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Post-Cold War Democratisation in Africa

A Literature Review

Content	page no.
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PART ONE - OVERVIEW

1.	Introduction	2
1.1	A Note on the Title	4
2.	The Review	4
2.1	Transitology and the Study of African Democratisation	4 - 5
2.2	A Model of African Political Development	5 - 6
2.3	Post-Cold War Democratisation in Africa: The Debate	7 - 14

PART TWO – THE DEBATE REVISITED **5**

3.	The Origins of the African Democratisation	15 - 20
4.	The Concept of Democracy in Africa	20 – 26
5.	The Main Challenges to Democracy in Africa	26 – 31
5.1	Socio-economic Development	27 - 29
5.2	Social Division	29 – 31
6.	Conclusion and Prospects	31 – 33
7.	A Final Note on the Debate	33
8.	Appendix 1) Table 1: Multiparty Politics in Africa (1995)	
9.	Bibliography	

“Post-Cold War Democratisation in Africa”

A Literature Review

PART ONE - OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

This literature review covers a sample of articles written by scholars on the post-1989 democratisation processes in Africa. The majority of the articles was published in either one of two academic publications, namely the ‘Review of African Political Economy’ or the ‘Third World Quarterly’, between 1989 and 1999.

The review examines twenty-six contributions made by scholars to the democratisation debate. The majority of the scholars are political scientists and political economists based in Great Britain or North America. There are also contributions of academics from other disciplines (e.g. law, linguistics, African studies, Development studies) and from other places (e.g. France, South Africa, Tanzania).

Both publications, the ‘Review of African Political Economy’ and the ‘Third World Quarterly’ are widely read amongst academics of Third World politics. The articles are therefore written in an academic style, widely drawing on the established bodies of knowledge in the social sciences. Many scholars quote extensively, three articles in particular are actually literature reviews themselves (Rijnierse, 1993; Crawford, 1994; Beetham, 1996). The articles by Barry Munslow and A.B. Zack-Williams (1990), Lionel Cliffe and David Seddon (1991), Chris Allen et al (1992), Shadid Qadir et al (1993) and Anita Franklin and Roy Love (1994) are editorial articles.

Most articles are written in an argumentative way, contributing to the many debates the processes of political change in Africa sparked off. Some of the debates are new to the African context (e.g. the role of media in democracies; multiparty politics and ethnicity), while others are recycled (e.g. the relationship between development and democracy; imperialism). (compare Rijnierse, 1993: 651-661) Only a few scholars use quantitative indicators to support their arguments, or develop a comprehensive historical context for their argument.

In Part One, we start by reviewing some of the primary issues that were raised by scholars concerning generalisations, methodology and theory in relation to the study of the democratisation processes in Africa (Osaghae, 1995; Allen, 1995). Thereafter, we follow the prescriptions of Osaghae and Allen and introduce the debate by means of a long-term historical overview of the development of the processes of democratisation. This overview revisits Allen's proposal of a Model of African political development. (Allen, 1995) In the following section, we review the African democratisation literature by leading through the overall debate.

Part Two of the review then examines a selected number of fundamental debates that can be discerned within the overall debate, concerning the processes of political liberalisation, transition and consolidation. Namely, we examine the following aspects: 1. The origins of the democratisation in Africa; 2. The concept of democracy in Africa; and 3. The main challenges to consolidation (e.g. socio-economic development, social division). We will conclude by looking at the prospects of the new democracies.

1.1 A Note on the Title

The title of this review might be somewhat misleading: Whether we can safely call the recent processes of political change in Africa processes of ‘democratisation’, is subject of the debate. Furthermore, by calling those processes the ‘post-Cold War democratisation’, we do neither want to pre-empt the debates concerning the historical origins of the processes nor imbed them in any ‘post-Cold War paradigm’ other than debated below. Lastly, Africa here refers to a variety of states comprising a diversity of peoples with the primary common feature of being situated on the African continent. The majority of the processes of change in the form of governance in Africa as witnessed starting with Benin in 1989 were actually taking place in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. The Review

2.1 Transitology and the Study of African Democratisation

According to Eghosa Osaghae (1995), the study of the post-1989 transition processes in Africa has exposed some major inadequacies in Western ‘transitology’. Osaghae refers to “the periodic conceptualisation of the transition process itself, to the consequent treatment of transition in an ahistorical manner and the abandonment of previous perspectives of social and political change.” (Osaghae, 1995: 183) Wignaraja argues that the claims of Western methodology and theory to have universal applicability must be questioned, and that ultimately a ‘Southern theory’ is needed. (Wignaraja in Osaghae, 1995: 183) From an African perspective, Osaghae proposes that the study of African politics should be approached “from its historical, material and structural contexts” and combine theory with practice. For example, transitions need to be related “to the developmental needs of countries involved”. (Osaghae, 1995: 183)

Jean Copans also called for a new African sociology that would understand the democratisation processes beyond the narrow modernisation mechanism. The democratisation processes necessitate a renewal in African intellectual thinking and theorising about society, and a new political practice. The 'political modernisation' would have to be followed by a new concept of African modernity. (Copans, 1991: 92-95)

Questions of methodology and theory dominated especially the later part of the democratisation debate (post-1995). How should African politics be studied? How many Africas were there: one, none or many? What should be the basic unit of analysis, and how should African politics be interpreted? (Osaghae, 1995: 184)

According to Chris Allen (1995), Callaghy's 1985 case study of Zaire is an example of a study, which was intended to apply to all or most of Africa. In contrast, Richard Hodder-Williams noted in 1984 that the size and variety of the African continent make it difficult to make any generalisations. Allen argues that there is not only one African political system, but that since independence, African states had developed independently. As a result, there were several African political systems, necessarily limited in number, which had to be studied separately. (all in Allen, 1995:301)

