Introduction: On the Construction of Democratic Change

Peyi Soyinka-Airewele
Ithaca College

Kelechi A. Kalu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/politics_faculty_pubs

Part of the Comparative Politics Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/politics_faculty_pubs/10
SOCIO-POLITICAL SCAFFOLDING AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHANGE

Constitutionalism and Democratic Governance in Africa

edited by
Kelechi A. Kalu and Peyi Soyinka-Airewele

Africa World Press, Inc.

JQ1875.S63 2008
320.96--dc22
2008009623
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements** vii  
**Foreword: Reinventing Pathways for Growth, Stability and Democracy** Julius O. Ihonvbere ix  

1. Introduction: On the Construction of Democratic Change  
   *Kelechi Kalu and Peyi Soyinka-Airewule* 1  

**PART I: CONSTITUTIONALISM AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**  
2. Beyond King Baabu: A Renaissance Vision of Governance  
   *Wole Soyinka* 19  
3. Constitutionalism and Governance in Africa  
   *John Mukum Mbaku* 35  
4. New Visions for Constitutionalism and Governance in Africa: Lessons from Liberia  
   *George Klay Kieh Jr.* 59  
5. Traditional Institutions and Governance in Africa: Chiefs, Constitutions and Politics in Nigeria  
   *Pita Ogaba Aghae* 91  
6. Constitutionalism in Africa: A Conceptual Analysis of Ethnicity and Politics, with Lessons from Nigeria  
   *Kelechi Kalu* 119  
7. Media and Democratic Change in Africa: An Analysis of Recent Constitutional and Legislative Reforms for Press Freedom in Ghana and Nigeria  
   *Chris Ogbondah* 147
## PART II: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMIES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

8. Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Kenya: A Structural Perspective
   *Theodora O. Ayot*
   
   185

   *Abi Awomolo*
   
   237

10. Towards Sustainable Development in Africa: NGOs and Strategic Partnerships
    *Robert Dibi*
    
    257

    *Margo Nankoe*
    
    289

12. State Actors and the Political Economy of Democratization in West Africa
    *Sylvestre Odion Akhaine*
    
    331

13. Democratic Scaffolding for a Globalizing Age
    *Peyi Soyinka-Airewele*
    
    359

Contributors

395

Index

399
We must try to find out what it is that causes our cities to be so badly governed and what prevents them from being governed well.

—Socrates in Book V, Plato: The Republic.

Over the past three decades, the literature on ongoing political transitions in Africa has reflected a spectrum of attitudes about the future of democracy as well as of development in the continent—often pitting optimists, pessimists and the cautious against each other, as they debate the place of elections, electioneering, politicians and parties, constitutionalism and the rule of law in shaping the political future of African countries (Clapham and Wiseman, 1995). Such struggles over ideas and values encompass salient questions about the end vision of political transitions; the methodology for change; and the roles of domestic and external actors etc. In particular, they signify the urgency of the project of constructing political scaffolding that is responsive to internal constituents and constitutional provisions regarding basic human rights, freedoms, civil liberties and popular participation.

The socio-economic and political framework required for democratizing change clearly demands the navigation of difficult terrain: the
transformations of historical contradictions and the search for innovative ways of challenging power and of negotiating democratic voice. What constitutional, legal, political and economic provisions can assist citizens in their determination to dismantle the repressive institutions of state which have flourished within a neo-liberal philosophy of 'stability for economic growth'? What structures and processes can prevent the brutalization of communities that impede the operation of international finance and investment as occurred in Nigeria's oil fields? How can we prevent or at least reduce the likelihood of violent intimidation of opposition groups by incumbent regimes?

As the essays in this book forcefully indicate, the answers to these questions are determined by a more fundamental discourse over the end goals of democratizing transitions. Scholars of democracy have continued to disagree about whether our focus should be limited to purely political concepts—that is, to the political rights of the individual and the right to choose those who decide the rules of government (or what Held calls legal democracy) or if we should be working from a perspective of democracy that is informed by a broader concept of societal/participatory democratization and issues of human wellbeing and that understands individual rights as inclusive of economic, social, and cultural rights.

