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**POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION IN AFRICA
IN THE 1990s:
ADVANCES AND SETBACKS**

by

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Publications List

- No.1. Bratton, Michael and Nicolas van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa", 1993
- No.2. Bratton, Michael, "Political Liberalization in Africa in the 1990s: Advances and Setbacks", 1993
- No.3. Van de Walle, Nicolas, "Political Liberalization and Economic Policy Reform in Africa", 1993
- No.4. Bratton, Michael and Beatrice Liatto-Katundu, "A Preliminary Assessment of the Political Attitudes of Zambian Citizens", 1993
- No.5. Ka, Samba and Nicolas van de Walle, "The Political Economy of Adjustment in Senegal, 1980-1991", 1993

Introduction

The end of the Cold War and the demise of communism have released a global ferment of political change. The dissolution of bipolar power blocs has undercut international support for authoritarian regimes in the Second and Third Worlds and exposed them to pent-up political demands from their own deprived and repressed populations. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, incumbent leaders in every African country have faced domestic political protests that have fundamentally challenged the legitimacy of existing single-party and military regimes. In many of these places, leaders have had little choice but to respond with political reforms, thereby stirring up motions in African political affairs unprecedented since the independence era a generation ago.

Whether the current round of political change necessarily amounts to democratization, however, remains an open question. Earlier euphoric predictions that the world -- and Africa -- stood on the brink of a global democratic revolution must be tempered with reality. Although political liberties are now available to larger numbers of people than at any previous time in history, the sudden collapse of authoritarian regimes has unleashed forces that can undermine the consolidation of democracy. The past three years have seen a revival of religious fundamentalism, renewed nationalism, and the outbreak of brutal civil wars. Nor is it yet clear whether citizens value liberty highly enough to defend democratic institutions against a reactionary backlash. Instead, they appear to be preoccupied with a struggle for economic well-being that simply cannot be satisfied in the context of stagnant economies. This panoply of problems raises doubts about whether democratic political systems can deal with the complexities of a postimperial world.

The present paper assesses trends in political reform in Africa for the period November 1989 to April 1993. It attempts to answer several questions: Are African political regimes becoming freer? Do signs of liberalization amount to a transition to democracy? Can fragile democracies be consolidated under conditions of economic decline and adjustment? While it would be nice to be definitive, the answers unavoidably must be qualified to reflect a mixed empirical situation: while some

African countries have registered political gains, others have encountered setbacks. The overall findings of the paper are as follows. First, almost all African countries have experienced gains in political liberalization. Second, the process of democratization in Africa, after a rapid start in 1991, slowed down in 1992, raising serious questions about the future of democracy on the continent. Finally, prospects for the consolidation of liberal and democratic regimes depend critically on ongoing changes at the realms of economy and culture.

Political Liberalization versus Democratization

There is much debate among political scientists about whether the impulse for political reform in authoritarian regimes amounts to true "democratization" or mere "liberalization". These processes of political change are simultaneous, complementary, but ultimately autonomous.

Political liberalization refers to the relaxation of government controls on the political activities of citizens. As an analogue of economic liberalization, political liberalization reduces government intervention in the political market, breaks up public monopolies of political authority, and allows greater pluralism of opinions and association. A political opening usually occurs when authorities grant previously denied civil and political liberties to individuals and groups in society. For example, a presidential decision to release political prisoners is an act of political liberalization, as is a national assembly vote to eliminate a constitutional provision permitting the existence of only one political party.

Democratization is a more demanding process which involves the deliberate construction of new political institutions and a supportive political culture. To contribute to democratization, political institutions must embody enhanced opportunities for political participation and competition. The most minimal condition for democratic transition is the implementation of a free and fair election. But revisions to other rules of the political game are also essential if democracy is to be consolidated: the revival of legislative institutions to check executive powers, the establishment of genuine independence for the judicial branch, and the institutionalization of civilian control over the military.

A regime may undergo political liberalization without democratization. For example, a calculating autocrat may make minor concessions to allow political activity by his opponents, not so much as a prelude to reforming institutions, but in order to deflect criticism and remain in power. In perverse cases, a disintegrating authoritarian regime may give way to intensified corruption, military intervention or anarchy, rather than to democracy. Similarly, the process of democratization can be terminated before democratic institutions are fully consolidated. Democracy is not constituted in a single opportunity to vote, but by the fulfilment of guarantees of regular elections and by procedures for citizen involvement between elections.

In other words, liberalization and democratization, once set in motion, do not always unfold towards determinate positive outcomes. These processes can stall or be reversed. Moreover, while liberalization can occur without democratization, the opposite does not hold. Democratization is theoretically and practically impossible without liberalization because democratic institutions can only flourish within a matrix of civil liberties. One cannot have a powerful independent legislature, for example, without guarantees of freedom of speech. Because liberalization comes first, it may be all that is possible to achieve in many real world situations.

Measuring Political Freedom

In order to assess trends in liberalization and democratization, we must first ask: "compared to what?". What is the appropriate baseline against which to measure a country's performance at guaranteeing political freedoms? Several standards are possible: an absolute standard, for example a universal model of democratic rights; an empirical standard, which actually prevails in other countries in the region or world; or a self-anchoring standard, which is derived from the country's own past performance. Obviously, any judgement about whether progress is being made will be colored by the standard chosen.

This paper takes a pragmatic approach. The analysis begins by tracking progress in liberalization and democratization against each country's initial regime conditions. At minimum, this approach provides a common-sensical assessment of whether a regime is opening-up politically, regardless of how open it was to begin with. Later, the analysis is placed in comparative context. The trajectories of African countries on liberalization and democratization are compared with one another and with the performance of regimes in other parts of the world.

Comparative analysis requires standardized measures. Unfortunately, we do not currently possess conventional indicators for political development as we do for economic development (e.g. GNP per capita, GDP growth rate, percent of GDP in manufacturing) or social development (life expectancy, literacy rate, percent of population with access to safe water). Even though the United Nations Development Program now recognizes that political freedom is "a vital component of human development" (UNDP, 1992, 26), it has backed off from an experimental effort to construct a "political freedom index" claiming the need for further research on sources, quantification and weighting of data (ibid. 32)².

More boldly (rashly?), this paper applies an existing index. The annual Comparative Survey of Freedom by Freedom House, a private research institute³, monitors civil liberties and political rights for all countries and territories in the world. Expert reviewers systematically assign scores for a country's compliance with standard lists of civil liberties (13 items) and political rights (9 items). The Survey summarizes the quality of different regimes on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing the "most free" and 7 the "least free"⁴.

Despite efforts at objectivity, the methodology of the Survey is not beyond reproach⁵. In the past, Freedom House displayed a Cold war bias which favored Western liberal democracies and their allies against the former Soviet bloc. In Africa, this bias played itself out in the inclusion in the Survey of South African homelands as independent countries and in overt partisanship for the UNITA guerrilla movement in Angola⁶.