2.2 A Model of African Political Development

Allen takes up Osaghae's challenge to develop an African political theory and elaborates a model of African political development for the study of the democratic transitions. The categories of his model are based on the sequences of events and forms that make them up, rather than on a comparison of events or the political forms that feature in them. He understands the recent democratisation processes from a long-term historical perspective based on his model. In the post-Independence period a 'crisis of clientelist politics' started to

destabilise African governments. According to Allen, the 'crisis of clientelism' of the 1960s and 1970s was either resolved by the introduction of 'centralised-bureaucratic politics' or left unresolved by a continuation of 'self-destructive spoils politics'¹. (Allen, 1995:303-5)

When in the 1980's almost all African economies faced severe decline and African governments had to recourse to the IMF for loans, loan conditionalities started to exert external pressure for economic liberalisation. Later, conditionalities amounting to prescriptions for political liberalisation were added "in order to achieve accountability and the rule of law, administrative probity and good governance". (Allen, 1995: 312) "The impact of economic decline, SAPs and conditionality on centralised-bureaucratic and on spoils systems was dramatically – and necessarily - different." (Allen, 1995: 312) According to the model, only those countries with a system of centralised-bureaucratic politics experienced some form a democratic renewal (e.g. Benin, Zambia, Malawi, Ivory Coast, Kenya). On the other hand, in countries dominated by spoils politics, endemic regime instability combined with economic decline lead to a regime disintegration or even state collapse (e.g. Somalia, Zaire, Rwanda, Sierra Leone)². (Allen, 1995: 312-315)

Allen differs with his model from other political scientist in their attempts of generalising politics in Africa e.g. Bayart (1993: 'the politics of the belly') or Jackson and Rosberg (1982: 'personal rule'). (Bayart/Jackson and Rosberg in Allen, 1995: 316-317)

¹ Key features of 'spoils politics' are: winner-takes-all, corruption, looting of the economy, economic crisis, lack of political mediation, repression and violence, communalism, endemic instability, erosion of authority. (Allen, 1995: 307)

² Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, all of which achieved independence through prolonged guerrilla warfare, represent a distinct historical path (as well as a few other countries). (Allen, 1995: 315)

2.3 Post-Cold War Democratisation in Africa: the Debate

Beginning in 1989 and thereafter accelerating, a process of political restructuring and generally a shift from autocratic single-party or no-party rule to multiparty rule was witnessed across Africa³. The political liberalisation was accompanied by a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Chris Allen, Carolyn Baylies and Morris Szeftel identified in 1991 three groups of countries⁴ which were 'untouched' by the transition process: 1. The longstanding democracies (Botswana, The Gambia and Senegal); 2. The 'civil war countries' (Sudan, Liberia, Chad and Somalia); and 3. A small group of remainders (Malawi⁵, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Libya and Morocco). The country, which had gone to date through the most complete transformation, was Benin, the first country in Africa to start the transition process in 1989. (Allen, Baylies and Szeftel, 1991: 3-4) Table 1 (Appendix 1) illustrates dramatically the extent to which multiparty politics re-emerged in Africa after 1989.

Allen et al (1992) distinguish between three types of democratisation:

1. Democratisation by Round-Table Conferences, which mainly occurred in francophone countries;
2. Democratisation which by-passed the conference stage by the emergence of a loose coalition (e.g. Zambia, Kenya); and
3. Democratisation by rushed multiparty elections (mostly imposed by the incumbent regime). In Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Ghana the rushed elections were boycotted by the bulk of opposition parties. (Allen, Baylies and Szeftel, 1992: 3-4)

³ Compare Appendix 1: Table 1) Multiparty politics in Africa (1995)

⁴ Only referring to Sub-Saharan Africa

⁵ Elections 1995

Concerning the South African democratisation, Anita Franklin and Roy Love noted that the “events in South Africa, however novel in that country’s history, exemplify themes which pervade the rest of the continent. These include the legitimacy of the democratic process, the role of external agency in economic and social policy, and the continuing colonial heritage, even at this late stage of the twentieth century, of sub-regional and ethnically based conflict.” (Franklin and Love, 1994: 3-4)

Many parallels were drawn between the transition processes in Eastern Europe and the African democratisation, e.g. concerning the crisis and prospects of socialist development (e.g. Cliffe and Seddon, 1991; Mengisteab: 1992); the impact of the change of Soviet foreign policy in the 1980s (e.g. Riley, 1992; Qadir et al, 1993; Clapham, 1993); and the role of the USA in the ‘Latinamericanisation’ of the 2nd World and Africa. (Chomsky, 1991) However, Eboe Hutchful identified an important difference between the democratisation processes in Eastern Europe and Africa: unlike in the former Soviet Bloc, ‘perestroika⁶’ had preceded ‘glasnost⁷’ in Africa. (Hutchful, 1991: 51) While Hutchful asked whether an autocratic regime which promoted a free market policy could open up politically, other writers attributed the political liberalisation directly to the economic liberalisation in Africa, or went as far as to say that economic liberalisation could only be effective with political liberalisation. (e.g. The World Bank in Anyong ‘Nyong’o, 1992: 101; Clapham, 1993: 432)

The Western press tended to interpret the African events as part of a universal historical process of democratisation, as an African imitation of the events in Eastern Europe (maybe with the exception of the South African democratisation). However, scholars of Africa in the early years of the process as well as today were well aware of the longstanding history of struggle for democracy in Africa. (e.g. Allen, Baylies and Szeftel, 1991; Osaghae, 1995;

⁶ economic liberalisation (market-based economics)

Zewde, 1999) In certain countries like Sudan or Zaire, where people had “generally never experienced any positive transformation in their lives since independence, they have always yearned for a ‘second independence’. (Anyang ‘Nyong’o, 1992: 97) Therefore according to Peter Anyang ‘Nyong’o, “the recent moves by some African governments to abandon rigid systems of political rule in favour of much more open systems came after years of internal pressure for democratisation in Africa”. (Anyang ‘Nyong’o, 1992: 97)

The question of agency in the African post-Cold War democratisation was from the beginning of the debate of great importance. Although it can be said that in general scholars agreed on the predominance of local factors leading towards democratisation, the degree to which they were ‘co-opted by Western imperialism’ or informed by circumstances which were controlled by the West and its institutions (e.g. IMF, World Bank), was subject to much debate. (compare Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 3-7) This paper will therefore return to this aspect of the democratisation process in detail below.