Indeed the language of democracy has become devalued in the context of widespread hardships and the continued alienation of governments from those they govern. Claude Ake's ominous caution seems more relevant than ever: "it has in fact been trivialized to the point that it is no longer threatening to power elites, who are all too pleased now to proclaim their democratic commitment, knowing that it demands very little of them" (Ake, 1996: 35). Thus, the task of reinvesting the language of political transitions with form and structure has been taken up by the contributors of this volume who argue that positive transformations will depend on our capacity to construct required legal-constitutional framework in a manner that responds to critical historical, social, economic and other realities. Such a structure must bind constitutionalism and governance with transformative strategies for achieving rights and collective social goals and challenging oppression and exploitation.

This is perhaps in line with Mark Rupert's call for a new understanding of democracy as a process of deliberate social self-determination "beyond the procedural democracy of liberal capitalism" which would produce "democratically constructed demands for social responsibility in economic life, enacted and institutionalized at multiple levels from local to global" as well as the "possibility of new kinds of political identity and action emerging from public deliberations" among locations in similar structural cir-
cumstances in the global economy. This demands the 'de-reification of liberal dichotomies separating economics from politics, society from state, and domestic from international, and a democratic renegotiation of the social relations of capitalist modernity (Rupert, 2000: 81–82).\textsuperscript{3}

Such a challenging vision is relevant not merely to African countries but to other parts of the developing world where the connections between political liberalization at the regime level and societal democratization have been highlighted by scholars and activists. With reference to the ambiguous political transitions in Latin America for instance, Jelin & Herbst have argued that those social demands based on inequality and exclusion, which persisted in a subdued and hidden way during the moment of political transition, reemerged as fundamental issues of protest and mobilization during the 1990's (1996: 25). Since such social and economic dynamics play a similar role in the politics of wealthier nations, we are reminded that it is not only within Africa or the so-called Third World regions that policymakers are under pressure to ensure the democratic process is capable of encompassing an entire national framework oriented toward an overall improvement in social and individual welfare: for instance, healthcare, the environment and women's empowerment.

Consequently, while this book explores critical questions emerging from the specific political experiences of several African countries, it does not subscribe to the terminology gaining currency in describing a uniquely "African" crisis that apparently bears no resemblance or relationship to the issues and problems in other parts of the world. In fact, the politics of African countries demonstrates marked similarities with their Euro-American counterparts in the realities of political abuse and corruption, effective disenfranchisement or neutralization of large segments of the citizenry and civil society, widening social inequities and disempowerment of the poor, contradictions over the role and place of women, and the impact of religion, class and corporate power in determining the outcomes and character of politics in these seemingly diverse locations.

It is important to acknowledge such commonalities for they alert us to the essential capacity of 'legal democracy' to institutionalize and perpetuate many of the social and economic inequities and abuses that have ironically stimulated the same popular demands for 'democratization' in many African societies. Not surprisingly, pro-democracy activists in Africa have responded with anger to the unmediated impact of economic globalization on domestic inequities. African governments have been accused of 'selling' off their nations to the highest bidder and of embarking on ruthless suppression of domestic dissent in order to enable the economic exploitation of their societies by external powers.
In one particularly passionate commentary, a writer declaimed that beyond the visionlessness and shallow thinking that had come to characterize such foolhardy experiments in economic engineering, most disturbing is the "cynicism and naked opportunism that informs economic policy making". "So? Crush the labor unions. Kill and imprison pro-democracy activists. Gag the press and throw journalists into the gulag. Ban the principled politicians and encourage the unprincipled ones to take over..."

The importance of constructing appropriate scaffolding that will uphold systems of voice, rights and freedoms in African countries thus becomes an urgent project for African activists and scholars who read with some concern and suspicion, the Western preoccupation with the continent's resources and strategic relevance even amidst regional conflict. In a prepared testimony before the House International Relations Subcommitte on Africa, Howard Wolfe, Special envoy for the Great Lakes, indicated that overriding concern with economic growth. "Central Africa," he commenced, "is a zone of enormous promise that, if actively nurtured through responsible, committed governments and friends, can bring into the global economy new emergent market democracies that will substantially enlarge the transformation already well underway in Southern Africa, and anchor Africa's future."

ON CRISES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHANGE

The essays in this book examine the diverse socio-political experiences of African countries and the institutional and political structures and forces mobilized toward widely differentiated processes of change. By paying attention to the complexities of defining the type of system that is in fact desirable and how it might be consolidated, the contributors have captured some essential realities about the tangled relationships between structures of the state, the nature of democratic development, and the strength and role of civil society in defining evolving societal transformations and shaping the response of the emerging state to its many constituents.