The Survey is nonetheless serviceable for broad comparative assessments of trends in liberalization and democratization. The post Cold-War spread of liberal democratic values at least partly defuses the criticism that it represents only one narrow world view. And in practical terms, the Survey provides the best coverage of any data set on democratic rights currently available⁷. The data are derived in a reasonably systematic manner, presented in quantitative form, and are complete, both cross-sectionally (for 186 countries) and over time (from 1973 to the present).

Most importantly, the concepts of liberalization and democratization used in this paper accord closely to the Survey's operational definitions. What I mean by liberalization is well captured by the Survey's index of civil liberties, which include protection from torture, media independence, and freedom of association and assembly. What I mean by democratization is fairly represented by the Survey's index of political rights, which include open elections for the chief authority and legislative representatives, fair electoral laws, political party competition, and civilian control of the military.

Data on trends in civil liberties (a.k.a. liberalization) and political rights (a.k.a. democratization) for 52 African countries are presented in Table 1.

Trends in Political Liberalization

Politically, there have been unprecedented openings in African regimes over the past four years. Between 1988 and 1992, African citizens obtained significant and consistent gains in their ability to exercise basic civil rights. In 1988, 36 out of 52 African countries fell into the "least free" category of performance at protecting civil liberties on the Freedom House scale⁸; by 1992 this number had been reduced by two-thirds to just 12 countries (see Table 1, Summary). In the interim, as measured against their own previous records, an overwhelming majority of African governments -- 37 in number -- made discernible gains in observing and guaranteeing civil liberties.

The largest improvements on this dimension were made by a group of countries which started from a very low base of rights observance and which often abandoned an ideological commitment

to Marxism-Leninism (Benin, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, and Mozambique⁹). In these countries, the national constitutions were rewritten to include individual rights for the first time. In the other liberalizing countries, governments simply took administrative steps to relax emergency regulations or to place real powers of enforcement behind existing rights guarantees.

Only six African governments slipped backward on aggregate civil liberties performance between 1988 and 1992 (Egypt, Liberia, Libya, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda¹⁰). For example, the military of Sierra Leone overthrew President Joseph Momoh, dissolved the parliament, and suspended the 1991 democratic constitution. In Sudan, an Islamic government intensified its campaign to impose shari'a law on religious minorities and embarked on a forced resettlement program that destroyed nearly half a million homes in the country's southern region (Africa Watch, 1992, 2).

In order to disaggregate the broad concept of political liberalization, information is presented below on selected core liberties. These include personal security, freedom of expression, and freedom of association. Taken together, improved respect for these rights can create new opportunities for individual and group activity in politics.

Personal Security

The most basic human rights concern the inviolability of the person and require that individuals be protected from arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, extra-judicial execution, and "disappearance".

Starting from a very low base, trends in personal security have been generally positive in African countries since the turn of the decade. The South African government's decision to release Nelson Mandela in February 1990 and Namibia's independence in March 1990 under a liberal constitution were critical and influential events. Especially in the southern subcontinent, African governments responded by lifting emergency regulations which empowered the executive branch and security forces to detain political prisoners without trial. For example, President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe annulled a state of

emergency and released all political prisoners in July 1990. And, while Kenneth Kaunda did not revoke the state of emergency during Zambia's 1991 election campaign, he did announce a general amnesty for political prisoners. Released prisoners of conscience also reentered political life in Benin, Congo and Zaire, among other countries.

African leaders who initially responded antagonistically to demands for plural politics by arresting opponents were later forced back down. President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya revoked the detention order on multiparty advocate Kenneth Matiba who went on to be Moi's main rival at the polls. Even President Hastings Banda of Malawi found it expedient to release long-time detainee Vera Chirwa after the death of her husband in custody in October 1991. And, while the Nigerian government has regularly harassed journalists, printers and human rights activists for "subversion", most have been released after brief detention¹¹.

There are also signs that African governments, however reluctantly, are officially acknowledging the universal validity of human rights norms. The African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights became effective in 1990 after ratification by over forty states and the Charter's Commission in Banjul submitted its maiden report to the OAU concerning human rights violations in the Sudan. For the first time, official government offices or commissions for human rights have been set up over the past three years in Algeria, Burundi, Gabon, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda and Tunisia (UNDP, 1992, 26).

To be sure, these positive development have not eliminated persistent abuses. In Chad, three hundred political prisoners were summarily executed shortly before the government of President Hissein Habre was overthrown in December 1990 (Amnesty International, 1991, 59). The Ugandan army has been condemned for "arbitrarily arresting, torturing, and even killing civilians" in northern and eastern war zones and jailing non-violent opponents on treason charges (Amnesty, 1992b, 1). After cosmetic promises of liberalization, the government of Equatorial Guinea reneged on a guarantee of amnesty by

arresting opponents who returned from exile in Spain and France. And despite breakthroughs in Malawi, the country's leading opposition figure Chakufwa Chihana was sentenced to two years in prison for sedition in December 1992¹².

Within this mixed record, however, there have been more advances than setbacks in terms of personal security for Africans in recent years. African governments now find it harder to hide abuses of personal freedom from each other, from their own populations, and from the outside world.

Freedom of Expression

African journalists have been a driving force for liberalization, starting literally scores of newspapers and newsmagazines across the continent. Almost all speak with critical voices. Political opinions that government censors previously banned as "dissident" or "subversive" have entered mainstream discourse. Even within government-owned media, journalists and consumers have sought the expression of alternative viewpoints as a counterweight to discredited official propaganda. For example, in an interesting case of liberalization without democratization, Tanzania has seen the introduction of almost half a dozen lively weekly newsmagazines in Swahili and English, all bemoaning the government's slow march to multiparty elections in 1995¹³.

The international spread of new communications technologies, notably fax and satellite TV, has helped promote freedom of expression. Authoritarian governments find difficulty in controlling these decentralized technologies and in preventing the dissemination of international news, information, and political values within their borders. Especially in politically volatile urban areas, African citizens obtain information from Cable News Network, Agence France Press, and the British Broadcasting Corporation, sources which they say they trust more than government-owned media outlets. In West Africa, the proceedings of the national conference in Benin were broadcast into neighboring Togo and Niger, perhaps emboldening pro-democracy forces there. And the fledgling opposition movement in Malawi has been organized partly through fax messages from exiled leaders in Zambia.

Freedom House now judges six African countries to have a "free press", two of which (Cape Verde and Zambia) joined these ranks in 1992. In the same year alone, the media of twelve African countries rose to the "partly free" group (Sussman, 1993, 67). In a major victory for Africa's independent press, the 1991 Windhoek Declaration committed UNESCO to move away from supporting state-run news institutions in favor of a plurality of non-governmental media initiatives.