African regimes responded to the internal and external pressures for democratisation in different ways: Afro-Marxist states (e.g. Benin, Ethiopia) responded readier to democratic pressures than states under a presidential authoritarian rule (e.g. Malawi). In 1992, Anyang ‘Nyong’o categorised the responses of African regimes in the following way:

- “Pre-emptive channelling of democratisation initiatives: Senegal the first, followed by Nigeria, Uganda and Zaire;
- domesticating democratic initiatives through sluice-gate reforms: Cameroon, Togo, Benin and Côte d’Ivoire;

⁷ political liberalisation (democratisation)

- conditional surrender to open politics and pluralism: Mozambique, Angola and Congo;
- neither reform nor reaction but an uneasy defence of the status quo: Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia.”

(Anyang 'Nyong'o, 1992: 101)

Many scholars were concerned about the 'quality' of the African democratisation. After 30 years of almost exclusive single-party or non-party politics, questions concerning the conceptualisation of African democracy were debated widely. Lionel Cliffe and David Seddon (1991) argued that the introduction of multiparty politics was not equal to democratisation. If democratisation was to mean 'people's power' then the grassroots movements in Africa should be given constitutional form. While the African state had been challenged internally on three levels (economically, socially and politically), multiparty politics only addressed the bourgeois aspirations. (Cliffe and Seddon, 1991: 10)

Much of the discussion of the different types of democracy in Africa was problem-orientated: social divisions (e.g. ethnicity), popular participation etc. were major issues that scholars tried to address by exploring different definitions of democracy and their contextual applicability. Many scholars shied away from proposing a specific constitutional formula. However, Issa G. Shivji warned that the democracy debate amongst African scholars was threatened to become a celebration of 'liberalism'. (Shivji, 1991: 79)

He was echoed by Ayesha Imam: "If democracy is minimally defined as people's right to participate fully in the discussions and decisions on issues that affect them and to take control of their own lives, then the issue of democracy cannot be relegated to the modus operandi of voting (or not) for politicians every so many years. [...] Democracy must include the right of

people to live their own aspirations and programmes, not only in political life, but also in economic, cultural, religious and other aspects of life.” (Imam, 1992: 102)

Shivji stipulated that the constitutional arrangement had to be related to the context of each particular country, and that an extended transitional period was needed in order to arrive at a lasting solution. (Shivji, 1991: 79-80) We return to the debate of an African conceptualisation of democracy in Part Two. This section also addresses the debate concerning the ‘roots’ of democracy in Africa.

Socio-economic development had been one of the preferred reasons given by African regimes to justify authoritarian rule. From the beginning of the debate, scholars were concerned about the question, whether the low levels of development would allow for a meaningful democratisation in Africa. The old debate of which comes first, development or democracy, was revived. It was agreed that the higher the levels of socio-economic development, the better the chances for sustained democratic rule. (compare Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990; Rijnierse, 1993) However, a causal (instrumental) relationship could not be drawn conclusively. Concerning development, some writers argued that the form of rule was not related to the prospects of development, that actually both, autocratic and democratic governments in Africa had fared equally badly. (Sandbrook, Diamond, in Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990; also compare Leftwich, 1993) Development, it was argued, depended on policy choice, skill in implementation and policy consistency. (Sandbrook, Diamond, in Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990)

Concerning democracy, Thandika Mkandawire argued that democracy was a “good-in-itself”, which didn’t need to be justified in instrumentalist, developmental terms. (Mkandawire in Shivji, 1991: 81) Ultimately it was agreed that the prospects of democracy in countries with

low levels of socio-economic development were mostly dependent on human agency. (e.g. Sandbrook, 1996: 85; Rijnierse, 1993: 662) The relationship between socio-economic development and democracy will be looked at more closely in Part Two.

Other challenges to the process of democratisation, which were identified and debated by scholars, were issues of communalism, ethnicity, religion, class, and their divisive potential. Would liberal democratic politics be able to accommodate deep social cleavages or would the free peoples of Africa eventually redraw state boundaries, peacefully or by means of violence? (e.g. Clapham, 1993) The establishment of a democratic political culture and a supportive intelligentsia were also mentioned (e.g. Copans, 1991; Beetham, 1994)

Copans argued that the conception of ethnicity in Africa was most problematic: ethnicity should not be seen as a false consciousness but as a process which could only be valued by keeping the relationship between political communities and their means of thinking and expression open. (Copans, 1991: 97) The challenge of accommodating social divisions within a democratic framework will also be subject of both, debate concerning the concept of democracy and the challenge of National Unity, in Part Two.

The problem-oriented debate on the challenges to the consolidation of democracy in Africa was followed by the question, whether there was actually a political basis for democracy in Africa: Was there a domestic value consensus capable of maintaining support for democracy? (Clapham, 1993: 424)

David Beetham (1994) defined consolidation as the process, which begins where the process of transition ends i.e. with the inauguration of a new government at the first free and fair elections since the end of the previous democratic regime. Consolidation is a more lengthy

and difficult process than the transitional period, and the factors for consolidating the new democratic dispensation are not necessarily the same as those leading to elections. (Beetham, 1994: 159-160) According to Beetham, “democratisation is always and everywhere an unfinished process”. (Beetham, 1994: 157) His concepts of transition and consolidation are borrowed from Huntington (compare Beetham, 1994: 160) and reflect the ahistorical Western periodic definition of the democratisation process that was rejected by Wignaraja (1993 in Osaghae, 1995), Osaghae (1995) and Allen, (1995), as outlined above.

