Editorial
by Hussein Solomon and Senzo Ngubane

The twentieth century was not kind to Africa. It began with almost the entire continent under the rule of some or other European power. With the start of the decolonisation process which began with Nkrumah's Ghana - there were high hopes for Africa. Sadly, these hopes have been dashed. Decolonisation was followed with new types of control, in the form of multinational corporations and international financial institutions imposing various structural adjustment conditionalities. In addition, state structures inherited from former colonial powers were essentially weak. Consequently, independent African States could not meet the basic needs of their citizens. The inevitable results were social agitation and conflict hallmarks of contemporary African polity. In this situation, authoritarian despots - in the form of the Amins', Bokassas' and Mobutus' started to appear. They further entrenched the notion of a crisis-prone continent characterised by repressive regimes, where state security was often purchased at the expense of human security.

Such a situation, as stated by South Africa's Foreign Minister, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, is anathema to the entire vision of an African Renaissance: 'The regional conflicts wreaking havoc across the continent cast a deep shadow over the prospects of success of the vision of the African Renaissance) it is wrong to think that all conflicts should be resolved through the barrel of the gun. Political solutions should be explored at all times.' These political solutions referred to, include not only third party mediation for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. They also include a process of political democratisation, which would not only provide for good and effective governance (thereby breaking the cycle of violence referred to above), but also a democratisation process that would encourage trust and reconciliation between deeply divided communities during the post-conflict settlement phase. In this way, sustainable peace can be achieved. Democratisation, therefore, is an indispensable tool for conflict management throughout the African continent.

This edition of Conflict Trends is yet another valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse that focuses on the nature and content of democracy in Africa. The articles cover a range of themes: the expected role of civil society within a post-conflict democratic setting; the Kenyan elections, which marked a victory for democracy in Kenya, as well as the continent at large; and the traditional perspectives of democracy in Africa. Furthermore, it focuses on the link between gender and democracy, and the relationship between democracy and development.

Notes

References

Poll Watching, Peacekeeping & 'Good Governance' in Africa: Forward Look
by Njunga-Michael Mulikita

Introduction
Any casual mention of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping or peacekeepers evokes images of blue helmeted soldiers or civilian police personnel working tirelessly in conflict torn and far-flung territories, ranging from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to 'UN Protectorates', such as the province of Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, 'tens of thousands of military, police and civilian peacekeepers found themselves treating deep-rooted sources of wars within such states as Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique. At the height of peacekeeping in 1993, more than 70,000 troops were wearing blue helmets/berets in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.' (1).

This boom in the 'industry of peacekeeping' has been accompanied by an emergent global consensus on limited sovereignty, complemented by the doctrine on international humanitarian interventionism. The international community can invoke the aforementioned in order to intervene in a 'sovereign state' for the purpose of halting gross abuses of human and civil liberties. It is against this historical background that the observation of elections - particularly in countries where the painful transition from civil strife to a sustainable peace is being undertaken - has crystallised into an integral dimension of post-conflict peace-building.

The principle motivation for observing elections is to secure the integrity of the electoral process so that elections may be perceived as 'free and fair' to all major protagonists. Recent evidence from states throughout the African continent indicates that where election watchdogs observers are deployed, political intimidation of opponents (and voters) is minimised. In addition, corruption and other fraudulent practices may be restrained as a result of internal and external poll watching (2).

Increasingly, elections have become an essential ingredient of supervised political settlements intended to resolve long running regional or interstate conflicts. Thus, since the early 1990s, the UN and regional organisations - such as the Organisation of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU), the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) - have been mandated to go beyond their classic functions of preventive diplomacy and conflict mediation in order to re-establish political and civil authority in 'failed states'. In Africa, the UN operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ) - which culminated in free and fair elections in 1993 - and the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) - that enabled millions of Sierra-Leoneans to resolve a horrendously brutal civil war and elect a national government for the first time in six years - can both be characterised as peacekeeping successes.

However, the UN has also experienced dramatic setbacks in its expanded peace-building/keeping portfolio on the African continent. Somalia, despite extensive UN involvement in the early 1990s through the UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), continues to be mired in violent anarchy. In 1994, the international community looked the other way as Rwanda slid into genocidal anarchy. Former UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, painfully recalls that episode: 'The behavior of the Security

Council was shocking; it meekly followed the United States' lead in denying the reality of the genocide. Although it was a clear case of genocide, US spokesmen were obviously under instructions to avoid the term in order to avoid having to fulfill their treaty obligations under the 1949 Genocide Convention.' (3).

An independent UN enquiry into the Rwanda genocide concluded that 'the failure of the United Nations to prevent, and subsequently, to stop the genocide in Rwanda was a failure by the United Nations system as a whole. There was a persistent lack of political will by member states to act, or to act with enough assertiveness'assertiveness.' (4).

International Poll Watching: Conceptual Origins

The emergence of poll watching as a critical ingredient in the process of managing electoral contests, traces its origins to the dramatic international climate change in 1989. Late in that year, two events - both of which had great a great deal of significance for Africa - occurred within a few days of each other. One of these events was the opening of the Berlin wall, which finally led to the collapse of the one-party states in Eastern Europe. Particularly important was the massive international publicity given to the fate of the most prominent Eastern European opponent of democracy - Nicolae Caeusescu. African heads of state (and their nations) followed these events closely, and did not fail to observe parallels with their own situations.

The second key event was the publication of a World Bank report entitled Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth. For the first time, the Bank linked aid flow to what it called 'governance', which it defined as the 'exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs.' (5). Although the World Bank and most donor governments were careful to avoid connecting 'good governance' with multi-party systems, it was clearly implied   reference was made to the desirability of freedom of speech, transparency of decision-making and open political debate (6). Likewise, Western politicians and academics pointed out that 'good or democratic governance' involved much more than elections - regardless of how free and fair they might be perceived. Essentially, democratic governance was recognised to be an integral part of peace-building and conflict resolution. (7). Internally based opponents of one-party systems - regardless of whether they were clients of Washington or Moscow - pressed for the expansion of the political space required in order to permit the holding of elections that would supposedly pave the way for democratic governance throughout the continent. Within this fluid scenario, coalitions of non-governmental civil actors - such as the trade union movement, lawyers and academics broadly covered by the rubric of 'civil society' - rose against one-party states and extracted major concessions from absolute rulers who had, hitherto, appeared invincible.

Prior to the 1989 collapse of the 'iron curtain' regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, international poll watching was resented by incumbent regimes that saw it as an encroachment on their national sovereignty. It was admissible only in cases of decolonisation. For example, in Zimbabwe in 1980, and Namibia in 1989. However, this stance has gradually given way to the view that international election observation is a legitimate pursuit. Indeed, it is now seen as a duty of the international community, and is considered to be in the interest of democratisation worldwide - provided two basic preconditions are met: that election observation missions take place on the basis of a formal invitation by the government concerned; and that it takes place only in countries that have acceded to the various international human rights instruments, all of which (with the exception of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights) refer explicitly to the holding of free and fair elections (8).

Poll Watching and National Sovereignty in Africa

The last two decades have witnessed an increased interest in democracy and democratic politics throughout the African continent. Through the ballot box, the wave of popular demand and international pressure for political reform has witnessed the overthrow of numerous authoritarian regimes and , single-party dictatorsand military elites. Equally remarkable was the speed with which multi-party forms of political mobilisation and competition were established, creating a new context for political contestation.

Moreover, most poor African governments tend to seek technical, logistical and financial assistance from the international community - as well as international observers - at election time (9). The need for international election monitoring arose from the obvious need for impartial judgment of electoral processes. Also, the international community tends to feel a responsibility to assist in overseeing the proper conduct of elections, in accordance with emerging international standards.

Election monitoring exercises have served different functions in different countries. In African countries, they are employed in order to bolster public confidence and promote participation in an election process; to detect and deter electoral fraud and irregularities in situations where the ruling party controls the government apparatus; to avert outbreaks of armed conflict and provide international legitimisation for an otherwise controverted process; to enhance the meaningful nature of the electoral process itself; and to encourage political contestants to accept the results of a legitimate electoral process (10). The presence of international observers strengthens the institutional climate for elections by emboldening government representatives, electoral officials, judges, military personnel, police and journalists to muster the necessary courage in order to assert their independence.

As would be expected, some African leaders still consider international election monitoring as tantamount to meddling in their internal affairs - a principle that obviously favours incumbent governments. Worse still, some politicians believe election monitoring by international observers invokes echoes of north-south colonial relationships from the not-too-distant past. As Jennifer McCoy et al. (1991:103) poignantly observed, '〉no principle has been more frustrating to an expansive power, and more sacred to a weak nation than sovereignty.' Not surprisingly, most African governments have grudgingly accepted such interventions, albeit through considerable external pressure. Moreover, the new geopolitical situation following the Cold War allowed the international donor community to include explicit political requirements in terms of their foreign assistance policies (9). Explicitly or implicitly, they impose conditionalities related to the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and aspects of 'good governance'. This also encompasses the rights of political participation and competition for state power through regular and fair elections that serve to legitimise governmental authority.

