

Building Pluralist Democracy in Africa

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In the last few years, African politics have begun to take a dramatic turn from single-party systems to the possibility of multi-party systems. However, there doesn't seem to be a clear pattern of change emerging as governments in various countries are attempting to deal with the increased demand for popular participation. This paper argues that in order to understand the current demands for increased participation and the possibilities of multi-partyism, we need to analyze the origins of single-party systems and their consequence. The approach advocated here is that of political economy.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to look critically at the practice of politics in Africa since independence, with a special emphasis on one or single-party systems. It can be argued that, generally speaking, the study of African politics is simply a study of one-party systems, with minor exceptions such as Botswana and perhaps Senegal. The latter case, however, has become questionable as the government under President Abdou Diouf has sought to reinstate the dominance of the ruling *Union Progressiste Senegalaise* (UPS) -- which later renamed itself *Parti Socialiste* (PS) -- over the opposition, with such effect that the UPS is now set to remain the ruling party for the foreseeable future. The other two countries which do not fit this generalization are the extremely small countries of Gambia and Mauritius.

While it is true that the study of African politics is a study of one party systems, it is also true that the principal mechanism of regime change has been the military *coup d'etat* (as itemized in Michael Kelley's Table 3, this issue). In this regard, Africa may not be too different from other Third World continents -- Asia and Latin America -- in their experience with military governments. However, the difference between Africa and the rest of the Third World -- especially Latin America since 1985 -- is that there appears little prospect, at least on the surface, for total military disengagement from politics (Welch 1987). By the beginning of 1991, about half of the countries in Africa were under one form or another of military rule, although in countries such as Togo and Congo-Brazzaville the military governments had committed themselves to multi-party democracy and to hold national elections as a basis for the emergence of popularly elected governments. In Benin, the military government of Mathieu Kérékou, which had ruled the country since 1972, was defeated in the March, 1991 elections and gave way to a new government led by former World Bank executive Nicephore Soglo.

Although one-party systems and military regimes have been the norm in African countries for most of the years since independence, there is currently a push for pluralist democracy in most African countries. I will attempt to place this push for pluralism in the context of changes not only within the political system but also within the economic system. This approach is premised on my conviction that the two elements of political economy are closely interrelated and intertwined. Any analysis which ignores one element of the unity in political economy does so at its own peril, for in the African context such analysis will have little relevance. The role of history is also important. I contend that the roots of the one-party system (and military regimes) in Africa lie partly in the colonial system. Therefore, it is only through the understanding of the colonial system and of contemporary political economy that the push towards pluralism in Africa can be understood.

Nationalism and Democracy in Africa: The Nationalist Period

The nationalist period in Africa roughly covered the period between the end of World War II and the early 1960s, when most African countries gained their independence. We may recall that 1960 was designated "Africa Year" at the United Nations because in that year the majority of the African countries joined the UN as independent countries (Padleford and Emerson 1962). The attainment of independence in Africa was the culmination of a long, drawn-out process which pitted the nationalist forces in African countries against the colonial powers -- principally Britain and France, and to a lesser extent Belgium and Spain.

By the mid-1960s, all the colonial powers in Africa except Portugal had accepted the principle of self-determination and eventual independence for the African countries. The lingering issue was *timing*. Naturally, the colonial powers preferred a slower timetable while the nationalist forces advocated a much quicker pace. An example of this difference was reflected in the relations between Guinea and France. France had advocated a close association between herself and the soon-to-be-independent African colonies. Guinean nationalists under the leadership of the late Sekou Touré rejected this formula. Instead, they sought immediate independence and an "independent" posture vis-a-vis France not only in international relations but also in domestic policy. France responded by withdrawing all French personnel and equipment (including pencils and desks in classrooms) from Guinea. Thus, the principle of self-determination, even after acceptance by the colonial powers, remained problematic for African countries (Davidson 1978).

Unlike Britain and France, Portugal for a very long time refused to recognize its African possessions (Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tomé and Príncipe) *qua* colonies, considering them instead as its "overseas provinces" (Palmberg 1983). The Portuguese position had enormous implications for the nationalist movement in its four African colonies. While the nationalist process

