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DEMOCRATIZATION AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA:  
GENERAL TRENDS AND TYPOLOGY

by

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## 1. DEMOCRATIZATION AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: A GROWING AREA OF RESEARCH

Since the spring of 1990, the winds of change have swept throughout Africa, signalling the dawn of a new era variously referred to as the "second independence" (Nzongola 1987), the "second liberation" (Ayittey, 1992:305-34; Diamond 1992b) or the "springtime of Africa" (Bourgi & Casteran 1991). After three decades of authoritarian one-party rule characterized by political repression, human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, nepotism and corruption, democracy has spread like bushfire throughout Africa. According to the latest evaluation of the Carter Center in Atlanta (Africa Demos, July/August 1993:19), out of a total of 51 Sub-Saharan African countries, 15 may be described as "democratic", 7 are under a "directed democracy" regime, and 24 are in transition to democracy, with various degrees of commitment. It is generally agreed that the Benin National Conference (19-28 February 1990) marked the beginning of this second independence movement. Four years later, it is necessary to take stock, look back and reflect on the achievements, problems and prospects of democratization in Africa.

While many countries experienced relatively peaceful democratic transitions from military dictatorship to civilian, multiparty democracy (Congo, Madagascar, Mali, Niger), others went through a process of guided military transition (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria). And while some countries experienced co-opted transitions in which the incumbent president, acting promptly, managed to control (and even subvert) the transition process (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya), there have been extreme cases of authoritarian military reaction leading to a dual authority structure (Togo and Zaire). Thus, while democracy continues on the upswing throughout Africa, leaders such as Eyadema, Mobutu, and Moi are a constant reminder that autocracy is far from vanquished. Finally, in a number of countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Zambia) a second, post-transition phase of elections worthy of scrutiny is coming up in late 1994 and 1995.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it aims at presenting an overview of the on-going debate on democratization and governance in Africa in terms of the main problematic, themes and issues. Second, it offers a typology designed to help make sense of the varied and complex processes of democratic transition currently unfolding in Africa. This should, hopefully, shed some light on the political environment in which emerging civil societies in Africa operate.

## 2. A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE ON DEMOCRATIZATION AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

While the second independence movement is a relatively recent phenomenon in Africa, it has already given rise to an abundant and rapidly growing literature, mostly in the form of unpublished (academic or policy) papers; newspaper, magazine and academic journal articles; and single-authored books or edited volumes.

The present survey -- obviously limited in time and space -- cannot pretend to be exhaustive, it only constitutes, at best, a brief overview of what are generally considered to be the most notable and significant academic contributions published in English and French on this subject during the last eight years (1986-1994), including work in progress. It essentially focuses on general works and mentions country case-studies only to the extent that they constitute a significant contribution to the literature. Our geographical coverage is limited to Sub-Saharan Africa (thus excluding North Africa); only what we consider to be the most significant works on South Africa (a country on which there is abundant literature) have been mentioned.

The mushrooming literature on democratization and governance in Africa makes it difficult to establish any clear and firm classification. However, one may tentatively distinguish between the following categories of writings, which will be examined successively in what follows:

- (1) Pioneering works on the changing structure of power and the emergence of democracy in Africa (1986-89).
- (2) Major theoretical contributions to the study of democracy and governance in Africa.
- (3) Recent studies on democratic transition/political reform in Africa (1990-94').

### 2.1. Pioneering Works on the Changing Structure of Power and the Emergence of Democracy in Africa (1986-89)

The emerging literature on political liberalization in Africa could arguably be traced back to early critiques of authoritarian (civilian or military) one-party (or one-man) rule characterized by political repression, human rights abuses, economic and financial mismanagement, nepotism and corruption. First among these were studies on personal rule and the authoritarian syndrome in Africa, such as that of Jackson & Rosberg (1982), who suggested a typology of personal rule (prince, autocrat, prophet, and tyrant); or Decalo (1989), who focused on extreme cases of personal dictatorship (Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Idi Amin of Uganda, and Bokassa of the Central African Republic). In a pioneering collection of essays, Dov Ronen and contributors (1986) boldly broached the subject of pluralism and democracy in Africa at a time when it was not fashionable to do so.

