



Assessing Democratic Development in Africa

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Abstract

The challenge of developing lasting and representative political institutions based on the will of the people has been clearly demonstrated in Africa over the past decade. Depending on one's perspective, recent years have shown either the promise of a transition from autocracy to democracy in Africa, the continent's inability to do so, or some intermediate and inconclusive result. A substantial number of countries including such regional powers as South Africa and Nigeria have succeeded in holding legitimate elections and in moving ahead to address questions of democratic consolidation, albeit at an early stage. Anyone suggesting in the late 1980s that this would be the case by 2000 would have probably been roundly dismissed. On the other hand, however, the past decade has seen the tragedies of state failure in countries such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. So Africa defies simplistic generalizations. The reality is much more complex and varied.

The paper briefly categorizes countries in 3 types: those undergoing meaningful change, those adopting the form but not the substance of democratic functioning, and those that have not undergone any significant democratization process. It then provides some considerations for future institutional development. It also highlights implications for the future, and provides several policy-oriented recommendations.

I. Introduction

The challenge of developing lasting and representative political institutions based on the will of the people has been clearly demonstrated in Africa over the past decade. Depending on one's perspective, recent years have shown either the promise of a transition from autocracy to democracy in Africa, the continent's inability to do so, or some intermediate and inconclusive result. A substantial number of countries including such regional powers as South Africa and Nigeria have succeeded in holding legitimate elections and in moving ahead to address questions of democratic consolidation, albeit at an early stage. Anyone suggesting in the late 1980s that this would be the case by 2000 would have probably been roundly dismissed. On the other hand, however, the past decade has seen the tragedies of state failure in countries such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. So Africa defies simplistic generalizations. The reality is much more complex and varied.

Huntington, in his now famous postulation of a third wave, characterized it as a post-war growth of liberal democratic institutions around the world. Diamond has argued that a fourth wave is on its way, that whatever pullback or lessening of the pace of political reform may have occurred in the Third Wave's wake will be superseded by the next round of reform.¹ If these perspectives are true, where does Africa fit into this equation? What can we learn from the experience of governance in Africa over the past decade?

The organizers of this meeting have posed some very challenging questions for us to consider in this context. They include: Has democratization helped or hindered ethnic frictions? Why have some states done better than others? What democratic models work in Africa? What about de facto single party states, how to encourage democratization? Are more collapsed states likely? What policies have been most successful in promoting democracy?

It is, of course, impossible to answer all of these questions definitively. This paper has a more modest goal – to serve as a basis for discussion. It outlines some of the extent and breadth of political change in Africa over the past decade. It argues that the glass is half full, half empty. This is true not only at the continent-wide level, as we assess the overall “scorecard” of democratic reform, but also at the individual country level. There is hardly an authoritarian regime in Africa which does not contain some element or elements of political liberalization, for example through the presence of opposition parties, civil society and/or an independent press. Similarly, there is not one democratic country that we would consider to be fully consolidated.

The paper briefly categorizes countries in 3 types; those undergoing meaningful change, those adopting the form, but not the substance of democratic functioning, and those that have not undergone any significant democratization process. It then provides some considerations for future institutional development. It also highlights implications for the future, and provides several policy-oriented recommendations. These include:

¹ Diamond, Larry, Plattner, Mark, Chu, Yun-Han and Tien, Hung Mao, eds. *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- Continuing and increasing support for D/G activities in Africa;
- strengthening the international regime regarding democracies;
- encouraging International Financial Institutions and other donors to promote the inter-related nature of economic and political development;
- supporting continued focus on institutional design;
- considering, in extremis, the necessity of partition.

To provide a basic framework I distinguish between three models of contemporary African governance. Obviously these distinctions are not always perfect; there is overlap and not all countries fit neatly into one category or another. But these typologies can be useful as guideposts. To an extent, USG policy towards these varying contexts must be differentiated.