Together, they explore and relay a provocative discourse on what the writers consider to be one of the continent's most critical needs: a framework for responsive governance and democratic development. Toward this goal, the first set of chapters in this volume focus on the historical legacies, indigenous political structures, processes and identities that have come to define the framework of political life in African countries. These factors have shaped the contours of emerging constitutions and raise critical questions for scholars who seek to delve beneath the maelstrom of political conflicts and struggles in the African post colony. They also invoke serious dilemmas for citizens of African countries who are personally impacted
by the ongoing quest to construct legitimate and enduring frameworks for just law, peaceful change and contestations within their countries. A central question then becomes: what are the most pertinent internal and/or external factors that should propel and shape particular political directions in transitional states?

Our interrogation of the African political landscape takes off with a stinging indictment of the dictatorships that have reinforced patterns and structures of colonial injustices and subverted the demands for voice and participation toward shared social goals. Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate and political critic argues that it is at the edifice of the territoriality of the African state we must begin our search for requisite political scaffolding; in particular, by reexamining the rhetoric of ‘territorial integrity’ and the notion of the sacrosanct nature of the colonial boundaries that had been imposed on African societies. It is that burden, more than any other protocol of the charter of the Organization of African Unity that has been responsible for the endurance of personalization of political spaces since the era of African independence, and for the succession of one “King Baabu” after another on Africa’s political landscape.

Furthermore, the disingenuous language and politics of such governments effectively help to derail and subvert popular struggles for equality and democratic change. Soyinka’s destabilizing interrogation of power within the domestic sphere insists that it is important to locate democratizing frames within a rigorous understanding of the interaction between power and the disempowered. In other words, our concerns with governance will enable us to better define the substrata of citizenry spaces and mobilizations in redirecting the process of positive transformations. Thus we must look closely into the ways in which issues of governance are rooted partly in the people’s view of their roles within the political system, their relationship to the state, the nature of the state, and the various contradictions between local and global, social, economic and cultural institutions.

Some of these questions are investigated in depth in the first few chapters in this book. In an essay that provocatively frames the subject matter, Mbaku argues that to the extent that the African state retains colonially-imposed political institutions and apparatuses without reform, the march to constitutionalism and democratic consolidation will continue to be problematic. Europe’s project in the continent was obviously conducted to maximize labor and resource exploitation and not as a grand exercise in constitutional design and state building. The colonial states were designed as hierarchical extensions of the imperial states, which entrenched European class structures and perspectives in the colonial African states.
Consequently, rather than serving as a framework for stability, the imposed state system in Africa continues to impede efforts at national integration in many countries and their external and internal institutional structures maintain European hegemonic control of politics and economic underdevelopment without advancing the structures for democratic governance and economic development in Africa. The ease with which the United States and today China have been able to engender similar relationships through their governing allies is an indicator of the continued failure of the political systems to work in the interest of the majority of citizens. In view of the foregoing, Mbaku warns that contemporary struggles for constitutional reforms and "good governance" must reckon with the historical trajectories of constitutionalism that set problematic limits on the process of social and political change in the continent.

The tendency to strip a powerful political project of its historical, racial and socio-economic dimensions and reduce it to procedural basics is also effectively assailed in a case study of Liberia by George Kieh. His insistence on the imperative for institutionalizing democracy in African countries is based on the perceptive understanding of the challenges of constructing social justice, reconciliation, inclusive democratic frames, good governance and social recovery in states with strong diverse ethno-national loyalties, relatively expansive transnational networks and engagement. Despite the euphoria of the collapse of the formal apartheid state in South Africa and the post-war election of Liberia's female president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who assumed office in January 2006, the turbulent legacies of an imperial past continue to be apparent in Liberia as they are in South Africa and numerous other African countries struggling to come to terms with the socio-political aftermath of violent destabilizations.

Kieh provides a telling reminder of the devastation that often follows on the heels of a failure to erect a meaningful scaffold for continued democratic voice and peaceful change through his analysis of the challenge of democracy in Liberia in the aftermath of its devastatingly violent civil war. He evokes the complexity of racial and historical ghosts and argues that it is imperative that such colonial legacies be effectively confronted and addressed through various kinds of constitutional provisions that must be deliberately evoked and designed to reduce social injustices and to correct historical misdeeds.

