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A Decade of Democracy in Africa

Edited by Stephen N. Ndegwa

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A DECADE OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

Guest Editor: Stephen N. Ndegwa

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S. ISHWARAN

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STEPHEN N. NDEGWA (ED.)

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A Decade of Democracy in Africa

STEPHEN N. NDEGWA*

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a broad retrospective on the experience of democracy in Africa over the last decade. It advances five major arguments to explain why the democractic experiment has had such a checkered history. It is argued that in order to gauge the pace and content of democratization, scholars need to move beyond the preoccupation with events in the political and legal spaces (i.e., elections and constitutions) by including a focus on issues such as changing social norms, generational change, and class and gender issues.

Introduction

A decade since transitions from authoritarianism burst onto the scene in Africa, almost all countries undergoing reform are experiencing immense struggles to institutionalize democracy. Disillusionment with the promise of democracy has set in as the monotony of single-party dominance has effectively been replaced by a range of hybrid regimes that fall short of the idealized liberal democracy (e.g. Monga 1996; Joseph 1999; Bratton and van de Walle 1998; Gros 1998; Udogu 1997). The fading optimism lends particular relevance to the decade's point of retrospection and reconsideration of both the pace and content of reform and the nature of the democracies under construction in these countries. This volume examines the status of democracy in Africa with a bias toward uncovering issues common to the experience of democratization in the last decade. Individually and collectively the chapters in this volume promote a more cautious, if pessimistic, stance about democratic progress in sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, five major arguments are worth emphasizing.

First, it is evident that a decade is not enough time to make conclusive assessments about democratic achievement; especially given the "moving train" nature of democratic struggles. Second, the conditions that permeate African nations (state and society) — and they have changed little since 1990 — while very conducive to the triggering of the transitions from authoritarianism, have been inimical to further democratization and consolidation. Third, the nature of

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the forces that the transition — as a continuous moment of fluidity — unleashes has put a tremendous burden on the democratic project. Fourth, these conditions gave rise to the dominant form of democratic polity in Africa — the pseudo-democracy, as Diamond (1997) labels it or the virtual democracy as Joseph (1999) labels it — where authoritarianism or at least illiberalism and neo-patrimonialism subsist alongside electoral competition. Finally, it is clear that democratization analysts err by focusing mainly on the political and legal space and on state-oriented civil society instead of including broader (interdisciplinary) issues such as changing social norms, generational change, and class and gender issues. All these indicate not that the study of democratization in Africa is futile but that it requires more complex, multi-faceted studies and not simply electoral and institutional examinations. It is necessary to examine democratization as a long-term process that is slow, evolutionary, and dialectic and enacted in several arenas both within and outside electoral and institutional contexts. Thus, the status of democracy at any given time is transitory.

Democratization as Work in Progress

First, we should note that a decade is not enough time to make conclusive arguments about democratic achievement, especially given the uncertain nature of democratic struggles. Analysts accept that while the transition moment can be characterized by a single significant event, for example, the defeat of an ancien regime in founding elections, liberalization, democratization, and consolidation are multi-phase processes whose path is not inexorable, but almost always dialectic. As leading transition analysts concur, several factors are necessary to ripen conditions for regime challenge and ultimately transition (e.g., Przeworski 1986). Among the most significant is a loss of legitimacy, which erodes over time and across many facets.

Since post-authoritarian democratic regimes are, almost by default, inclusive, rights-enhancing, and signify a promising change from oppressive, ill-performing, and exclusive authoritarian regimes, they come to power with a significant reserve of goodwill and legitimacy. However, as the experience of several African countries indicates, the honeymoon period is extremely short and such regimes must secure legitimacy beyond the democratic promise contained in the transition. After the transition, this promise of open, participatory politics becomes an expected, warranted, norm rather than an attractive promise. Henceforth, regime legitimacy is tied to three areas: (a) managing uncertainty; (b) extending rights (as in new discourses of citizenship); and (c) substantive consumptive issues. All three demands may appear irrelevant to *system* preferences in established democracies, but they are critical to post-transition regimes since the authoritarian alternative is

ever-present and more than a handful of elites may still view it as beneficial to their interests.

Adam Przeworski (1986:57-61) has asserted that democracy is essentially the institutionalization of uncertainty. As the chapters in this volume indicate, it is well worth clarifying and perhaps reformulating that edict. The problem, as Hobbes and Locke assert, is that life itself is uncertain — and it is especially so in authoritarian regimes. Democracy then, rather than institutionalizing uncertainty (in the sense of making change institutionally probable) is actually the management (taming) of uncertainty through channeling political uncertainty into a rule-based arena. The notion of managing uncertainty is central to all political regimes, and each makes a claim to legitimacy in terms of its fundamental ability to secure protection against uncertainty.[1] Democracy then must contend with that claim to legitimacy since citizens judge democratic experiments largely based on the ability of the regime to weather uncertainty and to secure them from uncertainty.

Related to this is the problem of extending rights which democracy promises and in its regular function allows. Thus democratization, as we know it, does not necessarily free all sectors of society from dominance, although it does free the most significant sectors from the most significant dominance by the state and a narrow elite. Thus each democratic experiment ought to be judged by the extent to which it preserves, promotes, and extends rights for its citizens and how it opens up new arenas of democratic action previously dominated by narrow hierarchical organs. At a broader level, the Marshallian three-step course of expansion of citizenship rights — civil, political, and social — suggests the expected evolution of rights. Democracy therefore allows, in ways authoritarianism never could, for a discourse and a negotiation of new citizenship norms and a continual reconfiguration of relations between state-society and within society (see also O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986:12). Given that this is a perennial discourse, it is reasonable to expect continual friction without evident resolution in the short term.

Furthermore, democratic experiments in Africa cannot be divorced from precedent citizenship discourses in the post-colonial period that arrived at peculiar configurations entailing the state ensuring several livelihood issues for citizens. Of course, these are compounded by present day contradictory pushes for the state to extricate itself from economic enterprises and social welfare functions. Nor can these new democratic regimes avoid their main charge to assuage the economic crisis, which for many was the main reason for the success of the challenge to authoritarianism (see e.g., Bratton and Hyden 1992). Thus, new democratic regimes are also judged by the extent to which they manage economic recovery. While the masses may show a clear disdain for authoritarian leaders, when those committed to democracy fail to deliver on economic progress, the masses are not immune to seeking salvation from formerly authoritarian leaders who excite nostalgia for bet-

ter times — albeit skillfully avoiding recalling their authoritarian patterns. For instance, the re-election of ex-president Mathieu Kerekou in Benin against Nicephore Soglo and of Didier Ratisirika in Madagascar are profound examples. Similarly, the credible challenge mounted by Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia found particular resonance among Zambians who were continually economically disenfranchised under Frederick Chiluba's economic management.

The foregoing suggests the need to review democratic experiments by examining several fronts, principally how the new regimes deal with the uncertainty of the transition, with the perennial uncertainty of civic life, with the discourses of citizenship that arise, and with the substantive demands citizens make (see e.g., Ndegwa 1998a). Clearly, electoral and institutional apparatuses are important and undergird all of the above; however, they cannot capture completely the weaknesses in the transitions. In essence they are the minimal criteria — necessary but insufficient in telling us how the edifice looks like, especially on the inside.

In this regard, Kenya and Zambia, which may appear to be at different ends of the democratization pendulum are actually very similar in their transitions and status of democracy. In Kenya, the electoral and constitutional apparatus have been unable to dislodge the former single-party regime, while Zambia was among the very first emphatic successes. However, in Kenya significant strides have been made on constitutional matters, especially through the protracted battles pushed by oppositionists and civil society organs. This has taken place over clear institutional issues such as electoral law, constitutional demands, as well as broader social and economic questions that have been articulated in the context of various conflicts such as strikes and riots by farmers, teachers and students. Although these battles have largely been inconclusive, they suggest more than social stress but a negotiation of terms of social contracts between a reluctantly democratizing state and an insistent civil society. In Zambia, while the former single-party lost power, the state has lost legitimacy in two ways. First by its inability to assuage the economic crisis while deepening the crisis for many urbanites as it studiously implemented structural adjustment programs (SAPs); and second, escalating unconstitutional practices such as outlawing the candidacy of former president Kenneth Kaunda. In Kenya, the regime has been able to ride the economic crisis, skillfully blaming the donors, and relying on the donors and large capital's preoccupation with stability over radical overhaul of the system to extract support without substantial democratic reforms.

Persistent Crises

Evidently, the conditions that permeate African nations (state and society) as they struggle to consolidate democracy, while having been very conducive to triggering transitions from authoritarianism, have been inimical to further democrati-

zation. Specifically, five conditions: (a) economic crisis and deep discontent; (b) institutional weakness (or decay); (c) external conditionality (and broader dependency); (d) post-cold war fluidity and lack of external patronage; and, (e) patrimonialism and personal rule tendencies. These factors, as has been variously discussed, triggered the collapse of several authoritarian governments in Africa. They remain obstacles to further consolidation.

By far the most significant was the economic crisis that reached unprecedented proportions in the late 1980s and considerably demolished the mild prosperity upon which the legitimacy of the previous regimes rested. The deep discontent that this elicited ignited active resistance from several sectors, notably, unions, students, and civil servants and led to the speedy erosion of regimes and rupturing of previously tightly knit ruling cliques. The SAPs, which, while seeking to treat the causes of the decline, exacted a steep price on the very sectors it was ultimately supposed to help in the long run, complicated the problem.