Major constraints nonetheless remain. Even though governments no longer monopolize all news outlets they have other means of exercising control over information, for example through monopoly ownership of printing presses and by regulating the import and distribution of printing supplies. The electronic media have always been more tightly controlled than the print press in Africa, and radio and TV remain strong redoubts of official opinion. Radio is the key communications medium in a rural continent, but only a handful of experiments with community-operated stations (e.g. in Mali and Burkina Faso) and private commercial stations (e.g. in Gambia and South Africa) are underway.

Moreover, recalcitrant political leaders regularly revert to heavy-handed tactics to suppress freedom of expression. In many African countries, the authorities still possess a battery of public security legislation which extends extensive powers to limit access to official "secrets" and to ban publications. For example, in Kenya, the government impounds "offending" issues of Society, Finance, and Nairobi Law Review and continues to harass editors with sedition charges. The repeal of such repressive press legislation remains an important item on the liberalization agenda. Nor has violence against journalists been eliminated: 11 journalists were killed in the course of duty in Africa in 1992. While unacceptably high, this figure must nevertheless be placed in perspective against the 98 killed worldwide (including 24 in Bosnia, 15 in Turkey, and 10 in Peru during the same year) (Sussman, 1993, 67; see also Article 19, 1991).

Moreover, the benefits of media liberalization are undercut by economic trends. The inflation of national currencies, brought about by devaluations and lax monetary policies, has prohibitively

raised the cost of newspapers, among other basic commodities. Thus, at precisely the time that the free expression is flowering, the readership of newspapers and newsmagazines in African countries may actually be shrinking. Nor does the contraction of aggregate consumer demand bode well for the long-term viability of media enterprises. Until there are vibrant market economies, advertising revenues will remain meager and the price of newsprint will continue to skyrocket. Africa's press sectors can expect to face competitive shakeouts in which numerous newly-established independent publications will close.

Freedom of Association

The pendulum has recently swung towards greater associational freedom in Africa. Opposition movements have emerged in every African country to challenge the official political monopolies which prevailed less than half a decade ago. Civil societies have manifested themselves with the burgeoning of religious bodies, independent trade unions, professional and business associations, womens' and students' groups, and community development and civic organizations. And, with opportunities to contest elections, former politicians and a new generation of political aspirants have coalesced to sponsor the formation of new political parties.

By way of illustration, just three types of political association will be mentioned: civic organizations, political parties, and national conferences. During the 1980s, a few courageous citizens (in Nigeria, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe among other places) established non-governmental organizations to monitor governmental human rights performance. By 1991, local chapters of Amnesty International operated openly in Benin, Sierra Leone and Togo, joining those already active in Zambia and Mauritius (although members in Sudan were forced to restrict their activities). Some such groups expanded their mandate to include election monitoring, for instance through the GERDESS network of intellectuals and professionals in francophone West Africa and umbrella groups of churches in East Africa. By insisting on non-partisan oversight of government performance and electoral contests, election civic associations have helped to keep governments honest and to educate citizens about the importance of an

independent civic realm.

Activists usually made single-party legislation a target of protest. In numerous countries, the repeal of constitutional restrictions on political party formation prompted a flood of party registrations, though this did not always reflect a genuine increase in associational activity. Too often, so-called "parties" constituted little more than an ambitious politician, a handful of acolytes, and a non-existent base of members and finances. In these cases, freedom of association sometimes worked at cross-purposes to the larger objective of democratization. Political parties tended to proliferate uncontrollably, to engage in internecine bickering, and to fragment the opposition movement. Incumbent authorities were quick to seize opportunities to divide their opponents, for example (like Mobutu and Bongo) offering public subsidies to any group wishing to set itself up as a political party. Elsewhere (as in Kenya and Zaire) the opposition split on ethnic lines. And even, as in Zambia, where a labor, business and professional groups coalesced into a powerful social movement, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy, has failed to institutionalize itself as a well-organized political party.

Africa's greatest original contribution to global liberalization is the national conference, a form of political association that has been convened in more than half a dozen francophone states. A national conference is an assembly of national elites, between several hundred and several thousand strong, which includes representatives of all major segments of civil society and is often chaired by a church leader. The conference meets to address a country's political crisis and to attempt to formulate constitutional rules for political transition. The critical point comes when the conferees demand full sovereign power to revise the constitution or, as in Benin and Congo, to conduct a public impeachment in which the sitting president is accused of corrupt practices and stripped of executive powers.

Unsurprisingly, governments have placed obstacles in the way of free association and assembly. In francophone countries, incumbent leaders have attempted to infiltrate the national conference with phony associations made up of their own supporters or to prevent it from meeting at all. In

anglophone African countries, leaders have implemented public security legislation requiring police permission for small groups to congregate in a meeting. Still others have unleashed security forces: Mobutu ordered troops to gun down university students (May 1990) and peaceful street demonstrators (February 1992) in Zaire; and President Ahmed Taya launched a raid on the opposition party's headquarters in Nouakchott, Mauritania in early 1992.

But, taken together, advances in the availability of basic freedoms have improved the atmosphere for political activity in African countries. As the vulnerabilities of repressive regimes have been revealed, ordinary citizens have become less fearful of state power. Today they are less inclined to remain silent and politically passive when civil liberties are trampled. Independent media and independent political organizations, however fragile, do constitute institutional checks against the quixotic excesses of dictators. If not yet fully empowered, Africans are at least emboldened. I would argue that this freshening of the "atmosphere" of politics is likely to be the deepest legacy of the current period of liberalization.

Trends in Democratization

How would we recognize a democratic political transition if we saw one? Three simple criteria apply. A political transition is democratic if:

- * it occurs by a competitive election that is open to all potential participants;
- * the administration of the election is free and fair, as judged by international observers and domestic monitors;
- * all participants, including the losers, accept the results of the election.

Note that the ouster of incumbents and the alternation of leaders are not necessary conditions for a democratic transition. A reelected leader could feasibly govern under new rules for enhanced participation and competition, even though recent African experience shows this to be unlikely. A more important requirement is that all participants accept the outcome, usually because the rules allow

losers to live to fight another day in a subsequent, scheduled election. Unless all parties agree on new rules for the political game, there is no transition; and unless these new rules include provision for popular participation and open competition, a transition cannot be considered democratic.

To date, in the current round of reforms, presidential elections have been held in 18 independent African countries. These contests, listed chronologically in Table 2, underestimate the total amount of recent electoral activity in Africa by excluding legislative elections¹⁴.

What political trends can be observed? To begin with, these elections have apparently been conducted with a degree of integrity. At least half of the time -- 9 "Yesses" out of 18 cases (see Table 2, column 3) -- the elections were conducted freely and fairly according to official observers. In an additional three cases (Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal, marked "Yes?" in Table 2), observers noted irregularities in campaign conduct and polling procedures but did not challenge the official results. Only five cases of fraud sufficiently blatant to discredit the elections were identified (Gabon, Mauritania, C.A.R., Cameroon and Kenya, marked "No" in Table 2)¹⁵.

