
This chapter was published in *Population and Economic Growth: Perspectives from the Global South: (Reports and Papers No 7)*, Center for the Study of the Global South, School of International Service, The American University in Washington D.C. (March 30. 1994)

Some African Perspectives on Democratization and Development:

The Implications of Adjustment and Conditionality

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I. Introduction

The end of the Cold War, and subsequent transformations in the global order, has given rise to new external pressures on African states to democratize. These pressures have taken the form of political conditionality – the linkage of bilateral and multilateral aid to political and economic liberalization. The rationalization of this new approach - the so-called "democratization carrot" - is that political reform is necessary for economic development. This reform is usually envisaged in the form of multiparty liberal democracy with the emphasis on cultivating a political culture anchored in Western democratic values.

Attitudes of African scholars and political activists towards this conditionality have been ambivalent, to say the least. While pro-democracy groups generally welcome the linkage of aid to democratization as a useful weapon in the fight against authoritarianism, there are still considerable suspicions about the motivations behind the conditionality, and much uneasiness over the ambiguity surrounding it. There is also growing concern over the political and economic implications of implementing the new approach.

The major limitation of conditionality is its linkage, in the minds of both the general public and specialists, with the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) deemed since the early 1980s by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the necessary mechanism to sustain economic growth and development. The overall African impression is that conditionality is merely the new phase (or face) of adjustment.

To understand the ambivalent African attitude, it is imperative to see these external pressures for democratization from an African perspective. In the bipolar world of the Cold War, foreign pressures in the form of aid, or covert and overt interventions, were meant to win friends and neutralize enemies. In this context, the West was almost always identified, in African eyes, with the support of some of the most unpopular and repressive regimes. The Soviet Union, by contrast, was seen as the ally of progressive states and liberation movements battling the forces of reaction and colonialism. The demise of communism and the

disintegration of the Soviet bloc came as a rude shock to many Africans. The collapse has triggered in its wake a multitude of interrelated ideological and socioeconomic crises in many African countries. The bankruptcy of the Soviet development model has called into question the validity of the one-party system, while the loss of the countervailing Soviet presence has rendered African governments extremely vulnerable to Western pressures. Indeed, the West has gained considerably greater leverage over Africa's governments than the usual patron-client relationships of the last two decades. "The growing external debt and economic difficulties of many African states, their status in some cases as clients of the major powers, and the economic and geopolitics of global power has increasingly undermined the national sovereignty of many African states."¹

Yet the present unchallenged hegemony of the West has tended to complicate the contradictions in the transformed global order rather than to resolve them. The simultaneous and multiple global transformations have coincided with, and profoundly influenced, the indigenously-rooted democratization process in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, the impact of these transitions has demonstrated that popular resistance and action can overthrow the most entrenched dictatorships. On the other, the effect has been to raise grave concerns that rapid democratization may rekindle, within Africa's essentially tribal society, the kind of disintegrative forces that are already plaguing the emergent democracies in Eastern and Central Europe. The still unfolding events in the countries of the former Soviet bloc have highlighted the dilemma of how to reconcile the contradictions inherent in liberal-democratic pluralism and ethno-cultural pluralism.

The backdrop to these political and social concerns is the acute development crisis that has generated cycles of severe economic hardships affecting virtually every country in Africa. The accumulative effects of natural and man-made disasters (ranging from drought and famine to civil wars) have combined to produce what is called, perhaps rather charitably, Africa's "lost decade."

It is under these destabilizing conditions that the West has thrust conditionality on Africa, more or less on a "take-it or leave-it" basis. This may explain, in large part, the ambivalence, contradictions and even resentments in African attitudes and reactions. The impact of these pressures so far, has largely served to enhance a sense of uncertainty, confusion and unpredictability.

II. Some Problems of Definition

The terms democratization and development immediately bring to mind the questions: What kind of democracy, and what type of development?

The almost universal claim to democracy has given the terms as many meanings as usages. The uses of the concept range from the descriptive-prescriptive (parliamentary democracy) to the mutually-exclusive (authoritarian democracy). Similarly, the notion of

development has various connotations (economic, social, political, human) and different models of association (market-oriented, scientific-socialist, bureaucratic-authoritarian).

