

Incomplete Metamorphic Democracy as a Conceptual Framework in the Analysis of African Politics *An Exploratory Investigation*

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, effectively reduced the East-West conflicts that tended to spill over into the Third World nations and influence the political systems. The "New International World Order," arguably, allows scholars (and politicians) to re-examine the various political systems, and to design modalities that are germane to their polities. This disquisition, among other things, attempts to explore a conceptual framework for analyzing African democratic genre at this juncture of the continent's political evolution.

IF THERE IS one area in which most political scientists are in agreement, it is that definitionally, conceptually and operationally democracy is a very complex system, and so is the democratization process, especially in developing countries. Moreover, the intricacies of democratic "principles" in these areas become more evident and problematic when attempts are made to universalize the concept, or apply it paradigmatically given the unique political cultures of different polities. Yet, a common argument that is in vogue is that although some African nations enjoy certain characteristics of democracy (elections, for example), they are yet to metamorphose into full-fledged democracies similar to those found in the West. Indeed, until this is done, many have contended, it might be premature to allude to these societies as democratic.¹

For the purpose of operationalizing the concept of democracy in this study, there may be two genres of democracy and, to borrow (the term not necessarily the

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meaning) from biology, these are complete and incomplete metamorphic democracies. The former is represented by the democracies found in the First World, and the latter the Third World. Our concern, however, is on the incomplete metamorphic democracy (IMD) of the African countries. So, this investigation, in effect, is concerned with IMD as a conceptual framework, intended to assuage the analytic burden on the democratic processes in African nations, as the continent marches gingerly toward the twenty-first century.

Let it suffice to say, that the term “incomplete metamorphosis” suggests that democracy is still undergoing a developmental process to suit the African political milieu. But two questions that this assertion may arouse are: Is it necessary for African countries to strive to attain a complete metamorphic democracy (CMD)? Second, is the IMD concept a useful tool in the analysis of African patterns of democracy to ease the sensibilities and definitional problems (of the term democracy) that many scholars are confronted with in the African case? In fact, with a few exceptions, many have argued for the terminology’s clarification.

For example, Robert Dahl argued for the supersession of the term democracy by the concept polyarchic democracy to describe the particular sort of political system that was in practice in the First World.² According to him, the following dimensions, *inter alia*, were the distinguishing qualities of polyarchic democracy: First, it is a political system in which the many rule; second, there is the formal sense of universal or near-universal suffrage; third, there is a meaningful degree of competition among groups contending for power; and finally, the many who choose among these contenders have meaningful choices to make and actually do rule in that they determine who will be making the decisions of government.³ Probably, these democratic peculiarities and distinctions were intended to resolve the conceptual and definitional “schism” among communists and noncommunist students of democracy. The polyarchic mode of definition and philosophy dominates the Western literature, and its features may be analogous to complete metamorphic democracy in the dichotomy to which we have alluded earlier on.

Arguably, Catherine Newbury’s elucidation of the characteristic and stability (or instability) of democracy in Africa epitomizes the incomplete metamorphosis of Africa’s democratic genre. She noted: “Perhaps the most salient feature of democratic openings in Africa is their fragility. Though in some cases political liberalization, multiparty politics and elections have led to regime change, we cannot assume that this will necessarily result in broadened participation and representation; even if formal democracy were established, its durability would still be in doubt. The rigors of structural adjustment programs serve to intensify this challenge, as governments face dwindling capacities to promote human resources development.”⁴ Indeed, as president Jerry Rawlings has noted with respect to Ghana, “a starving [human being] has little interest in the democratic process, unless it also brings with it the fulfillment of his [or her] basic material needs.”⁵

What is Democracy?

Before revisiting the nature of the incomplete metamorphosis of African democracies and the democratization process, it might be germane to briefly explain the concept of democracy, operationally, only to serve as a point of reference and to help, we hope, clarify (or mystify) the very thrust of the subject matter.

Larry Diamond has contended that:

It is symptomatic of the international momentum of democracy in the world that so many different kinds of regimes strive (and strain) to define themselves as democracies and that democracy is the term used to signify so many different visions of the "good" society. This is one source of conceptual confusion. Another is that many people conceive of democracy as not only a political but also a social and economic system, while others believe that a free, open, and competitive form of government is a valued goal in and of itself.⁶

Clearly, the above does not quite explicate the concept of democracy; if anything, it underscores its intricacies. James R. Scaritt and Shaheen Mozaffar, however, defined democracy as a unique type of governance regime⁷ whose major characteristics are enshrined in a set of constitutional rules which underscore the following dimensions: First, access to public offices in which effective governmental power is vested must be determined by contestation at regular intervals; second, the outcome of this contestation (as to who will occupy public offices and the policies they will formulate and implement) must be determined by the free broad-based participation of all eligible citizens and some form of majority rule; and third, the civil and political liberties of citizens must be guaranteed against government infringement to ensure that they can freely join and establish civil associations and political groups, express and debate a diversity of ideas and issues, and choose public officials.⁸