This volume of reported irregularities is generally lower than for previous, one-party elections in the same countries (Hayward, 1987, 12). Close scrutiny by international donors and observers, and by local journalists and election monitors may have partially deterred fraud and violence in this round of elections. Occasionally, international observers may have helped incumbents stake a claim to victory by overhasty endorsement of the electoral process (e.g. in Ghana, and initially in Kenya). On the other hand, where defeated opposition movements cried foul, their complaints were not always fully justified (e.g. Angola). Overall, recent presidential elections display an improving record of fair conduct as judged against prevailing electoral standards in Africa.

The peaceful alternation of leaders as the result of a competitive election is also an original development in African politics. In six recent elections, incumbent presidents were voted out of office (see "Yesses" in Table 2, column 4) and in two other cases incumbents did not run and were replaced by

elected leaders (Mali and Niger, see "Yes?"). These unprecedented events included, in the case of Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, the rejection by voters of one of Africa's most prominent nationalist founding fathers. The pace of peaceful electoral successions has clearly accelerated: whereas only two such events occurred in the three decades between 1960 and 1989¹⁶, African presidents were replaced in peaceful elections on eight occasions in a brief three-year interlude between 1990 and 1993.

The alternation of top leaders has not occurred without hitches. For example, in the Central African Republic, incumbent president Andre Kolingba annulled elections-in-progress in October 1992 when preliminary results indicated that he was running fourth in a field of five candidates. Moreover, several more incumbents have been reelected (10 out of 18) than have been ousted in presidential elections held since 1990 (see Table 2, column 4).

Incumbents enjoy electoral advantages in all types of political regimes, but such advantages are particularly marked in authoritarian regimes where the chief executive monopolizes power. African presidents facing reelection have freely exercised their control over the informational, material, adjudicative and coercive instruments of state. They have everywhere used state-owned radio and TV stations to disseminate their own campaign messages and hindered media access for other candidates. In countries where the president retains personal control over public revenues, vote-buying has been rife. Especially in the francophone countries, where the electoral machinery is located within the Ministry of the Interior, incumbents have been able to count on the loyalty and partisanship of electoral officials. And, when all else has failed, certain presidents have been willing to unleash security forces against their electoral opponents.

Despite such significant advantages, however, the remarkable point about the current round of multiparty presidential elections is the uncertainty of outcomes. The turnover of some supreme leaders indicates that these elections have been genuinely more competitive than previous one-party contests in which there was only one candidate who always won.

As Table 2 indicates, however, there is a very strong relationship between fraudulent elections and incumbent victories. Wherever the election fell short of internationally accepted standards ("No" in column 3), the incumbent was returned. An existing leader was returned fairly with observer endorsement only in the case of Angola; even in Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Senegal ("Yes?") where incumbents won large victory margins, serious questions were raised about how they did so. The data confirm that, where electoral irregularities have occurred, incumbents and their supporters have been the main perpetrators.

Perhaps for this reason, there is an absolutely perfect relationship between the return of an incumbent and the refusal of losers to accept the results of an election. This relationship holds true for all cases in which the incumbent won, regardless of whether he did so by fair, foul, or mixed methods. Because this is a perfect relationship, the opposite also holds true: namely that, wherever an incumbent was ousted fairly, he accepted the results and stepped aside. What do these mixed outcomes portend for the consolidation of a democratic political culture in African countries? On the one hand, democratic rules are strengthened when leaders like Kaunda and Kerekou gracefully concede power. On the other hand, leaders like Biya and Bongo have apparently rigged themselves back into office. Moreover, as will be discussed further below, two out of three incumbent African presidents have yet to expose themselves to an electoral test and many are showing great reluctance to do so.

Before turning to the bad news, however, let us summarize the good news. In the past three years, 18 competitive elections have been held in Africa. Eight of these elections marked democratic transitions, by fulfilling basic conditions outlined above, namely that electoral procedures were free and fair and that the loser accepted the results. These eight cases -- Sao Tome, Cape Verde, Benin, Zambia, Congo, Mali, Madagascar, and Niger -- are marked with an asterisk on Table 2.

The eight newest democracies join six existing regimes in Africa that have a record of multiparty competition (Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Namibia, Senegal and Zimbabwe). Depending on

how one defines the term, there are now up to 14 democracies among the 52 states in Africa. Note that Freedom House makes a more conservative count, with only 9 countries falling into its "most free" category on political rights (see Table 1, Summary)¹⁷.

By any measure, however, only a minority of African political regimes are democracies. To complete the assessment of trends in democratization, comments must be made about the status of political transitions across the continent. I see four basic patterns of political transition, each with distinctive contradictions and challenges.

1. Fragile Democratic Transitions. In this pattern, discussed above, a competitive election has been successfully held and a new regime has been installed which promises to abide by democratic rules. These transitions are fragile because new political institutions (regular elections? active legislatures?) are untested. Democratic regimes have no more than a toehold in Africa, for several reasons.

First, democratic transitions have so far occurred disproportionately in small countries. Whereas one-quarter of Africa's countries now have democratic regimes, they contain under 10 percent of the continent's population¹⁸. With the exception of Madagascar, all recent democratic transitions have occurred in countries fewer than ten million people, and, in the case of Cape Verde and Sao Tome, in micro-states with fewer than a million.

Second, the pace of democratization has decelerated after a turning point in mid-1992. Almost all the recent democratic transitions (6 out of 8) took place by August 1992, a moment marked by the successful election in Congo (see Table 2, columns 2 and 5). By contrast, beginning with the Mauritanian presidential elections in January 1992, and gathering pace in Angola in September 1992, most subsequent elections (6 out of 8) have been flawed either by incumbent fraud, loser protests, or both.

Third, political institutions in Africa's fledgling democracies are proving to be extremely fragile. The executive branch finds difficulty in extending its authority throughout the the national.

territory in the absence of extra-constitutional powers, as witnessed by the Zambian government's reimposition of a state of emergency in March 1993. In addition, parliament has yet to consolidate itself as a coherent independent branch of government in most African countries. For example, President Pascal Lissouba dissolved the elected assembly in Congo after the prime minister lost a vote of no confidence; the political crisis was eased by the formation of a coalition government but deep divisions remain and a date for a new legislative election has yet to be set. In large part these problems can be laid at the feet of opposition movements who, failing to abide by the rules of the democratic game, take advantage of newly-won freedoms to plot against duly constituted governments.

At the same time, opposition parties, always weak, are weakening further. In Namibia's December 1992 local government elections, for example, the governing party (which obtained only 57% vote in the country's founding election) trounced the opposition and moved closer to establishing a defacto one-party system. In one commentator's view, a strong constitutional opposition "is crucial in the establishment and maintenance of democratic regimes", a requirement which few African countries have yet met (Lawson, 1993, 184)¹⁹. To state the obvious, the challenge for post-transitional regimes is to consolidate a full range of democratic institutions.

