DEMOCRATIZATION IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AFRICA

Coping with Uncertainty

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Democratization in Late Twentieth-Century Africa

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Preface

The genesis of this collaborative effort can be traced to May of 1991, when the editor happened to be in Cameroon at the apogee of popular resistance to the Biya regime. In those days of *villes mortes* (ghost towns) and *conference nationale souveraine* (sovereign national conference), the democratic vortex seemed certain to engulf anyone who dared to stand in its way. But things did not turn out as envisioned by Cameroonian democracy activists. Paul Biya "won" both the 1992 and 1997 presidential elections; he was not alone. Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, who overthrew at least one elected government in 1981 and then brazenly professed his lack of faith in the ballot box, has emerged as one of Africa's most respected "new democrats," having "won" elections in 1992 and 1996. Omar Bongo of Gabon and Daniel arap Moi of Kenya are still standing firm. Of course, the 1990s also have seen the displacement of some of Africa's most entrenched former dictators; the late Kamuzu Banda of Malawi and Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia are now political relics of a seemingly distant past.

After observing the mixed record of post-Cold War elections and politics in Cameroon and other African countries, I could not resist the temptation to assemble a group of scholars and have them compare and contrast various African cases of transition from unipartyism to multipartyism. The result is this text, which situates political events, including elections, in late twentieth-century Africa in the larger context of democratization. But what is democratization? Why do countries democratize? What factors, both internal and external to African countries, appear to be critical in explaining democratization outcomes; in other words, why success in some cases and setback and stalemate in others? What are the prospects for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa? The pursuit of answers to these questions is what this work is all about. The approach is very straightforward. Following an introductory chapter, seven transition cases are examined: Malawi, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana, and Gabon respectively.

The contributors are, in the main, Africa-born scholars and prodemocracy activists. Three were intimately involved in the struggle for political change in their respective countries. The perspectives of people who know what it is like to face down authoritarianism adds strength to the study by giving it a more trenchant edge. Indeed, there is much to be found here that some might consider iconoclastic, perhaps even heretical. This is good. The pursuit of knowledge requires occasional controversies out of which new insights and wisdom may emerge. It is also salutary that the contributors come from more than one professional discipline: there are five political scientists, one linguist, and one former journalist and radio commentator, now dean of communications studies at Yaoundé University. The diverse nature of the group, combined with the fact that some of its members have been tested for battle, make the work more enjoyable to read than it might otherwise have been.

One institution and several individuals contributed mightily to this manuscript. Honorable mention of each one is necessary, although, in the end, only I the editor and the writers should be held responsible for the ideas expressed herein. The University of Missouri Research Board generously funded part of the project. The chapters on Tanzania and Gabon (written jointly) would not have been possible without financial support from the board. Furthermore, the Department of Political Science at the University of Missouri–St. Louis reduced my spring 1996 teaching load to facilitate the completion of the tedious task of editing. Professor Ho-Won Jeong, who spent 1995–96 as a Theodore Lentz post-doctoral fellow at the University of Missouri–St. Louis was always available for informal one-on-one discussions with me. Professor Ruth Iyob also provided useful advice. Above all, the Africa-based contributors are commended for their participation. Carrying out high-quality research under conditions of scarcity and uncertainty is not easy. Yet they came through, even though on numerous occasions they were on the receiving end of long-distance telephone calls at odd hours and some terse notes, which thinly disguised my impatience.

Abbreviations

ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AFORD	Alliance for Democracy
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AFRC	Armed Forces Ruling Council
AIDB	Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank
ARC-CNS	Alliance for Change in Cameroon through a Sovereign National Conference
BP	British Petroleum
CCM	*Chama Cha Mapinduzi*
CD	Campaign for Democracy
CDS	Center for Democratic Studies
CFA	*Communauté Financière Africaine*
CNC	Committee for National Consensus
COD	*Coordination de l'Opposition Démocratique*
COR	Council for Ogoni Rights
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CPP	Convention People's Party
CRC	Constitutional Review Committee
CRTV	Cameroon Radio and Television
CUF	Civic United Front
DPN	Democratic Party of Nigeria
DWM	December Women's Movement
EC	European Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EEC	European Economic Community
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
EU	European Union
FAC	*Forces Alliées pour le Changement*
FUAPO	*Front Uni des Associations et Partis de l'Opposition*
GDM	Grassroots Democratic Movement
GNP	Gross National Product
GSO	*Groupe Spécial d'Opération*
ICDA	Interim Committee for Democratic Alliance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ING	Interim National Government
IOT	International Observer Team
KANU	Kenya African National Union
LESOMA	Socialist League of Malawi
MAFREMO	Malawi Freedom Movement
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEISON	All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement
MFJ	Movement for Freedom and Justice
MORENA	*Mouvement de Redressement National*
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MYP	Malawi Youth Pioneers
NAC	Nyasaland African Congress
NADECO	National Democratic Coalition
NCCR	National Committee for Constitutional Reform
NCOPA	National Coordination of Opposition Parties and Associations
NCPN	National Center Party of Nigeria
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDC	National Democratic Convention
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEB	National Election Board
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIP	National Independence Party
NLC	Nigeria Labor Congress
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRC	National Redemption Council
NRC	National Republican Convention
NYCOP	National Youth Council of Ogoni People
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
PA	Peasant Associations
PDG	*Parti Démocratique Gabonais*
PGP	*Parti Gabonais du Progrès*
PHP	People's Heritage Party
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council
PNC	People's National Convention
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council