Then came radical (or Neo-Marxist) critiques of the African one-party state viewed as antithetical to democracy in the sense that it was considered to be ideologically and functionally incapable of satisfying basic popular needs and aspirations. In a collection of cogently argued essays, Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987) observes that in Africa, independence has not brought about peace, security and development to the majority of African peoples, but rather oppression and despair. "In this context", argues Nzongola, "the struggle for genuine liberation [the "second independence" movement] involves the transformation of the inherited structures of the state and the economy in order to make them capable of serving the interests of African workers and peasants (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1987:ix-x).

The contributions in Meyns & Nabudere (1989), which are the result of a rare collaborative research endeavor between African and German political scientists (and include case studies of Burkina, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra-Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), also illustrate this trend. Similarly, the pioneering contributions of leading African scholars assembled by Anyang' Nyong'o (1987) have been among the first to examine how various authoritarian regimes (Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, and Zaire) have been progressively challenged from below by emerging national-popular alliances and coalitions. In the same vein, the essays edited by Cohen & Goulbourne (1991), analyse the decline of one-party rule and African socialism and examine the extent to which popular demands for democracy are both subverting and enriching the postcolonial order in Africa; theoretical chapters are followed by case studies of the prospects for democracy in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa and Sudan. While far less radical in tone and substance, the contributions of a group of leading Kenyan and Ugandan scholars edited by Oyugi et al. (1987) and focusing mainly on East Africa clearly fall within the same category, as do the exhaustive and innovative studies on Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe assembled by Diamond et al. (1988).

## 2.2 Major Theoretical Contributions to the Study of Democracy and Governance in Africa

### 2.2.1 Major Theoretical Contributions to the Study of Political Change and Democracy in Africa

The collection of essays edited by Chabal (1986) was among the first works to attempt to re-assess the aims, methods, concepts and theories which Africanists had hitherto applied to the study of African politics and to suggest new approaches (grounded in universal political theory and African history) to contemporary African political theory and practice. The contributions by Bayart (1986) and Sklar (1986) stand out by their incisiveness and originality. Thus, Sklar argues that Africa needs a "Developmental democracy" that should include "the core values of social, participatory, and consociational democracy as well as the specifically liberal elements of limited government and individual self-development" (Sklar, 1986:27-8). Chabal pursued this quest for theoretical innovation on his own in a recent book (Chabal 1994) aimed at reinterpreting contemporary African politics through a comparative conceptual framework grounded in African history while also offering a plausible interpretation of Africa's present predicament and possible future. In a strikingly original work, Robert Fatton, Jr. (1987) analyzed Senegal's emerging bourgeois liberal democracy in terms of the Gramscian concepts of "organic crisis", "organic intellectuals, and "passive revolution" with great success. In a more recent book, Fatton (1992) suggests a new analytical framework based on a class analysis that reveals the hegemonic power of the ruling class ("statocracy"), and on the dialectical interaction of state and civil society predicated upon the interrelatedness of culture, power, production, exchange and consumption relations in contemporary Africa.

Like Fatton's earlier work, the seminal study by French political scientist Jean-Francois Bayart (1989 & 1993) builds on the Gramscian notions of the post-colonial "historic bloc" (a class in the process of formation rather than a dominant class); "hegemonic quest" (a cooptation of the leadership elements of the rural and urban constituencies into established oligarchical structures); and "passive revolution" (the promotion of social and economic change through the "reciprocal assimilation" of elites in both the public and private sectors, in town and countryside) to provide a fresh perspective on the fundamental questions of African political science relating to the genesis of the state, state-society relations, the historicity of African societies, and their impact on the structuring of power relationships. The collective work by Chazan et al. (1992) also tries to break new theoretical ground by proposing a "political interaction" framework which presumes that the state-society relationship is central to understanding the political dynamics of Africa today and which focuses on identifying the multiple factors at work on the African political scene and tracing their diverse dynamics over time (Chazan et al., 1992:22-31). In a highly controversial work, Ayittey (1992) argues that black neo-colonialism, not white colonialism and neo-colonialism, is to blame for Africa's present predicament, and that a second liberation struggle that will sweep away black kleptocracy and rediscover African traditions is now building up throughout Africa.