2. Flawed Transitions. In this pattern, which has predominated since mid-1992, an election is held and a new government is formed, but the regime of governance changes minimally, if at all.

The best known cases are Cameroon, Ghana and Kenya, where incumbent presidents manipulated the rules of the transition and the timing of elections to their own advantage. For example, Moi amended the constitution of Kenya to introduce regional vote requirements for presidential candidates and Rawlings packed Ghana's constitutional reform commission with members of his own Provisional National Defense Council²⁰. Usually, the incumbent won narrowly with a bare plurality -- Biya obtained 40 percent of the vote against John Fru Ndi's 36 percent, and Moi secured 36 percent against a splintered

opposition²¹.

For all these contests, observers issued critical reports: the National Democratic Institute blamed Biya for a "failed" election (NDI, 1992), a pre-election observer mission criticized repressive campaign laws and defective voter registration rolls in Ghana (IFES, 1992), and in Kenya, Commonwealth observers stated that while the elections were "an important turning point in Kenya's history", they "cannot be given an unqualified rating as free and fair" (see also IRI, 1993).

In flawed transitions, the losers refuse to accept the validity of election results. The frequency of this outcome -- in 10 of the 18 recent presidential elections (see Table 2, column 5) -- is cause for doubt that democratic rules are being institutionalized in Africa. In Ghana, for example, the opposition refused to take part in subsequent legislative elections and, in Kenya, losers mounted legal challenges to election results in 90 out of 180 parliamentary constituencies.

With hindsight, the pattern of flawed transition was visible from as early as October 1990 (see table 2) when Felix Houphouet-Boigny and Omar Bongo used the incumbent's advantage of surprise over disorganized and fragmented oppositions to call snap elections in Ivory Coast and Gabon. Boosted by electoral fraud, both incumbents won. Learning lessons from previous elections, many African presidents are now implementing "strategic countermeasures" (Lemarchand, 1992) aimed at regaining power through controlled elections. While such leaders profess acceptance of democratic norms, they convene polls simply to ratify the legitimacy of the dominant party. There is a danger that flawed transition will become the "default mode" for contemporary African elections and the most common pattern of political change.

Leaders "elected" in this way are likely to govern much as before. After the elections Houphouet and Biya imprisoned their main opponents and Moi suspended the first day of parliamentary proceedings. These leaders have made no firm commitment to subject themselves again to scheduled elections ("one man, one vote, one time"). They have fallen back on proven methods to consolidate

personal rule by distributing public revenues as patronage rewards. Also, these reelected incumbents have succeeded in winning a measure of international political support for flawed transitions, in part because they lead relatively large, rich countries whose stability is a matter of concern for international investors and trading partners. Given financial backing from France (notably to Cameroon), Britain (notably to Kenya), and by international financial institutions (to the Ghanaian government), these leaders enjoy improved prospects for political survival.

3. Blocked Transitions. Ironically, the African country which sparked the current round of political renewal in 1988 has become the paradigm of blocked transition. Algeria's path-breaking return to multiparty politics collapsed when the government cancelled a second round of elections after a sweep of the December 1991 polls by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The military then forced the resignation of President Chadli Benjedid and dissolved the National Assembly and the Constitutional Council. The military government of Idris Deby in Chad has since introduced a similar crackdown, destroying democracy in a putative effort to "save" it.

Other cases of blocked transition have also involved military intervention, though less directly. In both Zaire and Togo, the transition bogged down when the country's strongman refused to bow to popular demands made at a national conference. The power struggle was immobilized in a standoff between the incumbent president and a prime minister who had the support of legislators. Strikes and protests escalated and were met with whatever remnants of military force the president could still muster. As public resources dwindled, the military mutinied over pay, at one point surrounding the sitting legislature with guns. In these cases, "it has almost seemed as though Mobutu and Eyadema were operating from the same manual" and the process of democratization dissolved into "a contest of brute force" (Africa Demos, 1993, 15).

In such highly personalistic and intransigent regimes, the fate of the regime and the prospects for transition depend on the whim of a supreme ruler. Where rulers have governed by

dismantling all political institutions that could serve as a power base for an opponent, their own demise is often followed by a power vacuum. In the absence of tested procedures to resolve a succession crisis, the greatest danger is the fragmentation of the state.

4. Transition Precluded by Conflict. Some African states have already fragmented. Governments embroiled in civil wars cannot make good on authoritative claims to monopolize the legitimate use of violence within their own territories. Where central authority is weak or nonexistent, and guns are readily available, social relations are decidedly "uncivil". The mass starvation in Somalia which claimed some 300,000 lives (including 25 percent of all children under five) was at least partly attributable to extortion by armed guerrillas.

In such conflict situations, the preconditions for democratic transition are entirely absent. As the United Nations has learned in Cambodia, free elections are impossible to organize where central government structures have collapsed and where contenders do not agree on ground rules for political competition. In Liberia, Mozambique and Rwanda, warring factions have caused delays in the convocation of elections by refusing to enter and abide by cease-fire agreements. And, in Ethiopia and Angola, where elections were attempted as a means of peace-making, the results have been deeply disappointing. In Ethiopia, subnational factions withdrew from the electoral process in June 1992, seeking instead to discredit it. In Angola, UNITA commander Jonas Savimbi resumed the civil war rather than face likely defeat in a runoff election for the presidency. These cases point to an important lesson: warring factions must be demobilized and disarmed in advance of any election; otherwise, armed groups have the military wherewithal to overturn any electoral outcome that they find objectionable.

Overview: Liberalization Without Democracy

Commentary from sympathetic Westerners on political trends in Africa has swung wildly from early hopeful expectations of a "second liberation" (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1992) and "political renewal" (Joseph, 1992) to a prevailing mood of "Afropessimism" (Lemarchand, 1992, 98). In

a stinging critique in Foreign Affairs, Marguerite Michaels warns of impending civil disorder in the wake of the "stalling...winds of change" (1993, 93). Less apocalyptically Africa Confidential expresses "new doubts...about the sustainability of multiparty democracy in Africa in the wake of a series of disputed elections" (20 Nov 1992). And Africa Demos now concedes that "as the new year (1993) begins, we are no longer so optimistic. The struggle for democracy has been forced onto a new and disadvantageous plane" (3, 1, February 1993, 14).

Instead of rushing to judgement about the prospects for democracy in Africa, analysts should take a detached, comparative view of a mixed situation that is comprised of both advances and setbacks. As Peterson suggests "democratic development will not be a uniform, linear process" (1993, 17). Even in democratizing countries, the transition will unfold with at least one step back for every two steps forward. As some countries incur setbacks, others will make advances. And long-term prospects cannot be projected from a short-term trend in a single year: while there were more flawed transitions than democratic transitions in Africa in 1992, there have already been three democratic transitions in 1993 (Madagascar, Niger and Lesotho²²). It is premature to announce the death of the democratic impulse in Africa. Rather than seeking simple generalizations about complex political changes, we need to recognize that different categories of African country are embarked on divergent and circuitous paths.