in the British and French colonies (excepting a few, such as Kenya and Algeria) generally was a peaceful, political struggle, such was not the case in the Portuguese colonies. There, guerrilla warfare became the principal avenue of the struggle for independence, resulting in the relative radicalization of liberation forces such as FRELIMO in Mozambique, the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA in Angola, and PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau (Humbraci 1974). Eventually, FRELIMO, MPLA, and PAIGC won independence in their respective countries, but the emergence of *single*, dominant liberation movements had serious consequences for post-independence politics in these countries. Because each struggle against Portuguese colonialism had necessitated a strong, united front under one principal organization, the tradition of pluralism within these liberation movements had weak roots. In some respects, the inability of these movements -- which eventually became ruling parties -- to establish peacefully competitive political environments can be traced to the centralization of the liberation struggle itself. In the cases of Angola and Mozambique, however, it is also necessary to factor in the presence of South Africa, which militarily supported opposition forces against the ruling parties in both countries after independence in 1975. South Africa's support for RENAMO in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola had the effect of fueling the centralizing tendencies within FRELIMO and MPLA, which considered themselves to be under siege, just as they had been under Portuguese colonialism (Hanlon 1984, 1986).

Political centralization as a characteristic of guerrilla/liberation movements in Africa may seem easily explainable. That is not the case, however, when we examine political parties which operated in the post-World War II period in the majority of the African colonies. In countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, and Tanzania, there existed a fairly pluralistic, competitive multi-party system during the transition to independence. For example, in Kenya the principal competing parties were the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). In Uganda, one could find a lively partisan competition between the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and the Kabaka Yekka (Leys 1975; Mamdani 1976). Thus, up to the time of independence in many African countries, multi-party systems were the norm.

This pattern, however, changed fairly quickly once independence had been achieved. In the case of Kenya, which gained independence in December, 1963, KADU disbanded itself and joined KANU, effectively making Kenya a one party system in 1964. In Uganda, the UPC-led government of Prime Minister (later President) Obote radically changed the constitution, which had more or less guaranteed Kabaka Yekka's existence after independence. Thus, African politics of the 1960s was for the most part single-party politics; multi-partyism was a dead letter only a few years after independence (Mazrui and Tidy 1984, 84-115).

The immediate question, of course, is why was the transition from multi-partyism to single-partyism so universal and so quickly attained? I think the question can be approached from two angles, both of which are related. The first

angle is the colonial system itself. The second angle is the nature of the political parties as they evolved in the 1950s. First, looking at the colonial situation, one is struck by the overtly undemocratic character of the colonial state itself. Colonial governments could hardly pretend to be democratic, given their origins. European powers formally colonized Africa towards the end of the 19th century, culminating in the "Scramble for Africa" at the Berlin Conference (Curtin et al. 1978; Rodney 1972). The establishment of colonial rule had been the final result of several centuries of contact between Europe and Africa. Perhaps the most lasting legacy of this contact, up to the end of the 19th century, had been the Atlantic Slave Trade. By the time formal colonial rule was established, many African societies had been severely weakened by the slave trade process. This process had included the introduction of more devastating firearms on the continent, and the exacerbation of intra-African conflicts. Although some African societies offered resistance to overt colonial annexation, the majority of societies succumbed quickly to superior European firepower (Curtin et al. 1978).

The colonial enterprise in Africa had both political and economic dimensions. At the political level, the first obvious thing that happened was the complete loss of political independence by African societies. No longer were African authority structures the ultimate sovereigns. The colonial state had assumed that role. But more significant was the creation of large territorial units (i.e., the present African countries) which previously had not existed. The creation of these large political units had serious implications for the nationalist movements, especially with the evolution of the notion of "national integration" as an operating principle. For a nationalist movement to succeed, it had to appeal to a wider "country" audience, as opposed to particularistic ethnic concerns which would have been the case before 1884-1885. Setting aside for a moment the political consequences of this need for "national" appeal, at the economic level, the colonial state was tied to the concerns of the mother countries. Thus, economic policy in the colonies was a mere reflection of wider metropolitan concerns. Students of African economic history and world system theory have captured the essence of this economic system, which thus requires no further elaboration here (Rodney 1972; Freund 1984; Gutkind and Wallerstein 1985).

What is of interest to us, however, is the fact that both at the political and economic levels, the colonial state was never a democratic state in relation to its African subjects. Most of the attributes we ascribe to liberal democratic states -- periodic popular elections, free speech, freedom of association, representative government, and so forth -- were absent under colonialism. Indeed, in the years following the establishment of colonial rule, colonial subjects resisted the system by various means, including military action, as in the case of the Maji Maji rebellion (1905-1907) in Tanzania and the Shona and Ndebele uprisings (1896) in Zimbabwe. The larger point, therefore, is that up to the time of independence, no African polity could actually claim to be *democratic*, given the colonial circumstance. The colonial state had the final authority, which to an overwhelming extent was

responsive to the metropolitan country, not its colonial subjects. I am going to contend below that this undemocratic nature of the colonial state was a bad habit which the post-colonial state inherited and is finding difficult to shake.