In its most basic sense, democratization can be seen as essentially a search for participatory patterns of development. In the West, this pattern is generally taken to mean increasing the capacity to cope with internal and external demand by combining growth and changes in the productive structure of the economy. Underlying this assumption is the presumption of the linkage between economic development and liberal democracy that is rooted in the industrialization process.

The original Western notion of democracy (as a rule by and for the common people) has been transformed, before and while being admitted to the liberal state, to become liberal democracy (as a system of power involving the politics of choice and the right to compete). The liberal democratic state was liberal and market-oriented first and democratic later. C. B. MacPherson describes this process as "liberalizing democracy while democratizing liberalism." He argues that in the justifying theories of liberal (Western) democracy and non-liberal democracy (communist and Third World variants), the ultimate ethical principle, at the highest level of generality, was the same. In each case, the aim was to "provide the conditions for the free development of human capacities." In each case, the realization of this required both freedom and equality: "freedom of each individual from subservience to the will of others, and equality in that freedom".²

In the post-colonial period, communism and/or the one-party regime were, indeed, favored in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World as providing, at least in theory, attractive democratic and developmental options. But the underdevelopment crisis of Africa since independence has called into question the legitimacy and viability of the one-party system, while the demise of communism has served to underline the bankruptcy of the socialist model of development.

The current democratization drive essentially aims to transform the one-party system (in both its "vanguard" and "mass-organization" types) into a multiparty system which is more akin to the notions of liberal democracy than to any other concept. Democracy is often used in its liberal-pluralist sense, defined in terms of competitive politics, transparency, public accountability and respect for human rights.

But the notion of pluralism may have different and even contradictory, connotations in Third World contexts. In the West, the term is often closely associated with the values, traditions and practices of liberal democracy (Almond's Anglo-American type). In its most general sense, pluralism denotes the openness and diversity of society. Group theorists explain pluralism in terms of interactions between a multiplicity of groups with differing legitimate interests making claims on the decision-making process. The central assumptions of pluralism

emphasize the plurality of values and interests of participants in policy-making, and the plurality of actors involved.

Yet this approach assumes the prevalence of a degree of social homogeneity and political consensus that may not be obtainable even in most Western societies. This can mean that in plural societies not characterized by homogeneity and consensus the prerequisites for democratic government are not present.³ In this sense, pluralism can be said to be incompatible with democratization because it refers specifically to "segmental cleavages" in society. Indeed, pluralism is sometimes defined as automatically imposing the structural necessity for domination by one segment in society in order to effect "nondemocratic regulation of group relations".⁴

These two aspects of pluralism in fact underline one central problem of democratization, namely: How can liberal-democratic pluralism be achieved without exacerbating the tensions inherent in ethno-cultural pluralism? The issue is directly related to the wider context of political development theory. Arend Lijphart notes three significant aspects of the notion of political development:

In the first place, democratization and other dimensions of development are usually thought to be dependent on national integration. Second, the prescription for policy-making which follows from this proposition is that nation-building must be accorded priority and must be the first task of the leaders of the developing states. Third, the usual view is that nation-building entails the eradication of primordial subnational attachments and their replacement with national loyalty.⁵

While democratization and national integration need not necessarily be seen as making mutually exclusive claims, their compatibility may hinge on how democracy is defined and on the level of social homogeneity it may require to take root. It can be argued that Western-style liberal democracy may not be functional in societies where ethnic, class or religious polarizations prevail, and that for these a "consociational" approach may be more effective in creating the conditions conducive to the various aspects of development.

It is for this reason that the emphasis in the definition of democracy should be on the pluralist rather than the liberal aspects of the term. The question is not whether contradictions exist, but how they can be resolved. If development is taken to mean the general process of bringing about qualitative changes and transformations in society, then the two terms can be seen as mutually reinforcing, at least on the conceptual level.

III. The Democracy-Development Equation

The current African debate on democratization provides useful insights into African perceptions of democracy and development. One of the main issues in the debate is the relationship (or lack thereof) between democracy and development. Peter Anyang Nyong'o

argues the case for such correlation on the basis that competitive groups in a multiparty pluralist system would democratically control state power by confining their role to that of "coordinator of society" and leaving development issues to non-state actors.⁶ Thandika Mkandwire questions these assumptions, arguing that even if a linkage exists it need not necessarily suggest causation. He criticizes the notion of correlation as being an instrumentalist view of democracy in the sense that democracy is seen as "an efficacious political means to development."⁷ Kivutha Kibwana acknowledges the correlation but reverses the process of causation. He argues that the attainment of Western-style democracy is a long-term prospect which would require unrestrained economic development so that a national bourgeoisie could develop to create stratified segments capable, in turn, of turning into diverse and competing parties.⁸ This proposition implies a causal relation in which development is a prerequisite for democracy.

