

Reconstructing African Democracies for Development in Africa through Efficient Communication and Media Engagement

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Abstract

This article describes pitfalls experienced by the population and governments of African countries in their struggle to build democratic institutions and improve their own wellbeing. It describes poor communication among groups, corruption in the ruling party and the ambiguous role of observer missions and the media among the obstacles to democratic promotion. It also examines the mitigating impact of expatriates and African Diasporans' participation in the democratic processes of their country of origin, and shows the extent to which Western and American models of democracy and internal practices of the ruling party and observer missions during elections have become deterrents of 'progressive democracy' in the countries. The paper then offers suggestions for progressive democracy, arguing that the practice of traditional governing methods, the respect for global peace, protection of indigenes' personal interest and 'compensation' to local prospective voters, not the hardcore capitalist doctrine, are required to foster progressive democracy and expedite socio economic development in African countries.

Key words: ***poor communication, progressive, democracy, media, interventions***

Introduction

It is generally understood that democracy exists when a number of conditions are practiced. To paraphrase the *Stanford Encyclopedia for Human Rights*

- Free, competitive, and periodic elections are held to select leaders open to a majority of the adult population as voters
- There is measurable freedom of speech, press, religion, and gathering of people, allowing electoral campaigns to be organized and policies widely debated
- An impartial mechanism is in place for the settlement of disputes. This includes local courts with councilors hearing cases or an independent court system with a judge or jury appointed by the people, based on principles accepted by the majority.
- Everyone has basic human rights to pursue life, liberty and happiness that the country cannot take away. This includes the right to have their own beliefs
- Every individual has the right to seek other sources of information and ideas; to associate with whomever he/she chooses

- Everyone has the right to form groups and organizations or belong to such as they so desire (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>) retrieved 12/21/2014.

The Oxford Dictionary defines democracy as a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. Democracy can be traced back to period before 508 BC in Athens, Greece. Democracy arises in a well bonded group or tribe, also in a situation where the government is determined by the 'whole population' and the individual matters. Democracy arises in a well bonded group. In juxtaposing these concepts, we emerge with a consensus belief that democracy was practiced in other parts of the world where people had rules that governed their actions and each individual or population played a role toward the wellbeing of the group. Hence, there is liberal democracy. There is also illiberal democracy. According to CNN political anchor, Fareed Zakaria (2003) illiberal democracy practiced in the Soviet Communism is couched in dictatorship. It is one in which leaders weaken legislation and control elections to stay in power. In the groundbreaking 286-page hardcover book, *The Future of Freedom*, Zakaria (2003, pp. 89-90) uses Russian President Boris Yeltsin's fight for fragile democracy against communist thugs in the early 1990s to explain the illiberality of democracy.

In terms of governance, the representative is selected per certain prescribed values and believes of the group indicate how they want to be treated or served. Embedded in this explanation is the notion that power belongs to the people, not to elected persons, and the actions of the latter must not only be known by the group but also must be based on inherent, indigenous values of that group.

The lack of speedy development in many countries can be blamed on obstacles faced in the manifestation of democratic principles, on imbalances in diplomatic dealings between the leaders of countries with established economies and the fact that the majority of the population is not educated on the importance of elections.

There is even a false understanding among citizens in developing countries that the drive by national governments and international development organizations for multi-party politics could be preventing them from choosing an individual with values they can easily relate to. That view ignores the idea of representation where citizens are considered important by all and have the opportunity to select a leader he/she feels can serve their interests. The individual is not only a citizen who shares a social contract with his or her fellows but also a person with rights upon which the state may not encroach (Campbell, 2010, p. 31). The individual has the freedom to communicate, associate, organize and operate without fear of reprisal. Regardless of his/her religious values, socioeconomic status, social class, age, creed, sexual orientation, and historico-cultural circumstances, individuals are expected to have a mechanism for charting their futures.

To contextualize current public perceptions of governance and human rights in Africa, we need to look at the development of democracy in some countries on that continent.