The second angle of my argument with regard to the emergence of the single-party system in Africa relates to the particular type of the political parties which were in the forefront of the struggle against colonialism. In spite of the existence of two or more parties vying for political power under colonial authority, most (if not all) African political parties were *unitary* in character, i.e., they sought to create an atmosphere of unity among the African masses in opposition to colonialism. One of the basic strategies used by the parties was of course the “us” against “them” notion to emphasize the political divide between the African masses and the colonial state. Some scholars of this early period of transition to independence actually saw the evolution of the notion of “us” against “them” as the beginning of authoritarianism in African politics after independence. Martin Kilson (1963, 262-294), for example, noted that many of the mass parties which had been effective in challenging colonial rule for the attainment of independence actually were destined to become authoritarian because of how they perceived themselves. Using Sigmund Neumann’s analysis of European Socialist and Communist (mass) parties, Kilson argued that most of the effective and successful African political parties which later became the governing parties had a quality that made them more than political parties, properly conceived. They were (and some still are) parties of *integration* which sought to create a distinct African “community” vis-a-vis the colonialists, by attempting to create what were roughly *corporate* entities. Writing in 1963, Kilson suggested that

In the African situation, it is precisely this feature of mass-type nationalist parties that is a major factor in predisposing them to pre-empt the realm of political party activity. For one thing, insofar as their composition is widely representative of all sections of the population, they are inclined to conceive of themselves as the only valid embodiment of the mass will. Consequently, mass-type parties become suspicious of competing parties and are prone to view them as illegitimate arrangements, bent upon challenging the general will. What is more, this suspicion originates in the context of the colonial situation, and under these circumstances opposition to the dominant mass-type party is often regarded not merely as illegitimate but traitorous. When carried into the period of national independence, such opposition has invariably been met with extra-parliamentary restrictions (Kilson 1963, 266).

The phenomenon of mergers of political parties after independence can thus be traced back to the ideology of *integration* that Kilson refers to (see also Coleman and Rosberg 1964.) In the case of Kenya, for example, once KANU became the majority (governing) party after independence, KADU increasingly found itself in an uncomfortable situation with insinuations that it was parochial (i.e. “tribalist”) and that it did not reflect the general will of the Kenyan people. KADU’s

dissolution and its merger with KANU in 1964 therefore simply confirm the *integrative* characteristics of independence movements. In all fairness, however, it also must be pointed out that in some instances, opposition parties after independence were so weak that many "allowed" themselves to disappear and/or disband for lack of electoral support. In the case of mainland Tanzania, for example, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) under Julius Nyerere won 70 out of 71 seats in the first independence elections. The other seat was actually won by an independent candidate who was reported to have been an active TANU member (Mwakyembe 1985, 24-25). The United Tanganyika Party (UTP), the main opposition party, was therefore of little political consequence in the post-independence period. TANU's dominance of electoral politics in mainland Tanzania was mirrored in Ghana by the dominance of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP), which first became the government party in 1951 when Nkrumah became Leader of Government Business, and continued as such after Ghana's independence in 1957. CPP's main opposition had been the ethnically based Northern People's Party (NPP). The parochial outlook of the NPP endeared it less to the masses of Ghanaians, who saw the CPP as the legitimate "national" party (Mazrui and Tidy 1984, 88).

While the disappearance of a political party following electoral defeat may be understandable and logical, it is a different matter when the government party proceeds to legally ban all opposition on the basis of its own dominance. In the two cases cited above -- Tanzania and Ghana -- the ruling parties actually did just that. In Tanzania, the clear dominance of TANU prompted debates within the party about the desirability of political opposition in a newly independent (and underdeveloped) country. Among the elite within TANU, sentiments were high that the legal establishment of a single party democracy was the most desirable option, given the need for unity and the urgent demands of economic development. These two enterprises -- unity and economic development -- could not be achieved, they argued, amidst constant bickering from a "misguided" opposition. Besides, the people had spoken by giving TANU an overwhelming victory in the first independent parliament. A commission appointed by the president to study this question submitted its report in early 1965. The report recommended the establishment of a one-party system. The 1965 Interim Constitution of Tanzania declared the country a *de jure* one party state and it has remained so to this day (Mlimuka and Kabudi 1985, 57-86).