II. Positive Examples

Let us first examine the positive side of the ledger, not just because it provides the rosier picture, but because the breadth and depth of this change should not be undervalued. All too often the bad news from Africa tends to drown out the rest. That there have been dramatic and widespread improvements can be seen anecdotally, and by looking at various measurement methodologies. For example, the Polity Three data developed by Ted Gurr et al at the University of Maryland denoted significant positive political change for 11 African countries – almost one-quarter of the continent – between 1988 and 1994.

A recent study from Cornell University on how leaders leave office, including either through coup, war or invasion, or by elections noted the following:

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Through coup, war or invasion</u>	<u>Elections</u>
1960-69	27	0
1970-79	30	0
1980-89	22	1
1990-2000	22	14

The latter figure does not include other leadership changes which reflect democratic processes, such as interim or caretaker regimes and impeachment, which would bring the total, for the 90's, to 28. ²

Information from Freedom House's Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties provides an additionally nuanced perspective. Between 1988 and 1994, 12 countries increased at least one step, from Not Free to Partly Free, or from Partly Free to Free. Between 1994 and 2000 the trend continued, albeit at a slightly slower rate, with an additional 9 countries increasing at least one step. It is also interesting to note that overall, between 1988 and 2000 only three declined (Gambia, Sudan, and Swaziland).

Countries in the positive category are in all regions of the continent, although more tend to be clustered in southern Africa. They include formerly autocratic regimes that have evolved, such as Ghana and Mozambique, but more result from popular pressure that delegitimized the former autocratic ruler (although in the case of both Benin and Madagascar, he returned to power democratically). Most have had 2 or more rounds of national elections.

Many of these countries have an active and unfettered press, vibrant civil societies and/or institutions that function at least relatively effectively. There are, however, serious problems of democratic consolidation. These include contentious/contested electoral processes, corruption, strains between governing institutions, poorly performing political parties, and serious ethnic and regional tensions that threaten the development of a democratic political culture.

² Arthur Goldsmith, "Risk, Rule and Reason: Leadership in Africa", *Africa Notes*, Institute for African Development, Cornell University, May 2000.

The latter point has at times provoked questions about the overall suitability of democracy for Africa. Ethnic violence that has occurred in the wake of moves towards democracy in countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, and Cote d'Ivoire is often cited a grounds for championing this position. I believe that what these events prove is not that democracy per se is bad, rather that they have resulted due to a lack of democratic processes. What they tell us is that democratization processes have to be carefully managed in an inclusive and participatory fashion.

Why should democratic transitions have any greater chance of success on the continent now than they did in the period of immediate post-colonial rule? One could make the case that there are a number of positive differences. Certainly the human capital base has expanded tremendously. The growth of communications has facilitated the exchange of information, and the demonstration effect of political liberalization both around the world and on the African continent. The international community is evolving a set of norms, or regime of laws and rules in this regard. Aid conditionality has moved in this direction, and the IFIs and the World Bank, in particular, no longer see questions of political reform as being verboten subjects to address.

Another, more subtle point should be emphasized. Decades of economic decline have tested the patience even of the most long-suffering of Africans. Corruption and mismanagement of national wealth created populations ready for change from authoritarian leadership. A political generation that had been in power for, in many cases, a quarter century or more, had lost their appeal and legitimacy. People finally expressed their frustration with human rights abuses and the lack of fundamental freedoms. These leads to the conclusion that the 1960s weren't about democracy; they were a reaction to injustices on what had previously occurred. Nkrumah's famous quote, "Seek ye first the political kingdom" referred to colonial imperialism. By contrast, the democratic wave of the late 1980s and 90s was more a reaction against the authoritarian legacy of the post-independence period than an expression of support for any particular, specific set of institutions. That is why movement towards democratic consolidation will take time, as adaptation, experimentation and evolution play out.

A number of observers of the international, and African scene, such as Karatnycy, Diamond and Michael Bratton have pointed to increasing evidence that one of the key variables for successful democratization is previous exposure to, and use of, pluralist institutions, even if consolidation did not occur. More study needs to be done in this area, but it suggests that sustained political reform/liberalization may occur in the future in African countries whose experience has, to date, been less than fully successful.