If one were to extrapolate from the foregoing definitions and explanations, many African countries will not qualify as truly democratic. In any case, it has been the quest of many Africanists to re-examine the universal application of the aforementioned dimensions as the litmus test for genuine democracy that has sometimes pitted those who argue for an African "cultural" definition of democracy against orthodox scholars who subscribe to the Eurocentric view (as represented by Robert Dahl et al.). The argument of the latter is: We cannot have a Latin American, African, Asian, . . . or Russian democracy.⁹ They contend, theoretically, that democracy is unalterable whether practiced in Timbuktu or St Petersburg. Increasingly, though, many scholars are beginning to wonder aloud that while the orthodox definition is adequate in explaining the Western democratic forms, it may not be suitable for the African political theater at this stage of African development.

Democracy in Africa: An Overview

It was somewhat coincidental that *Africa Today* and *African Studies Review*, published almost simultaneously, devoted an entire volume to the question of democracy in post-Cold War international relations in Africa.¹⁰ Indeed, the depth of analysis emanating from the works, in these issues, appear not only to be bold, but also frank on the problematic interpretation of the democratic genre in Africa. Hitherto, the analyses of many scholars (educated in the East and West) tended to be conflictual because their works were influenced by the incongruences issuing from their philosophical and ideological chasms. In other words, these scholars suffered from ideological constraints flowing, fundamentally, from the nature and culture of their scholarships.¹¹

To be sure, such intellectual timbers as Richard Sklar and others have been major precursors in the quest to identify the peculiar characteristics and typologies of African politics.¹² In fact, Sklar contended: "Despairing of democracy as a form of government in the less developed countries, many political scientists have endorsed the idea of developmental or modernizing oligarchy. With the exception of bold Elie Kedourie, however, no prominent political theorist has disputed the thesis of universal development on the ground of cultural resistance [for to do otherwise especially in 'grad school' may be tantamount to heresy]."¹³

Perceptually, the process of democratization is one that continues to baffle and frustrate scholars concerned about this phenomenon and development in Africa and elsewhere. Yet, Sklar remains optimistic about its resilience. "Democracy dies hard... [it] stirs and awakens from the deepest slumber whenever the principle of accountability is asserted by members of a community or conceded by those who rule. Democracy cannot be destroyed by a coup d'état, it will survive every legal assault upon political liberty."¹⁴ In Nigeria, the tussle for democracy championed by the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and more recently also by the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), against the military regime that gathered momentum in the Spring of 1994 is probably a good illustration of its resiliency. While the topic of democracy remains the hegemonic issue and debate in African political studies today, it is essential to take stock of how far African countries have traversed since independence in order to fully comprehend the depth (or lack of it) in the democratization process in the continent.

For example, in his poignant and yet analytic narration of what seems to have gone right and wrong in the democratic transformations in Africa, Samuel Decalo traces the antinomies in the area's democratic evolution. He noted that resistance to democratic movements and capitalistic forces in the wake of the collapse of communism came with spectacular speed, ushering in numerous "born again" democrats and capitalists.¹⁵ In instances in which an autocratic leader has resisted change, the citizens have used National Conferences (as in Benin) to oust and snatch political

power from such leaders. In others, the symbols or infrastructure (as in Zambia) used for the perpetuation of “non” democratic regimes were pulled down by iconoclasts.¹⁶ Whereas these are positive developments in Africa, they should not call for celebration yet for there still exist strong pockets of antidemocratic forces. In fact, as Naomi Chazan has contended, “democratic pressures persist while authoritarian rules prevail,”¹⁷ probably because as Adebayo Adedeji has contended, the seeds of “authentic” democracy are yet to germinate in the “psyche” of Africa’s political class.¹⁸ Also, those who have argued for the dualism of economic stability and democratic sustainment as the menu for Africa, maintain that “Africa has no chance of attaining meaningful economic growth and development unless it first moves squarely into modalities of governance that include political accountability, participatory politics and free market economy.”¹⁹ Claude Ake insists that, “the problem of persistence of underdevelopment is related to lack of democracy in Africa... democracy is not just a consummatory value but also an instrumentalist one.”²⁰

The symbiotic view that economic development could further democracy and that democracy could nourish economic growth notwithstanding, Decalo provided the following patterns and prognosis that might emanate in the near future as African states pursue the redemocratization process:

First, it is now clear that the prodemocracy pressures are continentwide, and are not likely to spare any state except those few (Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Senegal) with meaningful competitive multi-party systems and significant civic and human rights freedom...