Kankwenda Mbaya cautions that if democratization is not anchored to another model of development it risks ending in a new generation of enlightened despots. He argues:

La démocratisation en cours n'aura porté heureuse pour les peuples africains que si elle est une composante politique d'un autre modèle de développement. Et réciproquement, ce modèle de développement ne sera bienfaisant pour ces peuples que s'il démocratise et s'il y a une socialisation du développement.⁹

Francs Wodie makes "multipartisme" the first condition from which all others flow: "La regime de transition-démocratique est une regime d'équilibre...La voie de l'autodétermination d'un peuple ne peut, tant au plan national qu'international, être unique; elle obéit au pluralisme et à la diversité de solutions qui restent toujours ouvertes à un peuple souverain."¹⁰

Mahmood Mamdani questions the narrow equation of democracy with "multipartyism" arguing that "the guarantor of democracy cannot be constitutional safeguards engineered by consultants, but the organized presence of social and political movements which need democratic freedom for their very existence, and which will therefore struggle to defend them." It is in this context that Mamdani regards the market-oriented economic reforms called for by political conditionality as entailing "efficiency of management, law and order, not democracy."¹¹

Claude Ake maintains that even as it achieves globalization, democracy is in crisis because of the continuous erosion of the democratic content of liberal democracy. But he sees some cause for hope in the two salient features of the democracy movement in the South. "First, despite a predominantly middle class leadership it has a popular base and is driven by popular consciousness. Second, it has a strong economic motivation...Democratization is clearly perceived as a means of reversing economic regression."¹²

The notion of democracy-equals-development has become a controversial issue in the African debate. As Abdelgalil Elmekki notes:

It is clear in the exchange that the very definition of democracy is a centre of contention, and that country specifications in Africa sometimes generates contradictory conclusions ... Whether democracy and development are taken as goals or as processes would make a difference in the debate and raise different sets of questions. Whether democracy and development are to be taken jointly or separately in popular struggles is the most vital issue in the debate.¹³

The issue still remains unresolved. What is clear is that, despite its apparent theoretical applicability, the democracy-development equation is not necessarily self-evident. In fact, the empirical evidence seems to indicate that the relationship between political system and economic growth is far more complex than the notion that political democracy automatically fosters economic growth. India, for instance, has not fared economically better than South Korea, nor has the economic performance of the Asian "tigers" been translated into genuine competitive politics. The highly state-managed economy of Japan is doing much better than the unfettered free-wheeling economy of the United States. There is no reason to presume that Western-style democracy would not be a hindrance to growth in the weak and undeveloped economies of Africa. Indeed, market-oriented authoritarianism (of the Asian and Latin American varieties) can be more effective than liberal democracy in generating economic growth.

Yet even if the equation of democracy with development is accepted at face value, problematic questions concerning the nature of democracy and development still persist in the African mind. The emphasis in the Western development model on some of the attributes of Western-style liberal-democracy is seen by some as impeding the emergence or development of indigenous forms of democracy. Issa Shivji argues that while the freedom to organize should be at the center of the democratization debate, it should not be confined to a narrow conceptualization of multiparty democracy. He rejects multipartyism as "elitist" and "compradorial", and advocates instead the freedom to form "people's organizations," defined as "the working people organized at the grass-roots, defending their own immediate interests, and crystallizing their own democratic practices from concrete experience".¹⁴ Shivji, however, does not elaborate on what these "democratic practices" would entail or how the "concrete experience" could be made tangible. The same is true of Wamba-dia-Wamba's proposition that in Africa "emancipative politics" would be politics without parties but through organizations with "several sites" and a "multiplicity of processes". This is presumed to constitute a "pluralist structure" involving all categories of people "without privileging anyone of them".¹⁵

Samir Amin advocates a de-linking process from the capitalist core by giving democratization a national (i.e. anti-imperialist) direction, and a social (i.e. antibourgeois) content.¹⁶ A similar view is expressed by Archie Mafeje who dismisses the present "democratization crusade" as being "all form but no content" because a new class of "compradors" is gaining ascendancy. The real issue in his view is neither liberal nor "compradorial" democracy, but social democracy.¹⁷