In a related investigation, Agbese highlights the intersection of multiple political traditions and structures that vie for attention in determining the philosophical, legal and political blueprints for Africa's political systems. The reality of embedded traditional rulership and indigenous political institutions within the context of ongoing constitutional and
democratic transition processes generates a potential volatility in the system while also offering possibilities for political innovation. It is not surprising that democracy activists and policymakers have advocated and adopted a range of strategies in defining a constitutional role for indigenous political systems that continue to wield such a presence and influence in issues of law, rights, community organization, identity and identification. By drawing from a comparative overview of countries such as Malaysia, Uganda, Botswana, Malawi and Japan etc, Agbese investigates some critical issues that must be taken into account in defining a pathway for Nigeria's large multinational political union, which encompasses over 200 geopolitical indigenous nations.

Turning his attention to identity questions that retain a central position in politics across the world, Kelechi Kalu proposes that the issue of ethnicity which continues to trump other identities in most post-colonial African states is not inherently conflictual and therefore can be effectively navigated by accountable leadership, transparent constitutional government and effective enforcement of law. Such a proposition opens up new ways for understanding governance in African countries and persuasively counters the mainstream 'failed democracy', Afro-pessimist approach used to evaluate democratization trends in African countries. Kalu's broadened analysis of identity politics in political reproductions offers strategic options for effective transitions towards stable polities in countries recovering from the divisiveness of imperial domination and the continued ravages of a harsh and exploitative global economy.

Collectively, these scholars illuminate distinct yet interrelated outcomes of the colonial partition of the continent. Decolonization processes across European colonial territories were also affected by flawed Eurocentric intellectual and political tendencies. Even in some instances like Ghana under Nkrumah and Angola under Augustino Neto where the search for substantive change was promising, the alternatives to the colonialist system of governance were immediately aborted by European cold war-induced bifurcation of the international system into capitalist against socialist/communist alliances. Consequently, the choice of self-governance within the context of well thought out economic development policies was compromised in the course of the East-West cold war rivalry. With the end of the Cold War, democratic struggles for choice and change were characterized by internal struggles involving a range of political strategies including competitive elections, negotiations and compromises between various political forces and power brokers. Clearly then, the prominence of these transitional strategies on the African landscape indicate that an increasing number of stakeholders are in agreement that violence is not an
option for contested ideas, policies and participation in democratic governance as Kelechi Kalu argues. The search for effective pathways for change has galvanized pro-democracy movements across many African states into intensifying already existing internal struggles for popular participation in governance.

Ogbondah presents an overview of current democratization processes in African countries with special emphasis on Ghana and Nigeria. Applying an integrated comparative analysis of historical, legal and political issues and data in each country, the chapter examines recent constitutional reforms that facilitate freedom of expression and mass media development. The use of state power in silencing or controlling the media through financial incentives, or more often, state terror, extreme punitive measures, legal strangleholds, and even torture and disappearances, has failed to destroy the vibrant independence of many journalists and news agencies in Africa. However, it has often created distortions, cowed journalists and eroded the democratic space. In this respect, Ogbondah argues that empowering the media through constitutional provisions for freedom of the press and of expression is essential for realizing the goals of transparency and accountability in governance. Based on a critical analysis of persistent problems in the overall process of democratization, he proposes several recommendations for reforms in guaranteeing and protecting media and civil rights and freedoms.

The second set of chapters in the volume focus on those critical social forces, local and transnational agencies and issues that play a significant role in contestations around modes of governance, constitutional reforms and social priorities. The case studies of Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria explore the role of women and feminist constituencies and non-governmental organizations as well as the question of access to qualitative healthcare as a protected constitutional right.

The evidence of effective “mainstreaming” of women into political office in several African countries is apparent, with Rwanda making the top of global rankings on percentages of women in upper and lower houses of parliament for the past few years, countries such as Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, Burundi and Namibia also consistently placing in the top 20 of 189 countries, ranking far ahead of the United States and numerous other Western democracies; and the 2006 election of President Sirleaf-Johnson as the premier of post war Liberia. Notwithstanding such gains, a major question in constitutional debates in African countries has been how to address the continued political marginalization of women, gender inequalities and women’s suffering through the paradox of their inclusion...
in spaces and projects that are simultaneously powerful as well as disempower­ing and depoliticized.