Secondly, the more African autocracies resembled in their features the discredited regimes in Eastern Europe, the greater the challenge from below for total change, and a purge of the past; witness the total eclipse of the Afro-Marxist states...²¹

The issue of modalities and instrumentalities for the “successful” democratization of the African political system is not in question given the democratic predisposition of most of the countries in the continent. For instance, the British and French bequeathed their former colonies (Kenya, Ghana, Gabon, Ivory Coast, etc.) with their parliamentary model at independence. Even Nigeria dabbled with the American-style presidential system following the collapse of the Westminster model. But what has been the outcome? Indeed, the issues of Africa’s democratic attempts and genre have not been that of formulating paradigms. The question has been that of the African polity itself—i.e., the complex mix stemming from Africa’s colonial experience and its peculiar traditional and cultural systems. Put another way, the colonial administrators socialized the African leaders in an authoritarian form of governance, but expected those to whom they handed the baton of leadership to become democrats in due course. The result in some cases has been the emergence of what has been termed a cyclical model²² that, because of the weak state formation, vacillates between despotism and democracy (as for example, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda). Such a pattern probably prompted Samuel Huntington to contend that, “in

a praetorian situation like this, neither authoritarian nor democratic institutions are effectively institutionalized. Once countries enter into this cyclical pattern, it appears to be extremely difficult for them [as for instance, Nigeria] to escape from it.”²³

Germane to the foregoing line of argument is the peculiar and complex blend of African political systems. Increasingly, though, some scholars and political practitioners are beginning to reassess the African political universe—asserting the significance of grassroots participation in politics to further the democratization process.²⁴

The efficacy of the political space enlargement is still to be measured. And if one were to extrapolate from the study of Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett that “democratic states are in general about as conflict and war prone as nondemocracies”²⁵ it makes the allurements to democratize much more troublesome in developing areas. Enfranchising the grassroots is a significant factor in the democratization process; yet, it is problematic in Africa especially because of the ethnic clashes caused by antagonistic interests in plural societies, and nourished by a *laissez-faire* political system characteristic of democracy. Indeed, it gives the leaderships political maladies as they attempt to reconcile conflicting interests.

Perplexed, as it were, by the complexities of the African political systems and the process of democratization, scholars have increasingly focused their attentions on the political chemistry within African polities. They have done so under the rubric of what some scholars term the Civil Society. It is to this concept that we now briefly center the proceeding analysis with a view to ascertaining its usefulness or lack of it in promoting African democracy (to complete metamorphic democracy).

Civil Society

Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl have argued that: “There are many types of democracy, and their diverse practices produce a similar varied set of effects. The specific form democracy takes is contingent upon a country’s socio-economic conditions as well as its entrenched state structures and policy practices.”²⁶

Given the entrenchment of military and autocratic governments in some African countries and the quest to perpetuate such regimes, members of the informed public in these systems have organized “altruistically” from different flanks in opposition to such leaderships and governments. And as Larry Diamond has contended, it is the intolerant, repressive and concentration of power that spurs various movements within a political system to demand freedom.²⁷ He further noted that “as people come to place a higher value on political freedom and civil liberties—in and for themselves—they also become more inclined to speak out, demonstrate, and organize for democratization, beginning with the denunciation of human rights abuses.”²⁸ Perhaps two relevant examples are the South African case which culminated in the all-race election, and the 1994 prodemocracy movement against General Sani Abacha’s regime in Nigeria.²⁹

Central to the continuing analysis, however, is the extent to which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) coalesce their efforts within the society to promote “genuine” democracy and its practice. Put another way, it addresses the degree to which the interaction within a polity furthers the process of democratization in the continent.

Indeed, from the liberal point of view, “a rollback of state power and the creation of a sphere of civil society where social relations, including private business, nonstate institutions, family, and personal life, could evolve without state interference,”³⁰ was imperative. S.F. Starr notes that within the concept of Western tradition, civil society refers to that political space that is “distinct from government and that government is but one of several institutions coexisting in a pluralistic social fabric.”³¹ Alfred Stepan defined a civil society as “an arena where manifold social movements . . . and civic organizations from all classes . . . attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests.”³² Naomi Chazan noted that the concept of civil society, “refers to that segment of society that interacts with the state, influences the state, and yet is distinct from the state.”³³ In the African case, she identifies two types of association within the civil society. These are voluntary and ascriptive associations. It is the nature of the interactions with each other and the state that determines the very character and locus of civil society in Africa.³⁴