PNP	People's National Party
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party
RENAMO	*Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana*
RNB	*Rassemblement National des Bûcherons*
SAC	*Service d'Action Civique*
SAMACO	Save Malawi Council
SAP	Structural Adjusment Program
SATUCC	South African Trade Union Coordinating Council
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SSS	State Security Service
TANU	Tanganyka African National Union
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UDP	United Democratic Party
UNCP	United Nigeria Congress Party
UNDP	National Union for Democracy and Progress
UNITA	National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola
UP	United Party
UPC	*Union des Populations du Cameroun*
UPG	*Union du Peuple Gabonais*
UPNO	Underrepresented Peoples and Nations Organization
UPS	*Union Progressiste Sénégalais*

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Introduction: Understanding Democratization

Jean-Germain Gros

For most of its history as an independent state, Malawi was so thoroughly domi-nated by the late Hastings Kamuzu Banda that it acquired the unofficial distinction of being a one-man state, "Bandastan." The obituary of Banda-style, autocratic rule was pronounced in May of 1994, when the people of Malawi voted the former dictator out of office and ushered in one of the most successful transitions to demo-cratic rule in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, Malawi's example has not been the norm on the subcontinent. More common is the tendency for long-time incum-bents—such as Paul Biya of Cameroon and Omar Bongo of Gabon—to try to hold on to power at all costs, for newly elected leaders to exhibit behavior patterns simi-lar to those of their nonelected predecessors, or for the military to return to power after flirtations with democracy "fail" to materialize into full-blown romance (e.g., Nigeria under Sani Abacha).

   This collection of essays is literally about seven sub-Saharan African countries, including those just mentioned, but mere storytelling, however amusing from time to time, is not its real aim. Instead, this text attempts to come to grips with the dia-lectic of regime change, or democratization, under conditions of uncertainty. The country study approach is used because it is unavoidable in cross-national political analyses. Indeed, how can the enigma of democratization, or for that matter poli-tics in general, be studied in the abstract, devoid, as it were, of geographic space or locale, time frame and people—in others words, without nation-states and the ac-tors who help to shape how they are governed? Furthermore, sound social science research requires that generalizations be made only after the evidence is examined; theories should always follow investigations, not the other way around. This *geist*, or spirit, underpins each of the chapters. This chapter does two things: it introduces democratization as a concept and political reality in late twentieth-century Africa, and provides a roadmap for what is to come in the book.

THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Democratization is a transitional phenomenon involving a gradual, mainly elite-driven transformation of the formal rules that govern a political system.[1] Thus democratization is not an end-game; rather, it is a means to an end, which is democracy.[2] Countries democratize so that they may, one day, become democratic. A democratizing country can be distinguished from a democratic one mainly by differences in political culture. Put another way, democratization might be described as a stage in the evolution of country where the rules governing power alternation and state-society relations (discussed later), though ostensibly based on democratic ideals, have not been fully internalized. In democratizing countries some groups or powerful individuals might still find normal to come to power by force and deny certain basic rights to some of their fellow citizens. Indeed, the populace, in the name of so-called law and order, may actively support ending democratization. By contrast, democracy can be said to exist when the formal rules of the political game, based as they are on principles of popular participation and sovereignty, are overwhelmingly accepted by the polity.