The democratic movements in Africa have now found that while the economic crisis was a significant ally in undermining authoritarian regimes it was not a basic characteristic of authoritarianism to which democratic regimes are immune or from which they can recover promptly. Like tobacco-induced lung cancer, it persists long after the smoker quits. The close association between authoritarian rule and economic decline or adjustment programs of the 1980s has come back to haunt the democratizing states. This is true in those countries where the democratic opposition supplanted the ruling parties (e.g., Zambia and Malawi), where an internally reformulated ruling party survived liberalization (e.g., Tanzania), and where the opposition floundered miserably (e.g., Kenya and Zimbabwe).

Thus when the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) in Zambia implemented even more radical adjustment programs, the threat to its hold on power was clear. The MMD pursued a rigorous policy of eliminating budget deficits, cutting tariffs and taxes, abandoning currency controls and pursuing privatization of state corporations, including the copper mines. These had the effect of making urban Zambians — the core of MMD support — even poorer, leading to massive discontent (*Africa Confidential* 21 June 1996). While these policies allowed Zambia to pay off $1,200 million in external debts, overspending and hesitance in privatizing the copper industry, which would affect 45,000 employees, neutralized the benefits. This, alongside the decline in political rights due to crackdowns against the opposition — principally from ex-president Kaunda — led to the West withholding aid. In Malawi, similar implementation of adjustment programs and an inability to create sufficient employment has led to deep discontent leading to a very narrow victory of the incumbent party in the second democratic elections in 1999.

The persistence of institutional weakness remains a fundamental characteristic of budding democracy but also its fontanel: essentially unformed at birth, yet essential to protect and secure democratization, but also potentially fatal to

the experiment. The African cases are particularly problematic because unlike Latin American authoritarianism or Eastern European communist dictatorships, authoritarianism in Africa was not bureaucratic but personal. As a result, fallen regimes left in their wake not intricate institutional behemoths but weaklings struggling to acquire even the most basic of bureaucratic perquisites. Institutional structures were riddled with incoherence, fluid rules, opportunistic enforcement, and shadow power centers. In this context, transitions from authoritarian rule were particularly speedy (if specious) in that the custodians of the state could not coalesce to extend the life of a system under attack.[2] As Bratton and van de Walle (1997:4-5) note, the average time of transition in Africa was 35 months, compared to at least a decade in Eastern Europe.

The consequence of this is twofold. First, the task of rebuilding institutions is long and drawn-out and cannot be accomplished within an electoral cycle. (Uganda's experience is instructive here.) This, as any aspect of democratization, is not episodic but a continual process of assertion, contestation, and precedent setting — in effect a dialectical process. This process produces restlessness for those eager to see concrete change, dislocation, and resistance for those affected by changing norms, and advantage for those whose short-term interests are served by this fluidity. Second, resocializing the masses to respect institutions is an equally difficult challenge, especially when uncivilty had seeped into the core of political relations. The cultivation of this new dispensation is necessary not only in the political arena but also in the various other public arenas where institutions have broken down.

In Kenya, institutional decay is particularly pernicious and extends across all state organs. Its perniciousness is also evident in the institutional decadence that the civil society sector has internalized, to the detriment of broader democratization. For instance, one of the leading women's organizations in Kenya that has also been associated with democratic pressures is the National Council of Women of Kenya. In its elections in 1999, acrimony emerged as different factions fought out a bitter battle. Part of the problem was the fact that the outgoing chairperson had served in the capacity for twelve years, six years past the constitutionally allowed two three-year terms. Despite previous challenges, including a court challenge, the ex-incumbent defense lay in the claim that the organization had requested that she stay on in spite of the constitutional prohibition. Similar problems afflict several other "progressive" civic organizations and political parties, which are created as vehicles to further politicians' agendas rather than as institutions to carry forth democratic demands.

A second example emerges in a peculiar reaction involving a 1999 *Matatu* (commuter taxi) strike called to resist the government's attempt to regulate the industry through licensing fees. The *Matatu* industry, short on courtesy to passengers, respect for traffic laws, and given to extortionist cartel controls over city routes,

fiercely opposed the move to regulate them. While most city dwellers welcomed the regulations others welcomed the strike, which coincided with a strike action called by the opposition to demand further political change. The schizophrenic set of interests were reflected in James Orengo (a rising star of the thinning credible anti-Moi cohort) exhorting the strikers to join the general strike, while the middle class (many admirers of Orengo) and their mouth-piece, the *Daily Nation,* strongly urged the Moi state not to give in to the *Matatu* strike action.

The third impetus for reform was the external pressure particularly from donors, especially western nations, the World Bank, and IMF in terms of aid conditionality, and especially in terms of required economic and governance reforms, which may have kick-started the reforms. This conditionality has not eased in many countries, especially with regard to economic adjustment, which has been particularly difficult to execute in the context of regime change-overs. Yet, tied to the economic issues above, the expectation that donor aid would flow freely after the transition has come to nought (see Riddell 1999 and van de Walle 1999). For those still "errant" regimes (and many regimes under transition are in this category), the dependence has shifted elsewhere as they seek aid from other conservative countries, deepen links to organized crime, and engage in public asset stripping and plunder.[3]

The dependence of the state on external actors, especially in terms of adjustment, budget and development policy clearly undermines the legitimacy of the state. In addition, the painful market liberalization actions undermine patronage commitments. For the opposition, a lack of independent sources of funding and for civil society dependency on external aid underscores the external dependence of the democratic transition and the external orientation of civil society. These factors complicate the urban bias in the transition — where it is based, draws most support, and has the most effect on political relations. The effect is the continued marginalization of local level groups and of labor, occasionally an ally of conservative regimes because of its organizational potential, but a rare partner for democracy and governance donors.

The aid relations reflect an important reality of the post-Cold War world. The fluidity of the international arena has robbed many African nations the leverage for securing aid as they could in the Cold War years. This, even when the surviving superpower and its cohorts are interested in pursuit of democracy, has not led them to provide more aid since the alternative (decline into dictatorship) can be thwarted with the threat of isolation. Moreover, the fact that the sole superpower is overstretched has led to a new policy of "containment" where some authoritarian regimes are accommodated to ensure particular "neighborhood crises" are contained or to ensure access to trouble spots (ala Museveni's Uganda for central Africa, Moi's Kenya for East and Horn of Africa). This is of course not applicable in all instances (e.g., Zimbabwe) but underscores the relative isolation

of these new democracies and democratic movements. Since democratization goals have a lower priority in comparison to other priorities that drive the *real politik* of external powers, the new democracies and democratic movements must craft their own trajectories without the benefit of the tutelage (principally funding) available during the Cold War.

A second aspect is internal and recalls Jackson and Rosberg's (1982) juridical statehood of African states. The African state remains (for an overwhelming majority of people) remote, inaccessible, and brutish. Its presence is inexact and erratic, and its legitimacy far from secure. Given that the main avenue of exerting state presence and legitimacy has been through "delivering development," lack of development resources has constrained the elaboration of state power, especially in ways substantially different from those of the *ancien* regime. Thus in Kenya, even while democracy has arrived in towns and cities and in the rural villages closer to the center, the northern districts continue to be governed as security zones, where the manifestation of the state is essentially the brutish security forces in pursuit of cattle rustlers who rend any semblance of order, community, and integration. Similar action is permitted in Uganda's northwestern frontier. Even in Malawi, where a new regime supplanted the human rights-deficient Banda dictatorship, President Muluzi was cited as threatening the human rights of thieves who stole telephone cables near the State House and thus prevented the president from making a phone call (*BBC 1999*).

As Bratton and van de Walle (1997; see also Throup and Hornsby 1998 on Kenya) point out, the dominant mode of elite-mass relations has remained a pernicious patrimonialism and personal rule that has transcended the demise of authoritarian regimes. In essence the nature of the political calculus has remained the same: the pursuit of personal benefit at the altar of the state. New mechanisms of democratic form such as elections, parties, parliaments, interest groups, and even NGOs have become simply tools of furthering patronage. This is indicated at several levels: institutional patterns among parties, discourses of electoral competition especially with regard to the presidency, and the volatility of party commitments which has seen many opposition party members cross the floor to ruling parties for the most contradictory of reasons simply to be near the center of patronage.

For instance, political parties remain very much the preserves of individual politicians who hold sway in their parties and who stand above the party's institutional structures. In situations where intra-party competition is intense or a contender loses, party break-ups have been common. Apart from periodic electoral manifestos (many of which are uncannily similar), parties do not have programmatic distinctions other than "win the presidency." The presumption is clearly that a particular party and leader hold the key to solving the country's problems. This is barely a step removed from the pretensions of authoritarian personal rule. Given

the total breakdown of inter-party and intra-party communication, relations with the incumbent party typically degenerate into perpetual prisoner-dilemma games in which members of the opposition make entreaties to ruling parties to access patronage while desperately trying to retain the respect of the masses.

In practically all the eastern and southern African transitional countries, the underlying logic attending political discourse remains of the variety of "our turn to eat." The Kenyan case is particularly clear in this; the trend is also evident in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia. This easily takes ethnic hues, with brutal consequences at times (e.g., Burundi). Moreover, the tendency of oppositionists — isolated from the patronage network — to defect to the dominant party has been more than an occasional occurrence, underscoring the opportunistic nature of opposition politics. This is particularly tragic when oppositionists make claims to furthering democratic governance and institution building, while acting in the contrary.