Whereas the rise of modern civil society in Western Europe did not issue, fundamentally, from its politics, it is, however, linked to political dimensions. For instance, it has been noted that the French revolution occurred as a result of intellectual and literary ventilation of ideas for social and political change in salons and coffeehouses in France.³⁵ But in a real sense, the concept of a civil society is “directly linked to the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the subsequent efforts by the class to separate private spheres from state action . . . civil society emerged as a counterweight to monarchical and semifeudal institutions that continued to treat the political arena as the private domain of the king and princely estates [which in the African case may be analogous to the military rule in Nigeria, autocratic rule under the late Felix Houphouet Boigny, Banda’s Malawi and Mobutu’s Zaire].”³⁶

The concept of civil society in Africa is problematic because, in general, there is as yet no clear line of demarcation between the African state and society or polity. This, one could argue, gives the concept an analytical allurements and consequently the need for its investigation.

The development of a civil society pre-dates the emergence of independence in Africa. Indeed, it was the assembly of “intellectuals” in urban settings, and the later articulation of their interests that culminated in the cessation and departure of the colonial powers. In this process, the intellectuals led the political calvary by amalgamating the various cleavages and (ethnic) groups in their demand for independence.³⁷ The post-independence era, however, saw a diminution in the effectiveness of social

groups that pressed for independence as they were absorbed in the proliferation of one-party rule in the continent. In some cases, they adopted totalitarian tactics in their style of governance. For example, if a group could not be destroyed, they were absorbed to neutralize their effective opposition to the government.³⁸

Such a stance probably prompted such scholar as J.F. Boyart to contend that “African intellectuals [with a few exceptions] have failed to provide civil society with the original conceptual instruments required for its advance. Even when they have had the courage to offer themselves as the leadership of the resistance, they have in no way been able to transcend the epistemic gulf between state and society.”³⁹ On the other hand, too, certain African traditions hamper the emergence of effective civil society. In fact, Patrick P. Motutsi and John D. Holme have noted, for example, in the case of Botswana that to a certain degree, the system of *kgotla*⁴⁰ limits public political participation in policy outcomes. They noted that as a result of this system, “the general public did not see itself as having a voice except through family elders, nor was it involved in political conflict above the ward level as a regular part of its social existence. In this sense the *kgotla* left the mass citizenry unprepared for the need to observe and evaluate the incessant struggle of elites which is a part of the pluralist politics of a liberal democracy.”⁴¹ This, additionally, renders the process of democratization in some African polities very complex and arduous.

Also, Naomi Chazan has noted the contending views regarding the political complications of the rise of the voluntary sector in Africa. She asserted that scholars disagree and are confounded as to the rise of associational activities and the atomization of civil society—in particular the concern rests on whether the actions of voluntary associations are integrative or disintegrative.⁴²

She holds the view that the above thesis could be visualized in two contending ways: “On the one hand, civil societies [in Africa] are seen as a critical check on authoritarian rule. The nurturing of civil society is widely perceived as the most effective means of controlling repeated abuses of state power, holding rulers accountable to their citizens, and establishing the foundations for durable democratic government; and on the other hand, the importance attached to civil society in Africa issues from an equally compelling, although perhaps less generally recognized, concern with social fragmentation and institutional breakdown. From this perspective, civil society provides an adhesive that brings together disparate groups and interests within a common framework.”⁴³

Joel Migdal argues, though, that the emergence of numerous voluntary associations with the purpose of doing battle with the state in regard to “political development” may not necessarily be cause for joy, since they have the propensity in more tolerant political systems of debilitating the strength of the state and eroding away state resources.⁴⁴ This may be so, given the centrifugal and particularistic tendencies of some of these collectivities in African politics.

Basic to the preceding discussion is the degree to which voluntary associations within the civil societies in Africa are capable of promoting (or constraining) the process of democracy in the continent. In other words, shifting their quest from incomplete to complete metamorphic democracy. Except in a few cases (Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia . . .), voluntary associations are generally weak and fragmented. Since some of its members rely on the state for their survival, they easily succumb to state pressure and manipulations. In fact, Bratton has noted that, "the civic structures that do exist are usually small in scale and local in orientation. In this lilliputian environment, even a weak state [as for example, Malawi under Banda] can seem to be strong."⁴⁵

In sum, the foregoing discussion was intended to examine an aspect of the African political development; that is, investigate further how the internal political dynamism could promote democratic practices in Africa, or act as a fillip to further what Sklar termed "developmental democracy."⁴⁶

Incomplete Metamorphic Democracy

Arguably, the concept of incomplete metamorphic democracy is a strategy for distinguishing African political systems from other forms, just as Dahl applied polyarchic democracy to classify the Western political systems. This notion is somewhat analogous to what Georg Sorensen referred to as "unconsolidated" democracy.⁴⁷ In another sense, the nomenclature, incomplete metamorphic democracy, may be an adequate concept or euphemism for describing Africa's current democratic development. The rationale for this approach is based on the assumption that at this juncture many lack a majority of the "essential" ingredients of a complete metamorphic democracy (such as accountability, multipartyism, legitimacy, orderly change of government, successful elections at intervals, freedom of expression, etc.).