Brief History of Democracy in Africa

Some African scholars trace the historical development of democracy only from the colonial period. But they focus only on democratic practices at the national level. For Salih (2001), democratization began between the 1950s and 1960s, and it involved the struggles for independence from colonial rule. The "second wave" started in the 1980s and 1990s, involving nation state experiences with post-colonial misrule; and the "third wave" started in 2000 and it is still evolving. It involves new ideas of civil society relationships, structures of governance, and norms of citizenship. For Barkan (2000), there have been protracted transitions among African democracies.

Over the last 24 years, more African governments have attempted to address the needs and wants of the population by organizing regular elections, certified by regional and

international observer missions as peaceful, free and fair. Some single-party states and authoritarian heads of state yielded to pressure from foreign entities and within. For example, activists and aspiring politicians in Uganda, Cameroon and Nigeria created their own parties in the hope that political freedoms and strong institutions would foster government accountability and effective development. In fact, since their independence from colonial rule, a number of African countries fought against military rule to set up electoral systems and shift away from dictatorship. Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, Kenya, Gabon, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia and most recently Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are among emerging democracies that have had their own share of uprisings, protests and other forms of civil unrest aimed at unseating the ruling party. Meanwhile, the mass media has often been playing the role of protector of civil rights by publishing news articles critical of the government undertakings.

While ruling parties in those countries point to the increasing number of private print, online and broadcast media, multiparty politics, and public demonstrations as symbols of democracy, development experts are becoming more concerned that there is little or no economic growth, and infrastructure development is being led by foreign corporations that are collaborating with corrupt locally elected officials.

More than six centuries ago, long before Europeans entered black tribes, kings and queens abdicated their thrones through uprisings by their people who did not agree with their actions and/or decisions. This suggests that democratic practice had been in place. Although most kings used harsh tactics to maintain order, the people were aware the ultimate future of the land rested in their ability to publicly express their sentiments. Renowned American anthropologist, Paul Bohannan's (1964; 2000) contribution to this topic is critical to understanding that point. Bohannan mentions that many tribes had a tendency to decentralize the government by delegating authority and responsibility to local entities and instituting a complex system of checks and balances to curb autocracy. The past President of the African Studies Association points out that in Central Africa, delegation of the king's authority usually amounted to delegation of almost all authority. But to clearly understand the current nature of democracy we have to go back to the 15th Century, during the days of the Asante Empire where a liberal form of government existed. Then the constituent states retained autonomy from the central authority. In the sixteenth-century, Benin imposed strong centralized rule followed by the Zulu in the nineteenth-century.

Surely, democracy has existed in different forms in Africa, but as we will see in the next segment, multiparty democracy that swept across Africa in the early 1990s like a hurricane has brought widespread corruption in African communities and institutions, and raised more direct questions about the usefulness of the model itself as a development paradigm.

Hypocrisy of Democracy

Democracy involves the notion that human beings can live together through scarcity, socio-cultural differences and hardships. However, its rules and principles are primarily designed to be broken. From a social-anthropological perspective, the democratic model introduced in Athens, Greece in the 6th Century BC and highlighted in France on July 14th 1789 with the takeover of the *Bastille* by the citizens is one in which people systematically upend rules and authority to wield high-level power and influence and protect personal interests instead of providing basic necessities to the people. In the U.S., lobbyists sponsored by special interest groups as well as companies with global financial investment and non-profit organizations persuade senators and congressmen and women to pass laws that support their agenda. The elected officials tend to reward groups that made major financial contributions to their campaign. Reports also suggest that some lawmakers have investments in companies whose agenda they had voted for.

There are similar instances of political corruption manifested through patronage and nepotistic behaviors. Within the same context, natural modes of sociability are dominated by patron organizations that utilize force to control the will of the people. Examples include Somalia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Libya, and Nigeria where militia groups consistently disrupt elections and terrorize communities to promote their own system of government at the expense fledgling young democracies within those countries. It is even alleged that some members of government sponsor those groups with a view to overthrow the government and rule the country.