### 2.2.2 Major Theoretical Contributions to the Study of Governance in Africa

The concept of "governance" first emerged out of two seminars organized by the Carter Center's African Governance Program in February 1989 and March 1990, respectively, whose working papers were eventually published in two volumes (CCEU 1989; CCEU 1990). The seminars' discussions centered around the failure of authoritarian rule in contemporary African states and the need to create efficient and accountable African regimes and political institutions. The first volume contains 28 contributions structured around five main themes, namely: community governance and "high politics"; prospects for progressive statescraft in Africa; regime types and prospects for democratization; the informal governance of Africa by aid agencies; and Perestroika without Glasnost. The second volume consists of 27 essays organized around five sections, namely: the case for democratization and political renewal; economic restructuring: prelude to, or product of, political renewal? the political capacity of voluntary and communal associations; alternative models and mechanisms of political reform: Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia & Uganda; and what can be done?

A fuller theoretical elaboration of the concept of "governance" is contained in the essays edited by Hyden & Bratton (1992) which examine how certain African countries (namely Botswana, Burkina, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zaire) are being governed and what the constraints and opportunities for political reform are in these countries. The authors' focus on governance (defined as the management of regime relations, i.e. the rules that set the framework for the conduct of politics) marks a new departure in African politics, recognizing the potential significance of actors other than governments, notably the various associations that make up civil society. Observing that "by curbing associational life, African regimes have fostered blind compliance and a lack of concern for a strong civil public realm", Hyden suggests that "the ongoing efforts to privatize Africa's economies are likely to enhance stable forms of pluralist democracy only to the extent to which this process also strengthens the civic public realm" (Hyden, 1992:24-5). Starting with its seminal 1989 report, and in subsequent publications (World Bank, 1990 & 1992), the World Bank enthusiastically endorsed the concept of governance while giving it a slightly different twist more adapted to its developmental goals and policies. Thus, the Bank's ideologues redefined governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development". For the World Bank, "Good governance is synonymous with sound development management" (World Bank, 1992:1).

### 2.3. Recent Studies on Political Reform and Democratic Transition in Africa (1990-1994)

Arguably the first book-length analysis of the end of autocracy and the rise of democracy in Africa is the highly readable and penetrating – if somewhat impressionistic – account of Bourgi & Casteran (1991). At about the same time, a lively debate on the challenges, opportunities, problems and prospects of democracy in Africa has been raging in various academic fora and periodicals, most notably the Journal of Democracy in the U.S.; Politique africaine in France; and the CODESRIA Bulletin in Africa. It is noteworthy that such a debate, recognizing democracy as a developmental necessity, focuses mainly on improved systems of democratic governance and are engaged by Africanists of all ideological stripes across the world, notably by many African intellectuals who only yesterday were subjected to ruthless repression for daring to criticize dictatorial regimes. In a nutshell, these debates center around the following themes: (1) divergent perceptions of the concept of democracy; (2) the state and civil society; (3) multiparty systems and democracy and (4) democracy and development. Each of these will be briefly examined in the following sections.

#### 2.3.1 Divergent Perceptions of the Concept of Democracy

As the initiation of democratization processes becomes a prerequisite for the continuation of economic and financial assistance from the West (a subject to which we shall return later), the fundamental question of whether democracy is a universal or purely Western concept has emerged once again. While most authors would agree with Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as "Government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Address of November 19, 1863), a distinction must be drawn between the value of the concept of democracy and its actual application in a given context. Various authors (Anyang' Nyong'o 1987; Mamdani 1990a; Meyns 1992; Onimode 1992; Post 1991) have stressed the universality of democracy, and the centrality of human rights to the concept of democracy. Similarly, Bayart (1986:110) noted that such concepts as human rights and democracy were integral elements in traditional African political philosophy. Now that there is widespread agreement on the desirability of democratic development, the question is no longer whether democracy should be instituted, but how (Kuhne 1992:25).

Definitions of democracy vary from the extremes of narrow and wide interpretations, from institutional change to socio-economic emancipation and the development of a democratic culture. Broad conceptions of democracy are adopted by N. Bazaara (in Stetter 1990:17); Imam (1992:102); and Toulabor (1991:58). Given the fact that democratization is a lengthy process that presupposes the creation of minimal conditions, a narrow definition has generally been adopted by policy-makers for practical reasons ("they have to start somewhere"); in international political negotiations (where financial aid decisions are linked to political conditionality); and by some African leaders in their quest for legitimacy. Democracy can be defined either in behaviorist terms (*true* competition and participation; *effective* political freedom) or in structural terms (political institutions, electoral systems and independent legislature and judiciary appropriate to a multiparty system) (Bratton 1989b:421; Riley 1991:4-7; Sandbrook 1988:241)..