III. Virtual Democracies

Juxtaposed against this generally positive perspective is the reality that many countries are not on a clear path towards consolidating democratic institutions. In these countries authoritarian governments have attempted to carefully manage the democratization process, and the legitimacy of electoral processes has fallen short of expectations. The legitimacy of elected governments is contested by broad segments of society which argue that conditions under which elections were held did not permit the expression of a meaningful choice.

There are four subgroups in this category. It includes formerly single-party regimes that have allegedly entered into a democratization process such as Gabon, Togo, Cameroon and Kenya. These countries have presidents and supporting elites who have learned how to utilize the language and formal trappings of democracy without embracing its spirit, especially the principle of alternance in power. Unfortunately, national elections have neither resolved issues of political legitimacy nor succeeded in creating political equilibria in these countries. Most of the fault for this state of affairs, however, can be laid at the feet of the governments involved. They bear an extra responsibility for establishing the 'playing field' or conditions under which elections will be held. In addition, these formerly authoritarian governments and ruling parties have a particular responsibility to overcome suspicions that their *raison d'être* is to perpetuate themselves in power by whatever means necessary.

Second are countries where a coup displaced a democratically elected government, such as Burundi, the Gambia and Congo Brazzaville. It is interesting to note the relative paucity of these latter examples, and the fact that in at least two cases – Niger and Sierra Leone, democratically elected leaders are now in power. A third, smaller set of countries are those with democratically elected governments which have backtracked, such as Zambia and Liberia.

We can also include in this category the group of countries led by what had been hopefully called the “New Leaders” in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda. The political reform side of their ledgers is wanting. Non- governmental organizations have been expelled from Eritrea, which has yet to legalize a multi-party system. Political party and civic organization development has been impeded in Ethiopia. The no-party “Movement” system in Uganda was recently prolonged. The RPF dominates Rwandan politics and a pluralist system is not yet, and may not be in place in the future. There is no serious prospect of meaningful multiparty electoral competition in these countries. And yet, it is precisely the lack of political checks and balances which led to Africa’s post-independence sorry experience of political authoritarianism and single party rule. Legitimate concerns thus exist about the lack of emerging democratic structures, and whether these governments are prepared to permit the development of a political culture allowing alternance in power.

It is clear that the lack of progression in these cases results from a variety of causes. Part of the problem may be opposition parties that take rejectionist positions which may call into question their adherence to democratic values. More generally, however, these flow in part from a lack of political will, especially in contexts where incumbent leaders are from minority ethnic groups,

and they see the unfettered exercise of democracy as being inimical to their own interests and those of their base of support. Another set of causes is more value neutral, and flows from a lack of experience and resources. In theory, at least, these can be more easily addressed.

IV. Stillborn Transitions

A third set of countries have yet to make it to the point of holding elections. Most often intractable political conflicts have impeded development of a consensus regarding the conditions under which elections would be held, and the authorities have not attempted to hold elections under the prevailing conditions. Countries in this category include Congo Kinshasa, Sudan, and Somalia. These are unlikely to develop meaningful democratization processes in the foreseeable future. They are problems to be managed, rather than clear candidates for long-term stability. It is unlikely that any result not including at a minimum a significant amount of decentralization of power will result in any kind of sustained peace.

V. Sectoral Perspective

Another conceptual approach to the question of democratic development in Africa is to assess progress sectorally. How well are the constituent elements of democracy; civil society, political parties, electoral processes and governance, or the functioning of institutions such as parliaments, municipal governments and the judiciary functioning. This is, of course, an extremely subjective exercise that would be facilitated by the development of analytic tools such as the Nations in Transit project which USAID has funded in eastern and central Europe. While it is not possible to fully address these questions, several generalized observations may be useful, keeping in mind that democratic development takes time and is rarely linear.