Another type of hypocrisy is voting per ethnic connections commonly practiced in African countries. Members from a candidate's tribe are more likely to vote for their 'home boy' (or 'home girl') into office than select a qualified candidate from a different tribe, whether or not the individual is qualified. The practice that started when the people began to elect their own leaders is typically found in systems where leaders have to contest elections to come to power. Instead of having face-to-face meetings with voters, political candidates use intermediaries to canvass for votes. While in the U.S. and other Western municipalities the intermediaries are precinct captains and ward heads who develop personal relationships with individual clients on behalf of the candidate (Fukuyama, 2014), enhancing his/her chances of winning, ethnic voting decides political futures in Africa. In fact, ethnicity has become the credible indication that a particular candidate will deliver the goods to the target audience, as Fukuyama further points out (Fukuyama, 2014, p. 30).

The whole process of democracy is marked by animosity between different political parties, often culminating in massive bloodshed among supporters of a party. Party members quarrel, giving the impression they are in constant turmoil with the opposition party while large segments of the population outside the political groups remain spectators in the so-called democratic process. The common people easily notice that differences between the political parties are not due to fundamental differences in policies, legislation and programs but to the personal ambitions of leaders of the political party. The prominent Indian journalist and founder of the NGO *Nandini Voice for the Deprived*, N. S. Venkataraman, has observed that people who do not belong to any political party become wary of this sort of democracy, and ponder its overall usefulness to the country (Venkataraman, 2012, p. 116). Easily, people would crave for an alternative means of governance when they are dissatisfied with the status quo.

Daily editorials from the BBC News Africa and other press coverage on political issues by major news agencies houses such as the Associated Press Agence France Press, Xinhua, Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) and Reuters, along with privately owned local newspapers uncover embezzlement of public funds by elected officials while increasing numbers of electors in every African country are becoming more restless with the democratic process. They feel betrayed by a system that they thought would yield immediate results. Having been promised by elected officials that there would be accountability for the mismanagement of public funds and everyone would have the opportunity to improve their personal circumstances, the people have only witnessed more corruption and more poverty among their own communities.

The most glaring hypocrisy is that of foreign corporations which reportedly hide behind *rules* enforced by international financing organizations like the IMF, World Bank and others to plant their businesses in local spaces. Those Banks' structural adjustment programs supposedly meant to reduce government in developing countries, eliminate poverty, stabilize and grow local markets were, for some expatriates, an excuse to pave the way for foreign major corporations to widen their reach and create better conditions for their future investments. The financing bodies claim the rationale for the reduction (restructuring) of government is to reduce poverty. However, they can be blamed for indirectly participating in the country's policy-making process by including liberalization of markets, privatization of state-owned enterprise, and improvement of governance among conditions for providing loans to those countries.

There are other concerns about the role of democracy in Africa's future development that we can no longer ignore. The questions are guided by the conviction that socioeconomic development is inseparable from democratic practice and that sustainable development can truly happen only when every citizen and resident are able to practice *progressive democracy*. In the proceeding sections, we will analyze the following issues to determine the context within which African countries could chart their socioeconomic futures.

- Role of the ruling party in the electoral process and whether regular municipal, legislative, parliamentary and presidential elections are necessary or even authentic
- How thriving democracies serve as a marketplace for foreign investments
- Whether election observer missions add any value to the democratic process
- Whether democracy can be measured through local media coverage
- The role of the geopolitical landscape and neighboring countries in mitigating democracy
- How economic inequality is slowing the practice of good democracy, and
- How Africa can re-form its democracy to grow its social and economic institutions by using existing best practices, expatriates and Africans in the Diaspora

Ruling party as a corrupt political machine

There is the popular belief that leaders of the ruling party and their cronies use hypnotic techniques including black magic to retain their position in government or get appointment to senior management positions such as Director or Minister. To see relatives of a Minister from a poor family building mansions, running businesses with huge cash flows, or getting their friends and family members jobs shortly after the individual has been appointed reflects the corrupt nature of public institutions in African countries.

Ballot boxes are often stuffed with votes in favor of the ruling party before actual election begins, and local observers, particularly from the opposition party may not be given access to ballots and other election activities, fueling fears of rigging. According to press reports, during the 1990 Presidential Elections in Cameroon, some ballot boxes were stuffed with votes for the incumbent candidate and taken to the polling stations before people were allowed to cast their vote.

Media reports graphically describe killings of supporters of the opposition parties, burning of property and other atrocities, and calls for transparency from civilians, opposition party politicians, the local press and the international community.