Notwithstanding the concerns about sovereignty and national security, the practice of observing and monitoring elections is gaining increased acceptance and legitimacy throughout the world. For example, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) issued a declaration in June 1990, requiring all member states to accept the presence of international observers for national elections (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1990). The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 1991, which endorsed the practice of election observation, including

monitoring by non-governmental organisations (11).

All these pronouncements tend to emphasise the view that international election monitoring is no longer considered to be an infringement of a state's national sovereignty, or interference in a country's internal affairs. By December 2000, the OAU had observed more than 90 elections in 39 member states. In most cases, potential conflicts were diffused, as was the case in Lesotho, Togo, Congo and Gabon. In others - namely, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and the Comoros - actual conflicts were resolved (12). The critical role of international election monitors can hardly be overemphasised. To this end, Chris Bakwesegha (1997: 89) graphically concluded that 'Africans have been spared such absurdities as the incumbent winning an election by 99.99 percent.' (13). In the same vein, cases where legitimate losers contest election results, are also far fewer than before.

Poll watching within the context of NEPAD.

Though not explicitly mentioned, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) implicitly recognises the importance of poll watching, which undoubtedly helps ensure the integrity and legitimacy of elections throughout Africa, within the broader context of promoting good governance on the continent. The document outlining the nature of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a long and exhausting one. 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development is a pledge by Africa's leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development and, at the same time, to participate actively in the world economy.' (14).
NEPAD can thus be summed up as a programme of action that originates in Africa, is owned by African countries, and has as its principle aim the reversal of Africa's marginalisation (15) within an increasingly globalised world.

For NEPAD to crystallise into a framework of cooperation and partnership between Africa and the international community, African governments must back up their verbal commitments with tangible action, particularly in relation to their commitments regarding policy issues. The notion of good governance is explicitly recognised as an essential ingredient for socio-economic development. The NEPAD document states that 'across the continent, democracy is spreading, backed by the African Union, which has shown a new resolve to deal with conflicts and censure deviation from the norm.' (Article 45) It goes on to state: 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development has, as one of its foundations, the expansion of democratic frontiers and the deepening of the culture of human rights. A democratic Africa will become one of the pillars of world democracy, human rights and tolerance.' (Article 183) NEPAD's strong emphasis on democracy and governance does, indeed, make it genuinely different from earlier initiatives aimed at promoting, propagating and pursuing external support for African development within a continental perspective. As its main initiator confirmed: 'The New Partnership is unique in African history, in that African leaders have pledged to cooperate and be accountable to one another and to their people, in terms of the development strategy, plans and delivery of programmes.' (Mbeki, 2002) Conflict prevention, democracy and governance are of primary importance. This perception underpins NEPAD's claim to speak for the people of Africa through democratically legitimized representatives. Legitimacy and credibility are keywords and essential contributing factors in the ongoing efforts to turn NEPAD into a success story. If NEPAD is to be judged as a success story by the ordinary people of Africa and the wider international community, the

effectiveness of the peer review mechanism envisaged under NEPAD as an enforcement instrument of good governance norms and practices on the continent, will be absolutely crucial.

Conclusion

Recent evidence from Africa reveals that in order for election results to be acceptable to all parties, both local and external poll watchers must certify that elections have been free and fair. The participation of international poll-watching groups from organisations such as the UN, the AU, the European Union (EU) and the Commonwealth, is highly valued by all Africans who embrace the cause of good governance. However, it is extremely important that the international community build local capacity - particularly among non-governmental organisations - within the interconnected realms of poll watching and civic awareness. The perception that poll watching has flourished into a 'job creation' industry for western experts enabling them to publish articles in prestigious and glossy journals as well as garnering hefty per diems has been cynically cited by African leaders determined to cling to power in order to cast doubt on the credibility of international poll watchers. By building capacity among local civil society organisations, not only will the international community help strengthen the foundations of peace and stability - hence avoiding conflict-generating situations which may necessitate expensive peace keeping operations - but it will also enable the African continent to project an authentic image centred around ownership of the good governance process - this, after all, is at the heart of the NEPAD initiative. This is critically important, as NEPAD has to increasingly compete for international attention, particularly with regard to the US-led campaign against global terrorism. For NEPAD to enjoy sustainable international goodwill in a world preoccupied with dismantling the global infrastructure of international terrorism, African countries must convincingly demonstrate their total commitment to the rule of law, and to the cause of good governance.

Notes

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1. Jean-Marie Guehenno, 'United Nations Peacekeeping', Conflict Trends, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) 3/2002, p 13
2. See N. M. Mulikita, 'Democratisation and Conflict Resolution in Africa: The Role of International and Regional Election Observers', Peacekeeping and International Relations, Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre, Canada, Vol. 28, No. 3, May-June, 1999, p 1
3. See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga', I.B.Tauris Publishers, London-New York, 1999, pg 135-136
4. See International Panel of Eminent Persons (IPEP), 'Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide', OAU, Addis-Ababa, 2000, p 103
5. World Bank, 'Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth', Washington DC, The World Bank, 1989, pg 60-61
6. Former French President, Francois Mitterand, congratulated African countries that had committed

themselves to democratisation in his opening address at the fourth summit of the Francophone Nations in November 1991. See Africa Research Bulletin, 31 November, 1991, p 10293

7. Mulikita, Op.cit, p 3

8. Severine Rugumamu, 'State Sovereignty and Intervention in Africa: Nurturing New Governance Norms', discussion paper, International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 10 March, 2001, p 5

8. Ibid, see also Njunga Mulikita, Op.cit, p 3

9. Ibid

10. Rugumamu, Op.cit, p 6

11. Ibid

12. See OAU general secretariat, draft report of the secretary-general on Strengthening the Role of the OAU in Election Monitoring and the Advancement of Democratisation in Africa, 2000, p 15

13. Chris Bakwesegha, 'Conflict Resolution in Africa: A New Role for the Organisation of African Unity?' In Sorbo, G. & Vale, P., (eds). 'Out of Conflict: From War to Peace in Africa'. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainistitutet, 1997, p 89

14. Njunga-Michael Mulikita, 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Peace & Security Challenges', paper presented to the First NEPAD Zambia National Workshop, Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, 23 August, 2002, p 4

15. Henning Melber, 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)   Old Wine in New Bottles?' Forum for Development Studies, Vol. 6, No. 1 (June 2002), p 7

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Book Review - The Politics of Economic Regionalism: Sierra Leone in ECOWAS, by David J. Francis, Ashgate Publishing, 2001
by Senzo Ngubane

The continent's recent history speaks volumes about the different political and economic challenges that Africa has had to face. These challenges - some of which have manifested themselves in various inter and intra-state conflicts - have been experienced in all the various regions of the continent, albeit in varying degrees. As a result, the continental leadership has opted to create structures and mechanisms beyond the state, in order to deal with these challenges. Among such structures is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was created for the West African region. Apart from trying to assess the push factors that make individual states opt for a regional structure, one of the areas that is worth exploring is the extend and nature of the impact that a regional structure has on its individual states - in a nutshell, this is the subject of David J. Francis' book.

The book is an interesting account of how economic regionalism in West Africa has influenced events and, to a certain extent, changed the course of history in Sierra Leone. One of the most important aspects of the book is its introduction, at which point the author describes his view and definition of economic regionalism. From the onset, the author correctly argues that the phrase economic regionalism has been used as an all-embracing concept under which broader political, environmental, socio-cultural, security, military and developmental issues have been addressed. Consequently, the politics of economic regionalism focuses on the interface between all these important variables. Therefore, the book does not solely focus on the economic aspects of the relationship between ECOWAS and Sierra Leone - it also covers other important issues that relate to the relationship, which, by definition, is symbiotic.

The book also contains a chapter on the theoretical discourse surrounding the concept of regionalism. In this section an attempt is made to distinguish between what the author refers to as 'old regionalism' and 'new regionalism'. The book describes 'old regionalism' as belonging in the 1950s and 1970s eras, when it emerged within the historical context of the 'bi-polar world'. In this context, issues such as 'free trade arrangements' within ECOWAS are a reflection of this old approach to regionalism. On the other hand, 'new regionalism' emerged in the late 1980s in response to the demise of the Cold War. This is a very important distinction, since it helps to situate the challenges faced by ECOWAS, in general - and its role in Sierra Leone, in particular - within a changing global context. Moreover, this section also helps to further explain the links and contradictions that are embedded in the concepts of 'regionalism' and 'globalisation'. What is even more interesting about this section is that it also focuses on how ECOWAS has attempted to construct a regional structure that is aimed at meeting the challenges poised by 'new regionalism'.