Healy & Robinson (1992:151) draw an interesting distinction between three successive stages in the democratization process, namely *political liberalization* (guarantee of constitutional rights), *political accountability* (a move towards more inclusive politics), and the *democratization process* itself (involving the introduction of genuine political competition). The significance of this distinction is underscored by Lemarchand (1992b:178) who, following Bratton & van de Walle (1992b:29), observes that liberalization can occur without democratization, and that the end of authoritarian rule may, in some cases, be followed by anarchy or increased corruption. To a significant degree, the other points of discussion in the debate (the state and civil society; multiparty systems and democracy; and democracy and development) derive from these divergent perceptions of the concept of democracy.

### 2.3.2 The State and Civil Society in Africa

As our theoretical overview clearly demonstrates (see par. 2.2 above), one subject in particular has attracted the attention and mobilized the energies of the Africanist community, namely the complex network of private social forces (non-governmental organizations/NGOs and people's organizations/POs.) subsumed under the generic label of "civil society" (such as civic associations, voluntary organizations etc.) and its relationship to a post-colonial African state viewed as dysfunctional and predatory. Following the seminal work by Rothchild & Chazan (1988), a debate has been raging between those who tend to idealize civil society as the embodiment of the democratic ideal (Bratton, 1989a, 1989b & 1994a; Diamond 1989; Hyden 1989; Joseph 1991), and those, more skeptical, who warn that the state-society dichotomy oversimplifies a complex reality, and that African NGOs and POs can also be agents of non-democratic (i.e. reactionary) political and social forces (Chazan 1992; Fatton 1992 & 1993; Geschiere 1990; Lemarchand 1992a). A forthcoming book edited by Harbeson et al.(1994) which examines the potential value of the concept of civil society for enhancing the current understanding of state-society relations in Africa, with particular emphasis on the cases of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire, will, hopefully, shed further light on this issue.

### 2.3.3 Multiparty Systems and Democracy

There is a tendency in the liberal tradition to equate a multiparty system with democracy. Indeed, for most Western donors, democratic political reform means multiparty activity and competitive elections. Yet most authors now agree that multiparty activity constitutes a necessary, but by no means sufficient ingredient of a democratic system (Anyang' Nyong'o 1988a:74; Ben Yahmed 1990; Bourgi 1994); Imam 1992:103; Mamdani 1992:25; Toulabor 1991:59). As Ben Yahmed (1990:5) warned, "multipartyism is not democracy, far from it [...] the African people who are satisfied with multiparty activity as a democratic gimmick will soon be disappointed". Some authors (Bourgi 1994; Ellis 1991; Niandou Souley 1991) even go as far as to argue that in some countries, the current transition to a multiparty system is merely a cosmetic change designed to legitimate the existing regimes. The flawed and contested elections that have recently taken place in Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, and Togo, would tend to support this view. In this context, the multiparty system may be viewed simply as an arena in which the political elite (government and opposition) competes for access to the state's resources.

### 2.3.4 Democracy and Development

The central issue being addressed here is whether democracy is a prerequisite for development, or development a prerequisite for democracy. This old debate has gained renewed saliency because of the dismal failure of authoritarian regimes to provide any measure of economic development, and because of the severity and urgency of the African economic crisis. Thus, Africa is faced with the daunting task of effecting democratic change under conditions of severe financial scarcity and tight economic constraints imposed by the bilateral donors' and international financial institutions' conditionalities. As Anyang' Nyong'o (1992:99) succinctly puts it, "After thirty years of independence, there is no convincing correlation between dictatorships or authoritarian regimes and higher levels of economic growth or development in Africa. If anything, the more repressive regimes have done worse than the more liberal ones". In its seminal 1989 report and in subsequent publications, the World Bank (1989; 1992) took the opposite view that there is a positive causal relationship between political liberalization and successful economic reform. This led both multilateral and bilateral aid donors to establish a linkage (known as "political conditionality") between the implementation of political reform by African countries and the provision of economic and financial assistance to those countries.