In some countries, the creation of one-party systems in the post-independence period did not go as smoothly as in Tanzania. In neighboring Zambia, for example, President Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP), which led Zambia to independence in 1964, faced much stiffer opposition from the African National Congress (ANC). Although it is probably true that UNIP's dominance in Zambian politics would have made it difficult for any opposition to pose an effective electoral challenge, UNIP nonetheless created roadblocks for both the ANC and another opposition party, the United Party

(UP). Thus, as Tordoff and Scott note, despite the commitment to a policy of maintaining an open political system,

the government banned the United Party (UP) in August 1968 and prohibited the organisation of the ANC in its areas of strength. Then in February 1972 President Kaunda banned the United Progressive Party (UPP), a new political party which had been formed by Simon Kapwepwe (a former vice-president of both UNIP and the country) following his resignation from the ruling party the previous August. Soon afterwards, Kaunda announced that Zambia would become 'a one-party participatory democracy' (1974, 108).

In December, 1972, UNIP was given a legal monopoly of power. The presence of so many other political parties in newly-independent Zambia indicates that the *unitary* claims of UNIP and Kaunda under the slogan "One Zambia, One Nation" were neither supported nor in any other way justified by the historical record. Indeed, the fact that it took *eight* years after independence for President Kaunda and UNIP to achieve the status of a *de jure* single-party system reflects that there was widespread opposition to the establishment of a one-party system. The highly confrontational nature of Zambian politics (evidenced by many more labor strikes and demonstrations in its major urban areas than in neighboring Tanzania) since 1972 suggests that the single-party system under UNIP never has been accepted by a significant number of Zambians. It also suggests that Kaunda's UNIP regime in Zambia may be decidedly more authoritarian than its counterpart in Tanzania, given its apparently inexhaustible determination to keep reacting to the varieties of opposition to its rule. This history, of course, also bears upon the current politics of transition toward a multi-party system in Zambia, an issue we will discuss further below.

Thus, Martin Kilson's concerns and fears have actually been realized. Opposition parties have been banned and single-party systems on the continent are the norm. In the contemporary period, such practices by the governing political parties have been called "exclusionary corporatism." In probably the earliest application of the corporatist model to African politics, Timothy Shaw observed the same tendencies which had concerned Kilson two decades earlier:

In Africa, the corporatist imperative is expressed in a variety of one-party states which span the ideological spectrum but share a concern for control and order. In such systems, the range of interest groups, like the party itself, is singular: one youth group, one women's movement, one trade union, et cetera (Shaw 1982, 255).

If corporatism in Africa is to be defined by its *statist* character in contradistinction to the *societal* character of the developed/European corporatism (Schmitter 1977), then Kilson's and Shaw's observations inevitably lead to the conclusion that in Africa, control over the state and its connections are prized more than

elsewhere. Conversely, the costs of exclusion are higher, given the general tendencies toward economic contraction and political departicipation, as has been the case in the last two decades (Rothchild and Chazan 1988).

Independence and Military Regimes

Many of the African countries which gained their independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s did not survive for very long as civilian regimes. Many of them quickly fell under one form or another of military rule. The principle mechanism for the transition from civilian rule to military rule was, of course, the *coup d'etat*. The first *coup* in Africa actually took place in Egypt in 1952, when King Farouk was overthrown. In 1958, Sudan experienced the first of its many *coups*, the latest being in 1989. By the early 1970s, the *coup d'etat* was the principal mechanism for regime change in Africa, as most countries fell under military rule (Collier 1978, 62-93). Thus, one of the principal characteristics of democratic rule, i.e., the electoral process, has been absent in many African countries due to the existence of military rule. For purposes of our interest in one-party systems, the military regimes of Africa may be viewed as such, but with a different twist -- i.e., the level of violence in society.

Overtly repressive states in Africa have their origins in the military *coup d'etat*. The principal characteristic of military regimes is the abandoning of any pretense of democratic or peaceful "give and take" in the struggle for the allocation of resources in society. Usually there is an increase in the level of state violence used to suppress political parties, trade unions, and so forth -- in contrast to the one-party civilian regimes, which allow limited choice elections or outwardly ludicrous practices such as lining up behind candidates, as has been the practice in Kenya since the mid-1980s (Nyang'oro 1990).

Under military rule, periodic elections are effectively abandoned and policy-making becomes principally an exercise controlled by the military, while policy-implementation remains in the hands of the bureaucracy. In the case of Latin America, scholars of the region coined the phrase "bureaucratic authoritarianism" to explain a similar phenomenon. According to David Collier, bureaucratic authoritarianism occurs when a military government adopts a

bureaucratic approach to policy making as opposed to a more "political" approach through which policies are shaped by economic and political demands from different sectors of society, expressed through such channels as elections, legislatures, political parties, and labor unions (1979, 4).