Without a doubt, corruption is practiced in all sectors of the government and in the private sector. Even in the management of football, a sport whose passion brings communities and rivaling groups together, public funds are constantly being mismanaged. The government usually imposes its own candidate to run football operations. According to periodic stories on BBC News Africa-an online daily journal that focuses on political, social and cultural matters, funds provided by FIFA, earmarked for infrastructure and personnel development, are said to have been diverted into the bank accounts of relatives of Ministers, forcing the world's football governing body to intervene in the internal affairs of the country and impose sanctions. . The practice is designed to avoid tracing of the funds by auditors.

On the level of local politics, newspapers, radio and television stations in Nigeria, Mozambique, and Senegal report that their incumbent presidents, at some point, tried to change the electoral codes as their tenure expired. Ruling parties in Mozambique, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Uganda, and until several years ago Egypt, Libya and Tunisia changed electoral codes that require the country to hold regular elections.

Local democracies as investment attractions for foreign companies

We cannot separate democratic practice from internationalism or social democracy from capitalism, given that individuals and communities are naturally prone to enjoying peace and customs, and to protecting their own space and expecting financial reward, irrespective of their social, economic, religious or educational status. This may be the reason that more than 40,000 transnational corporations of varying shapes and sizes have installed in some of the remotest regions in the world since democratic reforms were put in place. Local customs are being eroded and negotiated as corporations take up local space and spread their own values and structures (Ngwainmbi, 2004; 2005; 2007); tensions prevail between biopolitical approaches to body, gender and sexuality, as well as issues of social class and geographic location (Kraidy, 2013). Political scientists, social anthropologists, development communication experts and practitioners know that democracy by its very nature represents rewardable labor, business practice, peace, and the overall wellbeing among people in a defined space and between them and external institutions. Therefore, global integration goes beyond the doctrine of economic salvation and the doctrine of democracy. It includes the freedom to move capital.

The influx of foreign companies in various countries in Africa is happening mainly because of growing peaceful relations between those countries and their counterparts abroad. China, India, Brazil and other Latin American countries have now joined the U.S. and European countries in doing business in African villages, towns and cities following installation of information technologies and agreements made by their embassies. Of course, business dealings with a country only occur when diplomatic relations between the two countries are good, and there is reason to believe the parties will operate in a secure environment or at least there is the expectation of peace around the business location. When there is cheap labor and relative peace in the cities and rural areas, more foreign companies and local and intergovernmental international development organizations are able to extend their business practices and their time. The increasing presence of foreign corporations and organizations does not, however, mean that there is progressive democracy.

In the segments ahead, we will examine problems and conditions that could be hindering progress on the world's oldest continent. We begin with an examination of democracy as an expensive and complex form of governing for developing nations because of the participation of observer missions.

Role of Observer Missions

Recently, there has been more interest in the role of external influence to regime change. Since 2000, humanities scholars have been trying to understand how forces beyond national borders influence democratic movements. Some use participation of foreign entities in the internal political and economic operations of a country such as 'internationalization', 'invasion of local space' (Ngwainmbi, 2004, 2005), 'globalization', 'glocalization', or 'foreign domination', to argue in favor of or against such interference. There are cases in which outside players are deliberately controlling the domestic political agenda, even a nation's direction. For Jacob Tolstrup (2013, pp. 716-739) domestic elites should not only be perceived as mere objects of external influence, but rather as gatekeepers that actively facilitate or constrain ties to external actors. The United Nations Organization, obviously the most visible institution in the world in charge of promoting peace and among all nations has always decried interference in the internal affairs of any nation. However, developing countries and critics are becoming more concerned that observer missions, initiated by the UN and implemented as part of its Peacekeeping Mission¹² program, have overall

¹² *The first UN peacekeeping mission consisted a team of observers deployed to the Middle East on May 29, 1948, during the Arab-Israeli War. The program includes a peacekeeping team of police officers, military personnel and experts in social sciences/ humanitarian areas selected from different who are assigned to a country or warring countries. Peacekeeping operations are mostly in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe where major conflicts have persisted since its inception shortly after World War II.*

been counterproductive. In fact, they are among the main external actors that negatively affect democratization in developing countries. Domestic election observation is increasingly being recognized by foreign governments and local potential voters as important, and it continues to be funded but the observer operations are deeply flawed.