The identification of factors, which would facilitate democratic consolidation, were part of an ongoing debate in political science. While Huntington deterministically identified “a zone of economic development between US\$ 500-1000 per capita GNP, at which a country is ripe for democratisation and capable of democratic consolidation”, Di Palma stipulated that successful democratisation was “the product of human volition”. (all in Beetham, 1994: 161)

Riley (1992: 546) argued continued foreign support was important. Both Clapham and Riley identified that the most crucial internal factor was a strong, autonomous civil society (Clapham, 1991; 435-436; Riley, 1992; 546) The importance of a respectable political party system, which would transcend social divisions, was widely recognised (e.g. Clapham, 1991; Crawford, 1994; Kasfir; 1992: 592). Sandbrook actually referred to political parties and independent organs of mass communication as the two key intermediary institutions in the institutionalisation of democracy. (Sandbrook, 1996: 70) We will return to the consolidation debate in Part Two.

Looking back at almost a decade of democratisation debate in Africa, the original enthusiasm has somewhat been overtaken by a more sober assessment. Considerations of the long-term structural challenges that the new democracies are facing in the process of consolidation have

taken the centre stage of the debate. According to Richard Sandbrook (1996), many observers of the democratisation processes in sub-Saharan Africa fear that the majority of the new democracies are doomed. The low levels of socio-economic development, which are accompanied by high levels of poverty and inequality, the wide-spread illiteracy, and the failure to reverse the economic decline of the 1980s support the arguments of scholars of quantitative political science in their bleak judgement. Deep ethnic and communal cleavages, which are intensified by the struggle for access to resources, further undermine the mutual trust essential in democracies. The individual historical legacy of each country and political 'traditions' of personalism, clientelism and corruption, unlikely have a positive impact on the ability of those countries to successfully institutionalise the new democratic compensation. (compare Sandbrook, 1996: 69)

However, the generalisations of the afro-pessimists cannot be left unchallenged. Although Allen insists that a uniform treatment of African politics is untenable, he replies to the afro-pessimists that "if we are to search for universal features of African politics, then they are to be found in this democratic energy and the readiness to innovate and reform [...]" (Allen, 1995: 318) Furthermore, it must be recalled that many of the structural factors, which according to the afro-pessimists are threatening democratic consolidation in Africa, are the very same factors that triggered the process of democratisation in the first place and returned multiparty politics and the democratic form of governance to Africa.

PART TWO – THE DEBATE REVISITED

This part of the paper reviews extensively certain fundamental debates taken up by scholars, namely: 1. The Origins of the African Democratisation; 2. The Concept of democracy in Africa; 3. The Main Challenges to Consolidation; and lastly 4. The Prospects of Democracy in Africa.

Our starting point is necessarily the debate concerning the origins of the democratisation.

3. The Origins of the African Democratisation

An important aspect of the democratisation debate in Africa surrounds the issue of its origins. According to Wiseman (1993:440), factors that led to the post-Cold War democratisation in Africa can be classified as structural, voluntarist or contingent. Structural factors refer to the socio-economic conditions in which African states operate. Voluntarist factors, are actor-oriented factors that take into account the aspirations of participants and the methods they employ. Lastly, contingent factors are those “which lie at the messy end of the spectrum of explanatory variables”. However, for the purpose of this review we use the same characterisation as most scholars do by distinguishing between external (exogenous) factors (such as the End of the Cold War) and internal (endogenous) factors (e.g. democratic movements).

Bahru Zewde (in Hyslop, 1999:231) names the major external factors that contributed to the democratisation process: 1. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe; 2. The Structural Adjustment Programmes; and 3. The Human Rights conditionality imposed by Western governments and donor organisations. The ripple effect of the collapse of communism had according to Zewde a different impact on different countries, as their respective ties to the

communist bloc were not equally strong. In Ethiopia, for example, the communist collapse had quite a strong impact. (Zewde, 1999: 231)

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe is cited by many scholars as *the pivotal external factor* for the resurgence of democracy in Africa (Rijnierse, 1993: 649). With the emergence of Gorbachev and the 'Revolution of 1989', the African elites lost Eastern Europe as an inspiration and aid donor. (Riley, 1992: 542) Cliffe and Seddon argue that Soviet collaboration with the US increasingly left the African states subject to the pressures of international capitalism. (Cliffe and Seddon, 1991: 8) According to Kidane Mengisteab, in the African Marxist states the crisis of socialism led to the introduction of changes, simultaneously with the Eastern European states and the USSR. All adopted multiparty systems and liberal economics. (Mengisteab, 1992: 77)

The collapse of communism removed the Cold War bipolarity, and the West did no longer have to fear losing allies. Left reassured that liberal economics were superior to the socialist system, the argument was fostered that corruption, economic mismanagement, inefficiency, stagnation and decline were the result of the lack of democracy and popular political participation. (Leftwich, 1993: 609) Consequently, political loan conditionality became more overt and insistent, and at the same time Africa's bargaining power with the West (and sovereignty) eroded. (compare Qadir et al, 1993: 421)

Clapham (1993: 428) argues that the end of the Cold War largely ended Western aid for non-democratic regimes which had previously been backed by political and military means. Western concern with governance and democracy were not new, but until the end of the Cold War they were clouded by economic or foreign policy interests. (Leftwich, 1993: 606) "The fallout from Eastern Europe – 'the wind from the east that shakes the coconut palms', as

President Bongo of Gabon aptly described it – has made clear the extent to which Western policies in Africa had previously been constrained by Cold War considerations.” (Clapham, 1993: 432)

Loan and donor conditionality was not a novelty at the end of the Cold War. Already a number of African states had their experience with economic conditionality in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) designed by international financial institutions. The intention behind SAPs was to overcome the post-war state-led development model, and to promote a free and open market economy regulated by a minimal state only. The foremost tasks of SAPs was to stabilise the economy, and then to transform (adjust) it e.g. by devaluating domestic currency, cutting state expenditure and transforming state-owned economic institutions (privatisation). Bureaucrats, public sector workers, party officials, farmers and manufacturers lost out most. But SAPs also hit the poor with price hikes. Many countries experienced austerity protests. (compare Leftwich, 1993: 607)