Such questions direct our attention to the loss of women's indigenous positioning and influence in several societies and the problematic scramble to recover this through the grafting of women into the confines of the exploitative political structures that remain substantively unchanged from their colonial predecessors. This issue is examined in the provocative analyses of debates about the innovative neutering of women in Kenya by Theodora Ayot as well as the contradictory influence and containment of market women in “machine” politics in Nigeria by Abi Awomolo. Theodora Ayot persuasively argues that the culture of violence produced through the colonial enterprise in Kenya through instrumentalities of force and intimidation has become germane to the reinforcement of the authority of males to the disadvantage of women. Consequently she extends the critical arguments of scholars such as Ngugi Wa Thiongo who have eloquently captured the violent cultural character of colonialism and its impact on African politics.

There is indeed need for a deepened understanding of the structural frames by which human beings have come to comprehend their identities and actions within the context of their gender as a socially constructed yet fundamental component of human identity and therefore of human history as Ayot argues. While the Kenyan experience of women's marginalization in contemporary politics cannot be understood as representative of all other African societies, an astute analysis of the postcolonial phenomenon in Kenya suggests that a combination of foreign and domestic forces have relegated women in many societies to what Ayot calls the backseat of political life.

In a sharp divergence from literature that attributes women's empowerment to western interventions, Ayot notes that not only did colonialism serve to reverse women's roles in the political arena, a close reading of Kenyan history provides ample proof of women's participation and leadership in Kenya's political life and decision making processes in their various communities before the coming of the Europeans. She further argues that despite existing obstacles and challenges, women have continued to be active in challenging the exclusive governmental structure based on gender disparity while advocating the transition from authoritarianism to democratic process in the country. In this important contribution to the literature, the author suggests a critical reexamination of the multifaceted political system based on authoritarianism, patrimonialism and overcentralization; a dismantling of the state engendered male-dominance of all aspects of the Kenyan society; and the adoption of new structures of
leadership that will allow women to develop strategic initiatives and channels for political voice, substantial influence and contribution to national policies and politics.

Abi's Awomolo's examination of women's mobilizations and electoral processes in Nigeria captures key dilemmas in a society with a powerful history of women's struggles and socio-economic and political positioning. Casting a thoughtful look at the impact of structural adjustment programs on women's struggles in Nigeria, her focused analysis of the vagaries and manipulations of electoral politics suggests key contestations within the society that shape the reality of women's strategic simultaneous exclusion and inclusion and an effective neutralization of critical social forces within the political arena. The need to address structural as well as procedural issues in the construction of meaningful change is one that Awomolo brings to the fore in her analysis of the political economy of women's empowerment or disempowerment as well as the concept of electoral "machine politics" and the problems inherent in how women seek to position themselves bargain and navigate within a political framework that both affirms and marginalizes their voice and influence.

The capacity of the state and of prevailing neo-liberal regimens for global governance to appropriate self determining social power is indeed an overwhelming one. Beyond the debates over the role of women and the media, the question of the positioning, role and power of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the African continent as in other world societies has also become a central issue in struggles around human rights, freedoms, social and economic governance. The acceptance of the presence of NGOs has served to normalize a powerful layer of non-elected governance in the social, economic and political spheres of life in most African countries, producing power that is legitimized largely by virtue of the perceived irrelevance of government agencies and political leaders. This influential project is examined by Dibie through the lens of public management practices in contested development processes. Development philosophy and practice rightly remains a problematic concept. It is traditionally viewed as the province of the government, yet in reality, is governed by a range of transnational and local agencies whose philosophies, capacities, ideological orientations and goals merit careful attention in determining their impact on the transition processes in numerous African societies. Dibie advocates for a careful policy based integration of NGO best practices and agencies at a local level as a way of extending the capacities and resources of government and reinforcing citizenry participation in political and social change.
Introduction: On the Construction of Democratic Change