In Kenya, Malawi, and Tanzania practically all the politicians in the opposition have extensive and sometimes compromising backgrounds in the former single-party. The practice of defecting from one party to another in search of better access to privilege or higher position is common. In Malawi, long-time opposition leader Chakufwa Chihana joined the ruling UDF when he lost miserably in the 1994 elections, but quit his cabinet position in 1996. In 1999, he joined forces with the discredited MCP to run for office. In Tanzania, maverick politician Augustine Mrema won a by-election in Dar es Salaam (far from his actual regional constituency) but his frequent troubles within his party culminated in his being thrown out of the party in 1997.

Continuous Fluidity and Uncertainty

The third obstacle facing democratic transitions in Africa emerges from the nature of the forces that the transition — as a continuous moment of fluidity — unleashes. At the core of this is the perpetual condition of uncertainty, which O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) characterize as defined by "numerous surprises and difficult dilemmas" (p. 3). It is compounded by a disorder that is characterized by "accident(s) and unpredictability, of crucial decisions taken in a hurry with inadequate information, of actors facing irresolvable ethical dilemmas and ideological confusions, of dramatic turning points reached and passed without an understanding of their future significance" (pp. 3-4). In African cases the uncertainty takes on three faces. First is a lack of exit procedures and assured prospects for authoritarian rulers, which make them particularly reluctant to leave. The fact that there are no precedents for pacts is particularly problematic and emphasizes the nature of the transition as a zero-sum game. Related to this is the unexpected staying power of ex-incumbents that has forced new regimes to deal with them in their actual or

threatened return and with their supporters who feel alienated, especially when this support is regional or ethnic (e.g., Kaunda and Kerekou).

A second face of the uncertainty is tied to the unleashing of pressures previously contained by the strong-arm tactics of authoritarian regimes. Principally these are ethnic and regional rather than class, although the relationship between the state and peasant producers has faced a significant awakening. These awakened passions entail a new negotiation of the state leading to fragmentation, and ethnic animosity. By far the most threatening is the extreme fragmentation which has led to state collapse in Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, or the severe challenges in the Congo and Angola, and significant doubts about integrity in Kenya, Tanzania, and, more recently, Namibia. Peasant rebellions have been prominent in Kenya and Zimbabwe, labor unrest in Zambia, and Namibia's unrest regarding the *Epupa* dam and the Caprivi strip. The fraying state produces a great deal of insecurity threatening the progress toward democracy.

A third face of uncertainty arises from the permissiveness entailed in the transition and which is also encouraged by the significant institutional fluidity alluded to earlier. While the permissiveness is part of the liberal pursuit, the weak institutions provide for tenuous limits to freedoms, and even less clarity as to boundaries that are an inherent part of democratic civic society. The result has been a general tumult in society including civil violence, rising crime, civil dislocation, and overall suspicions. In other words, an undermining of the very civility that democratic discourse seeks to promote. It is at once a cause and an effect of the transition in a multi-phase process. In its positive form, this permissiveness can be seen in various demands by local organizations for transparency, accountability, and internal democracy. In its more negative form it is characterized by spreading unrest among students, farmers, peasants, and veterans, and increasingly strident and exclusionary speeches from religious, regional, and ethnic agitators. Some see this fraying in unsuccessful transitions where the battle is more protracted (e.g., Kenya and Cameroon), but indeed it is also a condition that afflicts the successful transitions such as Zambia and Malawi, and recently Nigeria, as well as the semi-successful ones such as Tanzania, especially with regard to Zanzibar.

Mixed Fortunes

These conditions, as well as the inevitable unevenness of social change across countries, have given rise to a variety of post-transition regimes whose proximity to the ideals of democracy varies widely. It is useful to categorize and characterize these emergent democracies as a number of analysts have attempted. But while doing so two things are important to keep in mind: first is that democracy is, by definition, incomplete and imperfect; and, second that these democratic experiments are in constant motion and we are at the early stages of

this transformation. Ike Udogu (1997) has described these regimes as “Incomplete Metamorphic Democracy.” While the metaphor of metamorphosis borrowed from biology is powerful, it is flawed in two ways. First it asserts the possibility of a complete metamorphosis, a perfection of democracy after which the evolution planes off. Second, it assumes a naturalistic, evolutionary logic that suggests an inexorable process of change. On the other hand, analysts such as Jean-Germain Gros (1998) argue, unconvincingly, I think, that notions of mature and fragile democracies as well as the process of consolidation are unhelpful. However, he concedes the distinction between newly democratizing countries and established democracies lies in their respective political culture, over and above formal rules.

In between these extremes is Diamond’s (1997) characterization of the three forms of post-transition regimes we find in Africa today. According to Diamond (1997), there are (a) electoral democracies; (b) liberal democracies; and (c) pseudo-democracies. Electoral democracies are those that display the minimum requirements of fairly free and fair periodic elections with broad-based multi-party competition, but with limited chances of alternation of power. Pseudo-democracies are similar to electoral democracies because their sole claim to legitimacy is holding elections, however within a severely constrained environment. The elections are non-competitive, with limited civic and political rights, and the dominant party actively undermines — through legal and illegal means — any efforts to weaken its hold on power. On the other hand, liberal democracies, to which presumably these countries aspire, are built upon a foundation that goes beyond periodic elections. In addition, there is a strong sense of constitutionalism, effective rule of law, effective power by those elected, broad enjoyments of freedoms, and clear possibility of power alternation.

These parameters all refer essentially to the institutional structures within the state. In addition, we ought to consider the rising political culture, and the question of legitimacy, which is and will continue to be at the center of the transition and the progression (forward or backward) from one type of democratic regime to another in the long-term process of consolidation. Countries are not static in the categories that Diamond outlines but in fact their movement is produced by momentum arising from the accumulation of discrete political decisions, actions, and events.

Taking Przeworski’s notion of legitimacy, for instance, I suggest that in Africa’s democratizing states it is centered on a number of issues. The various components contributing to legitimacy create the justification for the regime in place and, if not challenged, secure its survival even when complete democratization has not taken root. Of course the reaction of elites to the deficiencies of each regime and what they propose as an alternative is important. For instance, in Benin and Zambia the ex-incumbents challenged the new democrats on the basis of worsening economic outcomes and proposed a return to the old system. In Kenya,

the economic crisis is producing significant momentum for greater openness and reform, though not full regime change.

Overall, analysts agree that the decline of legitimacy for the authoritarian regimes of the 1980s led to the transition; with democratization, legitimacy was renewed, initially by the very fact of regime transformation. In the late 1980s citizen rights withered but expanded and became more inclusive in the 1990s. Economically, adjustment pressure and closed markets hurt all sectors of the population. Under democracy liberalized markets, while bringing more hope, continued to affect significant parts of the population and may breed contradiction and tension in the system. Overall, the political system was easier to oppose under transition politics, but very difficult to recreate as is indicated by various ongoing wrangles over constitutions, electoral laws, and separation of powers. Finally the social effects of thirty years of authoritarianism and patrimonial politics were inherited in the democratic period and continue to present a challenge to the consolidation of democracy.

Underlying the new democracies is a long and multi-layered process of reformulating new social contracts, which outline new limits, rights, and obligations. It is a process that also seeks to renegotiate the nature of the state and the public sphere and the nature of the nation (who belongs and who does not). In the immediate context, consolidation of democracy entails not only the creation of institutions but also the accommodation of the consequences of democratic rules and practice and substantive results.

In all these events, analysts ought to be looking for critical junctures in new democracies, junctures that may make or break the consolidation process and the factors that contribute to these junctures and appropriate actions within them (see Casper and Taylor 1996). Of significance here is the juncture of transition, succession, and the periodic crises (e.g,. economic, constitutional, etc.) that arise as the transition unfolds. For instance, in Zambia the exclusion of ex-incumbent Kaunda from the politics tell us more about the health of that democracy than the fact that second elections were held. Overall, democratization is but one aspect of a larger discourse on citizenship that seeks to spell out new rules about how power is accessed and wielded, by whom, and to what end.

Conclusion: About this Volume

Democratization analysts continue to err in focusing mainly on the political and legal space and on state-oriented civil society instead of including broader (interdisciplinary) issues such as changing social norms, generational change, and class issues. If we accept that democratization is a complex and multi-layered process that is long term, evolutionary, and dialectic, it is imperative that efforts be made to describe, explain, and anticipate trends in various arenas that constitute

the public space in countries under transition. For this reason, analysts should look beyond the present preoccupation with elections, constitutions, and institutional structures. We should also direct our attention to discourses enacted in civil society (with and without the state as a partner), changing social norms, and especially indications of a spreading democratizing imperative outside state arenas (e.g., within local level associations). Our best conclusions about democratization in Africa will come from evidence drawn from broad societal sectors and not limited to political arenas.

This retrospective collection aims to expand the repertoire of analytical frameworks that are brought to bear on the assessment of democracy in Africa in the last decade. It goes beyond cataloging of the institutional workings and missteps of the unfolding experiments and teases out areas, at times new areas, that may more precisely illuminate the status of democracy. Steve Orvis' contribution engages contemporary theorizing on the concept of civil society that has been so critical to the analysis of democratization in Africa and, indeed, to the self-conception of many actors involved in the process. In a detailed analysis of patron-client networks, ethnic associations, and "traditional" authorities, Orvis demonstrates that "African civil society is more rooted in and representative of African society as a whole... but also less internally democratic and less likely to support democracy."

If Orvis' contribution engages the predominant discourse, albeit in a creative and critical way, Judith Van Allen counters and enriches the discourse evaluating democracy in Africa by examining the status of women as a pointer to the health of a democracy. Her contribution, rooted in the Botswana case, elevates not only the role of women in the democratic struggle and in the aftermath to counter the male-dominated and denominated narrative of democracy in Africa but also provides a useful measure of substantive democracy.