The implementation of SAPs needed a strong and relatively autonomous state, democratic or not. (Leftwich, 1993: 607) However, according to Bayart (1985), the continuous internal pressure by the subordinate classes against the authoritarian governments had weakened and damaged the African state already. (Bayart in Rijnierse, 1993: 649)

The assessment of external factors has led some writers to locate the democratisation process within the imperialist agenda of the West (e.g. Chomsky, 1991). Osaghae declares: “Indeed, with the political and economic conditionalities by these Western powers and the international monetary institutions which they control – principally the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – the democratic transition project has practically become a new form of

colonisation.” (Osaghae, 1995: 195) Qadir, Clapham and Gills ask, whether democracy was becoming a weapon of Western foreign policy? (Qadir et al, 1993: 420)

Zewde (1999) disagrees with Osaghae’s argument concerning the importance of Western donor and loan conditionality. He argues that the impact of donor conditionality was actually weak. Thereby, he follows the argument made earlier by Thandika Mkandawire that the dynamics of the African democratisation were endogenous in most cases e.g. in Mali and Togo. In Ethiopia, for example, the collapse of the USSR had a greatly disruptive effect on the Marxist Mengistu regime, but the regime itself was swept away by a longstanding rural guerrilla. (Zewde in Hyslop, 1999: 231-232)

Ethiopia’s experience of a rural opposition contrasts with that of most other countries, where popular protest was mostly urban based. Wiseman points out that the protests by the mass democratic movements were the largest popular demonstrations since the colonial period. (Wiseman, 1993: 443) Riley compares them with the nationalist coalitions of the 1950s and the 1960s because they involved very diverse groups of civil society. (Riley, 1992: 543)

Chazan attributes the successful articulation of protest against authoritarian governments in Africa to a greater social capacity to organise. She attributes this capacity to the development of an independent civil society in the 1970s and 1980s, which grew from the need to devise methods of fending against encroaching impoverishment. (Chazan in Rijnierse, 1993: 649)

While Allen (1995: 318) reminds us of the long history of the struggle for the democratisation of African politics, Leftwich (1993) argues that pro-democracy movements in Latin America and Eastern Europe stimulated the African mass protests. (Leftwich, 1993: 610)

According to Munslow and Zack-Williams, it was elements of the local bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie linked to international forces, which embraced the idea of democracy at a moment when African states were faced with a legitimacy problem. Internal mass movements were co-opted by the local elite. (Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 4-6) Osaghae also believes that strategic elites in certain countries 'hijacked' mass movements in order to prevent a 'people's revolution. (Osaghae, 1995: 191)

The dictatorial and often times bankrupt regimes deprived of foreign support and faced with popular protest turned anxious to negotiate with their opponents e.g. RSA, Ethiopia, Zaire. However, the impact of Eastern European revolutions was also felt by opposition groups: the diversion of Western aid away from the Third World to Eastern Europe and the political conditionality attached to the remains led to the broad renunciation of communist ideology. (Hutchful, 1991:52-54)

Leftwich (1993: 610) conclusively argues that it was a combination of internal and external pressures in Africa, between 1989-92, which prompted steps in the direction of democratisation in a host of countries. The same argument is made by Clapham (1993: 431) and Meyns (in Rijnierse, 1993: 648).

Munslow and Zack-Williams (1990: 8) say in 1990, that the call for democracy in Africa is an imperialist top-down imposition, while Wiseman (1993: 441) and Zewde (1999: 231) argue that internal factors have been most important in promoting the recent change.

According to Allen (1992) we must understand the African democratisation as a struggle between two major internal groupings:

1. The Pro-democratic groups e.g. students, trade unions, professional associations, and intellectuals; certain business interests; women, urban poor, small farmers and religious forces.
2. The Anti-democratic groups e.g. the ruling clique, their business associates, their external allies (including African allies), and their external surrogates (e.g. Unita, Renamo). (Allen et al, 1992: 6)

Finally, Anyong 'Nyong'o, answers the question whether it was mostly internal or external forces that brought about the African post-Cold War democratisation, from an insider perspective: "The struggle for democracy is thus 'home-grown' from the point of view of its advocates, though 'foreign-imposed' from the perspective of those who defend the single-party regime." (Anyang 'Nyong'o in Wiseman, 1993: 441-442)

The question of the origin of the forces for democratisation is of importance because, as Allen, Baylies and Szeftel stress, these forces will also determine the extent of the democratisation and the success of consolidation. (Allen et al, 1992: 9) We turn now to the scholars' considerations of the concept of democracy in Africa.

4. The Concept of Democracy in Africa

30 years ago multiparty systems failed almost throughout the African continent. Since the end of the Cold War, national and international forces are promoting it again. Many of the questions posed in the 1960s and 1970s are still not resolved. However, the circumstances have changed and history has taught many lessons. (compare Rijnerse, 1993: 651)

Between January and March 1992, the National Research Council organised on behalf of USAID a number of workshops in Benin, Ethiopia and Namibia. The African scholars and

political activists whose reflections were recorded and later published univocally agreed that democracy was not the exclusive property of the West, and that Africa had a long history of democracy. On the one hand, they referred to the pre-colonial, village-democracy in Africa, on the other hand, they also pointed out the democratic values of the anti-colonial nationalist movements. (Crawford, 1994: 140) Anyang 'Nyong'o also names the struggle for independence in Africa as a shared democratic heritage of the African peoples. (Anyong 'Nyong'o, 1992: 98)

The debate concerning the roots of democracy in Africa features only on the sidelines of the broader topic. Zewde warns that continent-wide generalisations about an African democratic heritage are erroneous. The nationalistic debate, making direct, participatory village democracy in Africa the hallmark of democratisation, is reductionist, whilst the colonial portray of barbarism and arbitrary rule must be discarded as untenable. Pre-colonial Africa encompassed a number of state forms, from empires (e.g. Mali, Songhay) to military dictatorships (e.g. Dahomey, Zulu). Even the originally African village democracies, Zewde declares, "had either an unmistakable stamp of gerontocracy⁸ or were quite often disrupted by the intervention of powerful individuals or groups relying on military prowess or invoking spiritual powers." Conclusively he argues that contemporary Africa can only build on the cumulative legacy of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial experience. (Zewde in Hyslop, 1999: 230-231)