There is little consensus of opinion in the academic community with regard to the question of whether democracy is a prerequisite for development or vice versa. Some authors believe that democracy does not necessarily lead to economic development, and that democratization usually gives rise to many economic expectations that cannot possibly be satisfied in the short-term (Healey & Robinson.1992:157; Kuhne 1992:13; Mkandawire 1992:24). Others start from the assumption that economic growth is a favourable condition for the development of democracy (Clapham 1993; Founou-Tchigoua 1992:4-7; Onimode 1992:7; Southall 1991: 114; Tetzlaff 1991; Weiland 1991:14). The more cautious scholars refuse to be caught in the "which comes first" trap. As Peter Meyns wisely observes, "it does not make sense to define development as the prerequisite for democracy, nor will it do to call for democracy as a condition for development. Both assertions have some truth in them, but they need to be seen in the dialectical relationship based on reciprocal dependence" (Meyns 1992:23-4).

### 3. DEMOCRATIZATION AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: A RESEARCH AGENDA

In spite of its brevity, the preceding overview reveals numerous gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature on governance and democratization in Africa. The purpose of this section is to identify some of these gaps and shortcomings and to suggest potentially fruitful avenues of future research in this area.

#### 3.1 Uneven Country coverage

Our literature overview reveals a striking imbalance in the coverage of African countries in the sense that English-speaking countries (notably Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia) are extensively covered while Francophone countries (with the possible exception of Cameroon, Senegal and Zaire) and Lusophone countries are hardly ever mentioned. Indeed, except for the articles by Allen (1992) on Benin; Martin (1993) on Mali; Nzouankeu (1993) on Benin & Mali; and Robinson (1992) on Burkina Faso & Niger, studies on Francophone Africa in English are few and far between. Two on-going research projects shall, hopefully, fill this major gap in the literature. One is the volume on Political Reform in Francophone Africa edited by John Clark & David Gardinier, which includes case-studies of 16 Francophone African countries. The other is the collection of essays by African scholars entitled Democratic Transition in Francophone Africa assembled by the present author which numbers 12 similar case-studies (for details, see section 4.5 below). One subject in particular, the National Conference phenomenon in Francophone Africa, deserves much greater attention from scholars than the brief overviews that Morel (1992), Nzouankeu (1992), and Robinson (1992) have devoted to this issue. Two significant exceptions to this gap in French are : (1) the thought-provoking book by Eboussi Boulaga (1993) on the National Conferences in Francophone Africa; and (2) the excellent (if somewhat outdated) collection of essays by various African and French scholars who participated in a December 1990 Paris colloquium put together by Gerard Conac (1993) including, inter alia, case studies of Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinee, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Zaire.

### 3.2 Theory versus Practice

Our survey reveals that while a significant and rapidly growing body of literature on the general and theoretical aspects of political reform and democratization in Africa currently exists, detailed country case-studies of democratic transition based on extensive field-work are still too few. Of particular interests would be comparative studies of the "democratic pioneers" such as Benin, Botswana, Mauritius and Senegal, as well as case-studies of the many African countries who, during the last four years, have undergone a process of democratic transition through national elections. In this regard, one would like to know precisely the extent to which these new, democratically-elected governments have been able (or unable) to implement their programs of political reform and to pursue economic and social policies consistent with popular aspirations and demands (particularly in view of the external constraints imposed by the international financial institutions). Of particular relevance here would be further studies (in addition to those of Cheru 1989; Deng et.al. 1991; and Gibson et. al. 1992) of the short, medium and long-term effects of the Structural Adjustment Programs on the economic development and democratization processes of the various African states.

### 3.3 Democracy in Africa: Political Parties, Political Culture, Religion and the Media

A fascinating aspect of the current democratization processes in Africa is the resurgence and emergence of a multiplicity of political parties based on ethno-regional, corporatist, class (and sometimes individual) interests rather than on ideology. Yet very few recent studies (with the notable exception of the already dated volume edited by Meyns & Nabudere 1989) focus on the social and political basis, programs and functioning of these vital political actors. An on-going research project under the general editorship of the present author on Political Parties of Sub-Saharan Africa (Martin 1995) will, hopefully, partially fill this gap.

Most authors lament the lack of a "democratic culture" in Africa (i.e. the absence of values, ideals and behavioral patterns usually associated with the Western democratic ethos). Yet (with the possible exception of Ayittey, 1992:37-77 and Simiyu, 1987:49-70), very little research has been undertaken on the extent to which African traditional political culture and institutions could merge with modern democratic ideals to create a specifically African political culture. A related topic of inquiry still very much neglected is the impact of (Christian, Islamic, syncretic and traditional African) religion on the political culture and democratization processes of African countries. The newly-found freedom of the press in Africa has led to the proliferation of the print and audio-visual media as a crucial element in the political liberalization process. Yet neither these developments, nor the role and impact of African journalists in initiating and sustaining democratization processes have been the object of systematic investigation.