Apart from looking at Sierra Leone within the context of a turbulent region, the author also traces the brief history of its civil war - it also provides an analysis thereof. This chapter serves as an excellent background to the two chapters that delve into the political and economic implications of Sierra Leone's ECOWAS regionalism. In these two chapters, the relationship between a state and a sub-regional structure is appraised. The demands associated with attempting to build bridges and forge greater regional unity through responding to individual state's problems, are also discussed.

This book provides an excellent account of the challenges that ECOWAS faces in attempting to forge

regional integration, peace and stability. Also, the book makes an important contribution to the ongoing discourse on global regionalism, but focuses on its growth and development in Africa. For this reason, it is a very important resource for those interested in Africa's development. Over and above this, the book portrays a positive image of ECOWAS, the manner in which it has evolved, and its attempts to deal with the challenges in Sierra Leone. Of course, this positive image is not exaggerated   the book also discusses the various problems that face the structure. However, because of the way that it is written, it moves away from the common tendency to paint a dull picture of Africa. It also manages to refrain from describing West Africa as a region that is unable to handle its own challenges!

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References

Civil-Military Coordination: An operational requirement for the effective management of peace missions
by Kwezi Mngqibisa

Understanding the post-Cold War United Nations' (UN) response to conflict hinges on accepting that most conflicts are more complex than merely be unable to conform to a signed ceasefire agreement. In terms of the management of peace missions, the elements of a structured response are gaining international consensus. The international community recognises the need for a multi-dimensional response in order to resolve conflicts. It also accepts that this response would have to include a conceptual and managerial focus aimed at establishing an amicable working relationship between civilian and military role players.

The leading work on civil-military coordination is based on the Balkans deployment experiences - particularly those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The alliance found itself confronted by challenges that demanded a response far beyond purely military solutions. The essential requirement was a response that focussed on human rights, economic rehabilitation and humanitarian assistance, among other things. Owing to the circumstances, the military had to find ways to work with their civilian and humanitarian counterparts in order to provide a more comprehensive response to conflict.

There is much confusion about the definition and role of civilians in peace missions. This is because the focus tends to fall on the managerial and political guidance demonstrated by a staff member of the deploying authority's special representative. Essentially, there are numerous categories of civilian staff who work towards providing a consistent response to any precarious situation, whether it is a degraded civil authority, a non-functional public service, a ruined economy, the existence of multiple armed groups, or any other feature of a country in conflict.

In response to conflict following the Balkan experience, the UN has managed   quite well, in fact - to institutionalise the cooperation and coordination of civil and military conflict management efforts. A survey of several current UN missions reveals a variety of mechanisms aimed at facilitating the sharing of information and joint planning, as well as other co-operative activities. These have resulted in a number of labels being attached to coordination institutions. For example, Civil-Military Operations Centres, Military-Civilian Coordination Centres, Joint Humanitarian-Military Centres and so on. More than anything else, these labels expose the evolving consensus regarding the leadership and participation of the various role players. Much conceptual ground has been covered in order to put to rest any leadership contention by the military in terms of these coordination forums. A simpler definition for civil-military coordination is 'any effort that allows for coordination of the efforts of the various role players in a peace mission [in order to ensure] that the objective of a stable society is achieved'.

For both the military and civilians, the basic principles of effective coordination include a clarity of objectives, the integration of effort, timely decision-making and - on the part of the military - permissive rules of engagement (1).

The good work done to create a more effective UN peacekeeping response has, for quite a while, consistently emphasised the need for joint civil-military capacity-building   this is essential for better performance in the field (2). In principle, this view is generally accepted. However, in practise it is

always complicated by the duplicity of the deploying authorities that respond to differing elements of the same conflict. Fortunately, the importance of sub-regional roles in responding to conflict was recently acknowledge. Consequently, much emphasis has been placed on first developing sub-regional standard operating procedures for deployment. Focus has been placed on establishing the required capability in order to mount a comprehensive response that goes beyond just military deployment - peacemaking and peace-building in the pre- and post-conflict stages is also important (3).

Consequently, the international community - represented by the UN and sub-regional organisations - are effectively coordinating their activities with regard to the following:

Emergency aid
Resource management
Infrastructure rehabilitation
Public health
Mine awareness and de-mining
Vulnerable groups, such as women and children
Professional police services
Human rights
Refugees and displaced persons
Elections
Support to humanitarian organisations
Military prisoners/POWs and missing persons
Civil administration

The multiplicity of activities is not the primary challenge   the focus is the number and orientation of the various role players (4) who make up the conflict response. In essence, the challenge is how to put the 'puzzle pieces' together in a way that will represent a coherent response.

It is for the reasons outlined above that the peacekeeping programme at ACCORD (5) will run a Civilian Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Course, the central theme of which will be civil-military coordination. The course will take place in April 2003. It will be aimed at civilian and military participants from the Southern African sub-region who have been earmarked for deployment. The curriculum will focus on applicable strategies and mechanisms generic to a number of deployments. The idea is to expose the participants to the latest thinking in terms of how best to respond to the coordination and cooperation challenges in field deployments. This will be a strategic contribution to the preparation of peacekeepers for peacekeeping and peacebuilding deployments to countries within the sub-region.

Most, if not all, assessments of modern peace missions have emphasised the need for improved coordination between the various entities. It is important to note that not only one entity - whether it be civilian or military - should be the focal point. For example, overall coordination may fall under the special representative of the secretary-general (in terms of a UN-based context), but no entity should dominate the entire peace effort. Coordination needs to take place, not only within a UN-deployed mission, but also between the mission and other resident UN agencies, international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the host government and local population. A peace mission should be a holistic effort, where all the elements involved have the similar objective of achieving

sustainable peace and stability. For this overall objective to be realised, the efforts of different actors need to be communicated and considered in order to avoid duplication, and to ensure that each actor is doing what they are mandated to do best.

Notes

Kwezi Mngqibisa is the manager of the Peacekeeping Programme at ACCORD. He takes overall responsibility for the views expressed in this contribution. The peacekeeping programme is funded by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the Training for Peace in Southern Africa Project. More information on the peacekeeping programme can be found at www.accord.org/ web.nsf/ programmes/peacekeeping

1. Joulwan, G. et al (1998) 'Civilian- Military Cooperation in the Prevention of Deadly Conflict'. Carnergie Commission.
2. The Brahimi Report (accessible at www.un.org/peace/reports/peace-operations/docs.) and its regional consultations are instructive pieces of work that are supportive of this view, based on the experiences of ongoing and past peacekeeping missions.
3. The expectation is that sub-regions will develop capabilities and procedures that will facilitate a civilian and political deployment responsive to the specificity of the challenge.
4. It is befitting to note the important role played by international and non-governmental organisations in humanitarian endeavours. In fact, it is the level of independence and decentralised response indicative of IGOs and NGOs that characterise the institutional culture difference that contributes to the need for mechanisms for coordination.
5. For the 2003 annual programme of the peacekeeping programme, please visit www.accord.org.za/ web.nsf/yearplan

References

Constitutional democracy in Africa
by Clive J Napier

Much has recently been said and written about democratisation in Africa. We have also recently seen elections take place in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia, all of which have been vigorously contested by governing and opposition parties. In the case of Kenya, the results have generally been accepted; in the case of the latter two countries, they have been disputed. In many parts of Africa, we have also recently observed numerous initiatives aimed at reconstituting the state. These initiatives have included equipping the country concerned with a new constitution, as well as the provision of new constitutional orders   in other words, creating a rule-based state.

Democratisation and constitutionalism are two buzz words that have been tossed about in the minds and rhetoric of many leaders, followers and others throughout the continent. Many believe they are prerequisites in order to make African countries more prosperous and stable for their citizens, and to turn the tide of political and economic decay.

Democracy, and the process of adopting democratic principles, takes place in various different ways. One way is through the amendment or liberalisation of existing laws: to allow greater freedom to those who wish to establish new political parties, to campaign in elections for votes, and to mobilise the population to support one cause or another. Another way is to make changes to security and law enforcement agencies, so that those competing for the support of an electorate may enjoy more freedom to do so.

Several democratic frameworks could emerge as a result of the liberalisation and constitution redrafting processes, and these could provide for the establishment of procedural, ideological and organisational democratic systems. For example, one could refer to capitalist democracy; consociational democracy; electoral democracy; local democracy; party democracy; plebiscitary democracy; radical democracy; liberal democracy; and many more.

Democracy can be portrayed in many different ways. However, the democratisation process within the African context has focused mostly on the introduction of institutional arrangements that allow party candidates to compete for votes in order to fill public positions. For many African states, this focus represents a shift away from one-party, limited democratic forms of leadership selection, which have often been performed under autocratic and authoritarian regimes. Now, the shift is towards a more open method of filling public offices. What is important in electoral democracy, however, is the process followed in order to ensure that the public is able to freely select its public office bearers according to a set of generally accepted rules.