Van Allen's counter-narrative challenging "the inevitability of neo-liberal hegemony and unrestrained capitalism" is echoed in Nigel Gibson's assessment of South Africa. Gibson highlights how South Africa, the preeminent democratization story in Africa, has found itself mired by the weight of history and the ideological and politically expedient compromises of the transition. Gibson revives ideological analysis drawing from Frantz Fanon and Antonio Gramsci to produce a provocative analysis that offers us a unique prism through which to examine Africa's experiment with democracy. Gibson's analysis points to "the ideological capitulation necessary for a limited transition" as a culprit in the myriad problems democracy has encountered in the last decade as noted above.

Lisa Aubrey interrogates the link between gender, development, and democratization in Africa and looks especially at the marginalization of women in democratic politics. Looking specifically at women leaders in Ghana and Kenya, Aubrey points to the artificiality and arbitrariness of the dichotomy between public and private domains. Of central concern, as in Van Allen's earlier paper, is whether

the "dawn of political transitions can bring democracy back in without bringing women in, with the same equal citizenship rights as men."

This volume closes out with two innovative papers that simultaneously challenge conventional wisdom and invite us to explore new areas of research or at least new considerations in our attempts to understand democracy and democratization in Africa. Marcus, Mease and Ottemoeller offer an empirical study probing the ways Africans conceive of democracy and compare this to popular conceptions in the west. The comparison between Uganda, Madagascar, and the United States may seem uncanny — it is certainly off the beaten path — but it is chiefly illuminative in capturing the commonality and subtle difference between what Africans and Americans expect and ascribe to democracy. Their empirical analysis is matched by Wisdom Tettey's contribution that shifts attention to yet another area unfamiliar to contemporary analysis of democratization — information technology. Tettey argues that while "technologies have expanded the amount and sources of information that are potentially available to citizens, they have not resulted in any significant transformation in the way government is run or how politics is conducted." Tettey's analysis offers the kind of study — empirically based and analytically rigorous — that adds considerably to our attempts to understand the different facets of democracy and democratization in Africa.

Indeed, the contributions assembled in this volume offer more than a retrospection of African democracy in the last decade. Intrepid in their conceptual pursuit and rigorous in their empirical conduct these studies collectively uncover useful conclusions and raise new questions for our understanding of democracy in Africa. From Orvis' interrogation of the concept of civil society, to Van Allen and Gibson's counter-narratives on democracy, race, and women, to Tettey's unraveling of the mythical hope in technology, these studies offer a sobering assessment of democracy in Africa. It is hoped that these assessments will prod other analysts to replicate what is offered here or at least engage fruitfully in resolving the questions raised.

NOTES

1 For example, in the singe-party era in Africa authoritarian regimes justified their monopoly in terms of protecting citizens from exploitation and the vagaries of multi-party politics.

2 Among the rare exceptions are in pre-Obasanjo Nigeria where the military and the military-commercial-industrial elite and in Tanzania where the party behemoth were triumphant.

3 For example, Kenya made secret entreaties to the United Arab Emirates for money to prop the regime before the 1997 elections, [*Daily Nation* July 23, 1999]), while there is credible evidence to suggest government cover for drug transit in Zambia and Nigeria (see also Bayart et al. 1999). Public land, import/export schemes, privatization state corporations, and new monopolies such as cellphone service have also become the new currency of patronage for regime support in several countries.

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Civil Society in Africa or African Civil Society?

STEPHEN ORVIS*

ABSTRACT

One of the most vociferous and voluminous debates in African politics over the past decade has been over the concept of civil society. Both optimists and pessimists in this debate tend to define (often implicitly) civil society too narrowly and ask of it too much. By insisting on a definition of civil society that is an idealized and rather narrow vision of civil society in the West, neither optimists nor pessimists have portrayed African civil society accurately. To provide a more realistic analysis, we must focus on the broad array of collective activity and norms, whether "democratic" or not, that constitute actual existing African civil society. This approach leads to an analysis of patron-client networks, ethnic associations, and some "traditional" authorities as part of civil society, demonstrating that African civil society is more rooted in and representative of African society as a whole than the pessimists have admitted, but also less internally democratic and less likely to support liberal democracy than the optimists assert.

The fitful political liberalization that has swept Africa since 1990 has once again raised debates over how well concepts and experiences in Western political history "fit" African conditions. One of the most vociferous and voluminous of these debates has been over the concept of civil society. This debate has a familiar ring to it, with optimistic observers proclaiming the dawn of a new, democratic era based on the "resurgence of civil society" while their more pessimistic colleagues point to the "realities" of Africa to claim that little has changed. In an eerie parallel to the 1960s, the optimists seemed to hold the upper hand initially, and the pessimists, supported by numerous "failures" of democracy across the continent, appear more prescient at the dawn of the new millennium.

Both optimists and pessimists in the civil society debate in Africa tend to define (often implicitly) civil society too narrowly and ask of it too much. By insisting on a definition of civil society that is an idealized and rather narrow vision of civil society in the West, neither optimists nor pessimists have portrayed African civil society accurately. Insisting that civil society can and is producing democratic transition, the optimists have confused conjunctural for structural phenomena,

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setting impossibly high expectations for African civil society. To provide a more realistic analysis, we must focus on the broad array of collective activity and norms, whether "democratic" or not, that constitute actual existing African civil society. This approach will demonstrate that African civil society is more rooted in and representative of African society as a whole than the pessimists have admitted, but also less internally democratic and less likely to support liberal democracy than the optimists assert.

Defining civil society broadly, as a public sphere of formal or informal collective activity autonomous from the state and family, allows inclusion of much more African political activity than does the "conventional wisdom" in the debate (Kasfir 1998a). A more inclusive definition remains true to the traditional Western conceptualization of the term as well as allowing its application outside the West. In Africa, "[o]ne of the most contested issues is whether or not the 'traditional' or primordial sphere should be included in the definition" (Hutchful 1996:68). The broad definition given above allows inclusion of this "traditional" sphere — ethnic organizations, patronage networks, and even some "traditional" authorities. Indeed, I shall argue that much of African civil society is guided by the norms of what John Lonsdale has termed "moral ethnicity" and Stephen Ndegwa has analyzed in terms of "civic Republican citizenship" (Lonsdale 1994; Ndegwa 1997), rather than the norms of liberal democracy. Collective activity guided by the norms of moral ethnicity and taking the form of ethnic or patronage organizations is every bit as much a part of African civil society as are trade unions, professional associations, or churches. While civil society will not single-handedly create democracy, or always be internally democratic, it does provide an autonomous public sphere of collective political activity whose very existence has the potential to limit the state's reach and create some element of political accountability and means of political participation.

The Debate: Civil Society in Africa

The "conventional view of civil society" (Kasfir 1998a:3) adopted by both optimists and pessimists in the Africanist debate tends to follow definitions put forth by Latin Americanists (see Stepan 1988; Schmitter 1997), which themselves derive largely from a Tocquevillian view of the concept (Ekeh 1992:195). Schmitter (1997) provides probably the clearest summary of this "conventional view":

> *Civil society* can be defined as a set or system of self-organized intermediary groups that: 1) are relatively independent of both public authorities *and* private units of production and reproduction, that is, of firms and families; 2) are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defense or promotion of their interests or passions; 3) do not seek to replace either state agents or private (re)producers or to accept

> responsibility for governing the polity as a whole; and 4) agree to act within preestablished rules of a "civil" nature, that is, conveying mutual respect. (P. 240)

Africanists' definitions have tended to be less precise than but similar to Schmitter's, claiming for civil society an inherently democratic role. Bratton (1994) argues that in African transitions, "[t]he contours of civil society are shaped by the social groups and classes that come out openly in favor of political liberalization" (p. 60), and that "civil society is the source of the legitimation of state power," implying elsewhere that he clearly has in mind democratic legitimacy (p. 56). Lewis (1997) suggests civil society "is demarcated by the civic orientations of its constituents" (p. 137). Hadenius and Uggla (1996) argue that associations must be internally democratic, have diverse membership, and operate on some principle of relative equality among members if they are to fulfill the pluralist and educational functions essential for civil society (pp. 1622-23). More generally, most authors discuss only voluntary associations in the "modern" and urban sectors in detail, implicitly indicating the conventional view of the "traditional" sphere as beyond the boundaries of civil society.

Many scholars, Western and African, have criticized this rather narrow definition of civil society for being a Western imposition. Ekeh (1992), for instance, has warned against, "the danger of transposing the raw notion of civil society in the West in its entirety to African circumstances" (p. 194). But the conventional view is not really a full rendering of the Western tradition; it is derived rather narrowly from Tocqueville's use of the term. Even a cursory reading of recent Western literature on the subject shows clearly that little agreement exists on what civil society is, other than some type of public sphere between the state and the family. Classical theorists disagree on what elements of life beyond the individual family or firm constitute civil society, its relationship to the state, its ability to limit state power, its ability to overcome the particular interests of deeply divided capitalist societies, and its ability to teach democratic norms.[1]

Tocqueville saw a civil society that could limit majority tyranny and teach civic virtues: "[he] likens... civil associations to permanently open schools of public spirit within which citizens learn their rights and obligations, press their claims, and become acquainted with others" (Keane 1988:61). But Hegel saw in civil society the danger of particular interests overwhelming the public good, and argued for a state that would guide and override civil society when necessary to preserve the greater public well-being. Marx and later Gramsci, of course, saw civil society as a non-state sphere of outright domination (hegemony for Gramsci) controlled, directly or indirectly, by the bourgeoisie (Bobbio 1988). These philosophers saw civil society neither as performing a democratic "educational function" (Hadenius and Uggla 1996:1622) nor as creating egalitarian democracy in the midst of

capitalist societies. Clearly, not all of the major Western philosophers of civil society would accept Schmitter's definition.