Observer missions have been heavily criticized for their role in damaging the democratic spirit in the country they visit. When individuals perceived to be neutral but knowledgeable about the political process are pulled together from civil society organizations, foreign delegations, government, regional and international institutions to monitor elections and produce a report of their experience, we get the sense that the team has the potential to be a reputable force. Its key role is to advise the public of its findings and to seek measures of improving the democratic process, without prejudice, and the population usually expects that its presence would lead to a free, fair, and smooth election. This is why observer missions are usually welcomed in the country. During the presidential election, an African country receives one or more of the following groups with the same goal --the European Union Observer Mission, African Union Commission Observer Mission, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum, and other missions sponsored by the United Nations, or groups from the US. This is in addition to local election monitoring and observing organizations.

Election observation requires monitoring the entire electoral process over a long period of time, not only during election-day proceedings alone. Sadly, due to infrequent technical difficulties involving their travel or violent public demonstrations in the host country, the observation team usually arrives just before the voting period begins and leaves after results are published—a stay too short to grant any sort of legitimacy to the election process itself. Information given the group upon arrival is insufficient or inaccurate, and members do not have enough time to make reasonable assessments to pre-election conditions. For their own part, the media, political scientists and patriots, or what I would call *keen citizens*, have expressed dissatisfaction over the role of observers.

Critics inside and outside Africa, not excluding the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and the Institute of Development in Africa (IDEA), are increasingly concerned about the political impact of short-term observer missions. Although representatives are not present in all precincts, the mission usually endorses elections based on stations it observed which are normally guarded by security forces and closely watched by journalists. Observer missions rely on the host government for direction and they struggle to surmount powerful national, political and diplomatic vested interests. Cyril Obi (2008, p. 82) has found that their assessments are subjected to the hegemonic, strategic and economic calculations of the dominant political elites. Some missions have been expelled from host countries for allegedly inciting violence or supporting the opposition party, which obviously affects their credibility and that of their sponsor.

Besides those controversies surrounding the observer mission program, the local media may be a dubious actor in the struggle for democratic growth. The daunting role of the media is described in the next segment.

Media as dubious gatekeeper

We are mindful that the media is responsible for telling the truth and sharing knowledge that could empower people to say and write what they think, seek different sources of information and ideas or practice their religious beliefs without interference. In fact, the print and broadcast media have been the most influential agent in shaping public opinion. In young nations, people believe news disseminated through newspapers and audio visual media because they trust journalists. As the main intermediary between government operations and the public, journalists have unprecedented power in controlling people's perceptions of their community and their

leaders. They also have the moral responsibility to disseminate the truth and earn the public trust as reputable messengers.

During elections the press is perceived as a powerful tool; some observers think it is more powerful than leaders of the ruling party. For instance, press reports and opposition party candidates uncover unethical operations conducted by the ruling party to ensure its continued domination. Local newspapers periodically publish sensational stories; some describe cases of voter bribing, election rigging, inexplicable imprisonment or mysterious disappearance of popular members from the opposition party, and all sorts of heinous crimes. Radio and television stations provide more airtime to political parties during campaigns; newspapers also sell a record number of copies as potential voters clamor to read 'scoops' and 'dirty' stories about incumbents. Even those who cannot read or write believe the stories they are told as the majority of the population rely on radio and television coverage to learn about voting stations and candidates.

The media usually rush to publish unverified information, giving voters no opportunity to make independent, sound judgments about the candidate prior to voting time. Although some radio stations allow callers to express their opinions on the air and individuals to write columns or express their views on the *Letters to the Editor* page, readers only focus on headlines and front page stories. In some cases, when the media cover issues deemed damaging to the reputation of the government, the reporters and editors are arrested, imprisoned or killed.

Newspapers critical of the government are suspended or terminated. In fact, the government usually perceives the media as a suspicious messenger and an undesirable ally of the democratic movement.