Significantly, however, the use of terror by the state perhaps signifies the emergence or existence of a pure authoritarian system. Thus, in Africa, the military *coup d'etat* is the starting point of degeneration into a worse authoritarian system. But what constitutes state terrorism? Christopher Mitchell et al. have suggested

that “terrorism by the state . . . involves deliberate coercion and violence (or the threat thereof) directed at some victim, with the intention of inducing extreme fear in some target observers who identify with that victim in such a way that they perceive themselves as potential future victims” (1986, 5). Target observers are thus persuaded to consider altering their behavior in some manner desired by the state-actor. Fundamental assumptions of this conceptualization are:

1. Purposive behavior or intention on the part of the “terrorist actor”
2. The act or threat of violent harm to a victim(s)
3. Observation of the effects of the act or harm by some ultimate target(s)
4. Identification by the target with the victim
5. Some degree of terror induced in the target(s) through a “demonstration effect” and the act of identification
6. Altered behavior (“compellence”) or abandoned behavior (“deterrence”) as a direct result of the terrorist demonstration (Mitchell et al. 1986, 5).

In Africa, there are concrete examples which fit the above description: Uganda 1971-1985; Ethiopia 1980-1991; Central African Republic 1967-1979; Equatorial Guinea 1969-present; Sudan 1969-present; Somalia 1969-1991. In all of these cases, military rule was established after the overthrow of a civilian regime which was “moderately” authoritarian. In its stead a military regime committed to terror came to power. The distinction between the two types of authoritarianism (civilian versus military) is the latter’s overt and direct use of military force and coercive power of the state to achieve specific results internally. Thus, militarism becomes an important element in state terrorism. Marek Thee (1980:15) notes the linkage between militarism and authoritarianism by identifying the *necessary* relationship between the two. Indeed, he sees the phenomenon of militarism reflected in such state behavior as the rush to armaments, the growing role of the military, the use of force as an instrument of supremacy and political power, and the increasing influence of the military in civilian affairs.

The six countries mentioned above fit Thee’s characterization of militaristic regimes, and also fit Mitchell et al.’s characterization as terrorist states. Levels of military expenditure per capita and as a percentage of central government expenditures (CGE) are, along with ratios of military personnel-to-population, important indicators of the commitment of the state to the use of military force for purposes of citizen compliance with state policies. Table 1 indicates such levels of military presence in African states *circa* 1988, along with each state’s rate of increase/decrease in military expenditure since 1978.

The most significant point about military expenditure in Africa is that it rarely is for the protection of the territorial integrity of the states against external danger, but for the suppression of internal dissent. As Paul Baran remarks in *The*

Table 1. Africa: Military Expenditures, Armed Forces and Population, 1988

	Military Expenditures (ME) (in Millions)	Armed Forces (Thousands)	Armed Forces per 1000 population	ME as of % GNP	ME as of % CGE	ME per capita	Annual ME Growth, 1978-1988 (in constant 1988 dollars)	GNP per capita
Algeria	\$1784	126	5.2	3.4%	9.0%	\$74	21%	\$2160
Angola	na	107	13.0	na	na	na	na	1364
Benin	38	5	1.0	2.3	na	9	80	363
Botswana	99	4	3.4	8.2	10.3	83	32	1011
Burkina Faso	55	8	0.9	2.7	17.4	7	17	240
Burundi	na	11	2.1	na	na	na	na	209
Cameroon	na	21	2.0	na	na	na	na	1167
Cape Verde	na	3	8.5	na	na	na	na	742
C. African Rep.	na	5	1.9	na	na	na	na	401
Chad	39	33	6.8	4.3	45.1	8	14	189
Congo	na	15	6.9	na	na	na	na	928
Egypt	6086	452	8.5	7.8	21.7	114	-36	1455
Guinea	na	1	4.0	na	na	na	na	4
Ethiopia	na	250	5.2	na	na	na	na	114
Gabon	167E ^a	8	7.4	5.2	15.3	159	25	3083
Gambia	na	1	1.4	na	na	na	na	256
Ghana	23	16	1.1	0.5	3.1	2	-33	349
Guinea	27	15	2.2	1.2	6.7	4	na	327
Guinea Bissau	na	10	10.5	na	na	na	na	149
Ivory Coast	199	8	0.7	2.3	9.2	18	-28	780
Kenya	294	20	0.8	3.6	14.0	13	7	354
Lesotho	na	2	1.2	na	na	na	na	444
Liberia	na	7	2.8	na	17.5	na	na	na