The non-consolidation of democracy in the continent, it has been contended, issued from the weak economic and political institutions.⁴⁸ In addition, what is more appalling about the present situation is that the continent is worse off today than it was thirty years ago. To exacerbate the political and economic stagnation is the lack of legitimacy which characterized post-colonial African political systems. Today, a system of neopatrimonialism, derived from pre-colonial Africa has in some instances being resurrected. This was the case in Banda's Malawi and Mobutu's Zaire.⁴⁹ In Nigeria, the attitude of the military approximates this behavior pattern.⁵⁰ Indeed, democratic tendencies similar to those characteristic of what Juan Linz and others termed consolidated democracy are rare. Linz contends that a consolidated democracy is "one in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and that no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision-makers . . ."⁵¹

In a nutshell, what this implies is that in a consolidated democracy, democratic institutions and practices are ingrained in the political culture.⁵² Most African countries, however, may be “unconsolidated” democracies because democratic practices are not yet fully imbued in their political cultures. A good example is the nullification of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria by the military government. Basic to the contention of this essay is that the situation is promising, because the process of democratization from independence to the present is still metamorphosing, hence incomplete metamorphic democracy as a conceptual framework. For example, Martin A. Klein contended in his 1991 address to the (American) African Studies Association that:

Nowhere in the world was there a tradition of democracy in the 18th century. France had no democratic traditions when it began its revolution. It created a revolutionary democratic tradition in 5 years and fought about it for the next 160. It took Britain two centuries to create the parliamentary democracy it later tried to bequeath to its former colonies. As late as 1832, Great Britain was ruled by several thousand wealthy property owners. Democratic traditions are created by people resisting autocracy or attacking privilege. We are seeing democracy created in the former Soviet Union, in Eastern Europe and in Africa—but this is the beginning of the struggle, not the end. Those who have power rarely yield willingly. Many African autocrats are tenacious and ordinary soldiers are, not surprisingly, unhappy about changes that threaten their privileges.⁵³

The claim to the universal oneness of democracy is one that many scholars have denied indefatigably. Yet, any attempt even for the purpose of simplification to compartmentalize the concept—i.e., African, Latin American, Asian and Western forms of democracy pricks the sensibilities of many students of democracy who argue for its monolithism.

The question, however, is that on the eve of the twenty-first century (and with the end of the Cold War), how may Africanists view the development of democracy in the continent? Is it possible for them to redefine African political systems without opposition and pressure from the erstwhile superpowers? Is the “indigenization” of democracy (while it maintains its fundamental characteristics) based on the different cultural influences possible? Does Samuel Huntington’s thesis, *The Clash of Civilization? The debate*, have any relevance in the New International World Order? In particular is the query: “is it more meaningful now to group countries not in terms of their political or economic systems or in terms of their economic development but rather in terms of their culture and civilization”⁵⁴ significant for the analysis of Third-World political situations?

The Complexity of Democracy in Africa: The Quest for Re-examination

Many Africanists and Third-World scholars have expressed misgivings concerning efforts by colleagues to apply Western paradigms to Third-World phenomena.⁵⁵

In fact, Sklar notes: "For the time being, at least, they do not wish, or do they need, to be enlightened by North Americans and Europeans about the alleged principles of 'political development.' However, they do need, must discover, and may even borrow practical, problem-solving political theories regardless of their origin [since ideas tend to be trans-pollinational and fertilizational]."⁵⁶

It is against the backdrop of the foregoing discussion that we examine some of the relevant and thought-provoking analyses in the hitherto mentioned journals (i.e., *African Studies Review* and *Africa Today*) with a view to observing and comprehending African democratic trends.