Civil society has played a remarkable, and largely positive role in promoting democratic change on the continent. It is likely to continue in this vein. The cumulative effect played by human right groups, advocacy organizations, journalists and lawyers' associations, trade unions and other watchdog groups has been vital. This is a similarity with democratic transitions in other parts of the world, especially eastern Europe and Asia. There are at times problems with accountability and alleged partisanship but overall the balance sheet has been very positive.

The record of political party functioning is much more checkered. In this post-ideological age it is difficult to identify bases around which parties organize which are not personalist or ethnically/regionally based. In addition, many parties remain heavily top-down in leadership style, and are weak on internally democratic, participatory processes. The eternal problem of lack of resources, and of organizational expertise is especially bedeviling for opposition parties. The adherence of some parties to democratic principles is questionable. The answer is not to seek to do away with parties, as some governments would like, but rather the development of political party "enabling environments" designed to mainstream parties into the process. Elements of this could include the development of codes of conduct which reflect fundamental democratic values, the possibility of public financing, and the establishment of credible conflict resolution mechanisms such as ombudsmen which could address legitimate party concerns before they reach a stage of threatening the democratization process.

The conduct of elections on the continent has both highly positive and negative elements. Many countries have held credible elections that have resulted in governments having popular legitimacy. Others, however, have suffered from serious structural, financial and administrative problems. There is an increasing body of experience and expertise on the continent, and organizations such as the African Association of Election Administrators have the potential to assist in this process. The principle of independent electoral authorities is increasingly recognized.

The OAU and the sub-regional groups such as ECOWAS and the Southern Africa Parliamentary Forum have an important, although to date imperfectly realized, record of promoting legitimate elections. It is interesting to note that an OAU election observer delegation did call it as it was recently regarding presidential polls in the Tanzanian islands of Zanzibar. It denounced the electoral commission there as incompetent, stating that "the OAU observer team regrets that it is

unable to endorse the Zanzibar elections as having been freely and peacefully conducted and representative of popular opinion."

Hopefully the current situation in the U.S. is providing a reminder of the importance of attention and resources being devoted to electoral processes.

The functioning of national parliamentary and decentralized bodies such as municipal or local assemblies is also potentially an important part of the democratization equation. In general, parliaments in Africa exercise less power than executive branches, although they have been making, along with other bodies such as constitutional courts, and media councils, some inroads into executive predominance. Much needs to be done in this regard, some of which can be promoted through donor assistance. Similarly, most African countries are at early stages of implementing decentralization reforms.

In summary, civil society has played the most consistently positive role in promoting democracy. Electoral processes present a mixed picture. Governance institutions and political parties present the greatest challenges.

VI. Towards Post-Consociationalism?

For democracy to survive anywhere, it must reflect appropriate contextual realities, especially the social and political makeup of the country. As in the early post-independence period, some of the democratic experiments in the 1990s have imported constitutional frameworks from elsewhere, especially their former colonial powers. These institutions need to evolve, and in some cases they have already. When this hasn't occurred, such as in Burundi, violence has erupted in large part because of a negative-sum and brusque transfer of power from the minority to the majority. In South Africa, by contrast, an inclusive, transitional framework was created to minimize the possibility of groups being "frozen out" of the new system and resorting to extra-constitutional methods of gaining power. A necessary consideration underlying all of this is how this change can be managed to avoid subsequent violence and rejection of the process. The challenge that policy-makers here and elsewhere have wrestled with for the past decade and more is how to calibrate carrot (positive support for democratic reform) and stick (sanctions and public pressure) approaches to facilitate change,

In his highly influential 1997 entitled "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", Fareed Zakaria appeals for a revival of constitutionalism. He notes that constitutions were meant to "tame the passions of the public, creating not simply democratic but deliberative government". He notes that failed attempts at democracy, such as in Germany's Weimar Republic, have led to suspicion about over-reliance on complicated institution-building. The problem, Zakaria notes, is that emphasis on more purely majoritarian democracy can lead to winner-take all scenarios in which significant sectors of the population have now vested interests in its success.³

Perhaps reflecting the importance of consensus decision-making in African political tradition, many of the successful political transitions in the first set of countries referred to above have had some element of consociationalism to them. The widespread use of some form of proportional representation in election systems, institutional recognition of ethnic or regional interests (such as in special voting districts for the Tuareg population in Niger), the structure and nature of national conferences and the maintenance in power for at least a transitional period of formerly authoritarian rulers in a number of so-far successful experiments in democracy all reflect to some extent consociational principles.