Clapham, however, dismisses the romantic stereotype of pre-colonial democratic societies because the circumstances are vastly different in the post-colonial state. Concerning the period leading to Independence, the transfer of a democratic ideology from the colonial regime also failed, and cannot be used as a source of democratic values. Rather the opposite is

⁸ Rule by age groups

true: According to Clapham, the colonial state demonstrated that the state could be used at will and that no group or organisation would be able to stop it. (Clapham, 1993:424-425)

Mamdani's argument concerning Human Rights is applied by Rijnierse to democracy: Although democracy in its present form might have been first formulated and presented as a political item in the West, that is not the only place where people are aware of human dignity and oppression. (Rijnierse, 1993: 651-652)

The question of democratisation is necessarily also a question of inquiring the definition of democracy. Riley and Sandbrook (in Rijnierse, 1993: 652) define democracy with focus on institutional change: regular free elections; organised political parties, which compete for government; a virtually universal adult vote; and the guarantee of political and civil rights.

Imam on the other hand defines democracy more widely, focussing on the people's right to fully participate in discussions and decisions that affect their lives. He argues that the 'modus operandi' of elections is not equal to democracy. Democracy must include the right of people to make decisions concerning all aspects of their lives. Democracy must also end oppression, exploitation (e.g. unequal exchange) and discrimination. (Imam, 1992: 102) Many scholars, including Beetham (1994:157-159), echo his argument.

Multipartyism, liberalism and procedural democracy are widely contested amongst the scholars of the debate. Shivji (1991) argues that when democracy is debated in Africa, scholars are often referring to liberalism rather than to the struggle for equality, which is the true essence of democracy. According to Shivji, liberal democracy is a democracy of domination of one group over another and therefore is part of the ideology of domination and must therefore be discarded. (Shivji, 1991: 80-82)

Anyang 'Nyong'o argues: "In the absence of a political culture of participation and accountability, multiparty democracy is likely to remain confined among the political elite to the exclusion of the masses. Enfranchisement does not necessarily lead to empowerment, since universal suffrage does not guarantee access to political decision-making." (Anyang 'Nyong'o in Rijnierse, 1993: 653)

Bayart (in Riley, 1992: 549) also insists that democracy is more than multiparty politics and that institutional and procedural democracy is insufficient. "Africa's potential for democracy is more convincingly revealed by rural and urban groups (such as local associations) than by parliaments and parties, instruments of the state, of accumulation and of alienation." (Bayart in Riley, 1992: 549)

Cliffe and Seddon (1991: 10) similarly argue that the introduction of multiparty politics in Africa is not equal to democratisation. If democratisation is to mean 'people's power' then the grassroots movements in Africa should be given constitutional form, they propose. The weakness of civil society organisations in Africa, which had been undermined and strangled by regime co-option cannot effectively underpin a multiparty framework. (Cliffe and Seddon, 1991: 10; also compare Imam, 1992: 102)

Democracy is historically the entry of the working classes into politics and citizenship. However, if the working classes are not drawn into the political process, democracies often degenerate into fascist or military states. Post-independence Africa has witnessed its own experiences in this respect. The establishment of an institutional framework, which allows for both, the participation and demobilisation of the working classes therefore presents a major challenge to democratic survival. (compare Allen, Baylies and Szeftel, 1992: 8-10)

How then could an African democracy be conceptualised? Oculi (1990) and Simiyu (1988) suggest a synthesis of traditional political practices and modern forms of conducting politics. However, according to Rijnierse, these alternatives have not yet been widely discussed and elaborated. (Rijnierse, 1993: 657-658)

Nelson Kasfir (1992) distinguishes three types of democracy: the Populist democracy, the Multiparty representative democracy and the Madesonian democracy. In order to allow participation of all levels (classes) of society, he proposes that a Mixed democratic system should be adopted in Africa, encompassing both, elements of direct and indirect democracy. (Kasfir, 1992: 587-603)

Extensive popular participation is seen by many scholars as an important requisite for a new democratic dispensation. Rijnierse, for example, suggests that people's participation could be addressed by decentralisation or the institution of neo-traditional forms of government. Riley uses a proposal made earlier by Senghor: African democracy must involve the local 'palaver', an inclusive and extensive dialogue/discussion followed by a consensus. (Senghor in Riley, 1992: 539)

Wide-ranging popular participation, federalism or provincial autonomy is also seen as a means of bridging social divisions. The threat of disintegration is widely acknowledged by African scholars and activists, and it was agreed that the 'ethnic problem' must urgently be resolved. (compare Crawford, 1994: 140; Davidson in Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 7)

Many of the proposals brought forward entail extensive popular participation or aspects of federalism. However, concerning popular involvement in political decision-making, Shivji noticed a distinct lack of faith on behalf of African leaders and politicians in the masses. (Shivji, 1991: 82) Zewde also discourages the arguments brought forward by the proponents of alternative models. According to him, participatory democracy and federalism are seen as a luxury in Africa. (Zewde in Hyslop, 1999: 230)

Lastly, to Leftwich the question of democratisation in Africa is less one of the appropriate model. He asserts that the long-term sustainability of any African state is less a question of whether the country is ruled democratically or autocratically, but whether the regime has a developmental character. (Leftwich, 1993: 619) Wiseman, however, questions the capacity of the African state to be truly developmental. (Wiseman, 1993: 446)

This leads us into the examination of the debate concerning the challenges that the emerging democracies are facing.