Libya	na	86	21.7	na	na	na	na	6022
Madagascar	34E ^a	21	1.9	2.0	19.8	3	-50	156
Malawi	34	7	0.9	2.5	12.4	4	-33	181
Mali	45	8	0.9	2.4	na	5	-17	221
Mauritania	na	14	7.0	na	na	na	na	484
Mauritius	4	1	0.9	0.2	0.8	4	100	1737
Morocco	1138E ^a	195	7.8	6.0	na	46	15	753
Mozambique	na	65	4.3	na	na	na	na	68
Niger	21	4	0.6	0.9	4.8	3	0	324
Nigeria	223	107	1.0	0.8	2.6	2	-80	256
Rwanda	37E ^a	5	0.7	1.6	10.0	5	0	316
Sao Tome Príncipe	na	1	8.5	na	na	na	na	449
Senegal	97E ^a	14	2.0	2.1	6.2	13	-48	649
Sierra Leone	6E ^a	4	1.0	0.7	7.0	1	-67	219
Somalia	na	47	5.9	na	na	na	na	203
South Africa	3607	100	2.8	4.3	15.0	103	-08	2397
Sudan	175E ^a	65	2.7	2.4	11.7	7	-53	306
Swaziland	8	3	4.1	1.4	5.1	11	-42	829
Tanzania	111	40	1.6	3.9	14.6	5	-17	118
Togo	na	6	1.8	na	na	na	na	390
Tunisia	255	40	5.2	2.7	7.3	33	106	1236
Uganda	68	25	1.5	1.5	20.9	4	-43	271
Zaire	62	51	1.5	0.8	1.6	1	-75	178
Zambia	na	17	2.3	na	na	na	na	484
Zimbabwe	386	45	4.6	6.3	15.0	40	0	628

^aE - estimate based on partial or uncertain data; na - not available.

Source: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* (Washington, D.C: 1989) pp. 31-72.

Political Economy of Growth:

The conclusion is inescapable that the prodigious waste of the underdeveloped countries' resources on vast military establishments is not dictated by the existence of an external danger. The atmosphere of such a danger is merely created and recreated in order to facilitate the existence of comprador regimes in these countries, and the armed forces that they maintain are needed primarily, if not exclusively, for the suppression of internal popular movements for national and social liberation (1973, 414).

Two of the six countries mentioned earlier -- Ethiopia and Somalia -- have essentially created an "armament culture" in their respective societies in the sense that despite being two of the poorest countries in Africa (and the World), they have been spending more money on armaments than several European countries. These two countries also have been prominent in the suppression of internal popular movements (Samatar 1988; Selassie 1980). According to the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (i.e., the Palmer Report):

Ethiopia and Somalia spent more on arms imports in 1977-79 than did all the Nordic countries plus the Netherlands. Arms imports were worth less than 0.1 percent of the national income of the six European countries but about 14 percent of the national income of the two African countries. Their cost was equivalent to the income of 36,000 people in the European countries but of 5,000,000 people in the African countries (1982, 89-90).

At the beginning of 1991, the military regime of Siad Barre in Somalia was overthrown, but serious fighting still continued among the various ethnic and political factions which had opposed his regime, thus continuing to make life extremely difficult for the majority of the population in the country. In Ethiopia, the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam battled armed opposition in the country until May, 1991, when the government fell, forcing him into exile. Under those conditions, it is difficult to conduct the business of economic development. Most of the state's energy is spent fighting against opposition groups. The militaristic/authoritarian phenomenon has therefore contributed to the crisis of economic development in Africa. It is within the context of economic underdevelopment that the crisis of the state, and the struggle for democracy and transition from single party rule on the continent, must be understood.

Political Economy and Authoritarianism

The economy of sub-Saharan African countries has performed extremely poorly in the last two decades. A 1989 World Bank Report flatly stated that "[o]verall, Africans are almost as poor today as they were 30 years ago." The same

report notes that after the initial period of growth in the early years of independence,

most African economies faltered, then went into decline. There were some exceptions, but Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole has now witnessed almost a decade of falling per capita incomes, increasing hunger, and accelerating ecological degradation. The earlier progress made in social development [has] now [been] eroded (World Bank 1989, 1).

Of course, the result has been the now ubiquitous structural adjustment programs (SAPs) which African countries have adopted in order to continue receiving foreign capital. Whether SAPs have succeeded in arresting the decline of African economies is still a hotly debated issue. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund clearly see SAPs as the only way out of the economic crisis (World Bank, 1989). The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) doesn't seem to think so (ECA 1989). All are agreed, however, that the institution of these economic reforms necessarily will create hardship, at least in the short run, for large segments of the population, especially the urban wage-earners (Onimode 1989; Nelson 1989).