There is also limited access to news material. Reporters and editors end up relying on eyewitness accounts, including tips about government officials in public and private space from citizens, rather than on personal observation and journalistic assessment, to publish stories. In cases of breaking news, witnesses with no background in any kind of journalism phone journalists and offer tidbits and photographs about the scene. Coverage focuses on personalities simply because the political figures are easy to find and their public and private life provides tidbits for newspaper headlines. Because politicians are among the most prominent and eminent people in Africa, the public is eager to know about any of their misdeeds. This is why politicians set the media agenda especially during the election period. It also accounts for the massive distribution and sale of print copies. The same situation exists with radio and private television stations, which have more listeners and viewers during that period. The period usually brings more income to the media houses as candidates buy airtime and advertizing space to promote their ideas to persuade more voters. No wonder, during the electoral process, the media pay a lot of attention to political figures than to legislative issues.

On the whole, election campaigns generate financial resources for the private media. However, as a profit-making business, the private media do not have the financial resources to produce in-depth coverage, leaving the audience misinformed or under-informed about serious topics that require extensive coverage and expenditures such as legislative proceedings, diplomatic missions, campaign trails, etc.

While commercial media have been facing those obstacles, social media seem to be doing a job in democratizing African countries. The people mobilize and organize themselves to fight dictatorial regimes, corruption and other forms of social injustice through social media. They seem to have better luck reaching out to each other and acting on the messages they share. And they have succeeded in not only changing attitudes but initiating change with national and global implications. For example in October 2014, protesters in Burkina Faso (including women and children), politicians and journalists used hashtags, #wili, and #Burkina to live-tweet their way through a chain of massive street protests. Later, cell phone video showed the President Campaore fleeing the country. As Yahoo News reported on <http://www.yahoo.com> December

6, 2014, the digital connection between Burkinabe youth activists who called the protest “Revolution 2.0, their Diaspora” and supporters in Western countries led to a flurry of interest in Burkina Faso. Images displaying streets flooded by demonstrators, mostly women brandishing wooden spatulas (which are a local symbol of gender defiance) were shared thousands of times on Twitter and Instagramⁱⁱ. Other media reports show that protesters in neighboring countries, Togo and Chad, started their own demonstrations using social media to unseat their autocratic leaders.

Certainly the media is helping people to change the way they want to be governed. However, some compromised journalists have used the social media to misinform voters about the governing or opposition parties and their candidates. Nonetheless, the social media revolution has increased international interest in the region as more online audiences tweet about the unfolding political events. To appreciate the magnitude of the media-induced wave of political change, particularly how protesters in other countries are becoming as successful as their predecessor we need to first understand the complex nature of the African geo-politico-cultural landscape.

Geo-Political Landscape as Political Climate thermometer

The geo-political African landscape is a complex potpourri that requires first the identification and replication of suitable democratic ideologies and careful planning. This is because (a) Africa consists of different religions and cultures; (b) village, town and city residents operate under uneven economies; (c) capitalist practices exist at different levels with the world’s poorest economies having to compete with the fastest growing economies; (d) the press is not completely free to operate; journalists are being silenced for uncovering corruption and other unjust practices by top state officials prevail; (e) not everyone has direct access to information technology due in part to differences in their purchasing power or the lack of information.;(f.) imbalances exist between parliamentary authority and presidential authority, with the latter having overwhelming power, and (g) press freedom and freedom of expression laws are not written or implemented with the same intensity in all countries, etc.

Another dynamic is the fact that people in neighboring countries tend to copy each other’s behaviors without necessarily taking into account the political realities in their own country. Persons traveling to a neighboring share stories about experiences which often give the host group ideas. In the last few years, there have been successive protests and uprisings in North Africa. Between 2010 and 2013, citizens of Libya, Egypt and Tunisia held major demonstrations that led to removal of dictatorial regimes..

A look back at recent political upheavals in those countries as well as in Senegal and Burkina Faso in 2011 and 2014 respectively where demonstrations led to a change in the countries’ leadership demonstrates the usefulness of those inherent democratic principles among Africans. This is why political scientists like Ayittey and modern ‘afrocentric’ thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, and Molefi Kete Asante should be commended for prescribing to the extraction of forward-bound, homegrown knowledge and practice aimed at serving the common good of the majority of African people. Ayittey (1991; 2010) remains outspoken against recommending Western-style democracies for Africa but recommends that African democracies should build on a consensus model since traditional African societies take decisions by consensus.