In an attempt to re-examine democratic trends in Africa, George Munda Carew undertook a prodigious step in explaining the anomalies in assuming the existence of harmonized nationhood in Africa in pre- and post-colonial Africa, and the formulation of "faulty" theoretical paradigms for explicating the complex political processes in the continent.⁵⁷ In a way, the argument and challenge for the re-examination of the African systems flow from the Huntingtonian concept of "cultural determinism." That is, a political system is determined by the culture of the nation or nation-state. Carew, therefore, argued, *inter alia*, for the "need to reconceptualize democratic criteria in a bid to render it relevant to culturally plural and ethnically diverse societies."⁵⁸ Arguably, it is this dimension and the activity of the political class (in consonance with other economic and social forces) that determine a nation's stage in the development of democracy; i.e., it is the political "sophistication" and "altruism" of the political class determined by the ethno-cultural and socio-economic variables that will help shape African democracies as is the case elsewhere. Additionally, as Julius E. Nyang'oro has affirmed emphatically, regardless of the democratic genre in Africa, the significance and role of the political economy in shaping and determining its mode cannot be ignored because of the linkage between political and economic life in the continent.⁵⁹

In Africa, though, the incomplete metamorphosis and the evolution of the democratic process derive from the indecision and naivete of some of the political actors who see the individual and group interests as more important than those of the "organic" state. Perhaps a good case in point was the Nigerian political imbroglio during the march toward the Third Republic, when some politicians pleaded with the military to accede to power because it was perceived to be in their best interest.⁶⁰

That notwithstanding, as part of the political awakening of some of the political actors in Africa, a strategy known as "National Conference" intended to draw upon the wisdom of various collectivities within a national polity to determine the political direction of the nation-state have been utilized with mixed results. The outcome of the National Sovereign Conference in the Republic of Benin (generally touted as a test case) resulted in a multiparty democracy and the dethronement of General Mathieu Kerekou.⁶¹ Pearl T. Robinson noted that the Cotonou convocation was powerful enough to galvanize between March 1990 and August 1991 the rulers

of Gabon, Congo, Mali, Togo, Niger and Zaire [to push for democracy and demand national conferences to work out the modalities for national governance].⁶²

But as Nyang'oro further contended: "Under the centralizing policies of the state in most African countries, grassroots organizations and what some writers call civil society have generally found life to be difficult. African governments have always perceived autonomous organizations and institutions in society to be oppositional and conflictual in nature, and therefore dangerous."⁶³ Such a discordant nature of African politics, which has its roots in the colonial administrative pattern, traditional patrimonialism, and mode of governance and socialization, mitigates and retards the democratization process. For instance, when General Abacha sacked the Interim National Government (ING) in Nigeria and dissolved the existing political structures in November 1993, the legislators without any resistance left the posts into which they were duly elected.⁶⁴ Indeed, some even joined the Abacha administration. That notwithstanding, attempts by some of those who were not part of the new government to recapture their offices in 1994, met with stiff opposition from the military.

It is possible that as Africa marches into the twenty-first century without the former superpower "leashes" on it, the development of "indigenous" democracy may be relatively less conflictual (as for example, the no-party democracy in Uganda).⁶⁵ This is probable if the various African polities are able to assuage the internal contradictions flowing from the diverse interests of their constituencies. Nevertheless, in light of Africa's daunting problems, certain relevant questions may have to be tackled in the process of elevating the incomplete metamorphosis of the area's democratic experience. For example, are the grassroots organizations capable of influencing state authority such that they could exist symbiotically with minimal conflict? Are the aims and objectives of the prodemocracy movements within the national polities comprehensible and congruent to those of the general population? Perhaps most significantly, have the prodemocracy groups, in the continent's polyethnic societies, clearly articulated the political culture necessary for the sustainment of African democratic genre?

Arguably, for democratic consolidation to occur and thrive in Africa, grassroots participation is a *sine qua non* because it provides the system with the necessary legitimacy with which to govern. This may be furthered if African states promoted political and economic enfranchisement of its citizenry.⁶⁶ Additionally, the clamor for democracy by prodemocracy movements in Africa may be hollow if individuals do not see the benefits of democracy in their lives. To this end, the values of democracy must be demonstrated and taught by prodemocracy cadres and, most importantly, they must illustrate its virtues through their individual and collective examples. Finally, the development of a political culture that is likely to sustain democracy in the continent must never be taken for granted. While it is too early to pass judgment, South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, et cetera, represent cases in which the incumbent leaders were defeated in an election without major (destructive) political