The notion that there are mature and fragile democracies is hereby rejected, as is much of the literature on consolidation. A country is either democratic or it is not. What is commonly called fragile or nonconsolidated democracy is, in fact, democratization at a specific phase in its development. Because democratization is a process, it is neither unilinear nor static: it can move forward, stagnate, or be reversed. Furthermore, even though democratization is elite-imposed political reform, the impetus for it need not come from the top; indeed, in Africa and elsewhere, democratization has often come about as a result of pressure from various sources, including domestic civil society and the international community (more on these later). Democratization in late twentieth-century Africa is part of the worldwide process of political transformation that is taking place in the aftermath of the Cold War. Its origins lie not only in the fact that sub-Saharan Africa is an integral part of the world system of nation-states, and therefore not insulated from sociopolitical, cultural, and even philosophical influences from the outside, but also because African societies themselves are undergoing profound internal changes. Distinct voices are emerging in Africa, articulating the universality of principles, which the ideologues of yesteryear might have dismissed as "un-African."

Two distinct phases may be identified in a democratizing regime, although one does not necessarily guarantee the other. The first phase of democratization is sometimes called political liberalization, wherein leaders of a country open the political system to competition.[3] In Africa, where the one-party state held sway for much of the postcolonial period, this step has involved amending constitutions to permit opposition parties to operate legally and establishing timetables for multiparty elections at various levels of government. The second phase of democratization is more difficult and spans a much longer time period. It involves creating the conditions that will lead to the rule of law. In postcolonial Africa formal state-society relations were asymmetrical and favored the state. Moreover, relations between state institutions were equally unbalanced, with the executive branch, usu-

ally with the support of the military, dominating the other two branches (i.e., the legislature and judiciary). African executives enjoyed extraordinary powers until 1990; they were heads of state, heads of government, and heads of their ruling parties; they could appoint at least some members of the legislature and they appointed all judges and top civil servants. The lack of limits on executive prerogatives encouraged arbitrary behavior; citizens were treated as appendages to the national leader's extended household (as in Malawi), which led some scholars to dub Africa's postcolonial regimes "neopatrimonialist."[4]

In the second phase of democratization the goal is to make intrastate and state-society relations more balanced. Separation of power (especially judicial independence), checks and balances, administrative decentralization and accountability, freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and, less frequently mentioned, civilian hegemony over the military are some of the components of the second phase of democratization. A truly democratizing country must not only officially embrace multipartyism and the principle of free and fair elections, it must also show that it is committed to the establishment of what the French call an *état de droits* (literally meaning a state of rights), which guarantees a broad range of civil liberties to its citizens. For purposes of simplification, in the remainder of this chapter political liberalization is referred to as phase one of democratization and movement toward a state of rights as phase two.

Technically a majority of African countries are in phase one of democratization; most have legalized multipartyism and have held at least one multiparty election since the end of the Cold War. African countries have taken these steps under different circumstances. In some countries, democratization of the phase one type was embraced by incumbents who had long been hostile to pluralism (e.g., Malawi, Gabon, Kenya); in others, incumbents had to be swept from office—in some cases violently—before reform could be contemplated (e.g., Mali and Ethiopia); in others still, there was a constitutional emasculation of incumbent power through so-called national conferences, culminating in the first multiparty elections held in decades. However, multiparty elections have been the subjects of controversy in many countries. For example, Cameroon's transition to multipartyism, especially the presidential elections it has held since 1990, has been heavily criticized (see chapter 3). Considerably fewer African countries have made it fully to phase two, although some have made more progress toward that goal than others. Malawi, South Africa, Benin, and Mali are in phase two of the democratization process. In all four countries, elections held between 1990 and 1994 led to the coming to power of opposition forces, and institutions and practices that fundamentally strengthen society vis-à-vis the state have been put in place.

South Africa's recently adopted constitution has been dubbed one of the most liberal in the world; Malawi's newspapers have flourished with surprising speed and apparently without much government interference since the late Banda's departure. Ironically, Banda may have been the most famous beneficiary of political change in the new Malawi. His acquittal on murder charges in 1996 by a jury of his peers may have been a sign of an emerging independent judiciary. (In fairness, the lack of a conviction may have also underscored the need to reform Malawi's jus-

tice system.) In Benin, there have been not one but two consecutive multiparty presidential elections since 1990, and progress in protecting civil liberties there is apparently resented by laggard African states (e.g., Nigeria and Burkina Faso).[5]

Perhaps the most important lesson Africa has provided to the world in the late twentieth century is that virtually all of its states, including those that are on the verge of collapse or that have collapsed and recovered (e.g., Liberia), have embraced at least phase one of democratization. It is not a stretch to assert that democratization (phase one), however imperfect, has achieved ideological hegemony in sub-Saharan Africa. No one is openly calling for a return to the *status quo ante.* Even in the countries where the military has forced its way back to power (e.g., Nigeria, Burundi), soldiers have found it necessary to promise a return to elected civilian rule, although increasingly they throw themselves in the lot by shedding their uniform. The transformation is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that before 1990 all but a handful of African states were ruled by one-party, often one-man, regimes. Why democratization at this time in African history? What accounts for differences in the experiences of various countries with it? What are the prospects for democracy, which is the end-game of democratization, on the African continent? These three questions form the bases of Chapters 2 through 8. It is, therefore, appropriate at this juncture to provide guidance to readers, so they will understand the sequencing of each case study.