Yet no new version of democracy or new theoretical venues of participation can claim validity if the people themselves are in practice left out of the equation. Assef Bayat suggests that Amin's economic reductionism of democracy as a function of capitalism with its advanced and backward variations fails to address the relationship between the economy and civil society. Democracy cannot necessarily be equated with free markets because "the dialectic of economy-capitalism versus civil society-state will ultimately determine the scope of democratic practices in a given country." It is for this reason, he concludes, that liberal democracy is destined to be "scarce and when formally adopted, highly fragile" in countries with weak economies and non-existent or highly fragmented autonomy of civil society.¹⁸

IV. Development and Adjustment

African views are most critical in relation to the two related aspects of the social dimensions of adjustment and the political implications of conditionality. Eboe Hutchful argues that "one of the myths of the new economic fundamentalism that dominates the international discourse on development is the natural compatibility of democracy and the market". The terms "market ideology" and "free trade" have become a new "international orthodoxy". The "shock therapy" prescribed in structural adjustment packages may well entail the need to "curb democracy to allow the introduction of market reforms".¹⁹

This is a theme on which the views of many African scholars converge. Aikel Kweka raises the question of whether democratic reforms are "a historical necessity for Africa or more of a political dictate imposed by Western donor countries". He maintains that the Tanzanian model of a socialist-oriented one-party system has accumulated good experience in inner-party democracy but has failed to generate a synthesis between individual freedom and responsible life in the community because of the adverse impact of market-oriented economic reforms imposed by the IMF. Kweka, however, concludes that a multiparty system has become an "internal necessity" because it is interpreted as a response to growing social stratification. But he cautions that the multiparty state can only flourish if it disengages itself from dependence on the international economic system.²⁰

The reason why this is so is suggested by Nyangabyaki Bazaara in a separate but related thesis. He views multi-partyism as the latest additional conditionality for receiving loans and an attempt to buffer economic structural adjustments politically by means that are inappropriate because they are alien to the African experience. A multiparty system could, at best, liberate the middle classes but would not necessarily alleviate the poverty of the masses. As such, structural adjustments could only be implemented under repressive political conditions, thus eroding further the social basis for political democracy. Bazaara maintains that the notions of "consensus" and "empowerment" in the political conditionality mean, in reality, the consensus of the donor community and their local allies, and the empowerment of private enterprise to liberate itself from state interference. He argues that the "trend in the Africa of 1980s has been the further erosion of democracy stemming mainly from the corrective measures sponsored by

the IMF and the World Bank," and that, in turn, "the absence of democracy has undermined, and continues to undermine, possibilities of recovery and economic development".²¹

A more radical interpretation is given by Chango Machyo W'Obanda. He asserts that "the African economic crisis is not due to the lack of democracy or the presence of it. The real cause is the deliberate work of imperialism, using the so-called aid, the World Bank and the IMF, to influence and guide African development in the interest of the West".²² Claude Ake notes that the democracy movement in Africa "has been nurtured by the intensifying poverty of a decade of negative economic growth, and by the life threatening austerity of the Structural Adjustment Program, a cure worse than the disease".²³ SAPs are seen as a form of what Hutchful refers to as the new "economic fundamentalism" that emphasizes economic efficiency regardless of the social and political cost.²²

The impact of SAPs has indeed been negative in most African countries. Africans are critical of the insensitivity of the economic reform packages to social and political needs. In some African countries, popular perceptions have come to equate liberal democracy with the democracy of the capitalist-market society, and to view the development generated by the market-economy as the development of a "supermarket" economy for the rich. In implementing SAPs, a democratizing regime can find itself in an untenable no-win situation: even if it survives the short-term backlash, it risks becoming de-legitimated in the eyes of its own people. A regime that is suspected of acquiescing in the erosion of national sovereignty is bound to lose any claim to legitimacy. The "de-legitimization" factor is closely related to what Mkandawire calls the "de-indigenization" process, whereby key elements in the state are taken over foreign "experts" under SAPs arrangements. It is ironically significant that in some African countries (e.g. Ivory Coast and Zambia) the pro-democracy movement originally sprang into existence as protest against the impositions of SAPs. It is in this paradoxical sense that SAPs can be credited with having contributed to the advancement of the democratization process in Africa.