These rules are largely embodied in a constitution, which is often described as a body of fundamental law. However, a constitution is not the only body of law that governs democratic processes. Ordinary legislation and court decisions also have a democratic role to play. The constitutional evolution of the African state has involved four phases: during pre-colonial rule, constitutions were unwritten; during colonial rule, constitutions were largely colonial instruments merely handed down; and during the attainment of independence, constitutions were hurriedly drafted documents based on former colonial models, and were accepted without much debate by post-independence African elites.

We are currently in the fourth phase, and African constitutions are now being redrafted in order to embody democratic principles, and provide for civil rights and liberties. This fourth phase process has often resulted in controversy and conflict within many African states. As the above suggests, African countries have yet to experience a long period of rule under modern day constitutions. Constitutional democracy has simply not had time to bed down within the African context.

Consequently, it must be emphasised that constitutions and constitutionalism (in other words, abiding by constitutional rules), have only recently emerged to support the democratisation of the continent. The obvious question is how has electoral democracy and constitutionalism fared so far on the African continent? In addition, what does the future look like for Africa's electoral democracy and constitutionalism?

According to a 2000 survey undertaken to assess democracy in Africa, only four countries - namely Cape Verde, Sao Tomé e Principe, South Africa and Benin - were considered to be 'free', in that they provided for the expression of political rights and civil liberties - a key component of a constitutional democracy. A further 13 countries were considered to be 'partly free', in terms of adhering to the aforementioned rights and liberties. This would suggest that constitutions and constitutionalism play important roles within these countries. In other words, the constitutions in these states place limitations on the abrogation of political rights and civil liberties. However, of the 53 independent states on the continent, only four are considered to be 'free'. This suggests that the continent has a long way to go before widespread constitutional democracy is achieved.

To answer the second question posed previously, constitutional democracies in the developed world have evolved over many centuries. Perhaps African countries have to go through a similar evolutionary process.

However, constitutional democracy, and the consolidation of democracy (in other words, ensuring that the democratic process endures beyond the first multi-party election), will be determined by many factors, such as ethnic and religious conflict; robust political party systems; the existence of professional national bureaucracies and court systems; a strong civil society; an equitable economic system; modern agrarian relations; and so on. It is very much a matter of waiting to see whether constitutional democracy will emerge, where it will flourish, how it will evolve, and whether it will endure in the long-term.

Notes

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Content counts: democracy and development in Africa
by Cornelia Stols

INTRODUCTION

'The problem in Africa is not so much that development has failed) it was never on the agenda in the first place. With independence, African leaders were in no position to pursue development; they were too engrossed in the struggle for survival (1). However, things have changed during the last decade. Development is no longer just an issue on Africa's agenda - it is central to the debate. Democracy has also become more important. Indeed, during the last two decades of the twentieth century, we witnessed renewed hope for the birth of democracy in Africa.

On the African continent, democratic aspirations were accompanied by a demand for economic empowerment. However, the deteriorating social welfare and living standards of the people   despite the vote for democracy - gradually undermined people's confidence in the new democratic order.

In an era where calls for more open, democratic and transparent government (accompanied by economic liberalisation) permeate development thinking throughout the continent, one is forced to ask the question: Does democracy and development fit into the same picture? Is democracy really the answer to Africa's problems? More specifically, does it provide an answer to the demands for improved socio-economic conditions and living standards   elements that are so central to political life in poor African countries?

UNPACKING THE PARCEL

What is development?

There are two important ways in which democracy can be viewed: by either focusing on the process (a 'means to an end' approach), or by focusing on the substance (a 'end in itself' approach). Democracy as a process is linked to the literal and classical meaning of democratia ('power of the people'). In other words, it is linked to democratic institutions and procedures. However, the concept of 'democracy' shoots its roots much deeper. When focusing on the substance of democracy, various core values - such as accountability and transparency - are revealed.

TYING DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT TOGETHER

The question at the heart of the link between democracy and development is: Do democracies, in the long run, present their citizens with a higher level of social (human) and economic development? (2,3,4) There is an ongoing debate about the relationship between democracy and development. A number of prominent arguments regarding this link are worth mentioning.

The first argument manifests in the conflict model. This model proposes that democracy doesn't make a contribution toward economic or human development (5). On the other extreme is the complement model, which argues that democracy is not only desirable, but is absolutely necessary for a thriving

free-market economy (6). A third argument is the compatibility model. Essentially, this model believes that democracy and a market economy are compatible, and that they contribute to one another.v Another argument is the skeptical model, which, as the name suggests, is skeptical of a direct causal relationship between democracy and development.v

I developed a variation of the complement model called the content model. This model argues that successful developmental outcomes - both historically and in the modern era - depend less on whether or not regimes show the procedural and institutional elements of democracy; they rely more on the content of democracy, such as accountability, transparency and so on (7). Elements of the substance of democracy can be found in regimes that wholly lack any form of procedural democracy, and it is these elements that prove to be conducive to development.

Now we have to get back to the question that was initially asked. My answer is: A ballot box does not secure development. However, a citizenry that understands the content and value of democracy creates an environment conducive to development. If the democratic parcel has the right content, and does not consist of the mere procedural and institutional trappings of democracy, it will provide the mechanisms for development.

BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Like I said earlier, elements of democratic substance can be found in non-democratic states. However, democratic institutions and procedures provide the most suitable mechanisms through which core democratic values on development can prosper. However, there are obstacles that stand between democracy and development.

The first obstacle involves the protracted conflicts in Africa. We need to solve these conflicts in a sustainable way. Protracted conflict has a devastating effect on both the state and economy, and they stand in the way of democracy and development. There is more than enough proof to support the correlation between political instability and poor economic performance. Conflict and political instability are also more inherent in non-democratic regimes. The Economic Report on Africa 2000: Initial Conditions for Africa's Development in the Twenty-First Century, found that the countries that registered positive trends in development benefited from the end of civil wars - greater stability provided the platform for economic and political reforms. In addition, countries that displayed negative developmental trends all suffered from serious civil conflict and political instability. Consequently, an effective conflict resolution mechanism will be crucial to Africa's future development.

Secondly, there is a need for strong, capable and competent states to facilitate sustained economic recovery. Such states are more likely to be found within the context of deepening and substantive democracy.

The third major way in which we can contribute to development is by promoting a democratic African culture. In Africa, elections are largely equated with democracy. The continent's democratic culture has yet to evolve to the point where governments that perform poorly can be forced out of office by the ballot box or public opinion. Africa is even further from the stage where a mere threat of removal

serves as a deterrent for bad governance.

In addition, Africa should bear in mind that perception is the only reality! Although there is no empirical evidence that directly links 'greater democracy with economic management, effective adjustment policies or faster economic growth'vi - and ultimately development - donors now share the belief that democracy is conducive to improved economic performance. They also believe that people's participation in the processes of government ensures a more stable environment, and that democratic regimes are usually more effective at economic management. In addition, donors also maintain that democratic regimes are more responsive to a wider range of interests when formulating and implementing policies.vi In this sense, democracy shapes perceptions. Consequently, Africa should mould negative perceptions by letting their actions speak louder than their words.

PROSPECTS FOR AFRICA

Does the absence of certain links between democracy and development predict a bleak future for Africa, or is there reason for hope? I am convinced that there are prospects of hope for this 'dark' continent. Indeed, some long-term determinants of transformation can be identified, and the recently published special issue of Conflict Trends (Volume 4/2002) illuminates such positive democratisation trends. However, it is our responsibility, as Africans, to make the core values of democracy part and parcel of democracy.

Another positive development is the emergence of a 'good governance' agenda for Africa. This agenda does not deny the adverse impact of poor economic conditions immediately following independence, a hostile international environment, negative external shocks, and policy mistakes on Africa's development trajectory. Instead, it shifts the focus to factors within Africa's control. This shift in emphasis represents an attempt to transform Africa into a continent of 'developmental states'. (8)

CONCLUSION

The relationship between democracy and development remains complex and varied, and may give rise to occasional tensions and contradictions. Yet, when the core values of democracy are packaged in formal democratic procedures and institutions - which provide the mechanisms for facilitating development - Africa will make strides along the developmental path. Now that we have identified some of the obstacles between democracy and development, Africans must address these issues, give content to fragile new democracies, and promote the 'good governance' agenda.

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Museveni and Uganda's Struggle for Democracy
by Kintu Nyago

Assessing the status of Uganda's democratic consolidation requires one to consider the political role that President Museveni has played. This year marks his 17th year in power, and in that time, he has enjoyed landslide victories in two elections. However, Museveni is constitutionally eligible to contest the next presidential elections, which will take place in 2006. This paper will attempt to follow Museveni's rise to power. It will also attempt to answer the following question: What effect will Museveni's departure have on the sustainability of Uganda's democratic programme?