Yet, even within this murky context, some progress is discernible. About a quarter of African countries covering about a tenth of the continent's population now have freely elected governments and a reasonable semblance of competitive politics. This constitutes a significant break with a dark authoritarian past. Moreover, in most African countries -- even those in which the drive for democracy has been flawed, blocked or precluded -- leaders have been forced to liberalize. African citizens now enjoy improved personal security against abuse of state authority; without looking over their shoulders, they can openly express heart-felt political opinions; and they can exercise choice in organizing and joining political associations.

Let us recall that political liberalization can occur without democratization. The empirical record in Table 1 supports this interpretation for much of Africa. Between 1988 and 1992, more African countries made gains in respecting basic civil liberties (37 "gainers", 6 "losers", for a net gain of 31 countries) than made gains in implementing a full range of political rights, including open elections (21 "gainers", 11 "losers", for a net gain of 10 countries). Without exception, the 21 African countries that advanced on political rights also made gains in civil liberties, suggesting that political liberalization is a necessary precondition for democratization. At the same time, 16 other African countries made civil liberties gains without holding free and fair elections, confirming that political liberalization is not a sufficient condition for democratization.

Do these positive trends herald a new convergence of African regimes around norms of liberal democracy? The data indicate otherwise. The standard deviation of country scores around the mean scores for both civil liberties and political rights were higher in 1992 than in 1988 (see Table 1, summary). This suggests that there is now greater diversity among African regime types than in the past. During the 1970s and 1980s, African leaders came to share a normative consensus on the desirability of authoritarian practices such as political detention and single-party elections. While this old hegemony had been decisively broken by 1992, a new consensus in favor of liberal democracy has yet to emerge. Thus, while the processes of liberalization and democratization had begun, Africa still had a long way to go against absolute standards as embodied in say, the U.N. Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

Yet, from a comparative empirical perspective, recent political trends are more positive in Africa than in some other parts of the world. According to Freedom House, 21 countries changed categories in overall "freedom rating" in 1992. Of this number, most non-African countries on the list registered declines (7 out of 11)²³, whereas most African countries registered advances (8 out of 10)²⁴. In other words, recent African elections ("warts and all"), still constitute a broadening of political freedoms compared with previous regime conditions. Moreover, while the pace of democratization has recently

slowed in parts of Africa, the trend of deceleration has been slower and less widespread than in, say, the newly-independent states of Central Asia.

African countries also fare better on indicators of political development than would be predicted by their dismal standings on socioeconomic development scales. For example, Africa contains 8 of the 12 poorest countries in the world as measured by gross national product per capita and 11 of the 12 countries with the lowest average life expectancy (World Bank, 1992, 218). Yet, of the 12 "worst rated" countries in terms of abuse of civil and political rights, only 3 are in Africa (Libya, Somalia and Sudan), with the remainder located elsewhere in the post-communist and Islamic worlds²⁵. Civil and political rights are sectors of human endeavor (along with soccer!) in which African countries do not automatically fall at the bottom of the world league table.

This relatively encouraging political performance may be due to peculiarities of the Africa region. As followers rather than leaders in world affairs, African countries are latecomers to what Huntington has called the "third wave" of democratization which has swept the world since 1974 (1991). Thus African transitions may be "peaking" at a time when other countries are encountering the difficulties, and setbacks, of democratic consolidation. The problems of democratic consolidation are only now beginning to arise in most African countries which, in general, are economically and culturally ill-prepared to nurture and sustain democracy.

Ironically, Africa's improved political performance also may be attributable to a lack of capacity on the part of state institutions. The Chinese state had the indigenous military and material might to crack down on pro-democracy protesters in Tien-an-men square. African state institutions are much weaker in relation to their own mobilized populations, domestic military forces, and international donors. Many an African government is little more than a bankrupt institutional facade that lacks the wherewithal to convincingly back up authoritative commands. Thus, where armed repression has recently occurred in African countries, it usually has been initiated by disgruntled military mutineers rather than as a systematic

government policy.

Africa may well have entered a period in which democratic transitions will become less frequent than in the recent past. The "easy" cases may already have been exhausted, with transitions in the remaining countries inhibited by endemic or incipient conflict, weak and divided opposition movements, or wily incumbent leaders who can draw upon reserves of domestic and international support. A prediction can safely be made that additional political turmoil awaits Africa, even if its direction is difficult to discern.

On this last point, we should remember that we are observing political transitions that are still unfolding and which are far from complete. Over the course of the next year, elections will be held in at least ten more African countries (see Table 3). If present trends are extrapolated, we can expect several of these elections to usher in democratic regimes, while others will mark blocked or flawed transitions. The outcomes of presidential elections in two key regional states -- Nigeria and South Africa -- will influence decisively the prospects for democratization on the continent as a whole. On one hand, peaceful transitions are threatened in both these cases, in Nigeria because of entrenched civilian corruption and the military's need for control, and in South Africa because of deep-seated hatreds among ethnic groups. On the other hand, both Nigeria and South Africa can draw upon greater reserves of previous experience at operating democratic institutions than most African countries. At very least, commentators should suspend sweeping judgements about optimistic or pessimistic scenarios for African democracy until political outcomes are known for these critical cases.

Conclusion: The Reversability of Gains

To be sure, recent political gains in Africa are tenuous. Political openings, introduced with the stroke of a president's pen, can be closed with similar swiftness. Even democratic elections can be overturned. Africa's first "Haiti" -- in which a newly elected leader is ousted in a reactionary military coup -- cannot be far off.

Supporters of democratization in Africa must therefore turn attention to the urgent challenge of consolidating democratic political institutions. The tasks are legion. Within the state, reformers must further amend constitutions to entrench basic rights and to increase legislative powers vis a vis the executive. Judges and legislators must strengthen their independent branches of government to provide the rule of law and consultative policy-making. Civilian authorities must domesticate unruly armed forces and scale back military spending. Local government must be revived. Within society, voluntary organizations must proliferate further if citizens are to learn "the art of associating together". The independent press must find viable means of survival. Above all, citizens must build strong political parties dedicated, not to the politics of cabal and intrigue, but to loyal opposition and the rules of the democratic game.

Can such institutions can take root in infertile African soil? Without doing full justice to the subject, this paper will close by briefly identifying several factors that will affect the consolidation of democracy: the economic context, the cultural context, and the role of international donors.