Defining Civil Society in Africa

Noting that "[i]t is striking how little of African politics [the conventional] concept of civil society captures," Kasfir (1998) suggests the definition of civil society provided by the "conventional view" should be broadened by dropping the normative elements in the definition, in order to include ethnic and other types of political activity usually ignored or lambasted in the literature (p. 127). He suggests we should use "civil society to gain a wider understanding of particular societies and their relationship to their states" (1998a:3).

Pursuing this challenge to the conventional view is essential if the concept of civil society is to reflect the full array of African political and associational life, but an analytically useful concept must be more precise that just all state-society relationships. If under civil society we include analyses of the relationship between individual firms and the state, or between individual citizens and the state — as distinct from the role of those individual entities within some collective group — it is not clear what utility the concept of civil society can provide. Neo-patrimonialism, prebendalism, and citizenship may well provide all the analytical tools necessary to understand individual relationships with the state, making civil society a redundant concept. Its only potential utility is in defining a sphere that is conceptually distinct from both the state and individual political or economic behavior.

While we clearly should not import the concept wholesale from the West, it makes little sense to create a definition that is totally unrelated to the centuries' long, Western tradition. The challenge is to create a concept clearly part of the Western tradition, precise enough to have analytical utility, and able to include and reflect the rich associational life of contemporary Africa. To achieve this triple challenge, I suggest civil society can most usefully be defined simply as *a public sphere of formal or informal, collective activity autonomous from but recognizing the legitimate existence of the state*.[2] This definition allows the inclusion of a wide array of political activity, whether long-established or quite recent. It is also consistent with the broad tradition of the use of the concept in the West.

The term collective is intended to include virtually any activity involving more than one individual family or business, whether formal or informal, engaged in consciously "political" activity or not. The definition, then, leaves open as research questions what kinds of formal organizations or informal networks might be involved; in what forms participation might occur; how successful civil society will be at maintaining its autonomy and thereby limiting the state; whether elements within it wish to limit the state even further; whether it will peacefully overcome

ethnic, gender, class and other social divisions; and whether it will foster liberal democratic norms or not.

The definition maintains what Schmitter (1997) calls the "dual autonomy" of civil society from "the state" and "the family" (p. 240). A public sphere of "formal and informal collective activity" excludes little other than civil war, violent revolution, crime, and the activities of individual economic entities — families, laborers, and businesses. The market economy and its inequalities are crucial to an understanding of any civil society, but the market itself is best thought of as a separate analytical category, influencing but not constituting civil society. Individual businesses, laborers, and families pursue survival and prosperity in the market and perhaps political influence over the state; they become part of civil society when they engage in some type of "public" (e.g., involving more than one entity) collective activity. We cannot assume individual, profit-maximizing behavior (the market) and collective pursuit of group goals (civil society, whether motivated by self-interest or a conception of public good) are identical. The two kinds of activity may affect political life and democracy quite differently.[3]

Civil society must be "autonomous" from the state only in the sense that the latter cannot control formal or informal activities and associations; civil society must have some existence independent of the state.[4] Autonomy, however, implies that civil society will recognize the legitimate existence of the state and have some relationship with it. Violent efforts at either overthrowing the government or secession, while sometimes morally justifiable, are beyond the conceptual bounds of civil society.[5]

Pessimists argue that African civil society is weak because it is not based on "civic norms." Callaghy (1994) suggests: "*if used at all* (emphasis in original) [civil society] should be used in a very restricted sense relating to the emergence of a consensus on norms defining a 'civil sphere'" (p. 235), and goes on to express his skepticism about the emergence of such norms in Africa. This paper takes exactly the opposite position: we must excise norms from the *definition* of civil society in order to allow us to examine a *variety of norms* that might inform civil society. We can then analyze the myriad conflicts and tensions that pessimists have noted within African civil society. Rather than rendering the concept of civil society useless, ethnic, regional, religious, class, gender, and other conflicts are important areas for research. Indeed, they play a central role in understanding contemporary civil society in Africa.

By eliminating norms we leave open the question of the relationship between democracy and civil society. Civil society, as currently constituted, may or may not support the enlargement of liberal democracy.[6] By virtue of its autonomy from the state, it certainly allows the possibility of democracy, and many elements within it may actively support democratic movements, but we leave the overall, long-term relationship open as a research question. Africa may or may not follow some

version of the history of this relationship in the West. Civil society is an important sphere for analytical inquiry, with political implications of some sort, even if it does nothing to further democracy.

Moral Ethnicity, Political Norms, and African Civil Society

Broadening the definition of civil society allows us to ask an array of important questions about contemporary African civil society. What kinds of groups, associations, and networks, formal and informal, constitute African civil society? More particularly, can organizations based on ethnic, regional, religious, and other "traditional" groupings be considered part of civil society, as Ekeh (1992) has urged us to consider? What norms inform various elements of African civil society? What effects does all of this have on African politics and democratic transition? Obviously, this paper cannot even begin to answer all of these questions definitively. It will attempt, however, to begin an analysis of the competing norms informing contemporary African civil society, some of the groups that are (and conceptually must be) part of African civil society but are too often ignored in past literature, and the political effects that can be deduced from this initial investigation.

Following Callaghy, pessimists argue that lack of appropriate norms and deep cleavages in African society result in a civil society that is a "disorganized plurality of mutually exclusive projects that are not necessarily democratic" (Fatton 1995:75). "What is missing is the development of a trans-ethnic public arena grounded in universalistic norms and civic trust governing both political and economic transitions" (Berman 1997:19). This means there is little to undercut the patron-client relations and neopatrimonialism most scholars see at the heart of African politics. "Political tribalism" (Lonsdale 1994) reigns supreme. Under neo-patrimonialism, power battles among the elite are amoral competitions to gain resources to share with clients. The only political norm is Joseph's (1998) prebendalism: "the offices of the existing state may be competed for and then utilised for the personal benefit of office-holders as well as that of their reference or support group" (p. 54). Relations between patrons and clients, largely confined within recognized ethnic groups, are personal and individualized, undermining the modern concepts of impersonal but equal citizenship and citizen-state relations (Berman 1997).

Civil society, in this view, has little or no ability to counteract these trends in Africa. Calling the conventional view's expectations for civil society "clearly unrealistic," Berman (1998) argues that

> it is the ability of such groups [voluntary associations in civil society] to become the resistance of existing structures of wealth and power and shift the historical trajectory that is at issue. With distressing frequency, the rhizomes of ethnic factionalism and patron-client politics reproduce themselves within these parties and associations,

> rendering them, like so much of the apparatus of the state, into ideological and institutional facades covering the reality of business as usual on the back verandah (p. 342).

Lack of resources and severe economic crisis in the world's poorest continent make all organizations of civil society weak and usually dependent on the state or foreign donors (Gyimah-Boadi 1997; Markovitz 1998; Igoe forthcoming). Because they are relatively new, disorganized, and poor, associations such as trade unions, professional bodies, and independent media have few if any roots in rural society where the bulk of the population resides.

This pessimistic critique of the utility of the concept of civil society in Africa is quite sobering. It accurately criticizes many excessively optimistic expectations for African civil society. But by restricting itself to the common definition of civil society it fails to see that African civil society, properly conceived, has deeper social roots than normally admitted and a more complex, though certainly not wholly beneficial, relationship with political liberalization and democracy.

Recent work by Lonsdale (1994) and Ndegwa (1997) provides a framework for understanding contemporary African political norms that can greatly benefit our analysis of African civil society. Ndegwa juxtaposes liberal democratic and civic-republican citizenship in modern Africa, arguing the former characterized the original political project of nationalist elites as well as recent democratic movements, while the latter characterizes ethnic group identity and norms. Ndegwa (1997) maintains that liberal citizenship "holds that rights inhere in individuals, exist prior to community, and are guaranteed with minimal obligation to the community," while civic-republican citizenship "considers rights not as inherent but as acquired through civic practice that upholds obligations to the community" (p. 602). As liberal citizens of independent nation-states, Africans in theory have equal, individual status and rights vis-à-vis the state; as civic-republican citizens of ethnic groups, however, they have obligations to the group's well-being that, when necessary, override liberal citizenship.

Lonsdale's concept of "moral ethnicity" is closely related to Ndegwa's civic-republican citizenship. Lonsdale (1994) contrasts moral ethnicity — the "contested internal standard of civic virtue against which we measure our personal esteem" — with "the unprincipled 'political tribalism' with which groups compete for public resources" (p. 131). Moral ethnicity is essentially a concept of what "made one a good member of the local community" (p. 139). Like Ndegwa, Lonsdale suggests the core elements of this are the reciprocal obligations between rich and poor, powerful and weak, and obligation to the community's overall well-being.

Lonsdale's amoral political tribalism is closely related to Ekeh's (1975) much older depiction of the amoral "civic realm" associated with the modern state in Africa, Bayart's (1993) "politics of the belly," and Joseph's (1998)

prebendalism. It depicts an amoral, self-interested competition for power and resources among ethnically based leaders that undermine liberal, democratic norms and liberal civil society. Ndegwa (1997) suggests civic-republican norms undermine liberal democratic ones because "parochial civic-republican obligations taint one's 'individual' preferences in the nation-state arena. . . [and] for those who capture the state, the state becomes an arena in which to fulfill obligation to the subnational community" (p. 604).