commotions. This is rare in the continent. So, this aspect of the political culture (for the concept is rather broad) whereby national leaders see themselves as “servants” and, therefore, “inconsequential” *vis à vis* the state and national interests, is one which prodemocracy movements should inculcate in the psyche of their various publics in order to promote democracy. Indeed, the problem of the transfer of power from the government to a successful opposition leader following an election has been one of the impediments to the flourishing of democracy in much of Africa. Attempts to resolve these issues, *inter alia*, are significant if Africa’s incomplete metamorphic democracy is to “mutate” into complete metamorphic democracy. The process may not be easy, but the efforts have already begun.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Some scholars have expressed pessimism regarding the success of democracy in Africa. See for example, Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transition From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986); Rene Lemarchand, “African Transition to Democracy: An Interim Assessment,” *Africa Insight*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1992), p. 178; Samuel Decalo, *Psychoses of Power, African Personal Dictatorships* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986).
- 2 Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). See in particular, Clark Bertsch, Robert P. Clark, David M. Wood, *Comparing Political Systems: Power and Policy in Three Worlds* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1986, 3rd edn), pp. 3-6.
- 3 C. Bertsch, R.P. Clark, D.M. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 3. See also Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 314.
- 4 Catherine Newbury, “Paradoxes of Democratization in Africa,” *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (April, 1994), p. 7.
- 5 See “Democracy: No mean achievement,” *West Africa* (January 10-16, 1994), p. 15.
- 6 Larry Diamond, “Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism: Strategies for Democratization,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (Winter 1989), pp. 142-143. Diamond contends that democracy should be viewed, fundamentally, as a political form of government even though it is nourished by social and economic factors and structures. He defined democracy as a system of government that meets three essential conditions: 1. Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; 2. A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and 3. A level of civil and political liberties—freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations—sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.
- 7 James R. Scarritt and Shaheen Mozaifar, “Toward Sustainable Democracy in Africa: Can US Policy make a difference,” (Boston: Boston University African Studies Center Working papers, No. 171), p. 3.
- 8 *Ibid.* See also Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour M. Lipset (Eds), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Africa II* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988), p. xvi; Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, pp. 3-20; Tatu Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-1988* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), p. 11.

- 9 This issue was mildly contested at the Annual International Relations Conference, University of South Carolina, in Spring 1994. The conference dedicated one of its sessions to the examination and discussion of democracy and democratization in the Third World including the fledgling democracies in Africa.
- 10 See "Challenges to Democracy," *Africa Today*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (4th Quarter 1993); and *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (April, 1994).
- 11 It has been contended that two major works, namely, Peter Ayang' Nyong'o (Ed.) *Popular Struggle for Democracy in Africa* (1987), and Diamond, Linz, Lipset (Eds), *op. cit.*, opened up a new vista in the way scholars view the distinguishing characteristics of the democratization process in Africa.
- 12 Richard Sklar, "Democracy in Africa," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3-4 (September-December, 1983), pp. 11-24.
- 13 Richard L. Sklar, "Developmental Democracy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (October, 1987), p. 687. See also Elie Kedourie, *The Crossman Confessions and other Essays in Politics, History, and Religion* (London: Mansell, 1984), pp. 119-136; Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry L. Karl, "What Democracy Is... And Is Not," in: Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Eds), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 40.
- 14 Sklar, "Democracy in Africa," *African Studies Review*, p. 11.
- 15 Samuel Decalo, "The Process, Prospects and Constraints of Democratization in Africa," *African Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 362 (January, 1992), pp. 8-9.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Naomi Chazan, "Ghana: Problems of Governance and the Emergence of Civil Society," in: Diamond, Linz and Lipset (Eds), *op. cit.*, p. 119.
- 18 See *West Africa* (September 28 – October 4, 1992), p. 1617.
- 19 Decalo, *op. cit.*, p. 22. See also The World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington, DC: 1989), p. 34; Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics and the Markets* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 116.
- 20 Claude Ake, "The Case for Democracy," in: *African Governance in the 1990s* (Atlanta: Carter Presidential Center, 1990), p. 2.
- 21 Decalo, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-27.
- 22 Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 210.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 See Richard Sandbrook and Mohamed Halfani (Eds), *Empowering People: Building Community, Civic Associations and Legality in Africa* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1993); *From Centre to the Grassroots: Excerpts from Selected Speeches on the PNDC's Decentralization Policy – Volume 111* (Accra, Ghana: Venus Publication, 1993).
- 25 Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (September, 1993), p. 624. Suffice it to say that they also contended that as far as International Relations were concerned that "over the last two centuries, democracies have rarely clashed with one another in violent or potentially violent conflict and (by some reasonable criteria) have virtually never fought one another in a full-scale international war."
- 26 Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry L. Karl, "What Democracy Is... And Is Not," in: Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Eds), *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 27 Larry Diamond, "The Globalization of Democracy: Trends, Types, Causes, and Prospects" written for inclusion in: Robert Slater, Barry Schutz and Steven Dorr (Eds), *Global Transformation and the Third World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), p. 23 (original text).

- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 One such group in Nigeria was the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) which issued an ultimatum to the Abacha administration to resign by May 31, 1994, and for Abiola (alleged to have won the June 12, 1993 presidential election) to accede to power, and to form a broadbased national government. To be sure, other religious (Catholic Church, Anglican, Methodist, etc.) and Civic groups (Campaign for Democracy, Human Rights organization) expressed their support for the principle of June 12.
- 30 Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 5.
- 31 S.F. Starr, "Soviet Union: A Civil Society," in: Roy C. Macridis and Bernard E. Brown (Eds), *Comparative Politics, Notes and Reading* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Publishers, 1990), p. 194. See also Dwayne Woods, "Civil Society in Europe and Africa: Limiting State Power through a Public Sphere," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (September, 1992), p. 78.
- 32 Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 3-4.
- 33 Naomi Chazan, "Africa's Democratic Challenge," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 9 (1992), p. 281.
- 34 Naomi Chazan, "The New Politics of Participation in Tropical Africa," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (January, 1982), pp. 172-173. Voluntary association ranges from trade unions to women's associations, professional associations, self-help groups. . . and ascriptive association includes ethnic associations, traditional political units, kinship associations. . .
- 35 Woods, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), p. 88.
- 38 See Bertsch, Clark, Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 298.
- 39 J.F. Boyart, "Civil Society in Africa," in: Patrick Chabal (Ed.), *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limit of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 120.
- 40 P. Molutsi and John D. Holme, "Developing Democracy When Civil Society is Weak: The Case of Botswana," *African Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 356 (July, 1990), pp. 325-326.
- 41 Molutsi and Holm, *op. cit.*, p. 326. As a consequence of this system, it has been noted that "the traditional Tswana political system is considered to have been among the most authoritarian in Africa."
- 42 Chazan, "Africa's Democratic Challenge," *World Policy Journal*, pp. 281-304.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282.
- 44 Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State Society Relations and State Capabilities in Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 181-182, Chapters 6 and 7.
- 45 M. Bratton, "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa," *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1989), pp. 410-411.
- 46 Richard Sklar, "Developmental Democracy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, pp. 686-714.
- 47 Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- 48 See Julius Ihonvbere, "Pro-democracy Movements, the State and the Crisis of Democratization in Africa" (unpublished), pp. 1-24.
- 49 These leaders have been alleged to treat matters of state as if they were personal affairs (sometimes usurping the national treasuries and acting as though they are their private banks).
- 50 See E. Ike Udogu, "Democracy, the Two-Party System and the Transition Imbroglio in the March Toward Nigeria's Third Republic 1985-1992," *Scandinavian Journal of Development Alternatives*, Vol. 13, No. 1 & 2 (March-June, 1994), pp. 205-220.
- 51 Juan Linz, "Transition to Democracy," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1990), p. 158.

- 52 Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- 53 Martin A. Klein, "Back to Democracy: Presidential Address to the 1991 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (December, 1992), pp. 6-7. Elsewhere, it has been contended that: "The Western countries themselves are examples of the fact that democracy cannot be installed overnight; it is a long term process of gradual change. When quick fixes of imposing multiparty systems, for example, are substituted for the long haul of patiently paving the way for a democratic polity, the result may be that a thin layer of democratic coating is superimposed upon a system of personal rule without changes in the basic features of the old structure." See Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- 54 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization? The Debate* (New York: The Council on Foreign Relations Inc., 1993), p. 23.
- 55 Claude Ake, *Social Science as Imperialism* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University of Ibadan Press, 1979), pp. ii-vi.
- 56 Sklar, "Developmental Democracy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, p. 689.
- 57 George Munda Carew, "Developmental Theory and The Promise of Democracy: The Future of Post-colonial African States," *Africa Today*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1993), p. 31.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 59 Julius E. Nyang'oro, "Reform Politics and The Democratization Process in Africa," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (April, 1994), pp. 144-146.
- 60 Sunny Igboanugo, "Why govt can't reverse poll's annulment, by Diya," *The Guardian (Nigeria)*, (Wednesday, June 8, 1994), pp. 1 & 8.
- 61 Pearl T. Robinson, "Democratization: Understanding the Relationship between Regime Change and the Culture of Politics," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (April, 1994), pp. 55-56.
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 63 Nyang'oro, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
- 64 Ima Niboro, "The Game of Power," *The African Guardian*, Vol. 9, No. 23 (June 13, 1994), p. 18.
- 65 See Margaret A. Novicki, "President Yoweri Museveni: Uganda's Man of Vision," *Africa Report*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (July-August, 1993), pp. 23-25.
- 66 See for example, E. Ike Udogu, "Nigeria: The Quest for Economic Re-vitalization," *IN DEPTH: A Journal for Values and Public Policy*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter, 1994), p. 105.