Rounding up this thematic focus on vital social agents and concerns, Margo Nankoe provides a historically contextualized framework for rethinking the policy implications of the most basic of a government's responsibilities to its citizens: the provision of health systems and a social policy agenda and commitment that can sustain life and human welfare. As scholars and activists grapple with the larger debates around democratic governance and the rule of law, it is all too easy to ignore the core concerns that drive the desperate protests and political mobilization of the larger population. Nankoe's argument that healthcare and social security concerns should be a core part of the constitutional project in Africa is a provocative and essential one that has been framed within a thoughtful examination of the historical vicissitudes of global health care policy projects. She locates her case analyses of countries such as Mozambique, Kenya, Algeria and so on, within a comparative examination of changing policy in Europe and provides a compelling understanding of the emergence of international consensus that healthcare is a basic human right. While the struggles of African countries to provide basic healthcare to their citizens has been impacted by the imposition of neoliberal market oriented structural adjustment policies amongst other factors, Nankoe suggests that the way forward lies in looking back to the evidences of past success by African countries adopting coherent national policies that situated healthcare as a collective priority and responsibility.

The final essays in the volume advance the arguments opened in the preceding areas of investigation through discourses on the deepening of democratic progress, the impact of the external and the search for effective policies that can address constituencies impacted by violence, societal polarizations and trauma. An important starting point must therefore be a focused understanding of the nature of the state actors themselves and their navigation of the vertical pressures from global forces as well as what Sylvester Akhaine describes as a downstream push from internal social forces.

While it might be tempting to dismiss the implementation of democratization programs by erstwhile authoritarian regimes as politically neutered survival strategies, Akhaine reminds us that in fact, such survival strategies derive partly from the desperate effort to negotiate the inherently contradictory impulses contained in the political and economic conditionalities imposed by agencies of global governance. Constructing a compelling analysis of the trilateral structure that shapes and defines democratization in Africa through analyses of political experiences in Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria, Akhaine argues forcefully that to effectively critique the imposition of a hegemonic liberal political regimen in Africa,
we must bear in mind that such a regimen resists and rejects the core value of popular power which should be intrinsic to a meaningful human practice of democratic productions. It is indeed disingenuous to imagine a democratic transition that is not defined in part by the interactions and pressures of internal and external stakeholders. The experiences of those West African nations studied by Akhaine relay a telling narrative and challenge for those invested in the search for a framework for human rights, voice and democratic development.

In the final essay of the book, Soyinka-Airewele addresses the socio-economic minefields sown by the increasingly divisive and undemocratic economic growth patterns of globalizing trends. She argues that the combined impact of state violence as well as the evolving contemporary social crises of a globalizing age makes the best case for a renewed focus on the forms, contents, concerns and philosophies that must drive the search for viable constitutional structures, political systems and transitional mechanisms to be adopted and developed by African countries. While popular notions of "critical political moments", trends and democratic "waves" may appear to explain widespread experiences of changes in the nature of the state at certain critical and differentiated moments, they actually reflect a limited western conceptualization of the nature and appearance of democratization and a preoccupation with the mode of their engagement with African countries.

The notion and language of democratic waves and moments is problematic in that it prevents observers from acknowledging and understanding the continuing interlocking processes of democratic struggle and postcolonial democratic development in the continent and it ultimately delimits the concept of democracy with which we ought to deal. Such language minimizes the reality of a continuing intersection of external and internal impulses in defining both the nature of political transitions in the continent as well as how we respond to those processes. Consequently, Soyinka-Airewele draws attention to the significance of the turbulence and sense of volatility that confronts policy makers and activists amidst democratic transitions. She argues that these are forms of social voice that indicate an ongoing democratic discourse that challenges the global imaginary regarding democratization in Africa.

SCAFFOLDING FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

While democracy may appear to be in vogue again across the world, its meaning is still befuddled by the multiple goals that motivate its proponents as well as the very different traditions that attend democratic theory including: the conventional references to political and constitu-
tional arrangements; the institutions and processes that are geared toward achieving and maintaining representation through contestation; the "radical" reconceptualization of the participatory elements of liberalization, with emphasis on social and economic empowerment of the society, mobilization and the total dismantling and reconstruction of authoritarian state structures; as well as the notion of democratic development of a political system that incorporates procedural elements of representation and contestation as well as the deliberate construction of an environment of political liberalization, public participation and social empowerment conducive to multi-level participation.

Constitutional reforms and electioneering projects in the continent are typically oriented towards expanding, at least theoretically, the landscape for erecting enduring and effective political mechanisms for a just peace and meaningful social and political change. To effectively accomplish the foregoing requires urgent attention to the various forces, institutions and structures that define social formations and power relations in contemporary African political spaces.