Out of this debate we can derive three broad political norms present in contemporary Africa: liberal, democratic; moral ethnic (or civic-republican, but I prefer Lonsdale's term); and prebendal. Understanding contemporary African politics generally, and civil society in particular, requires understanding that these three broad types of norms exist simultaneously and at least at times conflict, with complex and uncertain long-term political effects.

Liberal, democratic norms

While liberal, democratic norms are neither universal nor dominant in contemporary Africa, they do have significant impact on politics and civil society. As Ndegwa (1997) points out, they have informed and provided the discourse for the contemporary democracy movement across the continent, which has been quite successful in a few countries and has had a noticeable impact everywhere. Another indication of the relevance of liberal democratic norms is the universal popular condemnation of both corruption and "tribalism." While both are widespread and involve large numbers of people, they are also condemned routinely and sincerely, indicating that an appeal to the populace as citizens of the nation-state with a stake in its probity and unity can resonate powerfully. Citizen attitudes toward both are clearly tied to norms of moral ethnicity as well. The poor and powerless often tacitly accept corruption when it benefits them or their community, but only then. The corruption of leaders of other communities, or of their own leaders if they do not clearly spread the benefits to the community as a whole, is not acceptable. Prebendalism only holds when the office holder benefits more than just himself. The "Big Man" who engages in corruption simply to "feather his own nest" — Mobutu, Abacha, etc. — is nearly universally despised. Behind this condemnation are not only a norm of moral ethnicity, but also one of liberal citizenship under which the resources of the national state are seen as being "eaten" illegitimately.

A similar case can be made for the use of "tribalism" in much public discourse in Africa. Peter Ekeh (1990) has termed tribalism a:

> counterideology [that] assumes that when persons from different ethnic groups live together in multiethnic communities, they have to agree to be bound by common rules of coexistence. It attacks behaviors and attitudes tending to be subversive of the prospects of good comradeship and neighborliness in polyglot and multiethnic

> communities... With respect to participation in the affairs of the state and in its agencies, the ethics of tribalism call for mandatory fairness in sharing out the benefits that accrue to citizens across constituent ethnic groups (pp. 689-690).

Virtually all observers would deny that Ekeh's statement portrays contemporary African society accurately. But Ekeh points correctly to the continuing power of a counterideology, or alternative discourse, that criticizes prebendal practice. The frequent accusations of tribalism and appeals against it that one can read in virtually any contemporary African newspaper are sometimes thinly veiled, self-interested attacks on one's ethnic opponents. But they are often more sincere appeals to the liberal norm of equal citizenship and treatment for all vis-à-vis the state. While this norm is clearly contested it nonetheless informs some elements of African civil society, at least some of the time.

Moral ethnicity

Moral ethnicity, Lonsdale (1994) argues, produces the predominant norms in African societies. It is an ongoing debate over what constitutes civic virtue within a morally imagined ethnic community. At its heart is a continually contested sense of reciprocal obligation under which the rich and powerful are to use their success to improve other individuals and the community as a whole. The rise of the market economy and colonialism meant that "new social competitions fostered new arguments about what forms of achievement made one a good member of the local community" (p. 139). Obligation to the community, civic-republican citizenship in Ndegwa's terms, is central if ill-defined.

That the norm of community obligation is crucial in African society is beyond dispute, widely recognized in the "hometown associations" of Nigeria, the constant flow of resources from employed urban dwellers to their rural homelands across the continent, elites' taking of "traditional titles" in parts of West Africa, the *harambee* system in Kenya, etc. I wish to argue that moral ethnic or civic-republican norms, while not part of the conventional view, nonetheless inform a legitimate and very large share of African civil society.

These norms can support all of the key elements of civil society as I have defined it. Moral ethnicity encourages collective (both formal and, more often, informal) activity in the public sphere with a goal of community betterment. In itself, this is a form of political participation, but it also often encourages interaction with the state in pursuit of the community's well-being. The central norm of reciprocal obligation is a norm of political accountability within the community, applied by the poor and weak to the rich and powerful. It is also a vision of good citizenship and the public good. By placing the community's interests at the apex of the moral order, it provides a norm on which formal or informal groups can rely to maintain autonomy from the national state.

Prebendalism

Prebendalism and neopatrimonial political behavior are recognized by most scholars today as the "core feature" of African politics (Bratton and van der Walle 1994). As a norm, however, prebendalism exists in constant competition with the other norms outlined above. Using the state's resources as one's own risks facing condemnation based on liberal, democratic norms, and is seen as legitimate only to the extent some (ill-defined) portion of the benefits accrue to one's community. While much of the battle over access to and use of the state's resources appears on the surface to be "amoral political tribalism," it actually takes place in an extremely complex moral playing field, a public sphere defined by the often conflicting and simultaneously held moral notions outlined above.

Walk into any village and hear the ongoing debate over who has "eaten" what and whether the community has benefited from that person's leadership and position, or read the accusations of corruption and tribalism in any newspaper where some freedom of expression exists, and you will see the raging moral debate within which prebendalism competes. In Kenya, this debate can be seen in the contrasting uses of the Swahili words *siasa* (politics) and *maendeleo* (development). Not unlike the contemporary United States, *siasa* is almost always a negative term, referring to the amoral battle over control of power and resources. *Maendeleo*, on the other hand, is positive and connotes improving both one's own and the community's well-being. New buildings and houses in a rural area are seen as examples of *maendeleo*. Even when elites build individual houses for themselves or invest in improving their own farms, if they do it in the rural community, as a symbol of their commitment and presence, it is *maendeleo*. And, of course, when they contribute to building a local school or health clinic via a *harambee* fundraiser they are engaging in *maendeleo*. At those times, the sources of their wealth are not questioned, showing the power of moral ethnicity over liberal citizenship. But repeated failure to make such contributions will lead quickly to questions and accusations about the sources of their wealth, and threaten their legitimacy as community leaders.

While neopatrimonialism is a core feature of African political life, it is far from undisputed. Much of that disputation occurs within contemporary African civil society, based on both liberal democratic and moral ethnic norms.

Actually Existing African Civil Society

Almost all discussion of civil society in Africa has focused on the voluntary associations assumed by the conventional view to be based on liberal democratic norms. The remainder of this paper will focus explicitly on groups not typically seen as part of civil society. Following the broader definition outlined above, I will

argue that patron-client networks, ethnic associations, self-help and cooperative groups, and some "traditional" authorities are important elements of African civil society, based largely on the norms of moral ethnicity.

Patron-client networks

Patron-client networks are so pervasive in Africa largely because they provide crucial resources to all involved. Africans gain employment, political position, and help in a crisis from their patron-client networks. Perhaps most importantly, in an extremely insecure situation, these networks provide the best available means of social and economic security (Berry 1993; Orvis 1997). Because of the historical evolution of the "invention of tradition" (Ranger 1994) in Africa, patron-client networks usually exist within ethnic groups. The reciprocal nature of patron-client relationships takes the form of the reciprocal obligations of moral ethnicity. Strong but imprecise norms demand that patrons provide essential resources to clients when needed, while clients provide loyalty and support to patrons as asked.

Patron-client networks, as well as ethnic political blocs or groups, are generally considered antithetical to both democracy and civil society. Fox (1994), for example, juxtaposes clientelism and citizenship, analyzing the transition from one to the other as part of the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. Patron-client networks are seen to be far too hierarchical and unequal to be part of democratic civil society. The very limited autonomy of clients vis-à-vis patrons denies them equal citizenship. In Africa, the networks as a whole are considered inadequately autonomous from the state, given many patrons' positions within or closely tied to the state (Chabal and Daloz 1999:17-30). If they are dependent on the state, how can they be autonomous from it? Patron-client networks are also rather nebulous and informal, making them poor candidates for inclusion in civil society according to the conventional view.

While parts of this argument are accurate, I argue that patron-client networks can be legitimate and crucially important elements in African civil society. Clearly, they are not based on liberal democratic norms. While clients do have some autonomy and choice, they are certainly not equal citizens with their patrons. Nonetheless, patron-client networks are informal groups that pursue their collective interests vis-à-vis the state, often retaining some autonomy from the state, and providing a means (however imperfect) of both political participation and accountability.

The ethnic and clan-based voting in many parts of Africa attests to patron-client networks' ability to act collectively; patrons can mobilize clients for political purposes. The networks, however, also serve as means of political participation for clients. Though clients are clearly not equal citizens with patrons, they do have some limited autonomy with which they can act politically. Clients can and do change patrons, and vice versa, if the relationship is unsatisfactory and alternatives

exist. This usually occurs within an ethnic group; except for those near the apex of the system, clientelist ties across ethnic boundaries are rare. Both patron-client networks and ethnic political blocs, then, are not unchanging ascriptive political phenomena. To some extent, they are subject to the demands of their members as individuals; patrons/leaders unable to provide adequately will ultimately lose their clients and with them their political position. By supporting the best patron available, clients gain a form of participation in the system, and a means of voicing at least some of their demands to the patron, and via him to the state.

Patron-client networks also provide a form of political accountability, albeit not one based on liberal democratic norms. Patrons demand the state provide them and their clients with resources, usually in the name of the ethnic community. While this is often couched in a public discourse of liberal citizenship vis-à-vis the state, few actors involved in the process see it that way in fact. The norms of moral ethnicity, gaining resources for individuals and the group as a whole, implicitly drive most of the demands. This nonetheless provides a form of accountability vis-à-vis the state. Saying what he calls "mutuality networks" (which include patron-client networks) "shield vulnerable people from harm, including harm caused by state officials," Schaffer (1998) argues, "these networks constitute a kind of (fragmented) counterweight to the power of officialdom" (p. 130). Demanding resources for one's ethnic group may not promote democracy, but it does hold the state accountable to a norm of providing for the group's well-being. While this may appear to be an extremely weak form of accountability to a liberal democrat, it is accountability nonetheless.