5. The Main Challenges to Democracy in Africa

According to Riley, the social and economic conditions necessary for the appearance and the survival of democracy are:

1. An educated population with political knowledge and a will to act;
2. A modern industrial economy;
3. A homogenous society; and
4. A long-established set of democratic political values. (Riley, 1992: 548-9)

“African states have few of these conditions. Many African states are socially heterogeneous, and political fissures follow social, religious and regional divisions. Their civic tradition as

independent states goes back little more than a generation, and they did not inherit democratic traditions from the longer period of authoritarian colonial rule.” (Riley, 1992: 549)

The low level of socio-economic development, and social divisions that are threatening national unity, are noted by many scholars as the most serious challenges. The debate, which concerns these two challenges, is therefore reviewed here closely.

5.1 Socio-economic development

The African democratisation processes challenged the long established notion that socio-economic development was a precondition to democracy. There is some consensus on the influence of socio-economic development on consolidation. For Onimonde, a certain economic prosperity is a condition for the development of democracy. (Onimonde in Rijnierse, 1993: 655) Founoun-Tchuigoua insists that economic growth always precedes development. (Founoun-Tchuigoua in Rijnierse, 1993: 655) And Leftwich argues that democracy cannot be easily introduced at any stage of development because capitalist development relied in its (early) capital accumulative stage on oppressive measures. (Leftwich, 1993)

Some scholars ask what the impact of democracy on development might be: According to the Brundland Report, sustainable development is only possible with popular participation. (Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 4-5) The World Bank also noted in 1989, that a lack of accountability and political consensus was responsible for the political, economic and social decline in Africa. (Anyang 'Nyong'o, 1992: 99-100)

Shivji agrees with the World Bank, that history evidently shows that authoritarianism has stifled development in Africa. Unlike in Latin America or Asia, “authoritarianism [in Africa]

leads more to increased consumption by bureaucrats and kleptocratic politicians than to a curbing of consumption and increased saving.” (Shivji in Anyang ‘Nyong’o, 1992: 100)

These arguments differ profoundly from the evidence brought forward by Diamond and Sandbrook. According to Diamond’s comparative study of 26 developing countries, democracies do not necessarily fare worse in economic development than dictatorships. He concluded that the difference in economic performance is based on policy choice, skill in policy implementation and policy consistency. (Diamond in Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 3-4) Sandbrook’s assessment of 39 sub-Saharan states came to a similar conclusion. Authoritarian regimes did not do better in the promotion of development or national unity than liberal democracies. (Sandbrook in Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 3)

Reviewing the debate concerning the relationship between democracy and development, Shivji dismisses the presentation of democracy within an ideology of developmentalism. To Shivji, developmentalism is an ideology of the state and the ruling classes of Africa, and hence an ideology of domination, which is incompatible with democracy. (Shivji, 1991: 81)

However, the question remains whether democracy and development can be squared with liberal economics. (Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 4-5)

The introduction of liberal economics preceded the introduction of liberal democracy in Africa (in Eastern Europe the opposite is true). (Hutchful, 1991: 58) The interaction between liberal economics and democratic politics are for Leftwich the main challenge. The existing material inequalities threaten democratic consolidation. Only if the costs and benefits of liberal economics can be democratically distributed, then the survival of democratic politics in Africa is probable. Therefore, it will be the character of the state rather than the type of

rule, which will determine the future. (Leftwich, 1993: 614; also compare Diamond, 1990)

However, according to Wiseman, all too often debates concerning the role of the African state in development “[...] are excessively based on abstract ideological positions, whether free market or interventionist, which have little to do with the empirical reality of the integrity and capacity of the African state.” (Wiseman, 1993: 446)

The new liberal notion of development is a contradiction to the process of democratisation, argues Imam. Liberal development focusses on dismantling the state economy and ‘right-sizing’ of the administration. He asks whether privatisation, massive unemployment, currency devaluation and the like, were the features of a democratic economy. He also questions the imposition of macro-economic policy by the international financial institutions. (Imam, 1992: 104-105)

According to Davidson, the problems of democracy and development are both related to the problem of the nation state itself in Africa. (Davidson in Munslow and Zack-Williams, 1990: 7)

5.2 Social Division

National unity and the ‘threat of tribalism’ were used previously to legitimise the African one- and none-party state. The colonial experience has left a legacy of artificial boundaries and multi-ethnic states. The ethnic diversity of most African states is complicated by the colonial system of ‘indirect rule’, which left behind a legacy of highly politicised ethnic identities. (Clapham, 1993: 424)

Zewde asks whether the resurgence of ethnic politics he witnesses in the 1980s and 1990s is the ‘apotheosis’ or ‘nemesis’ of the African democratisation processes. Or will the ethnic factor simply disappear? (Zewde in Hyslop, 1999: 231-232)

Munslow and Zack-Williams (1990: 7) argue that multiparty democracy re-enforces ethnic identity in poor countries, which experience economic decline. Zewde agrees that democracy accentuates ethnic identity, and he wonders whether ethno-nationalism might bring about “a basic restructuring of African state systems”. (Zewde in Hyslop, 1999: 232) However, who actually has an interest in state preservation in Africa? ask Qadir, Clapham and Gills. They conclude that it is first and foremost the elite, which gains from the African ‘nation state’. (Qadir et al, 1993: 417)

According to Copans, ethnicity has the capacity for powerful mobilisation and political appeal. However, it is also xenophobic in nature. He puts forward the argument of Lonsdale, that a new ‘historiography of tribe’ could provide a language for the celebration of central cultural issues, rather than their avoidance. (Copans, 1991: 96)

Bayart stresses the importance of an open relationship between political communities and their means of thinking and expression. Political communities must be acknowledged as such and their political mandate and identity must be recognised. (Bayart in Copans, 1991: 97)

Diamond and Chazan identify ethnicity as a positive force for democratisation in Nigeria. The ethnic complexity of the state makes it difficult to manage it in an autocratic way because ethnic diversity requires more decentralisation, distribution, rotation and representation than an autocratic regime can provide. (Diamond and Chazan in Riley, 1992: 540-541) Riley notes

that ethnic mobilisation with expectations of political autonomy and representation has retained resilience as a force for political pluralism. (Riley, 1992: 541)