There is no gainsaying the need for economic resurgence in Africa and there is equally little doubt that the global market will continue to play a major role in the policies and politics of African countries as governments contend for survival and simultaneously seek to respond to domestic social and economic needs. This external arena will however continue to send mixed signals with severe implications for the political stability of African countries. Consequently, political processes and transitions in Africa will certainly be influenced by the range of domestic affiliations, powerbrokers, cultural and social factors discussed in this volume, including struggles over women's political engagement, negotiations over the role of traditional rulers and so on. However, the nature of governance will also be defined increasingly by the growing marginalization of pro-democracy movements in global economic calculations and the increasing diversion of international support, political and otherwise, to 'reformed' non-democratic regimes. The geo-strategic interest in new gulf oil states may generate a deepening disparity between the political rhetoric and economic practice of Western nations in Africa, as they vacillate between support for positive political transitions involving popular mobilizations and support for governments and institutions capable of guaranteeing access to vital resources irrespective of their democratic credentials.

Obviously, it can no longer be argued that the domestic political struggles in Africa are effectively complimented (and in most cases encouraged) by developments in the global system on the basis of the assumption that the end of the cold war has reduced the relevance of tyrants and decadent
political rulers who serve western interests. Therefore, in light of the fore­
going, (1) to the extent that African governments, scholars and citizens do
d not take initiatives to ensure that internally driven competing ideas about
governance and development lead to public policies rather than externally
imposed agendas; (2) to the extent that government and the citizens are
unable to reconcile the complementary nature of state and civil society
and, (3) to the extent that contested ideologies are not encouraged and
welcomed, liberal democratic transitions in much of Africa will not in the
end ensure consolidated democracy, political stability and economic devel­
opment. It is inconceivable that any effective effort at institutionalizing
democracy in African states will succeed without some form of national
debates on the products of such constitutions before their adoption, fol­
lowed by an intensive effort at civic engagement that will substantiate and
institutionalize the reality and values of citizenship as prima inter fapes
relative to other identities.

While it may indeed be difficult to be sanguine about the prospects
for democratic empowerment in Africa under the current regime of global
market hegemony, the mixed evidence from many African countries sug­
gests that determined policies and action at the domestic and international
levels that retain focus on the goals of democratic development in defining
the nature and direction of transitional processes might generate a mutu­
ally reinforcing role between the global economy and domestic democratic
forces.

Notes
1. See Soyinka-Airewele, "Democratic Scaffolding for a Globalizing Age" in
this volume.
2. For a discussion of Held’s conceptualization of the debates over democracy
and Celestin Monga’s inelusive arguments, Soyinka-Airewele, Peyi “Civil
Societies and Universities in the Democracy and Development Enterprise”,
3. Ibid. Soyinka-Airewele discusses these perspectives in the context of an
interrogation of the roles and positioning of critical social and political forces
in the vanguard of struggles for democratic change. Like Ake and Rupert,
she examines the dilemma of meaningful political change within a com­
petitive global economy that imposes growing economic differentiation and
inequalities and argues for more ‘radical’ meanings of democracy.
Soyinka-Airewele, “Democratic Development in Africa Inc.: Globalization,
Economic Reformism and the New Autocrats.” Paper presented at the 24th
Introduction: On the Construction of Democratic Change


5. "Privatizing Nigeria" Nigeria Now, London 5(7), Nov/Dec 1996, p.2. Such denunciations were commonplace in speeches and protest actions by various civil society organizations particularly those in the vanguard of struggles for human rights and democratic change. While much of the more powerful private business sector appeared very eager to collaborate with a regime intent on supposedly opening space for private enterprise with an open door government policy, there was a prevailing sense of mistrust that the state in its militarized form could provide the form of socio-political security they sought.


7. See Kelechi Kalu, on Constitutionalism and Political Restructuring in Post-Conflict States in Africa (project funded by the Ford Foundation).

8. See "Women in Parliaments World Classification" on the Inter-Parliamentary Union website. IPU's statistical data on the state of world parliaments includes an annual classification on percentages of women in parliaments drawn on available information provided by National Parliaments. The 2006 tables compared data from 189 countries. URL: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm


11. See Kelechi Kalu, on Constitutionalism and Political Restructuring in Post-Conflict States in Africa (project funded by the Ford Foundation).

References


Kelechi Kalu and Peyi Soyinka-Alrewele