One must consider the socioal-political forces that Museveni has interacted with in order to assess his role within the Ugandan political arena. Museveni came to power in 1986, through the National Resistance Movement (NRM). The NRM was the first post-colonial, political-military African movement to topple an indigenous regime by means of a protracted people's war. Prior to this, Uganda had been under a brutal civilian and military autocracy that had resulted in political instability and economic collapse, (1) a situation best exemplified by the fact that during the first 24 years of its early post-colonial experience (1962 to 1986), Uganda experienced three constitutional changes (2). The result was political instability. This led to eight violent changes of government. State-inspired violence was unleashed, and resulted in the death of more than one million people! (3).

The Early times:

Museveni and his many contemporaries were influenced by these developments. Growing up in rural Ankole, he witnessed the negative political trends that arose from a cocktail of Bahiima-Bairu ethnic/caste politics, which was compounded by political antagonisms based onbased on religious sectarianism. (4). Associational political life thrived through religiously based civil-political pressure groups. These groups eventually emerged in post-colonial Uganda as the Anglican- and Roman Catholic-dominated UPC, and the Democratic Party (DP), respectively. (5). The politics of religious sectarianism exhibited by these parties led critics - such as Museveni - to search for an alternative form of democratic organisation, based on the Movement system.

The Dar-es-Salaam Days

The political life of Mwalimu Nyerere's Tanzania, as well as the stimulating intellectual debates at the University of Dar-es-Salaam during the 1960';s and 1970's, influenced the political thinking of many of Uganda's current leaders, including Museveni. During that period, he either studied or lived in Tanzania. The country's inclusive one-party state arrangement, and the political order associated with it, contrasted greatly with the chaos in Uganda. The ideas that developed while in Tanzania greatly contributed to the later creation of the Movement political system in Uganda.

Violence and the Establishment of a Democratic Order

The main enduring contribution that resulted from the NRM's 'Luweero Triangle' civil war (1981-86) against the Obote regime, centred around the democratisation of the Ugandan polity. It aimed to achieve this by dismantling the neo-colonial state and reconstituting it with an alternative one. This

process mainly affected the military and local administrative infrastructure.

The political reality of the time was shaped by a deep-rooted antagonism that the Buganda establishment felt towards Obote and the UPC. This dated back to the 1966 constitutional crisis - in the aftermath of that crisis, the victorious Obote abolished the ancient Kabakaship institution, suspended the rights of the Baganda, and ruled them through emergency regulations for five years in succession. General Idi Amin, who had formed an alliance with the Baganda, overthrew Obote in 1971.

Obote's return to power in 1980 set the ground for a civil war between his government and the Buganda. To his credit, Museveni had correctly interpreted and prepared for this showdown. Using his control of Fronasa - the political-military group he had established during the anti-Amin struggle - Museveni put his muscle behind the Buganda establishment throughout the civil war. This decision would propel him power.

A major contribution of the Luweero War was the political re-integration of the Buganda. The Buganda establishment participated in the leadership of the NRM. They also had a strong representation in the National Resistance Army (NRA). However, it should be noted that the resultant coalition that was formed under the aegis of the NRM, had a multi-ethnic and multi-ideological membership. The members were glued together by a shared commitment aimed at establishing a democratic order.

During the war, the NRM leadership encouraged debate within its ranks. This resulted in the conception and implementation of democratic reforms (6). It also provided them with the political will to form the NRA, a 'pro-people' armed wing. In 1981, the strict NRA Code of Conduct (COC) was established, and its aim was to instill military discipline within the force, as well as a respect for the civilian population. A conscious effort - mainly through political education - was also made to condition NRA cadres to respect the rule of law and protect the democratic constitutional order. The resultant discipline within the NRA, which contrasted with the lawless behaviour of the government forces, greatly contributed to the widening of the rebels' social base (7).

Its support was further strengthened through the introduction of Resistance Committees (RCs). Prior to their introduction, local government had been based on a system of appointed chiefs, who were all card-carrying members of the UPC. They all enjoyed fused powers that they abused, either through a laxity in supervision, or through deliberate government policy. The regime further complicated the local administration situation, when it introducedd a parallel structure of local para-military party and youth leaders. In the Luweero Triangle, these leaders acquired the power to determine one's life or death! Unwittingly, they contributed directly to the eroding of the regime's support with in this area.

Initially, NRM organs appointed RC members to link them with local communities. Soon afterwards, however, they took on a democratic character when reforms were conducted - leadership positions were suddenly elective. Three factors explain the political will to embark on such radical experimentation: , firstly, the democratic orientation of the NRM leadership; secondly, the overwhelming support it had acquired throughout the Buganda countryside; and, thirdly, the RC's represented a visible example of the covenant the insurgents had made with the population - in exchange for supporting the rebellion, their democratic rights would be safeguarded.

This was the environment that bred Uganda's Movement political system, . which began as a broad nationalist coalition aimed at challenging the dictatorial hegemony of the UPC regime. Though similar in many ways to a one-party system, there are two fundamental differences. Firstly, all citizens are entitled to full political rights under the Movement. As a result, anyone can stand for political office, based on the Individual Merit Principle. Secondly, there is, in theory, no membership attached to the Movement, as no one can be, expelled from it.

There were many factors that enabled the Movement to capture the imagination of Ugandans. Its inclusive politics, coupled with widening the democratic space in a participatory manner, were important. Also, recognising through affirmative action, the needs of historically marginal groups, such as women's groups, youth groups and disabled citizens. A number of NRM leaders   for example, Kategaya and Bidandi Ssali - were of the view that the Movement was an interim arrangement. However, Museveni insisted that the Movement was a political system on its own merit, and expressed reluctance to have it replaced by any other. This view was, in part, influenced by the chaotic political situation that Uganda had experienced in the past.

It should be mentioned that the Movement enjoyed popularity in the central, western and eastern parts of the country. However, this was not the case in the mid-northern areas, where the UPC had established a stronghold. This fact explains the ongoing armed rebellion that erupted within the area after the NRM captured state power.

The Politics of Constitutional Making

If the war in Luweero provided the basis for the introduction of democratic governance in Uganda, the culture of constitutionalism was entrenched through the elaborate constitution-making process initiated by the NRM in December 1988 (8). An Act of legislation established the Uganda Constitutional Commission. Headed by a High Court judge, the need to 'ʼ study and review the constitution with a view to making proposals for the enactment of a national constitution)' (9) was identified. This process involved widespread national consultations and covered a period of seven years. A total of 25,547 written memoranda were obtained through a variety of sources - ranging from essay competitions to village reports   all of which were submitted to the Uganda Constitutional Commission. The process ended with the Constituent Assembly being elected. The new constitution was debated and finally promulgated in 1995.

Politically, this sequence of events aided the nation-building process, as it brought together different actors from all levels of society. Essentially, the 1995 constitution provided a basis for the building of a new democratic order based on constitutionalism.

Challenges to Democratic Consolidation:

In terms of Uganda's democratic consolidation, a lot has been achieved in the last 16 years. However, its long-term sustainability does face real challenges. They are as follows:
Firstly, there is the issue of Museveni's control of the NRM and, by extension, Uganda. By implication, he is bound to be a major actor in Ugandan politics, whether he is in the State House or not;
Secondly, the army intends to maintain its high political profile (10). There is a concern that this could

destabilise Uganda if the army perceives that its interests are threatened . Emphasis needs to be placed on addressing this threat within the recently initiated Defence Review Programme;

Thirdly, the issue of establishing a sustainable political system for Uganda is still unresolved. Although the constitution does attempt to resolve this by calling for periodic referendums to decide which political system Ugandans prefer,, it is the minority that supports the cause of multi-party politics. The aspirations of this group need to be adequately catered for, if a durable political order is to be maintained in future;

Lastly, there are further threats relating to the insurgency in northern Uganda, as well as the fragile political environment in the Great Lakes region and Southern Sudan. To address these issues, Uganda would definitely need to strengthen the capacity of its state to maintain its territorial integrity. In addition, it needs to build on its diplomatic capacity in order to meaningfully participate in the region's peace-building initiatives.

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4. Interview with Hon. Eriya Kategaya.
5. See Report from the Uganda Consitutional Commission, 1993, p. 47.
6. See Ten Point Programme and Mustard Seed.
7. See Minority Rights Report.
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Navigating the post-conflict terrain: Civil society in Angola
by Britt de Klerk

How we define and understand the notion of civil society - as well as its proposed functions   has been the subject of many academic debates (1). Attempts have been made to delineate the state and political parties from the economy and general population. In this regard, the first has been governed by the logic of domination, the second by the logic of profit or rentability, and the third by the logic of participation (2). Civil society, it has been argued, falls into the final category.