We should accept the fact that there will be no practicable consensus model or sustainable democracy if the gap between the wealthy and hopelessly poor is not reduced. Economic inequality has strong ramifications for democratic politics. A parallel can be drawn between the ruling party and voters in African countries and the partisan politics in the United States, if we recall that shifts in economic growth are directed by the ruling party. During

election campaigns, members of the ruling party give money to their representatives in the provinces, towns and villages to bribe traditional group leaders for votes.

Those obstacles do beg the question--whether regular municipal, legislative, parliamentary and presidential elections are necessary or authenticate African democracy.

Conclusions

A number of far reaching conclusions can be drawn from the analyses in this paper. The distractions created by the militia groups, and imbalances in wealth distribution, the embezzlement of public funds, increasing poverty levels and increasing numbers of less educated voters are among the conditions that cripple the aspirations of African people to pursue democratic ways. By implication, proceedings of the national assembly, protests and uprising, political speeches, government propaganda disseminated through state-run media, voter tipping and tribal voting are not enough to sustain democracy in Africa. However, democracy could be the most legitimate form of government needed in developing countries because, in general, people are allowed to choose their own leaders, move to other places and explore opportunities to live freely. But democracy faces more challenges in succeeding in Africa than ever expected. Many rules are not followed and corruption continues to spread from the cities to the villages and among the poor.

Despite the challenges faced by voters, democratic regimes continue to experience greater legitimacy around the world while authoritarian regimes are losing support from the citizens. The recommendations from world-class economists for authoritarian capitalism in developing countries as the alternative to democracy will not work; for citizens who have experienced any form of democracy do not prescribe to any other form of government. The recent civil unrest in North Africa dubbed the “Arab Spring” and the attack on the parliament building in Burkina Faso in November 2014 that forced the resignation of its president, a former military officer himself, demonstrates a shift from authoritarianism and the will to try democracy.

We must come to terms with the fact that there always will be foreign influence in the daily operations of African countries as long as African governments continue to request and receive financial and military support from other countries. But the influence will not necessarily bring progressive democracy. Even authoritarian regimes in Russia, China, the Islamic world, richer African and Latin American countries that democracy that provide technical and financial assistance to Africa remain vulnerable to internal and external pressures for democratic reform.

Resources for reconstruction of progressive democracy

Progressive democracy can be practiced using local space and culture. I greedily argue those healthy local practices that aim to multiply peace and well being and the growth of economies without any form of foreign interference or negative external practices such as international aid count as elements of good governance.

Political strategists ought to capitalize on national pride, manifested through the social events to promote progressive democracy. Football, national days and other annual celebrations in villages and towns can serve as constructs of democracy.

Clientelism or what I call operation for mutual benefit (between voters and political candidate) should be viewed as an acceptable form of democracy rather than corruption because the majority of voters are uneducated on the voting franchise, and politicians do not yet know how to mobilize voters. So, clientelism should be connected with the level of economic development. The economic logic is that poor voters can be easily bought with relatively small individual benefits like a cash gift or a promise of a low skilled job (Fukuyama, 2014, 31). Here, three main objectives could be achieved. They are the following

- (1) Hope among locals that their economic conditions can improve.
- (2) Actual cash flow into the local economy with cash given to potential voters.

(3) Their vote can have a major impact in promoting local, national and regional peace if the practice is intensified and replicated.

Some aspiring politicians with progressive ideas do not have enough campaign funds or transport facilities to reach more people; hence they end up with fewer votes than their opponents in the ruling party. The situation can be reversed if pro-democracy groups at home and abroad raise funds and train volunteers. Compatriots abroad can coordinate efforts with expatriates to fund democracy programs.

We may also admit that some foreign democratic practices can be tested in African countries based on the existing indigenous socio-economic conditions. Because each country has its own historic-cultural reality, laws made and implemented in that country should reflect the will of the people. The laws should also be amenable to their countrymen and women living abroad with their families. In fact, Africans in Europe and North America have built retirement homes in their respective villages and cities and, some are resettling. Although the expatriates still have their heritage, their methods of reasoning and socio-cultural attitudes are different from those of the indigenes. This is a trend which national governments must not ignore.