Admittedly, the focus of international attention on South Africa in this regard is somewhat unique in the African context, as is its state of economic development. However, while South Africa represents the best model of participatory African transitions in the sense of cutting the loser into the process, it isn't the only one. Many countries which held national conferences, for example, found ways to treat former leaders honorably and to preserve a role for them and their political movements in the democratization process. Benin reformed its electoral system to include increased proportionality. Others have begun decentralization reforms. While not officially consociational in form, South Africa's Truth Commission, which has been partly replicated in Nigeria, in which those guilty of politically motivated crimes are made to account for

3 Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1997

their actions, can also be a useful tool in creating a basis for reconciliation elsewhere on the continent.

Consociational and power-sharing arrangements for at least a transitional period are often needed, especially in African societies characterized by deep ethnic cleavages. Some of these have successfully engaged in political transitions while other democratization processes are either stuck in neutral or are in reverse. Countries such as Kenya, Cameroon and Togo, for example, have failed to conduct electoral processes which resulted in popular mandate and legitimacy. In all of these countries political power has been garnered, if not monopolized, by ethnic minorities. The central question remains: how to democratize a political system when the regimes in power believe that maintaining control is the only means they have to ensure their continued status, if not existence.

A key lesson may thus be for the international community to encourage evolving institutional development which includes positive sum institutional arrangements. The fact that in a democracy the pie is larger than who sits in the president's chair must be understood by political protagonists. Election systems, second chambers of parliaments, and federalism or other decentralization models all offer possibilities for meaningful, broad-based political participation. It may be argued that deals in which "grand" or "national" coalition governments are imposed from above may fulfill this criteria, but this may be only addressing the issue in superficial terms. Coalition governments may not last, and they may be unstable and/or unworkable. While they may buy some breathing room for more negotiations on key issues, they do not by themselves address the question of longer-term institutional development. They can even run counter to the development of a political culture of freely articulating political differences by creating a forced marriage between political protagonists.

Consociational theory, however, brings with it a set of criticisms that are especially pertinent in the African context. Some argue that it is too focussed on elites. This normative argument does not reflect the reality of African politics, however, in which elites do have significant and often commanding roles in governing their nations. Another argument questions the wisdom of institutional arrangements in which the practice of political identification by ethnic group is legitimized. This argument implies that ethnicity does not play an important role in the political life of more established democracies. It also ignores the reality of contemporary African politics, in which regional or ethnic identification is a central issue. It also suggests a permanence or immutability of these arrangements which need not be the case. Consociational arrangements can exist for limited or transitional periods of time. This presents the possibility that as democracies become more established they may adapt institutions to reflect the amount of importance given to ethnic or other special considerations as appropriate.

Another set of criticisms relates to the feasibility of consociational structures. Obviously, not all the elements cited by proponents of consociationalism can be found in African nations. In addition, to be successful consociationalism requires that the elites conducting the negotiating to produce their constituencies in support of the compromises that are required. This is often a difficult and at least partly unsuccessful task.

One of the greatest challenges is how to inculcate democratic systems in environments where there is great ethnic/regional discord. It works better with a multiplicity of different groups - in a context where there are only a couple of different groups it does not work that well. Second, in countries with weak state institutions and low levels of economic development, it may be asking too much to how it implement a fully consociational model. Third, at least in the short run, it tends to be more expensive than more majoritarian structures because of needed various institutions and levels of government. (Countries such as Senegal have decided not to have upper chambers at least in part for these reasons). Fourth and perhaps most importantly, how can autocratic regimes be convinced – or forced - to truly open up and accept the at least partial loss of power that is inherent to the governing regime when consociational change occurs? Thus, the utility of a consociational approach must be carefully considered, as well as how, in what fora and with which participation these decisions are made. The international community can be helpful, but in most cases it cannot take the lead.