This understanding of civil society draws on the assumption that various non-governmental organisations   as well as interest groups, churches, business associations, the media, lobby groups, grass roots organisations and others - participate in both the social and political arena. Within this context, civil society occupies a space between the state and the population at large. As such, civil society may contribute to the democratisation process. It may also improve the quality of governance in four different ways. Firstly, civil society may alter the balance of power between the state and society. In other words, it may temper the state's power to dominate. Secondly, a strong civil society could play a disciplinary role with regard to the state, through enforcing standards of public morality and by improving the accountability of both politicians and administrators. Thirdly, civil society could play an intermediary role between the state and society. Through this role, the interests of society could be made known to the state. Lastly, civil society may redefine the rules of the political game along democratic lines (3). Essentially, what these prescriptions underscore is that civil society should facilitate, assist, encourage and promote democratic transformation.

In practice, civil society may operate with these intentions. However, it may be constrained by structural weaknesses, both within the political and social environment, as well as within its own institutional makeup. In post-conflict situations, the social and political arena is transformed. Consequently, the character and objectives of civil society organisations are also altered. For example, after the Association Law was passed in 1991, Angola slowly started experiencing the emergence of civil society. Then the political climate changed following the death of Jonas Savimbi, former leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Economic liberalisation in the 1990's, as well as an increased demand for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide social services in the face of worsening humanitarian crises, provided the space from which civil society organisations could grow. However, the end of the civil war resulted in a fragmented and factionalised civil society.

Furthermore, there seems to be (to some extent) a lack of consensus regarding the political, economic and social priorities within the new peace context. Agendas vary, with churches focusing on reconciliation and the rebuilding of local communities. Others divide their energies between monitoring the constitutional revision process, promoting transparency in public finances, and pursuing general sustainable development and poverty alleviation issues. (4).

Although Angolan civil society has the opportunity to operate within a widening political space - and thereby effect some measure of influence on the peace and democratic transformation process - it must still contend with institutional weaknesses. These include the difficulty of trying to break away from a deep-rooted culture of fear; financial dependence; a lack of strict management; organisational

and institutional fragility; the lack of a democratic culture; a concentration of action within the urban centres; an inability to differentiate between the roles of state and civil society; and dubious social commitment (5). The aforementioned weaknesses have the potential to stagnate these organisations and limit their efficacy.

Despite these endemic challenges, civil society has, over the years, developed into an impressive force within Angola. As such, it has the capacity to influence government by representing various interests, by engaging policy-makers in active debate, and by nurturing contact with society at a grassroots level. Angolan civil society has, in recent months, been making a concerted effort to overcome its structural and institutional limitations. Indeed, it is coming together to challenge both the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and UNITA's ownership of the peace process. For instance, on 25 September 2002, trade unions, churches and NGO's came together for the first time since the death of Jonas Savimbi. The gathering was aimed at discussing alternatives for sustainable peace in Angola. They called on citizens to play a more active role in the peace process, which has, so far, been dominated by discussions between the government and UNITA (6). They also appealed to citizens to become more involved in the constitutional debate.

In post-conflict situations, attempting to sustain peace (and further democracy) requires a joint effort on the part of the state, civil society and the citizenry. Bearing in mind the difficulties involved in moving from the 'war' agenda towards the adoption of principles of compromise and consensus, the state, former warring parties, civil society and citizens need to work together in order to overcome mistrust. Together, they must also remove the legacy of 'conflict versus negotiation'. To this end, civil society should pursue a coherent common agenda focussed on peace, political transformation and responsible governance. Each aspect is interrelated, and requires simultaneous address. Only then will the government, political parties and communities take civil society's objectives and motives seriously.

Angolan civil society   like civil society elsewhere in Africa - is faced with a number of challenges. These challenges will test its ability to effectively fulfil its function within the political and social spheres. One must consider structural and endemic weaknesses when applying the prescriptions of what constitutes civil society. Rigid application does not further the empowerment of civil society. Nor does it aid the realisation of its objectives. Civil society operates within an arena that is subject to a variety of factors and determinants. Consequently, due consideration is required when assessing its efficacy. There is no doubt that civil society has an important role to play in sustaining peace, and furthering democracy within Angola. Every effort should be made to assist this sector of society. At the same time, every effort should also be made to encourage constructive engagement between the government, political parties and civil society - afterall, peace can only be sustained through the will of all the people and groups within Angola.

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Traditional perspectives of democratisation in Africa
by Jannie Malan

Naturally, using the word 'democratisation' raises quite a few questions. If democratisation means changing a situation that is not democratic (or not democratic enough) into a (more) democratic one, then we have to wonder if the concept had any relevance in early African traditions? To what extent could the concept of democracy have been necessary within societies that were inherently equipped with a social and societal mindset? In addition, if we, in our day, share any thoughts on democracy, in which semantic sub-field are we using this popular, but polysemantic term, about which there is 'very little international consensus' (Filatova 2000:37)?
Democracy: Many senses! One essence?

The typical dictionary entry describes democracy as a form of government in which the power resides with the people. Often a note is added regarding the derivation from the Greek words for 'people' (demos) and 'to rule' (kratein). Such phrases and words may be general knowledge. However, they can provide us with clues that could enable us to transcend a naïve concept of democracy. Usually, clarity about who the 'people' are is taken for granted, and the attention is then focused on participatory or representative ways of ruling (cf Held & Pollitt 1986:7). Important as this distinction between the main types of democracy is, it is often more important to determine and discuss who the 'people' are, or who they are perceived to be.

The situation from which the term 'democracy' was coined, provides us with a pertinent example of a flawed perception of the people concerned: the Athenian free men defined themselves as the people, glibly excluding women and slaves who made up 90 percent of the population (Agar 1965:10)! During the history of democracy, there have been many examples where the people have been conveniently confined to a clan; a cultural; a religious or ideological camp; a political party (and its ethnic base); an oligarchic hegemony; or even a dictator (1). This is somewhat understandable, particularly in light of the value systems that have been (and are still) functioning as deep structures within human thinking these value systems have underpinned the various versions of democracy (2). However, it can become very confusing when the objective is to promote the right of the people really concerned (majority and minorities (3) to have an effective say about the way in which they are governed.

The indiscriminate use of the word democracy - even in cases where 'ethnocracy' would have been a more appropriate label - has obviously prompted people to question the 'essential meaning' of 'genuine' democracy. In this regard, a British researcher, who made a deliberate effort to gain a greater understanding from outside his own context, had the following to say (Agar 1965:[7]):

'I have tried to avoid the smug suggestion that our Western systems of government are the best, or [are] the only forms of democracy. Subtler and more successful ways of promoting freedom may be found by wiser people. But whatever the mechanics, the heart of the matter will be the same: a government which can be opposed without hatred, and changed without violence, and which seeks to promote whatever the citizens, helped by the wisest leaders they can find, consider to be their own and the world's best interests.'

Such a core concept - of having a government in place that promotes the interests of its people - may indeed be useful, particularly when we look for democratic and democratising perspectives within African traditions.

The Societal Perspective

With regard to early African history, the absence of words such as democracy, and the relative scarcity of written records, may be regarded as drawbacks. However, any resulting problems are more than compensated for by an advantage Africa can indeed be proud of: its remarkable societality. In Africa, as elsewhere, each human being inevitably lives as a unique individual. However, in Africa, each one's belonging to a societal group is taken seriously as a lifelong experience (cf Ngwane 1996:52-53; Filatova 2000:25-26). In Africa, social, economic and political activity is centred around the group. Such group-centredness can have great advantages. It can safeguard people against the competitiveness, divisiveness and exclusiveness of individualism. People experience the thrill of group dynamics, and can be inspired to act cooperatively, unitedly and inclusively (cf Malan 1997:32; Liebenberg 2000:68 (4).

In all honesty, we have to admit that social cohesion may also lead to disappointments and disadvantages. Group-mindedness can give rise to intergroup friction. While it seems as if this rarely happened in Africa's early history, the situation changed when inconsiderate boundaries were inflicted upon Africa by opportunistic colonial powers. Between groups that were driven apart and thrown together, tensions began to flare. In such situations, aggressiveness was easily exacerbated by group traditions that were preoccupied with honour. Consequently, they tended to precipitate retaliation and revenge.

Implicitly Democratic Perspectives

On the whole, however, loyalty to the group can surely be regarded as a democracy-friendly orientation. For our present purpose, we may have to connive at the anachronism of applying democracy to times before the term was coined. Ngwane (1996:159) also did this when he formulated the following:

'The aim of the democratic process in traditional Africa was to have a strong, organised community, with the interests of the community always being put above individual interests, while individual rights were to be protected by community ethics.'

This quotation provides us with three useful headings for the study of traditional democratisation perspectives: community organisation, community interests and community ethics.