In terms of other economic indicators, the overall picture for sub-Saharan Africa continues to be discouraging. The export sector has for the most part either stagnated or declined, reflecting the general slowdown in the world economy (World Bank 1989, 2). In per capita terms, GDP in sub-Saharan Africa actually fell by 0.2 percent in 1990. These figures led the ECA's now-retired Executive Secretary Adebayo Adedeji to conclude that "this means in effect that the average African continues, for the twelfth successive year, to get poorer" (Harsch 1990a, 1). The poor performance of Africa's export sector has also led to a poor external debt profile with mounting debts increasing the pressure on African governments to borrow even more to meet payment obligations. The World Bank figures released in December, 1990, projected sub-Saharan Africa's debt at \$161 billion in 1990, an increase of more than 9 percent over the \$147 billion of the previous year. However, the ECA estimated the total debt for all of Africa at \$271.9 billion in 1990, or 4.7 percent higher than the year before (Harsch 1990b, 42).

Coupled with the poor performance of the economy, sub-Saharan Africa is also faced with becoming increasingly peripheral to the global economy. The two processes are actually interrelated. As the African economies perform poorly, foreign capital becomes less interested in investing in the region, thus diminishing Africa's attractiveness in the global competition. The industrial sector especially has suffered because of high import levels for raw materials. The decline in social services and education is creating the impression that African labor is less skilled and therefore less attractive to multinationals which may be thinking of relocating from the developed countries in search of cheap skilled labor, a process that led to the rapid industrialization of the Pacific Rim countries in the 1970s and 1980s. The World Bank's conclusion with regard to Africa's economic performance tells

the story:

Africa's deepening crisis is characterized by weak agricultural growth, a decline in industrial output, poor export performance, climbing debt, and deteriorating social indicators, institutions, and environment. Agricultural output has grown annually by less than 1.5 percent on average since 1970, with food production rising more slowly than population. Although industry grew roughly three times as fast as agriculture in the first decade of independence, the past few years have seen an alarming reversal in many African countries where deindustrialization seems to have set in. With export volumes barely growing at all since 1970, Africa's share in world markets has fallen by almost half (World Bank 1989, 2).

Given African states' high propensity to participate directly in economic production and in the marketing of the major export crops, the decline of the economy has had an almost instantaneous effect on state political *and* economic behavior. At the economic level, the state adopts policies that are bound to get it into trouble. For example, in many instances the state underwrites or subsidizes urban consumption and overvalues domestic currencies to maintain certain consumption levels for the most vocal segments of the population -- the urban dwellers (Bates 1981). This behavior, although economically irrational, is politically expedient in the sense that the state is at least able to buy the allegiance and support of the potentially troublesome populations. This behavior by the state is important to our understanding of the nature of political relations. As we noted earlier, the exclusivist character of African corporatist practice suggests that the consequences of exclusion are dire for those segments of the population which either choose not to be included in the corporatist structure, or are excluded deliberately by the state. The result is exclusion from the "national cake." The interaction between the state and the various segments of the population in the allocation of resources in society thus defines the scope of politics -- and thus of authoritarianism -- in Africa.

Toward Building Democracy in Africa

In her study of post-independence politics in Africa, Ruth Berins Collier has argued that understanding regime change in Africa is essentially "the study of the collapse of the "tutelary" democratic regimes introduced during decolonization and the emergence of various types of authoritarian regimes" (1982, 22). In order to understand the nature of regime change, one must understand the differences among the regimes that come and go:

[T]ypes of regimes may be distinguished according to their authority structures or their formal mechanisms of legitimation. In the twentieth century claims to legitimacy have almost universally been made with reference to rule

by the people, a fact which directs our attention to the question of institutionalized mechanisms of mass political participation. Within this framework, one may refer to democratic regimes as those that hold liberal, or . . . “classical,” elections. These are characterized by freedom of voters (universal suffrage, equal weighting of votes, secret ballots with freedom from external pressure, and accurate counting of the ballots), “genuine” competition, and the real possibility of replacing officeholders with opposition candidates as an outcome of balloting. For present purposes, the salient feature of authoritarian regimes is that they do not hold classical elections. What, then, is substituted? What institutionalized mechanisms of legitimation are provided, if any? The answer to this question, which provides a basis for distinguishing subtypes of authoritarian regimes, often involves some form of controlled election (Collier 1982, 22-23).