In spite of patrons' frequent positions within or dependence on the state, patron-client networks can achieve a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the state. Patrons' tenure within the state in Africa is often short-lived, while their position as leaders of a network of clients is much longer term. While in control of part of the state, networks' interests might coincide with the states' interest, and in this sense the network is not autonomous. Only rarely does this situation endure, however; only patrons who climb to the very top of the most stable African political systems gain a nearly permanent position in control of the state.

When a powerful ethnic patron gains an official position within the state and uses it to distribute resources to his clients individually and collectively, he in a sense captures part of the state rather than being captured by it. For all but those at the very apex of the system, the patron does not control the state as much as he uses it to fulfill the norms of moral ethnicity. His long-term interests remain closely tied to his ability to provide for his network in some acceptable form. While dependent on the state, his interests may temporarily coincide with the state. He is not leading a network that can be considered part of autonomous civil society *while it is part of the state*. Most, however, lose control of the state and thereby return, conceptually, to civil society. Even where a particular network gains long-term control over part

or all of the state, other networks are outside and partially autonomous from it. While a particular network may not be part of civil society, patron-client networks as a whole conceptually exist within autonomous civil society. Patrons pursue their long-term interests of gaining power and resources for themselves and thereby their network, at times via controlling the state and at times via making demands from outside it.

A particularly clear example of patron-client networks as part of civil society is the marabouts of Senegal.[7] Marabouts serve as patrons vis-à-vis their disciples, engaging the state to gain collective benefits. The state is in part dependent on marabouts for rural political support, despite secular elites' desire to penetrate rural society directly. The religious basis of the maraboutic order makes this form of clientelism unusually stable and formally organized, with extensive rituals to reinforce client loyalty. Villalon (1995) demonstrates clearly, though, that

> the stability of the marabout-disciple relationship can neither be taken for granted nor does it imply the omnipotence of marabouts; there are limits to allegiance. Disciples who find themselves dissatisfied with the demands made on them may opt for two types of responses... first of all, the possibility of simply switching marabouts. Secondly [reducing]... their affiliation with a marabout or an order to a purely nominal level... (p. 193).

The marabouts, in turn, engage, support or oppose the state in order to gain benefits for their clients. They are not dependent on the state, even when actively cooperating with it. The clients' potential threat to shift patrons, though rarely carried out, combined with the marabouts' relationship with the state, makes the orders a means of both political participation and accountability, a part of civil society, though clearly not characterized by liberal democratic norms.

"Self-help" groups and ethnic associations

Closely related but conceptually distinct from patron-client networks are a wide array of ethnic, regional and "hometown" associations and self-help groups that are part of African civil society. At least one group of scholars has recognized hometown associations in Nigeria as part of civil society (Barkan et. al. 1991). Some see these organizations as "fitting" the conventional view of civil society in part because many have formal structures and decision-making processes. Others, however, might view them as outside the bounds of civil society, in that they are regionally and therefore often ethnically defined, and may not be internally democratic. But they are clear examples of the autonomous pursuit of collective interest. Their main functions are to initiate and fund local development projects such as schools and clinics, as well as articulate the interests of the local community vis-à-vis the state and local governments (Barkan et al. 1991).

Nigerian hometown associations are more clearly autonomous from the state than less formal groups, in that they raise their own funds, led by elite "sons and daughters" who have migrated to urban areas and gained high-paying positions. Both in initiating development projects and making demands on local governments, they provide a means of political participation and accountability. But it is equally clear that they are not the ideal voluntary associations based solely on liberal democratic norms imagined by the conventional view. Especially for elites, "participation at some level is expected" (Trager 1998:366); failure to join or contribute adequately can result in informal social sanctions, including ostracism (Barkan et al. 1991:462). Decision-making in at least some is more or less permanently vested in a relatively narrow elite group of older men (Barkan et al. 1991:470).

Rather than liberal democratic norms, the moral ethnic norms of reciprocal obligation are central. Trager views elites' role in the associations as a continuation of the Yoruba "big man" tradition: "a key aspect of the notion of 'big man' is that it involves reciprocity; one can accumulate money and develop a network of supporters, but one also needs to work to retain them. There is great fluidity in such a system; money and supporters can be lost as well as gained" (Trager 1998:375). Hometown associations share with more informal patron-client networks the norms of moral ethnicity, as well as a level of leadership fluidity rarely recognized by the conventional view of civil society.

Kenya's "harambee" self-help groups represent a less formal version of the same phenomenon. Often coming together only for a particular development project, "harambees" involve participation and donations of cash or labor from virtually all segments of a local community, including successful "sons and daughters" in the city (Barkan and Holmquist 1989). Some self-help groups exist on a more permanent basis, conducting harambees as needed for a variety of projects. Because they are not as well institutionalized, Kenya's self-help groups and harambees may well be weaker components of African civil society than Nigeria's hometown associations, but they nonetheless are an important element. By attracting funding from elites, including major political leaders with high positions in the state, they provide a means of political participation and accountability. Again, this is not based on liberal democratic norms but on the norms of reciprocal obligation and prebendalism; where major ruling party leaders are involved, rumors abound that the funds contributed come from state coffers in one way or another.

Self-help groups can maintain some autonomy from the state even as they interact with and demand resources from it. On the other hand, major harambees often have ambiguous autonomy, as state leaders try to use them to coopt a local group or undermine locally popular opposition. They may serve as part of an

autonomous civil society, or may be part of undermining it, depending on local circumstances.

Hometown and self-help associations tend, because they are geographically focused, to be ethnically identified. More explicitly ethnic associations can be part of civil society as well. Trager (1998) notes that in Ijesa, western Nigeria, hometown association leaders formed the Ijesa Solidarity Group, which carries out activities similar to the local hometown associations but in the name of the ethnic community as a whole. In Kenya, the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association (GEMA) was originally tied closely to the ruling elite under Kenyatta. Banned under the Moi regime in the early 1980s, it has resurfaced under multi-party rule as an informal ethnic lobby in opposition to, but willing to negotiate with, the ruling regime. A number of similar organizations have emerged in Kenya in the 1990s, informally and sporadically, in response to GEMA, articulating the demands of other ethnic constituencies. Press reports abound of statements made by “Kamba leaders” or “Bukusu elders,” among many others, in the name of their respective communities.

We know little about these and similar organizations across Africa, a testament to their exclusion from the purview of studies of “civil society.” The degree to which any particular group legitimately represents a larger community must be a subject of research. Given the power of ethnic identity, however, some of these groups clearly represent very real interests in society. While they may well lack internal democratic decision-making or fully democratic norms, if at all representative of larger constituencies, such groups are a vital part of African civil society. They represent and speak on behalf of many, very real demands for ethnic representation. Generally led by major patrons, they are often the public, ethnic face of patron-client networks operating in large part along the norms of moral ethnicity. By articulating legitimately the demands of many members of ethnic groups, they provide a potential means of political accountability as well as participation, even if they are rather undemocratic, informal, and at times led by state elites.

“Traditional” authorities

In certain circumstances, even “traditional” (more precisely, neo-traditional) authorities can become part of civil society vis-à-vis the modern state. The imposition of colonial rule effectively ended the binding authority of pre-colonial governing institutions. Whatever real authority they retained was only that granted by and derived from colonial and later independent national states. In this manner, many pre-colonial chiefs became officials of modern states. But in some cases, councils of elders who had had some governing authority in the pre-colonial era have, in effect, become part of African civil society. They continue to exercise

some local authority in settling disputes, but only that granted to them by the state. They also can assert the collective interests of their communities, sometimes more effectively and legitimately than “modern” civil society. Following Lonsdale’s (1994) depiction of moral ethnicity, we must remember that such organizations do not represent some unquestioned and “traditional” consensual ethnic identity, but are part of an ongoing normative debate about the social and political implications of ethnic identity. If successful, they may attain some degree of non-binding moral authority, defined in moral ethnic terms.

In at least two areas of Kenya, “councils of elders” have gained political attention in recent years and seem to be taking on civil society roles. The most interesting case is in Meru. The *njuri ncheke* was a pre-colonial council of elders, first created in the late nineteenth century, and governing only the northern sections of the greater Meru area. It has always been subject to internal debate in Meru society. From its creation, alternative, “fringe” councils have existed to challenge it. Local colonial authorities first tried to alter and retain it. When that failed, they banned it entirely, only to resuscitate it by the 1930s, in modified form, to assist in effective governing.[8] Since the early colonial era, local churches, especially Protestant ones, have challenged the legitimacy of *njuri* in an ongoing debate over what being a “proper Meru” entails. That debate continues today, and in the era of political liberalization has become more open.

In addition to fulfilling its “traditional” roles of adjudicating land and other local disputes, some elements in *njuri* have collaborated with the Family Planning Association of Kenya to create an alternative female initiation ritual, to counter female genital mutilation (circumcision). Members have also been active participants of local harambees — fund raisers for schools and water projects — and have served as community representatives in negotiations with neighboring Somali and Boran communities to resolve serious inter-ethnic land disputes that exploded into violence in 1999. *Njuri* has attracted, for the first time apparently, a few members of the educated elite, who are attempting to “modernize” it by creating formal leadership positions (chairman, secretary, etc.), perhaps writing a constitution for it, and even possibly registering it with the state as an NGO.