THE FRAMEWORK

To understand the ubiquity of democratization on the African subcontinent, and the mixed outcomes it has had, requires both macro and microanalytical perspectives. The levels of analysis approach, always a favorite among international relations theorists, is useful in this connection.[6] Three types of factors, each corresponding to a specific level of analysis, seem to have been crucial to democratization and its *dénouements* in late twentieth-century Africa: individual leadership, societal pressure, and the international community. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive; all three are likely to be present at any given time but in varying order of importance. Nor do the elements that make up each level of analysis always have salutary effects. To say, for example, that the international community shapes democratization in Africa is not to say that it always does so positively and singlehandedly. Ultimately, transition outcomes are determined by whether prodemocratization forces, regardless of the levels of analysis to which they belong, come together at the right historical juncture to overwhelm their anti-democratization counterparts.[7]

Leaders

Regimes have democratized in Africa thanks to relatively enlightened leaders. This has been the case during the latest wave of democratization as well as before. The following prototypes of African leaders may be identified in the postcolonial period. First, there were the early democratizers, who included leaders such as

Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Seretse Khama of Botswana.[8] Admittedly few and far between, prodemocratization leaders in postcolonial Africa were able to establish enduring pluralistic systems of government in an age when one-partyism dominated the African political landscape. The case of Senghor is especially interesting. Senghor led a de facto one-party state in Senegal from 1966 to 1974; however, in July of 1974, he reintroduced multipartyism, albeit in a way that left his *Union Progressiste Sénégalais* (UPS) in a very advantageous position.

In the 1990s, Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda come closest, among African leaders, to the two early democratizers just mentioned, as does Nelson Mandela. Both Nyerere and Kaunda were committed to the idea of democracy during their tenure in office but not to multiparty democracy. They presided over relatively benign one-party states, and neither has been accused of personal corruption. Zambia under Kaunda was among the first African countries to liberalize in 1990, and Tanzania's Nyerere became one of the most forceful and articulate advocates of political reform in Africa. With the possible exception of Khama, all four leaders might be said to have been philosopher-kings: people who, despite their other flaws, were imbued with basic democratic instincts.

The second prototype of African leaders are the opportunistic democratizers. This category includes those who, in 1989–90, sensed the coming of the prodemocracy juggernaut and attempted to divert (or dilute) it to their fortune. Opportunistic democratizers see democratization as just one more challenge to autocratic rule, not as an opportunity to create an entirely new governance system or regime. Consequently, they are more likely to agree to implement phase one of democratization (political liberalization) than phase two—if phase one does not threaten their rule. Omar Bongo of Gabon and the late Houphouet Boigny of Ivory Coast are opportunistic democratizers. Throughout their career both leaders have ruled by effectively combining political acumen with brutality (with Boigny resorting to the latter more sparingly than Bongo). After deriding prodemocracy activists in January of 1990, Bongo convened a national conference in April and manipulated the deliberations to his advantage. He also attempted to literally buy off members of the opposition by offering them cash and government posts. Boigny, after legalizing multipartyism in 1990, held elections so quickly that the opposition hardly had the time to make a credible showing.

Opportunistic democratizers are not necessarily incumbents; they also are found within the ranks of the political opposition. In general, such individuals may be long-time members of the ruling elite who, sensing the turning of the tide, jump ship and become opposition leaders. Their interest in democratization does not go far beyond a desire to replace their incumbent rivals and settle old scores; they see democratization (phase one) as an opportunity to come to power legitimately, before exhibiting behavioral patterns similar to those that prevailed in yesteryear. After all, opposition-produced opportunistic democratizers were socialized in the corrupt tricksterism of the single-party state. Opportunistic democratizers may even come from the bosom of civil society institutions (e.g., trade unions), but were either never committed to democracy or quickly became intoxicated by newly bestowed power. Ange Félix Patassé of the Central African Republic, Pas-