The election process therefore is central to Collier’s assessment of a regime’s authoritarian or democratic quality. This approach offers useful insights into the general characteristics of regimes in Africa. However, its drawback is that it is more descriptive than analytical in its approach. It leaves us with the impression of a score card on democracy and authoritarianism, thus making it a less dynamic approach.

Nonetheless, Collier’s work is important in the sense that it points to some of the problems that are pertinent to the analysis of different forms of popular participation in the political process. Indeed, as the push for pluralist politics gains momentum in Africa, the issue of holding “classical” elections and the real possibility of replacing office holders with opposition candidates as an outcome of balloting become critical issues of concern. This has been the case in virtually every country in sub-Saharan Africa (*Africa Demos* 1990-91). Thus, the push for multi-party/pluralist politics in Africa denotes the current limit of “political space,” and provides an antithesis to the authoritarianism of the state. As Mahmood Mamdani has recently noted in his discussion of constitutionalism in Africa, “without the fact of oppression, there can be no practice of resistance and no notion of rights” (1990, 359).

The resistance to one-party rule in Kenya, Zambia and many other places essentially reflects the internal contradictions in political economies that have failed to sustain development efforts that were thought would lead to dependency, thus forcing such regimes to circumscribe political rights in order to survive politically. In Zambia, for example, when President Kaunda was facing pressure from multi-party advocates in 1990, he suggested that if the economy was not in a shambles, he would be happy to retire. Said he:

Of course retirement has crossed my mind. I’m going to retire, but I want to retire a happy man, not leaving behind economic problems. . . . I want to put the economy right (*Standard* [Nairobi] 24 August 1990, 4).

If Zambian advocates of multi-party democracy were to wait for President

Kaunda "to put the economy right" they would have to wait for a very long time, as the Zambian economy is probably in the worst shape ever, and the prospects for recovery under the present socio-economic structure are next to nil.

The Structural Adjustment Programs (liberalization) adopted by most sub-Saharan countries have been primarily *economic* in their thrust, and for the most part have been externally derived. While the economic rationale for the adoption of these programs may be understandable, the political consequences of economic liberalization have been problematic. Until very recently (1989), political liberalization was never part of SAP, and even after that, neither the World Bank nor the IMF have pushed aggressively for political liberalization. Given the centrality of the state in the implementation of SAP, and given the economic pain that inevitably afflicts the majority of the population as a result of reform, it is inescapable to conclude that SAP and state authoritarianism are closely related in Africa (Nyang'oro 1992).

Most important, however, is the fact that the push for political space, i.e. political liberalization, must be understood as a necessary result of authoritarianism by the state. While it is true that SAPs have a bearing on the nature of the relations between the state and its citizenry, the civil/societal struggles vis-a-vis the state are the ones that ultimately matter in terms of projecting possible outcomes. In African countries, it is not clear at the moment whether governments in power are genuinely interested in political reform. In almost all of sub-Saharan Africa, governments have permitted limited discussions regarding multi-party politics. In some instances, however, the debate either has been sharply curtailed, as in Zaire and Mali, or outright prohibited, as in Kenya (Nyang'oro 1990). The reluctance of governments in power to entertain the possibilities of genuine political reform simply suggests that the chasm between state and civil society is as wide as ever in Africa. This makes prognosis for the immediate future less encouraging, and guarantees more violent struggles ahead.¹

Conclusion

Political reform in Africa -- whether a move toward multi-party systems, or something else -- will occur only as a result of struggles by the population against repressive and authoritarian tendencies of the post-colonial state. These struggles suggest a fundamental point that sometimes is neglected in the analysis of African politics, viz., the limits of petit-bourgeois (elite) politics. The failure of elites in Africa -- civilian *and* military -- to transcend the objective limitations of dependent and disarticulated economies is the primary reason for the evolution of authoritarianism. It is true that the elite performed admirably in challenging, and ultimately defeating Western colonialism in the struggle for political independence. However, the very basis of their success against colonialism has been the basis of their failure during the post-colonial period. Hence the current push towards pluralism in Africa.

NOTES

¹Toward the end of 1991 there were signs that governments which had previously restricted debate on multi-partyism were beginning to give in to relentless pressure from opposition groups. This was the case, for example, in Togo, Niger, Burkina Faso and Madagascar. In these countries, the governments had agreed to hold "National Conferences" to determine the direction of the democratic movement in their respective countries. (The phenomenon of "National Conference" is tentatively discussed in Nyang'oro 1991.)

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