### 3.4 The Social Basis of Democratization in Africa: Ethnicity, Social Groups and Social Movements, and Popular Participation.

Democratization in Africa has brought the issues of regionalism and ethnicity to the fore, raising a number of intriguing questions: to what extent can a multi-party system accommodate regional/ethnic diversity? Is it possible and desirable for political parties to be organized along regional/ethnic lines? Is it possible to keep regional/ethnic rivalry in check through appropriate legal-institutional mechanisms? Nigeria's adoption of a two-party system was such an effort that failed. Ethiopia's attempt at encouraging the creation of political parties along ethnic lines also failed (Mohammed 1993). In some states (Cameroon, Congo, Guinea), multi-party democracy has exacerbated ethnic tensions, while in others (Kenya, Zaire) one observes the dangerous rise of state-sponsored ethnic violence (Africa Watch 1993b). Hopefully, the on-going project on Ethnic Conflict and Democratization in Africa directed by Harvey Glickman (with case studies of Benin, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe written by African scholars) will shed some light on an area in dire need of further research.

The power and role of various strategically positioned social groups (such as the army, police and security forces) in the African democratization processes has generally been overlooked in the literature we surveyed. We definitely need to know more about the values, attitude, and interests of these groups in the current political reform process, and about the possible constitutional and institutional checks to potential abuses of power by them. In addition, most studies focus on the African elites while surprisingly little attention has been given to those social groups for whom and with whom the democratic revolution was initiated, namely the rural and urban popular masses and other politically and economically marginalized social groups such as peasants, women and youth (one exception is Roberts & Williams 1991). This exclusive preoccupation with "democratization from above" raises another issue, namely that of studying the political and institutional means of bringing these popular forces and marginalized social groups back into the democratization process.

Four on-going research projects try to address some of these issues. The first is the CODESRIA project on "Social Movements, Social Transformation and the Struggle for Democracy in Africa" which focuses on the democratic transition in Africa and on the relationship between democracy and development (Mamdani et al. 1988), and which culminated in the Dakar meeting of February 1992 on "Democratization Processes in Africa". The second is the AAPS project on "Democratization Processes in Africa" which analyses popular pressures and popular movements for democracy in Africa (Anyang' Nyong'o 1991).

The third is the project on "Political Transitions in Africa" sponsored by the Joint Committee on African Studies (JCAS) of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies which tries to "extend the analytical universe of political transitions beyond elites and their followings to include people in many different walks of life" and to examine ways of bringing the military back into the analysis of political transitions (SSRC 1994:1-3). The fourth is the Carter Center's African Governance Program May 1994 seminar on "Democratization in Africa" focusing on various key aspects of this process, notably politics and governance; social and political transformation; transitional elections; ethnic mobilization and conflict; and economic reform.

#### 4. A TYPOLOGY OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN AFRICA

The transition to democracy in Africa is taking different forms and is proceeding at various speeds with different outcomes, depending on the nature of external inducements and on the configuration of domestic socio-political forces. In this regard, it is possible to identify four types of democratic transitions in Africa: (1) regime change via a national conference; (2) co-opted democratic transitions; and (3) guided military transitions;.

##### 4.1 Regime Change via a National Conference

In this (essentially Francophone) scenario, a broad coalition of the civil society invests itself with sovereign and supreme constitutional powers. It appoints a transitional government with a dual executive. The president is robbed of substantive powers and reduced to a figurehead. A prime minister is elected by the conference as head of the government and is entrusted with the task of managing the transition under the authority and guidance of a provisional legislative body (High or Supreme Council of the Republic). It organizes within a year or so local, municipal, legislative and presidential elections, culminating in the installation of a democratically-elected Head of State. Such a process has taken place in Benin, Congo, Gabon, Mali, and Niger. In Togo and Zaire, it has been arrested in mid-process. It has been (unsuccessfully) demanded by opposition movements in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad; Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea; Madagascar; and Mauritania.

There are obvious limitations to the degree to which this model of peaceful and orderly transfer of power from military to civilian rule can be replicated. For one thing, to the extent that it is firmly embedded in French philosophical and historical tradition, the concept of sovereign national conference is peculiar to Francophone culture. More specifically, this concept is grounded in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas about popular sovereignty and the people's right to renegotiate the social contract -- a theory which became practice in the Estates-General of the French Revolution of 1789. But while they may be legitimate in the eyes of the African popular masses, sovereign national conferences are not be truly representative of the whole people.