First, it must be remembered that pro-democracy movements in Africa were ignited by economic protests against declining living standards; in one interpretation, "the struggle for political freedom (was) intimately connected with opposition to structural adjustment" (Carver, 1991, 58). Calls for a democratic change of leaders were driven by concern at economic mismanagement and corruption. While opposition parties were usually more economically liberal than incumbent regimes, election campaigns centered on the personalities of leaders rather than on economic policies. Thus, when voters ejected incumbents, they did not mandate an intensification of economic reform programs but, rather, demanded relief from them. Whatever opposition leaders said about sacrifice (and they usually said little), voters expected lower food prices and the elimination of fees for government services.

Unrealistic economic expectations pose a potentially mortal threat to democratically elected governments. The dilemma is sharply summarized in a letter entitled the "Agony of Democracy" written

to the Times of Zambia: "Before President Chiluba we were afraid to open our mouths. Now we can open our mouths but we have nothing to put in them" (Ndende Wa Mwiimbi, Lusaka, March 10, 1993). Economic protests have not ceased in the aftermath of democratic transitions and, in the new climate of openness in some countries, strikes and demonstrations have actually multiplied. Democratic governments could easily run out of time as political legitimacy is exhausted before benefits of adjustment are broadly felt. Disillusioned voters can easily blame their plight on the government of the day, and even retaliate by withdrawing from the democratic process itself.

More generally, the global historical record suggests that democratic institutions are difficult to construct under conditions of mass economic privation and great inequalities of wealth within society. At least in the short run, the structural adjustment programs adopted by African governments tend to reduce mass purchasing power (e.g. through the elimination of subsidies) and concentrate economic assets in the hands of private capital (e.g. through privatization of public corporations). There is a basic contradiction here: where political reform is immediately equalizing (e.g. by giving everyone a right or a vote), economic reform is initially disequalizing (e.g. by providing the greatest incentives to the most entrepreneurial). As such, until such time as economic benefits trickle down, structural adjustment tends to work at cross-purposes to the consolidation of democracy.

A second important factor is political culture. The values of human rights and liberal democracy are often claimed to be universal, and may be so for middle classes worldwide. Yet many of these values derive from Euro-American political traditions and the most individualistic and competitive are exotic to Africa. African masses (and African elites that owe their positions to political privilege) may not be deeply attached to them. Westerners, projecting our own aspirations, may misinterpret political changes in Africa in the light of the histories of our own societies.

Within African countries, the norms of liberal democracy confront a deeply-embedded political culture in which patterns of authority have been inculcated by precolonial, colonial, and

postcolonial regimes. At the risk of oversimplification, this culture can be described as neopatrimonial. Neopatrimonialism originates in the African extended family, with the dominance older males and strong interpersonal ties. It has been reinvented ("neo-") in the form of the "big men" and personal political relationships that pervade modern African political institutions, including government bureaucracies. At the elite level, neopatrimonialism is manifest in the overcentralization of power ("one-man management"), arbitrary decision-making ("the rule of men"), and the use of public resources for personal advancement ("corruption"). At the mass level, neopatrimonial culture reveals itself in obeisance and deference to political superiors ("respect"), in conformity in group behavior ("government by consensus"), and in economic dependence upon wealthy patrons ("lack of economic initiative").

This illiberal political culture is not conducive to political or economic entrepreneurship. Dissenters and overachievers are treated with suspicion and may even be punished if they threaten to upset established status-rankings of age, gender and clan. The political system is built on a hierarchy of patron-client relationships in which political support is traded for material rewards. This system has been sorely tested by national economic decline and has begun to break up as patrons lose resources with which to sustain political followings. In this context, some clients abandon old patrons, seek new ones, or sometimes -- in a break with the past -- try to go it alone politically as individuals or in groups of peers.

The prospects for democracy in Africa's complex societies depend on the size and influence of the counter-cultural groups that abandon neopatrimonial values. Democratization in Africa is very much a generational and a class struggle, with younger persons and middle classes claiming a share of power and opportunity. Because they are formally educated, these groups display values of political efficacy and tolerance that are consistent with democratic citizenship (Bratton and Liatto-Katundu, 1993). Whether democracy prevails, however, depends on whether these values disseminate to the majority of their compatriots. One can predict that neopatrimonial practices will die hard. Leaders who received their political socialization under authoritarian rule always will be predisposed to resort to extra-legal measures

against opponents. Ordinary people who are used to depending on patrons will be susceptible to the appeals of demagogues and the threats of thugs (Charney and Booysen, 1992). The construction of a supportive political culture remains an unfinished task in the democratization of Africa.

Finally, a word about international donors. Political conditionality, in which foreign aid is withheld in order to encourage respect for human rights and open elections, has contributed to political gains in selected African countries. Now that several African countries have undergone democratic transitions, a more positive approach -- using a carrot rather than a stick -- becomes possible. Official development assistance should be concentrated on those countries that have advanced politically. And, because Africa's new democracies are extremely fragile, new donor approaches are required to protect and nurture political institutions.

At minimum, donors should relax stringent economic adjustment requirements if they threaten to undermine legitimate governments. At the same time donors could make available a greater share of aid resources for ameliorating the social costs of adjustment. Debt relief could be offered in return for reductions in military spending. Donors should also increase investments in a whole range of formal and informal education programs that promise to accelerate the spread of democratic values in African societies. Finally, new forms of project assistance must be devised for encouraging the growth of democratic political institutions. Within the state many such projects, for example to strengthen legislatures and electoral or court systems and to improve governance in central and local government, could be initiated on a government-to-government basis. Otherwise, indirect, non-governmental channels could be used to help proliferate and reinforce civic associations, an independent press, and even political parties.

But, in accepting democratization as a goal for foreign assistance, donors will require good judgement about the sincerity of reformers and the authenticity of reforms. Too many recent elections in Africa have been cosmetic events convened for the consumption of an international audience. Western

governments should resist the trap, into which U.S. administrations have fallen in Latin America, of allowing economic or strategic interests to lead to the endorsement of mock elections and formalistic democracies (Carothers, 1991; Human Rights Watch, 1993). Moreover, Western governments should avoid concocting a new demonology in which Islamic fundamentalism replaces communism as a global threat requiring containment. Already there are signs, not only from Algeria, that African political leaders can win Western support for non-democratic practices by claiming to stand firm against the spread of Islam.

Similarly, donors should resist calls to soft-pedal on demands for parliamentary democracy and to "support for good governance and accountability in whatever form of government Africans choose" (Michaels, 1993, 108). Good governance can only be achieved and sustained where demands for public accountability constantly emanate from a full range of representative institutions. Nor should short-term incompatibilities between economic reform and democratization be interpreted as an excuse to deny political rights to poor people. Through their actions to oppose autocracy, ordinary Africans have already demonstrated a genuine desire, not only for bread, but also for freedom.