The growing resentment of SAPs in Africa has not been confined to opposition groups and left-wing scholars. The views of African leaders and economists, adopted in the *African Alternative to Structural Adjustment Programs* of the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) is scathingly critical of these measures. SAPs are blamed for "rending the fabric of African society," and for having almost invariably "been conceived and implemented outside the frame of national development plans in the African countries". Not only is there no clear evidence that countries with SAPs are performing any better than those without, but SAPs fail to lay the foundation for long-term development or to reorient African economies away from the structures inherited from colonial rule and designed to benefit European economies. The ECA report questions the Western assumption that Africa's economic problems are primarily a result of faulty domestic policies arguing that it ignores factors largely outside Africa's control such as the debt burden, recurrent drought and declining export earnings.

The African alternative framework projects a mix of state and private-sector roles involving not the complete liberalization of trade but rather the selective easing of trade restriction. It concludes that the "democratization of society" is essential to achieve a partnership between the government and the people: "Development has to be engineered and sustained by the people themselves through full and active participation. Only in this way will it be possible to persuade people to accept sacrifices and to give their best energies to the task of transformation."²⁵

The criticism that SAPs have been imposed on unwilling African countries with little or no regard to the social cost involved has been recognized by the international financial institutions themselves. The World Bank initiative, *The Social Dimensions of Adjustment*, seeks to assist African governments to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups in society. It maintains that "the mutually reinforcing goals of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction can be achieved without causing distortions in relevant economic mechanism or loss of the necessary political resolve".²⁶

V. Democratization and Conditionality

These protestations are not likely to defuse the mounting criticisms of the Bank's policies and strategies. Indeed, the orthodoxy of its programs has become anathema to almost every one, ranging from the U.N. to environmental groups, to the ordinary African for whom the Bank has become a symbol of oppression and deprivation. Fundamental questions have been raised about the role of the World Bank by the accusation (notably from the ECA) that structural adjustment in Africa is not working.

The limitations of conditionality are further compounded by the general perception of its inconsistency at the two crucial levels of articulation and application. Although Western countries invariably insist that political and economic reforms are required, there are variations as to what these requirements entail. This has resulted in donor countries sending mixed signals by making different and sometimes contradictory policy statements, much to the bafflement and frustration of both recipient governments and indigenous prodemocracy movements.

When U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen declared in 1990 that it was time for most African systems to "evolve towards Western-style democracy," he seemed to indicate a hardening in American policy vis-à-vis recalcitrant regimes and, more specifically, a change of attitude towards the African one-party state. According to a Western observer, Cohen was, in fact, "reciting what has become the view of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other providers of aid - that free-market economies are essential for economic growth, and free-market economies require democratic political systems".²⁷

But the strident message may have increased resistance to political change. This has certainly been the case in Kenya where American pressures to democratize seem to have achieved the opposite of what was intended. Daniel Arap Moi's regime lashed back with a

predictable denunciation of "external intervention in domestic affairs", while the prodemocracy FORD movement felt let down when the U.S. State Department appeared to back down. In the meantime, other Western countries, particularly Britain, which has economic interests in Kenya, were conspicuous by their silence.

At the other, and related, level of inconsistency, the conditionality is perceived as invoking a double standard in application. The Kenyan case serves to illustrate this point. The United States is also suspected of adopting a hard-line attitude towards the Kenyan regime not out of genuine concern over the abuse of political and human rights, but because the Americans have no substantial economic or security interests in the country. According to a report of Human Rights Watch, the Bush Administration tended to defend human rights "only when it is cost-free", but ignored such concerns when security and economic considerations were deemed to be more important.²⁸

Thus, for many Africans conditionality is seen as a pious and biased declaration that is more likely to be side-stepped when and where vital interests of donor states and international financial institutions are at stake. Ake observes that "the international development agencies, especially the IMF and the Bank lend subversive support to democracy - as accountability, transparency and competitive efficiency, mere correlates of policy reform. The West lends ambiguous support for the wrong reasons: because with the Cold War over, there is no excuse for the old alliances with reaction, and because of a desire to seize an unexpected opportunity for the consolidation of Western hegemony".²⁹

It is not, therefore, surprising that the Western commitment to democracy appears selective and manipulative to African eyes. Witness the French acquiescence in the abortion of the electoral process in Algeria, the indulgent British attitude to the excesses of the Kenyan government and the whole contemporary record of U.S. global interventionism.