According to Jean Copans, the democratic programme demands intellectual prerequisites such as a shared political language and a culture of non-violent conflict resolution in Africa. However, a method of thinking about democracy appropriate for Africa has yet to be articulated. Once this will be done, a concerted effort of education and media can stimulate the thinking necessary for a modern democracy. Otherwise, democracy in Africa will be “political modernisation without political modernity” - an imitation of Western institutions which will incapacitate any endogenous evolution. (Copans, 1991: 92-95) Shivji also argues that intellectuals need to re-examine their theoretical and political practices in the light of the actual struggles of the masses. (Shivji, 1991: 80)

6. Conclusion and Prospects

According to Allen, the present democratic struggle in Africa is rooted in the popular radical and nationalist struggles of the 1980s, and “[...] in the continual record of opposition, dissent and resistance to autocratic and repressive regimes [...]”. (Allen et al, 1992: 6) There is a considerable difference between the different African states in terms of their stage in the democratisation process, and the actual content of the process. (Bienen and Herbst, 1996: 25) The most constant factor is that overt pluralism has replaced covert pluralism. (Wiseman, 1993: 445)

“Under Huntington’s tough definition of consolidation – two electoral transfers of power – only three African countries (Mauritius, Niger and Sao Tome and Principe) can be termed democracies.” (Bienen and Herbst, 1996: 25)

Leftwich's prognosis for the new African democracies is bleak. The Human Rights record of African states might improve under democracy but he expects political turbulence including the possibility of executive or military coups. Furthermore, he fears that economic growth and development will be undermined. (Leftwich, 1993: 606)

Qadir, Clapham and Gill want to see the recent democratisation as transitional and inconclusive. They argue that there is a high possibility of reversion to authoritarianism, of instability and insecurity arising from the socio-economic crisis. (Qadir et al, 1993: 416) In general terms they assess the prospects of democracy in Africa as being precarious, unless democratisation can produce sustainable economic benefits for the masses (Qadir, 1993: 420).

Riley also foresees instability in the medium to long term. (Riley, 1992: 549) He recognises the importance of external factors such as continued pressure for democratisation and sustained foreign development aid. As the most crucial internal factor he identifies the importance of a strong civil society for democracy to work. (Riley, 1992: 546) "Multiparty politics is simply one outcome of the breakdown of Africa's authoritarianism. An alternative is the collapse of the state into competing factions and disputed or dividing sovereignties." As examples Riley names Liberia, Ethiopia and Somalia. (Riley, 1992: 547) Shivji (1991) and Allen (1995) make the same argument.

Prospects for liberal (bourgeois) democracy in Africa appear slight. Cliffe and Seddon think that authoritarian forms are yet more probable. (Cliffe and Seddon, 1991: 10)

As early as 1991, Eboe Hutchful warned that Western governments and institutions might push the democratisation agenda in Africa too aggressively with the consequence that this might forestall the possibility of genuine and distinctive local paths to democracy. Ultimately,

this might prove counter-productive. (Hutchful, 1991: 55) It appears that Hutchful's concern has become a reality.

Lemarchand (in Rijnierse, 1993: 653) noted as well, "for if by 'liberalisation' is meant the dismantling of dictatorships, there are good reasons to [assume] that [...] liberalisation can occur without democratisation and [that] in some parts of Africa the disintegration of autocratic rule may be followed by anarchy or intensified corruption [...]."

In conclusion it must be remembered, that despite the negative prospects, throughout this review, scholars made numerous recommendations on how to overcome the many challenges Africans are facing in their strive to establish democratic societies. Since the end of the Cold War, initiatives for democratisation have found many new allies. The importance of involving the majority of the population in the democratisation project e.g. by means of a constitutional arrangement, which reflects the realities of African political life, has been stressed by many scholars. "Africa is a continent undergoing profound change, with numerous events and processes bringing hopes for progress as well as dangers of intensified crisis. If international and internal forces act to prevent much necessary transformation there are nevertheless, numerous transitions going on." (Franklin and Love, 1994: 5)

7. A Final Note on the Debate

It must be noted at this point, that the sample of articles which is also a sample of academics necessarily limits the debate within certain realms. For example, most of the debate is concerned with what happened in the urban centres: The roles rural people played, the relationship between the rural and the urban, or the role of women groups, ethnic groups or kinship groups in challenging the autocratic state is largely neglected.

Appendix 1

Table 1) Multiparty Politics in Africa (1995)

<i>Country</i>	<i>In 1989</i>	<i>Multiparty Elections</i>	
		Presidential (direct)	Legislative (general election)
Benin	Multiparty	1991	1995
Botswana		Indirectly	1994
Burkina Faso		1991	1992
Cameroon		1992	1992
Cape Verde		1991	1991
CAR		1993	1993
Comoros		1990	1993
Congo		1992	1993
Cote d'Ivoire		1990	1990
Djibouti		1993	1992
Egypt	Multiparty	1993	1990
Equatorial G.		1989a	1993
Ethiopia		Indirectly	1995
Gabon	Multiparty	1993	1990
Gambia		Military take-over 1994	
Ghana		1992	1992
Guinea		1993	1995
Guinea-Bissau		1994	1994
Kenya		1992	1992
Lesotho		Monarchy	1993
Madagascar		1993	1993
Malawi		1994	1994
Mali		1992	1992
Mauritania	Multiparty	1992	1992
Mauritius		Indirectly	1991
Morocco	Multiparty	Monarchy	1993
Mozambique	Multiparty	1994	1994
Namibia		1994	1994
Niger		1993	1993
Sao Tome	Multiparty	1991	1994
Senegal		1993	1993
Seychelles		1993	1993
South Africa	Multiparty	Indirectly	1994
Togo		1993	1994
Tunesia		1994	1994
Zambia	Multiparty	1991	1991
Zimbabwe		1990	1995
Transition to Multiparty Systems			
Tanzania		1990a	1990a
Uganda			1989b

(compare Lass, 1995: 98-99, 109)

a) Single party election

b) Non-party election

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