Community Organisation

To make indiscriminate generalisations about community organisation is not possible. However, a few general observations may be admissible. It has been said, for instance, that in early 'stateless' societies - both small and middle-sized - traditional groups functioned according to a culture of cooperation. Kinship or village groupings had their leadership, which could have shown some specialisation in the religious and judicial fields. However, what is known about these societies is 'that

grassroots development, devolution of power and participatory democracy have always been central to the traditional African way of living' (Ngwane 1996:160). In larger societies, there was a more centralised, and sometimes quite sophisticated, leadership. Unfortunately, however, growing numbers and hereditary systems inevitably led to factionalism, rivalries and social instability. Consequently, we should have no idealistic conclusion about early versions of social democracy, in which the people revealed a social faith, and leaders a political will to serve their people (Ngwane 1996:160-161; cf also Botha 1992:35-36).

One great example of an early democratising tradition involved talking problems out until a satisfactory agreement was reached. The details of the process differed from group to group, and the names of the methods differed from language to language. However, the core elements of frank, extended, public talking (by experienced councils of elders) can definitely justify some generalisation (cf Amoo 1992:21). In fact, the concept of such talks having taken place under trees, has become quite famous!

Another good example of a democratising practise, was the creation of opportunities for frank criticism of others (including leaders), which could be made without fear of punishment or ostracism. According to Apollos & Yakubu (1999:6):

')the role of art, culture, music, festivals and carnivals played a significant role in peace-building and transformation in traditional societies. These created a disciplined space for criticism of those with power, and provided a way for those in power to be told their weaknesses.'

According to the cultural context, such censuring could be performed in mild, jocular ways, or in more risky forms of shaming and ridiculing. In some situations, criticism was not only tolerated at ritualised occasions, but in ordinary conversation too (Malan 1997:26).

Community Interests

Wherever the tradition of talking things out was upheld and practised, the community interests of recognition and participation were satisfied. At the same time, the people involved felt their very human need for belongingness was fulfilled.

It must also be mentioned that where critical observations and admonitions were allowed, the community was empowered with the freedom to protest, as well as - in an indirect way - the right to choose (cf Ngwane 1996:158-159).

Community Ethics

When groups of people were organised in such implicitly democratic ways, it follows that they would take concomitant values seriously.

According to Botha (1992:38), '[o]bservers have pointed out that traditional African leaders maintained a significant degree of accountability towards the members of their communities.' Ngwane (1996:163-164) mentions an example from West Africa, where 'the accountability of chiefs and rulers was institutionalised before colonial rule. The stool or throne of office could be withdrawn for malpractice. A

chief or leader was willing to resign if his bonds with the people snapped; he was still an active citizen and not an ostracised villain in the society.'

In their relationships with other groups - who differed in culture (including religion) and/or ethnicity democratically-minded communities showed a good deal of tolerance (while probably hoping for a fair amount of reciprocity and mutuality).

Communicational and Implementational Perspectives

Such a development   starting with tentative initiatives, developing into courteous reciprocity and finally genuine mutuality - could have been facilitated and encouraged wherever two-way communication was freely practised. There are enough indications, however, that an atmosphere of unreserved communication existed.

The most obvious example is the tradition of talking things out - and doing so quite openly. The fact that this process was associated with trees, could have been of great symbolic significance. After all, conspicuous trees served as popular meeting places. Their shade was welcomed in hot weather, and there was nothing exclusive about them   no walls or doors.

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that people were given the scope and space to criticise their leaders - and that leaders were willing to listen (at least to councils of elders).

Once again, we need to refrain from utopian illusions. Realism about human nature and personalities should prevent us from envisaging situations in which communication always took place amicably and effectively. Nevertheless, we may have reason to believe the obstinate leaders and difficult citizens of those days were the exceptions.

We need to steer clear of any notion that Africa is obsessed with talking just for the sake of talking. Over-pragmatic Westerners (and Northerners) may be tempted to frown upon such extended talks. However, when they explore the rationale behind such gatherings, and assess the outcomes of such meetings, they may well confess to having gained invaluable insights. It was such insights (and many more) that prompted me to share my impressions of conflict resolution wisdom from Africa (Malan 1997).

Typical perspectives from Africa are very much oriented to practical and attitudinal outcomes (cf Malan 1997:74-91). With regard to democracy and democratising, an interesting (but recent) example is described by Filatova (2000:36). A rural villager 'related the wisdom of his community' by telling how some of them had chosen the first candidate, while others the second. However, when the supporters of the second saw that the first candidate had more support, they immediately joined the majority. Filatova commented that:

'This majoritarian consensus is, however, sought and achieved not out of the sheer peaceloving nature of the villages, but for a purpose. If their candidate wins, he will deliver roads, water supplies, electricity and other advantages to them. They do not want an abstractly just, democratic and impartial

government, they want a partial government, acting in their favour. That, for them, is "demokaraasi".'

Although this example was drawn from our own time (5), its rural setting may justify some imaginary reconstruction of ancient, pre-urban thought patterns. It could very well have been that the democratising trend of those eras was geared more towards consensual stability and the implementation of expected benefits, rather than any cleverly designed, value-based system of governance.

Ongoing Relevance of Traditional Perspectives?

When we allow our thoughts to move to and fro between traditionality and modernity, the contemporary relevance of ancient perspectives and methods comes into question. Actually, this question is always asked when research into traditions is undertaken. At the All-African Conference on African Principles of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (Addis Ababa, 1999), this question was answered frankly and responsibly by more than one participant. The following is an example from the final report (6):

'In its determination to dig deep into the mines of its traditional values, Africa is not indulging in nostalgia or in the worship of past glory. What was emphasised was neither a nostalgic and blind glorification of African tradition, nor a wholesale rejection of colonial or Western values.'

The main objective of that conference was to delve into Africa's past, in the hope of finding effective ways of resolving African conflicts, and of bringing about reconciliation and social harmony. However, wider perspectives were not excluded - it was emphatically stated that 'Africa will spare no effort in its search for solutions to its problems from any of the [four] quarters of the world' (Murithi [2000]:15). Consequently, with regard to democracy and democratisation, we may commit ourselves to a similar dual search   in Africa's traditional past, but also in Africa's innovative present (while not ignoring the rest of the world). In a few chapters of Solomon and Liebenberg 2000, it is precisely argued 'that the search for workable models of democracy has just started' (Solomon & Liebenberg 2000:303).

So, what our brief discussion can contribute, is a wholehearted endorsement of Africa's traditional emphases on the following aspects:

The inherently societal nature of democratising   which needs to be protected against power-greedy politicians;

The participatory procedure of talking together   not only about problem-solving and conflict resolution, but also about regulatory and organisational planning;

The crucial importance of the needs, interests and values of the community   which make up the main reason for the existence of administrative and governing bodies;

The political will of leaders to function with accountability   and to deliver what the people are justifiably expecting from them;

The scope to criticise frankly and constructively   and the readiness to accept and respond to such criticism;

The orientation to cooperation   at all feasible levels of socio-political and socio-economic interaction;

The atmosphere of tolerating diversity   which may grow into mutual understanding and respect, and even into embracing diversity;

The extent to which democratising could be truly inclusive by including as many of the needs, interests and values of minorities as possible.

Notes

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1. Cf a few observations made 38 years ago (Agar 1965:9): 'We also have dictatorships which call themselves democracies in order to qualify for American aid. Almost every nation on earth today would claim to be a democracy in one of those senses' [e.g. 'people's democracy', 'basic democracy', participating democracy'].
2. For instance, tribal, dictatorial, authoritative, capitalistic, social, functional and global democracy (Beck & Schutte 1992, cf Malan 1999:49-51).
3. 'There are sound reasons for rejecting any equation of democracy with unqualified majority rule. "The people" is not the same thing as the numerical majority). As far as possible the interests, views and convictions of minorities must be taken into account in the processes of policy-making and decision-making' (Institute for Multi-Party Democracy 1992:49).
4. Where the argument is in favour of 'the reconstruction of inclusive democracy suited to the African continent and its people'.
5. In our contemporary situation this rural perspective anyway has to be distinguished from urban perspectives, which are much more in favour of multi-party politics and less in fear of the challenges of pluralism (cf Filatova 2000:35-36).
6. In a section outlining the presentation of Titilayo Ogundipe-Leslie from Ethiopia (her presentation having been the very first after the opening addresses).

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Transition to democracy in Africa: No easy challenges
by Ian Liebenberg

The debate on democratic transition is not a new one. However, the African context within which it is waged, is characterised by complexities different to those experienced elsewhere around the globe. During its history, almost all of Africa was colonised, following an age or more of mercantile exploitation. Its dawn of independence broke at a time when the world was deeply embroiled in the bi-polarism of the Cold War. States that lacked infrastructural development were unprepared for the hastily bestowed independence. At the same time, neo-imperialist countries retained the core-structures of economic exploitation   even today, some of these countries still continue this tradition. In this respect, Africa remains at the economic periphery of the world, even if some countries - such as Mozambique and Botswana - register positive growth rates.