30

ENDNOTES

1. This paper draws on data compiled for a larger project on Political Transitions in Africa being undertaken by Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle at Michigan State University. MSU provided an All University Research Initiation Grant to launch the project. The author wishes to thank Philip Alderfer, John Davis and Sangmook Kim for research assistance and Yusuf Hassan, Reinhard Heinisch, Peter Kariethi, Leonard Sussman, and Mark Wolkenfeld for providing supplementary information. David Gordon, Steve Tucker and Nic van de Walle offered useful prods and comments along the way.
2. The UNDP effort to create a "political freedom index" appears to have become bogged down in long-standing U.N. debates about the relative value of individual versus collective rights and political versus socioeconomic rights.
3. The Comparative Survey of Freedom is primarily underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Information for the survey is derived from a wide range of sources including fact-finding missions, resident correspondents, area specialists and published reports.
4. The panel of experts assigns initial ratings to countries by awarding from 0 to 2 points per checklist item depending on the degree of compliance with the standard. On the 13 civil liberties items the highest possible score is 26; on the 9 political rights items the highest possible score is 44. Countries with combined raw scores of 0-14 points are initially judged to be "least free", 15-29 points as "partly free", and 30-44 points "freest". The panel then makes minor adjustment to account for factors such as extreme violence, standardizes the scores on a seven point scale, averages the scores, and places countries in a final category on the "freedom rating" for the year in question. Those whose scores average 1 to 2.5 are considered "most free", 3 to 5.5 "partly free", and 5.5 to 7 "least free". The
5. Freedom House draws its expert panelists from a narrow network of employees and associates; the derivation of the survey numbers is not purely mechanical but also reflects the judgement of panelists; and the procedures for converting raw scores into standardized scores, and weighting different items, are insufficiently transparent
According to what mathematical formula, for example, does the Freedom House panel convert raw scores on a scale of 0 to 44 (with highest being "freest") to standardized scores on a scale of 1 to 7 (with lowest being "freest")? And how are the 9 political rights items and 13 civil liberties items weighted: equally? proportionally? And why not standardize the results on a scale of 1 to 10 for ease of mathematical manipulation and intuitive understanding? Above all, subjective bias of judges could be controlled by several expert teams working independently and then comparing and harmonizing the results (see U.N. 1992, 30).
6. To this reader, for example, Freedom House undermines its credibility by apparently basing the following account of recent events in Angola Freedom House on UNITA sources: "U.N. supervised elections in Angola led to a victory by governing party MPLA over UNITA. Before a required run-off between the two competing leaders, President Eduardo dos Santos and Dr. Jonas Savimbi, UNITA and other parties charged the government with voter intimidation and a pattern of voter irregularities they claimed disenfranchised their supporters. The breakdown in the ceasefire agreements led to a government-initiated air and ground offensive against UNITA's headquarters and strongholds in Luanda. Government troops summarily executed a UNITA negotiating team led by Vice-President Jeremias Chitunda. The year ended with UNITA returning towns it captured to government control and promising participation in a national unity government" (Freedom Review, 24,1, 1993).
7. Other data sources include the periodic reports of Amnesty International and Africa Watch. Each has shortcomings for purposes of comparative analysis. Whereas Amnesty reports cover every country, they focus on political imprisonment (and related issues like the death penalty) but neglect other aspects of civil and political rights. Africa Watch country reports address a more comprehensive range of rights issues, but cover only a handful of countries. The only source to rival Freedom House is Humana (1992), a data set which covers only 104 countries (excluding smaller African states) at multi-year intervals (rather than annually).
8. The "least free" category includes countries with a score of 6 or 7 on Freedom House's seven point scale.
9. The scores of these countries rose by three points or more on the seven point scale.
10. Algeria and Tunisia "opened up" in 1988, but then "closed down" again in 1991.

11. A fuller account of the Nigerian situation would be more nuanced. Whereas the government sponsored an international seminar on human rights in Lagos in 1992, it did not invite domestic groups and warned them not to criticize the government while visitors were in the country (Human Rights Watch, 1993, xviii).
12. On March 29, 1993, the Supreme Court of Malawi upheld Chihana's conviction but reduced his sentence to nine months. Supporter's protested that, although in ill-health, Chihana is forced to undertake hard labor. He may be released before Malawi's referendum on multiparty politics in June 1993.
13. See especially the bi-weekly Mwananchi, which has displaced the government and party-owned Daily News and Uhuru as the popular publication of choice.
14. The Namibian presidential election of March 1990 is not included because was part of a decolonization agreement. The list also excludes those countries which held legislative polls, but which did not choose a president by direct election, either because they are parliamentary systems (Lesotho) or because the presidential contest is yet to come (e.g. Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Seychelles). Data on electoral outcomes was drawn from a variety of documentary sources and judgements on the integrity of the proceedings from the reports of observers and monitors.
15. In one case, there was no reference available to an observer report (Comoros).
16. Incumbent chief authorities were upset in elections in Sierra Leone in 1967 and Mauritius in 1982.
17. For imperfections in electoral and representative processes, Freedom House excludes Congo, Senegal, and Zimbabwe from the "most free" category on political rights in 1992. Presumably the 1993 breakthroughs in Madagascar and Niger will be recorded in the 1994 Survey report. Concerns about Senegal's democracy have been borne out by recent events. In the February 1993 presidential elections, President Abdou Diouf was apparently returned again with a wide margin. Observers from the U.S. and France said the polling was generally fair although hampered by shortages of voting equipment and personnel. But the polls were marred by violence in Casamance province, opposition charges that Diouf's Socialist party engaged in widespread electoral fraud, and long delays before the electoral commission announced official results.
18. Calculated as 59.2 million persons out of a total Africa population of about 600 million in 1990.
19. Lawson also sees constitutional opposition as "one of the most important indicators of democratization".
20. The PNDC government secretly added a clause granting immunity to the military for acts committed in office.
21. Only Rawlings won an outright majority (with 58 percent).
22. Madagascar is an interesting recent case whose democratic transition echoed popular uprisings from Prague and Leipzig in 1989: in February 1993, medical professor Albert Zafy, the leader of a broad-based democracy campaign that drew up to half a million people into the streets, finally ousted entrenched military strongman Didier Ratsiraka by a two-to-one margin in an open presidential contest. In March 1993 in Niger, the interim military president was succeeded by Mahamane Ousmane, a leftist reformer who gained 54 percent of the vote from a united opposition coalition known as the Alliance of Forces for Change. In the same month, the opposition won a sweeping victory in Lesotho's parliamentary election and was expected to provide the next government and prime minister. Because this was a legislative rather than a presidential election and because, at the time of writing, there was an impending danger that the military could intervene to reverse the election result, as it has done before, Lesotho was not included on Table 2.
23. The countries regressing in 1992 include Estonia, Latvia, Venezuela (from "free" to "partly free") and Bhutan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (from "partly free" to "not free")
24. Mali moved up into the "free" category and Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Seychelles and Tanzania moved up into the "partly free" category.
25. Burma, China, Cuba, Haiti, Iraq, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Vietnam.