VII. Recommendations and Conclusion

A. *Continue Current Support.* A growing body of research and anecdotal information demonstrates that tangible USG efforts, both bilateral and multilateral, to promote the development of democratic institutions in Africa has had a considerable positive cumulative effect. Some types of programming work better than others and some important areas need further focus. I believe these include increased support to augment African capacity to undertake public opinion in order to strengthen vertical, as well as horizontal accountability. A fresh look should also be taken at ways that political party development can be assisted.

These issues are, of course, highly sensitive and delicate. The international community can help by providing a range of information and experiences. The USG has taken a lead in the international community in providing technical support for emerging democracies. More can be done in this regard, in providing comparative information on constitutional and institutional development. Electoral systems, parliamentary and executive branch structures and decentralization issues are some of the questions that should be addressed

In addition, it is important to maintain at least a reasonably uniform public position in strong support of continued democratic development. This is a rather self-evident point, but it is important what the USG says, and how it says it. We have often heard the importance with which champions of democracy in Africa note the support of and have taken inspiration from, the articulated position USG promoting democratic development. The reverse has also been true. Obviously at times this must be carefully nuanced so as not to produce counter-productive effects, but a lowered tone on this issue will be noticed and interpreted as a lessening of fickle USG priorities. It is important that a new Administration not contribute to a perspective of support for democracy being one in a list of shifting developmental priority emphases.

Both the carrot and the stick need to be used in encouraging governments and other players to develop democratic political systems. The tools of suasion include bilateral and multilateral assistance, and jawboning. At least the latter appear to be employed less frequently in recent years by such countries as the United States and France, despite this tactic's undeniable role in fostering change in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, turning up the volume on these issues would be a central element of a sustained international emphasis on democratization

Words, however, are not enough, especially as authoritarian leaders have guessed correctly that the international community's bark, which itself can be inconsistent, is worse than its bite. Multilateral organizations such as the U.N. and the Organization of African Unity should be pushed towards paying more than lip service to democratic ideals on the continent. Meaningful international sanctions on countries that do not meet international norms regarding democratic development are an essential tool.

B. *Strengthen the International Regime Regarding Democracies.* As a corollary to the first point, there is an evolving and growing set of normative international rules governing the acceptability, or lack thereof, of non-democratic governments. To use a somewhat overblown

term, the noose is tightening for governments that do not accept at least some level of democratic practices. There are a number of different examples in this regard, ranging from increasing application of the International Covenant on Human Rights in the Pinochet and Habre cases, and the adoption by the OAS of a activist policy to work against governments coming to power by non-democratic means, such as in recent cases in Uruguay and Peru.

A recent OAU summit in Algiers, took a strong stance against non-democratic governments, stating that any one which comes to power through undemocratic means would not receive recognition. Certainly General Guei found his path to power complicated by a continental and regional context which was not terribly supportive of his plans. An anecdote shows the power of inter-regional cross-fertilization, and the effectiveness of U.S. democracy promotion assistance. In a conference in Yemen a couple of years ago on democratic consolidation funded in part by the USG, President Konare of Mali, the incoming president of the OAU, learned about the OAS policy on non-democratic governments. At Konare's request, his charge here in Washington literally walked over to the OAS headquarters to get a hard copy of this information which he sent by DHL to Bamako. This served as the basis for Konare's proposal that the OAU adopt its own, similar policy.

Obviously there is a learning process in this regard – the European Union's clumsy attempt to pressure Austria into rejecting the Freedom Party comes to mind. Further work is needed to coordinate these between the global and regional organization levels, and to further what constitutes non-democratic practices, and what penalties can most effectively be applied. This is, nonetheless, an important field for further development.