Within the African context lie huge challenges for the reconstruction of state and society. In addition, contextual differences in the modes of transition, as well as differences in the contents of the eventual 'consolidated' democracy, also exist. Transition theories expressed by theorists elsewhere, fit uneasily within the African context. The underlying assumption of transition theories (and most of those related to the consolidation of democracy) involves transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Preferably, this transition should take place within a state that reflects a relatively strong economy, as well as a measure of socio-economic development that is self-sustainable. Moreover, it also seeks transition towards democracy without foreign intervention or imposed models.

Some theorists became so confident of the transition theory, they even referred to it as 'transitology'. For example, Philippe C Schmitter argues the following: ') these cases are subject to the same processes and face the same outcomes as their predecessors. The science of transitology should, therefore, treat them as theoretically and conceptually analogous, and [should] incorporate them in its [embryonic] effort at understanding and, hopefully, guiding the process of contemporary democratization.' (1). Out of the transition-to-democracy discourse came the implied notion that democracy   in terms of content and quality   consists of a multi-party political system and regular elections. In addition, it is argued that as politics becomes increasingly liberalised, so economics must also become less affected by state influence. In other words, economic democracy equals political democracy (regular elections). According to the transition theory, the state should, at this point, become smaller and smaller, as society becomes increasingly 'deregulated'.

At first reading, this glib argument rings true. However, political life is seldom this simplistic. Ron Perrin, an American political scientist, refers to the 'poverty of [North] American political science' (2). His argument is relevant here, in that the transition theory and discourse on democratic consolidation tend to affirm models, without taking contextual variances seriously. Our analyses of societies are required to take the historical path of economic and political experience seriously (3). At the same time, we need to appreciate that democracy and democratic politics involve more than just regular elections. To paraphrase Joseph la Palombara: 'Democracy can have many meanings; mostly it is the quality that counts and not the exact content.' In one of his classic works - Democracy: Italian Style - he argues that contemporary Italian democracy differs from other states. In fact, some people may have difficulty associating with the way in which Italians have constructed and maintained their democracy, following their democratic transition from a fascist state. The same may be true for some people when they study Spanish democracy, where various regions (or provinces) have managed to retain their

'separate autonomies', while still being part of a greater political entity. One can think of various other examples of states that function within quality democracies, despite the contents differing from one society to another. On the African continent, Senegal and Botswana are two examples.

However, these arguments force us to ask the following questions:

what about our past do we need to consider in order to be able to talk about democracy?
what intellectual traditions can inform African attempts to create participatory democracy and sustainable economic systems?
what steps need to be taken in order to mould democratic entities and guide the democratisation of state and society?

What do we need to consider in our past in order to be able to talk about democracy, or the maintenance thereof?

Africa has failed numerous attempts to establish democracies. So have many other societies throughout history. A South African theorist, Alf Stadler, argues that it is a fallacy to think European democracy (or democracy elsewhere for that matter) arose from consensus. In fact, 'democracy was achieved and expanded in conditions of intense political upheaval' (4). One is tempted to add that there is no single, ready-made recipe for democracy: what may apply to one case, may not apply to another. Creating a democratic culture, as well as participatory structures and attitudes, is not a once-off exercise. It requires continuous innovation and energy-sapping work. However, by recognising mistakes (and correcting them), one can hope to register progress. Regression is possible, and should be recognised. Zimbabwe is an example of how horribly things can go wrong. After the civil war (Chimurenga) and defeat of the minority state, Zimbabwe was a historic leader in many respects in southern Africa. However, 20 years down the line, the country's system of governance is a patent failure   and should be a lesson for others interested in advocating democracy. The political party that took power never opened up structures for participatory democracy (non-party members must be included if one is serious about democracy). In a land with a highly asymmetrical access to scarce resources (for example, land), no reforms took place for nearly two decades. However, frustrations escalated. Apparently, in a message to Robert Mugabe at the time of independence, Reverend Archbishop Tutu said: 'Please make Zimbabwe work.' By saying this, the Archbishop suggested that 'here is a country with a history of strife, but [it has] the resources [both human and otherwise] not only to reconcile people, but to grow and to prosper'. Sadly, this did not happen. Instead, another set of imposed horrors left us with an example of how not to do it. I am not necessarily arguing for a liberal democracy in Zimbabwe. However, I do support the introduction of participatory structures for citizen involvement. Also, I am not arguing for a capitalist state. However, I do believe a democracy must be built on shared economics. In addition, a citizen's rights must be fully protected, no matter what his or her politics may be. As in South Africa and many Latin-American countries, there has been and still is a need for land reform and redistribution. However, the state need not worsen existing fault-lines (as Mugabe has done) by failing to effect land reform through legal and constitutional means. When the Zimbabwean land reform process (if it can indeed be called a process) started, it reflected nepotism. Later on, it became characterised by brute state violence (some may even say state terrorism). There is no single pathway to democracy, economic justice or growth. Perhaps it is time once again to question the incorrect ways of pursuing democracy. Perhaps it is also time to accept that no single alternative is necessarily superior. However, whatever approach is chosen, it must enhance overall

participation and capacity-building. Democratising both the state and society should enhance the quality of life (inclusive of the full protection of human rights) of every person that forms part of that democratic community or 'state'.

Scandinavian countries have made fantastic progress in terms of human quality and economic prosperity for all its citizens. However, this took many years to achieve. At the turn of the previous century (circa 1904) Sweden started implementing elements of social democracy within its systems. Others soon followed suit. Today despite having suffered economic depressions, Nazi occupations and attacks from the Soviet Union (Norway) - they have built stable democracies, viable structures for civic participation, and enjoy good human rights records. Their economies are people-orientated (some may even call them welfare states), which is something to be proud of.

Scandinavia's historical development provides one political and intellectual tradition. History provides a warehouse of lessons learnt. Elsewhere in this edition, Mogobe Ramose refers to African examples that deserve consideration.

What intellectual traditions can inform African attempts to create participatory democracy and sustainable economic systems?

Our own history and those of others (for example, Europe), has shown that democracies can be attained and maintained by hard work and total commitment. History has also shown that democracy cannot and should not exist in the absence of shared economics this applies to both decision-making and outcomes. Moreover, once achieved, the continuation of democracy is not guaranteed. It needs to be nurtured and strengthened. Transition theorists are correct when they argue that transition is shrouded in uncertainty, and that regression is a real possibility. However, they describe only half of the story. The fact is that regression can take place in any democracy, no matter how mature it may be. Germany returned to an almost totalitarian state, while Italy became an authoritarian fascist state prior to World War II. The Spanish citizenry had to forfeit a republican form of government during the authoritarian regime of Franco. Zimbabwe degenerated from a one-party state to a system that does not only intimidate its own citizenry, but also destroys its economy and quality of life. The United States of America is currently showing increasing internal and external authoritarian tendencies that are similar to those observed in Germany and Italy before World War II. Essentially, shared experiences should encourage us to make democracy work, without relinquishing tireless efforts. Our own past and that of others; our own intellectual capacities together with 'lessons learnt' from others these elements of history need to form and inform the foundation for an enriching democratic practice in Africa.

What steps need to be taken in order to mould democratic entities and guide the democratisation of state and society?

Firstly, we should be willing to recognise failures within our region. We also need to correct these in order to end people's suffering.

Yet, we should be more open to learn from others both on the continent and elsewhere who have succeeded in creating participatory structures and working economics. Botswana, Egypt and Libya are only three of numerous examples.

Also, we must not be dumbstruck by glib arguments about election politics. In addition, we should not compromise on the absolute right of the citizenry (or disaffected groups) to enjoy the full protection of the state   even if they are the 'opposition'. Obviously, this implies that the opposition must also act peacefully and non-violently.

All this has to happen through consistent information sharing between the citizenry, political leadership, civil society and state organisations. Communication and joint problem-solving should also take place within and between countries on the continent.

As I argued elsewhere, interaction is taking place at a time when unilateralism and the ideology of globalisation are becoming increasingly aggressive. This implies that African states (including the African Union) should not be bullied into accepting prescribed models by outsiders. At the same time, we must strengthen our links with other southern countries that play a major role internationally. For example, India, China, Iran and Japan. Samir Amin points out a painful truth when he argues that: 'Globalisation and imperialism is nothing new. The history of capitalism, since the very beginning, has been the history of imperialist expansion. And, the system was always global. The contention of some people that globalisation is something new is laughable.' He also argues that changes are not always for the better, and do not always happen spontaneously. More important is his caution that 'the market that is capitalism will, by itself, solve the problem in the long-run [when everybody is dead]' (5). In other words, if we assume that the market, as a process, will solve the problems of transition and democratic consolidation, we are deluding ourselves.

If the aforementioned points are of any value, and if Amin's remarks are taken seriously, one soon realises the work required in order to achieve economic equality and participatory democracy is far from over) By sharing the experiences and analyses of successes and failures - without tolerating 'globally' imposed models - we may find, step-by-step, the way to a network of democratic communities within Africa.

Notes

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