The Diaspora as an Expensive Construct for Democratization

The African Diaspora is an expensive but necessary partner for the construction of progressive democracy in Africa. And African governments know that African think tanks in Western countries and North America become citizens of those countries for political and economic reasons. Efforts by the African Union Commission and its strategic framework for pan-African socio-economic development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to retain top-level nationally recognized scientists, astute political scholars, doctors, law makers, nurses, teachers, etc.), or lure those Africans living abroad back to their respective countries have failed. Many interested Africans with economic capital amassed in the Diaspora who return home face technical difficulties in establishing their families and businesses. In some cases, the procedures for starting a business require bribing local, provincial and state officials along the way. Still there is no guarantee for success. so, the majority of Africans return to the adopted country with their resources where there is relative transparency and respect for the law. Thus, 'brain gain' and the replenishment of economic resources and human capital are being enjoyed abroad at the expense of the country where critical stages of the talent was developed.

Some governments fear that their countrymen abroad may pose a greater threat to the fragile democracies than the ruling party or even militia groups. Because they operate under laws and democratic systems that are more advanced and the rule of law is upheld, local government officials and opposition parties are concerned that the compatriots could bring home radical ideas and influence public opinion using their strong financial capital. But the very complexity of their orientations makes the expatriates a liability in local politics in that, besides having to re-learn local customs, they must also adjust to the psychological and social modus operandi of the people, a behavior change that could take years. Even when they live in the community, local administrators and citizens keep see and treat them as outsiders, 'been-to', and remain distrustful.

Hence the only key contribution the Diaspora community and expatriates can make to the democratization of their countries is by mobilizing themselves into a unit with the same aspiration to support progressive democratic effort. They need to put their resources together, and launch campaigns for seats in the parliament where they can influence laws, assuming that local municipal elections are fair and the process is transparent.

Maximizing use of social media to support democracy

Social media have proved to be the promoter of democracy. Unlike traditional media that are bound by regulation and editors and journalists create a hierarchy by deciding what information gets into the public realm, social media allows ordinary citizens to create and post content. Civil

organizations that used the Internet to mobilize people on social justice causes are now using integrated social media into their campaign strategies to amplify their message (Taylor, 2012, p. 5). With the recent successes in political activity recorded in West and North Africa through socially mediated campaigns, this author sees social networking as the ultimate source for expediting policy reform, change in governing style, and democratization in Africa. Already, Twitter offers invaluable opportunities to connect directly with major influencers around a campaign's focus, in a way that has never previously been possible (Taylor, 2012, p. 7). To make social media more efficient in persuading potential voters requests to followers should be small enough to allow them to take part without a major effort. While it may still be difficult to convert small actions into more significant commitments, the impersonal format of the messages being conveyed would allow more people to receive and share them. Aware that people are still being monitored by secret police and other mechanisms are being used to suppress human rights in many countries, human rights groups and other activists should be encouraged to use their Face book and twitter accounts to offer live reports to other social media users. They should also have a database for an online community of supporters who regularly interact with, and promote, the campaign against autocracy, nepotism, corruption and other practices that widen the gap between the majority of people who are poor and the government jobs, known to be the illegitimate source of personal wealth.

The mastery of social media tools is needed by all sectors of civil society to help them understand the impact they are having. Civil society organizations, governments and foundations need to invest in social media training. International development organizations serving in Africa as well as foreign and local companies could offer support and funding. Thus, public mobilization through social media is not enough to promote political change on a national scale as most people are stilling using it for entertainment purposes only.

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ⁱ *The Bastille was a Paris prison destroyed by revolutionaries protesting acts of despotism. Political prisoners were released. The fall of the prison became a symbol of victory over the authority of the French king, Louis XVI who was no longer able to control the political process in the country. The incident sparked similar protests across Europe and introduced new ideas for governments led by the people.*

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ *The article was posted in the Quartz section of the front page of Yahoo News, retrievable by American online audiences. The title was "How Burkina Faso rediscovered a revolutionary hero-and overthrew a dictator". It praised ousted President Blaise Compaore's predecessor, Thomas Sankara, assassinated by the former in a coup as 'Africa' best' president.*

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