While the conferees claimed to represent the nation in its entirety -- *toutes les forces vives de la nation* -- in reality, they were drawn from the political and intellectual elites of civil society. The inevitability of the outcome (an intra-elitist transfer of power) explains why besieged African autocrats have steadfastly resisted convening national conferences (Robinson 1994: 55-60).

#### 4.2 Co-opted Democratic Transitions

In several elections in non-competitive systems, the incumbent president has acted in time to allow multiparty elections. With control over the media and electoral machinery and superior financial resources, he has been able to defeat the opposition at the ballot box and stay in power despite widespread allegations of fraud. This has happened in Cote d'Ivoire (October 1990); Gabon (September-October 1990; December 1993); Ethiopia (June 1992); Cameroon (October 1992); Ghana (November 1992); Kenya (December 1992); and Djibouti (May 1993)..

#### 4.3 Guided Military Transitions

In this model, represented most notably by Burkina Faso, Guinea and Nigeria -- and, to a lesser extent, by Ghana and Mauritania -- a military regime retains virtually complete control over the transition process, which is deliberately complex and prolonged. Through its control over state institutions and resources (particularly of the state's finances and security apparatus) and through devious and fraudulent political manoeuvring aimed at defeating the opposition at the ballot box, the military is able to maintain itself in power.

Togo and Zaire constitute two extreme cases of authoritarian military reaction. In Togo, General Gnassingbe Eyadema managed to subvert the transition process by wresting power from the prime minister democratically elected by the National Conference (July-August 1991), Joseph Kokou Koffigoh. Then, through a carefully controlled electoral process and with a little help from his French friends, he achieved a dubious victory in the August 25, 1993 presidential elections with 96.46 per cent of the vote cast (representing only 36.16 per cent of the registered voters). Following Koffigoh's resignation in March 1994 after his party's defeat in the February 1994 parliamentary elections, President Eyadema appointed, on April 22, Edem Kodjo, head of the Togolese Union for Democracy as prime minister. Similarly, in Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko subverted the transition process by refusing to acknowledge the authority of the prime minister democratically elected by the National Conference, Etienne Tshisekedi and appointed his own government, headed by Faustin Birindwa. Since then, through his control of the state's finances and security apparatus, Mobutu has continued to act as the country's sole executive authority. This has, in effect, created a dual authority structure: one legitimate, but powerless, the other illegitimate, but powerful. As of the time of writing, the situation in Zaire continues to be deadlocked.

### Conclusion: Prospects for Democracy in Africa

The final outcome of these on-going processes of democratic transition in Africa is uncertain at best, and experts' analyses and predictions range from guarded optimism to frank pessimism. Thus, Rene Lemarchand (1992: 98-100) warns that "there are compelling reasons to fear that the movement toward democracy may contain within itself the seeds of its own undoing", by which he refers to authoritarian reactionary African autocrats; the fragmentation of opposition forces; the fractious character of African society; the unfavorable economic conditions; and the global economic environment.

In the final analysis economic and political change in Africa will succeed only if it is a home-grown, indigenous process, initiated by the African people themselves, taking into account their own historical, social and cultural values and traditions. In this regard, it would be inappropriate and counter-productive for donor countries to impose rigid political conditionality in an attempt to encourage democratization. Any effort to super-impose the model of Western liberal democracy, understood in the most conventional sense of multi-party electoral competition, could lead to mere formal compliance without "real democracy" (Ake 1993; Newbury 1994; Salim 1992:11, 36-9).

In this context, "real democracy" means substantive (as opposed to formal) democracy. Real democracy goes beyond the formal trappings of democratic political systems (such as multipartism and elections) to include such elements as accountability and genuine popular participation in the nation's political and economic decision-making process. If democracy is to be sustained over time, firm foundations for democratic institutions must be created in accordance with local circumstances, and a democratic culture firmly grounded in African values and traditions must be built. As the world's attention is focused elsewhere, Africans must seize the moment and turn inwards to find within themselves the solution to their own problems. A momentous task of constitutional and institutional design awaits African intellectuals who, hopefully, will rise to the challenge and make their contribution to the world democratic culture.

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