Yet despite its limitations, conditionality is increasingly exerting pressure on the more repressive regimes to open up their political systems. It has been more effective in situations where autocratic rule is simultaneously challenged by domestic pressures. As Carol Lancaster and Stephen Riley separately note, in such cases the external factor can make a crucial difference both in encouraging the force of change and in inducing incumbents to accept democratic reforms.³⁰

The general trend of the democratization process - if not of the development alone - is more positive than negative. The content of democratic transformation in some African countries has been relatively peaceful and more real than artificial. More African states are moving towards more open and pluralist politics than in the opposite direction. The process itself can become self-generating and contagious.

Yet the challenges are still enormous. There is the ever-present danger of reversals in one form or the other. But it is difficult to envisage a return to repressive autocratic regimes

along the old ideological and security justifications. Even the reversals are also reversible in the direction of democracy. The central problem is how to encourage and enhance the positive tendencies while mitigating and containing the negative ones.

VI. Conclusion

African perspectives on democratization and development reflect some conflicting notions. The controversy over the relationship between democracy and development shows that the appeal of democracy to Africans does not necessarily embrace the development model associated with liberal democracy. The notion of a positive relationship between the two is often seen as an historical process in which economic development preceded and facilitated the application of democratic ideals - a process which Africans seem to prefer by-passing. Given the nature of the colonial and postcolonial experience, as well as the performance record of capitalist development, such a preference is not surprising, and may not be totally unjustified. Related to this is the concern in African attitudes with the social content of democratization. Shivji's idea of "people's organizations" may sound conceptually simplistic and functionally impractical; yet it underlines the importance of incorporating previously marginalized social groups in the political and developmental processes. This may also explain why the trend in the direction of pluralism, and the corresponding erosion of the legitimacy of the socialist-oriented one-party regime, has not necessarily meant for some Africans a whole-hearted embrace of multiparty politics.

In general, the appeal of liberal democracy is negated by some of its limitations - e.g. its inability to deal with the ethnic, class or religious polarizations in African societies. Yet criticism of liberal democracy, though valid in many respects, should not be carried to the point where they may tend to become justifying arguments for the resurrection of the politics of mass organization of one form or another. The multiparty system is no more incompatible with African realities and traditions than the discredited one-party regime. The pace of democratization is more likely to depend on how far the *plurality* of associational life in African societies succeeds in replacing the *multiplicity* of ethnic identification and mobilization. This transformation from tribal (traditional) society into civil (modern) society will, in turn, be largely fostered by the process of economic development.

The African ambivalence towards conditionality is reflected in a number of rather contradictory perceptions. On the one hand, there is general skepticism about its effectiveness in generating and sustaining economic growth. On the other, there is an underlying concern that, with the marginalization of Africa in international discourse, the West may use the conditionality to reduce even further Africa's share of the global assistance that now seems to be east-bound. Conditionality is sometimes perceived as an infringement of national sovereignty, yet it is equally seen as a contributing factor in the process of breaking down authoritarianism.

Conditionality can be a positive factor in inducing democratization but insistence on enforcing unworkable or unacceptable structural prescriptions may breed disillusionment with democracy and provoke internal and regional upheavals. There seems to be a general consensus, by no means confined to Africans, that SAPs are sapping Africa's strength because of the failure of orthodox adjustment policies to take into account social and human dimensions, long-term development objectives and the structural transformation of African economies.

The sometimes incompatible internal demands and external pressures can be instrumental in the de-legitimization of democratizing regimes and the resurgence or intensification of ethnic and political violence. External pressures are more likely to become effective through support, in various ways, for sustainable democratic principles rather than rigid Western-style models. These processes would be better encouraged by setting the right priorities for aid and, in the case of genuinely democratizing regimes, by making adjustment and conditionality a matter of negotiation not imposition.

The issues raised in the African debate on democratization and conditionality concern developments that are still unfolding, on which attitudes and analysis are understandably tentative and perhaps more reactive than creative. But it is imperative to inject the African perspective into the discourse on the global context of democratization. The African experience has received less attention in the West than the more dramatic transformations in other parts of the world. Given the interrelation and linkages of these phenomena, the African experience has to be evaluated in its own right as well as in relation to other events.

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