C. *Encourage International Financial Institutions and Other Donors to Further Recognize the Inter-Related Nature of Economic and Political Development.* There has been progress on this issue, particularly during James Wolfensohn's tenure at the World Bank, but more can be done to have the donors integrate political development issues more fully into their developmental approaches. It is clear that the effectiveness of institutions of governance, such as the legislature and municipal government, is integral to the success of democratization processes. In reality there is no dividing line between where economic reform stops and political reform begins. To cite one example, the World Bank and the ADB could increase and broaden their support for legislative functioning. Legislative strengthening activities could be increasingly mainstreamed into country plans. Project activities could focus not only on current areas of focus such as financial accountability and legal/judicial reform but include legislative-civil society outreach, constituent services, support for infrastructure, legislative-executive relations and overall legislative functioning and procedures. Furthermore, IFI activities could go beyond this and recognize that other, ostensibly political exercises, such as elections, have direct positive or negative effects on countries economies, depending on how legitimate they are.

D. *Encourage Continued Focus on Institutional Design.* This carrot should not be neglected. More emphasis should be placed on dissemination of institutional examples from democracies in Africa and around the world concerning inclusive ways in which issues such as constitutional development, legislative structures, decentralization, and separation of powers are

being addressed. Architects of democratic institutions must be persuaded to dare to think creatively about how democratic values and their socio-political realities can be accommodated. They must not simply opt for wholesale adoption of the former colonial power's institutions. The international community must also continue to work to create peaceful regional environments in which democratic development can take place. This is a long-term process, as witnessed by the range of successes and failures that have accompanied multilateral efforts at making and keeping the peace in a seemingly growing number of flash points around the continent.

Strategies also need to be developed to make it more difficult for authoritarian governments to decide that the only alternatives are either continued complete power or their total defeat. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that creating a positive sum political environment does not go so far as to tip the scales and make a system fundamentally undemocratic.

The use of indigenous traditions such as ganwaa in the Oromo of Ethiopia, khotla in Botswana and gacacca in Rwanda should be promoted. This recommendation needs an asterisk because, with multi-ethnic societies we must always be asking whose traditions are we talking about. To the extent that they can be accepted, adapted and utilized in conjunction with more “modern” democratic practices, this can help democracy take strong root in Africa.

E. Be Prepared, in Extremis, to Consider Partition. The issue of the future of the nation-state in Africa looms large. The problems inherent in borders drawn by colonial powers are well-known. There is no consensus on how to deal with this. It is useful to note the paucity of secessionist parties. Why? Idea of nationhood, seeking resources from the center, recognize the potential for disaster. Ethiopia has enshrined the de jure right to secession in its constitution, although whether this would be de facto is open to question.

Some of Africa’s conflicts are interminable, with no realistic prospect for solution. Their duration results in massive human suffering. The USG should be prepared to establish criteria for extreme cases in which it would be willing to support partition as a solution. These criteria could include the duration and magnitude of the conflict, and the regional ethnic and demographic context. This, naturally, a highly controversial topic. Many argue that it could lead to greater sentiment for secession on the continent, but this hasn’t occurred so far, despite the precedential nature of Eritrea’s secession. What in fact is striking in this period of greatly expanded freedom of speech and association in much of Africa has been the paucity of publicly expressed sentiment for secession. Others claim that partition could promote regional instability. But so does extended civil conflict.

This is not a suggestion that a broad new liberal policy on partition be adopted. The creation of criteria could be promoted however, under which extreme cases such as the conflict in southern Sudan, partition would be seriously considered as a policy option.

Will democracy develop and prosper as Africa moves into the 21st century? Yes, but a number of key issues have to be addressed, in addition to items outlined above. These include progress

in promoting the concept of the subordinate role of the military to civilian authority, while recognizing that for this to happen two-way communication must occur. The Asian experience shows that sustained economic development can greatly facilitate the task of establishing and consolidating representative political institutions. Certainly the best scenario will be if African nations have created democracies that are recognizable to the world as such, and which result from a symbiosis of both African traditions and experiences from the wealth of democratic experiments around the world.

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