As has always been true, *njuri* remains highly controversial in local politics. Membership, according to one of the new, educated members, is based not only on status but also on one’s moral position within the ethnic community, a clear vision of the norms of moral ethnicity. The Methodist church, the dominant Protestant denomination in the area, continues to oppose *njuri*, quite openly and adamantly, on the grounds that it is “anti-Christian” and “not modern.” A Methodist activist explicitly mentioned its lack of internal democratic norms and its gender bias (only men can be members) in justifying Methodist opposition to it. Other critics argue that its members have become corrupt, accepting bribes to decide land disputes in particular ways, and that it serves primarily as a front for the ruling party. A number

of interviewees, however, expressed their support for *njuri* as a legitimate form of local conflict resolution and community representation.

Njuri is clearly subject to much local dispute. It is equally clear that it is an important constituent of Meru civil society, supporting local development projects, providing informal conflict resolution mechanisms, and serving as a community voice in certain instances. Like many organizations in civil society, its position is contested and it may claim to be a more legitimate community representative than is in fact the case. These controversies demonstrate, however, its active participation in the debates that help constitute civil society. While clearly based on moral ethnic rather than liberal democratic norms, *njuri ncheke* nonetheless must be included in any depiction of civil society in Meru, Kenya.[9]

The largely informal, long-standing networks and groups tied to patronage, ethnicity, and traditional authority in Africa clearly do not function on the basis of fully liberal, democratic norms. Yet they appear quite capable of being part of civil society in the broader sense, being collective efforts to pursue group interests vis-à-vis the state, achieving some type of political participation and accountability. While at times individual groups may lose their autonomy vis-à-vis the state or individual families, conceptually and empirically these groups as a whole often have some autonomy. Usually based on norms associated with moral ethnicity, they represent very real interests of rural Africans even if they may not legitimately represent the entire ethnic population in whose interests they often purport to speak. Their ubiquity across Africa makes it impossible to understand African civil society without analyzing them as part of it.

Conclusion

It is both inevitable and unfortunate that the resurgence of interest in civil society in Africa has coincided with political liberalization. Scholars have been too quick to assume an iron-clad connection between the two. While civil society certainly helped foment political liberalization, the tie between the two is not inevitable. "Civil society can just as easily impede democracy as advance it..." (Ehrenberg 1999:236). Political liberalization, however, has opened up possibilities for the expansion of civil society. That expansion, well under way in many countries, will not inevitably produce a democratic transition. But the short-term "failure" of democratic transition in many countries should not be seen as the demise of civil society either. Actually existing African civil society pre-dated recent political liberalization and in many countries will outlive it. Defined broadly and analyzed in its full array of forms, African civil society is a rich field of study in its own right. While it will not necessarily produce democracy, it is essential as an arena in which contending political norms develop and evolve, with crucial implications for the long-term prospects for democracy.

Actual existing civil society in Africa is both more and less than the conventional view so often asserted. It is more in the sense that it is more fully entrenched in and representative of rural society than commonly recognized; it is less in the sense that it is often not nearly as fully "democratic" as some have assumed and hoped. Both pessimists and optimists in the Africanist debate must recognize the contending norms that shape contemporary African political activity, and the myriad types of formal and informal means through which African civil society is constituted. Because liberal democratic norms contend with both moral ethnicity and prebendalism, democratic consolidation is far off in most countries, if it is to come at all. This does not mean, however, that civil society is either conceptually inapplicable or empirically "weak" in Africa. Civil society as a sphere of autonomous, collective activity that provides some element of participation and accountability is alive and well. Its existence as an autonomous sphere provides the possibility of further democratization, but in no way guarantees it.

NOTES

1 This discussion relies heavily on my reading of Keane (1988) and Ehrenberg (1999), supplemented by others as noted. For other recent literature on civil society in Western political theory, see Seligman (1992) and Cohen and Arato (1992). See Orvis (1999) for a slightly more detailed elaboration of this argument.

2 In adopting the term "public sphere" I do not adopt Habermas's famous understanding of that term, in that it is as normatively restrictive as the definitions of civil society. Habermas's conceptualization of public sphere of communication and activity creating public norms, however, is in a generic sense quite similar to my sense of civil society. He has recently suggested that his conception of the public sphere is today discussed implicitly under the discourse of civil society (Habermas 1992).

3 My definition distinguishes neither civil from "political" society, in Stepan's (1988) terminology, nor political from non-political activity in more general terms. Many groups collectively pursue their own interests at the local level, rarely engaging the state. But when such groups believe their interests require interaction with the state they proceed accordingly. A "civil" group can conclude it must try to gain a position within the state and thereby become "political." A "non-political" group can quickly become "political" and just as quickly revert to its "non-political" status when its interests are met, or it gives up the effort as futile.

4 Kasfir (1998a) argues that this limitation on our definition of civil society ought to be eliminated along with all others. I retain it because it is essential to demarcate civil society as a conceptually distinct realm (along with the state, market, and family) with its own internal structures and logic of action.

5 The relationship of civil society and the family has been a more contentious issue. Feminist scholars have correctly noted that excluding the "family," normally defined as the "private" realm, from civil society excludes many issues and activities central to women's interests (Pateman 1988; Tripp 1998; Fraser 1992). By retaining the distinction between civil society and the family, I intend only to exclude activities pursued by individual families or family members alone. The conceptual distinction I make is between individual economic units, however constituted (individuals, nuclear households, extended households, firms), and "public"

collective activity involving more than one such economic unit. Women forming local self-help groups, or an association concerned with domestic violence or female genial mutilation, would clearly be part of civil society, no matter how "local" or informal their activities might be.

6 For examples of both, see Ndegwa (1996) and Uvin (1998).

7 This account is based on Villalon's (1995) excellent study of the relationships among the Senegalese state, marabouts, and their disciples.

8 See Fadiman (1993) for the best history of this subject from which I derive the historical material here, especially Chapters 7 and 11. The rest of the information in this section derives from a series of interviews conducted in 1999 and 2000 in Kenya.

9 The Luo Council of Elders appears to be a similar effort in western Kenya. It is a revival of a dormant organization that does not appear to have had the governing authority associated with its Meru counterpart. It has been revived by an array of elites, both rural and urban, from across the large Luo community, and has initiated a series of discussions on issues such as slowing the spread of AIDS (the Luo are the ethnic group in Kenya hardest hit by AIDS) and curbing the costs of "traditional" funerals (Author interview, Prof. Ogutu, June 1999).

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Women's Rights Movements as a Measure of African Democracy

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ABSTRACT

The currently dominant neoliberal narrative of democratization in Africa is silent on women, focussing (as have the dominant narratives on colonialism and nationalism before it) on conflicts between male elites. This paper, using the case of Botswana, is intended as a contribution to a counter-narrative of democratization that focuses on women's groups, along with trade unions, civic groups and other popular forces, as a basis for "democratization from below." The inclusion of women in both politics and scholarly narratives is not only a question of equity. Examining the conditions that make it possible for women's groups to organize and to succeed can provide a useful measure of the substantive democracy in a system, an understanding of the class base needed for effective women's mobilization and protection of their rights, and an idea of how women's groups might develop as part of effective coalitions seeking popular democracy.

With the current focus in African political studies on the "transition to democracy," we are seeing the assertion of a dominant narrative of democratization, and — to anyone's surprise? — it focuses on conflicts between male elites, just as the dominant narratives on colonialism and nationalism have done. And just as those narratives have provoked feminist critiques because they render female political actors invisible, so, too, the dominant narrative of democratization demands a corrective, but not only in terms of its neglect of women. For the male elite narrative is part of a currently dominant neoliberal view, most notably in political science, that casts liberal capitalist democracy as the only alternative for Africa or anywhere else. As John Saul (1997b) points out, there is a definitional slide in much of the "democratization" literature from "democracy" to "liberal democracy" to "liberal capitalist democracy," with either the implication or the direct assertion that multiparty elections are desirable because they preserve stability by legitimizing "governance" by elites, contain popular political pressures, and protect the interests of capital and the dominant class. In this narrative, popular mobilization from the bottom is dangerous, and only a "thin" democracy is feasible

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in Africa — one that seeks only those "reforms" consistent with the demands of capital and the neoliberalism of international financial institutions.

However, there is a counter-narrative in the making, one that challenges the inevitability of neoliberal hegemony and unrestrained capitalism, sees the danger as coming from the "top" — from national and international dominant classes — and seeks to encourage belief in a "popular democratic" alternative. This counter-narrative offers what Saul (1997b) calls a "political economy of democratization" — a critical anti-imperialist stance toward global capitalism, an analysis of class struggle, and a focus on popular forces (labor unions, women's groups, civic groups) and grass-roots mobilization.[1] Scholars contributing to this counter-narrative are not all explicitly Marxist; they do not all do analysis at the level of the state or international system. What they share is the view that the current drastically unequal division of wealth and power in Africa and the world is not inevitable, that the "needs" of global capital shouldn't dictate structural adjustment or any other programs for Africa, that what male elites do, in Africa or anywhere else, isn't the only significant action or subject of study, and that a progressive future lies with popular forces acting for change "from below."[2]

My argument about Botswana[3] is intended to contribute to this counter-narrative. Botswana's political system already meets the criteria being put forth for liberal democracy, and has operated as a stable, peaceful formal liberal capitalist democracy since independence in 1966. Botswana has received much attention from both scholars and policy-makers in the West for this record, for its economic growth, and for the developmental and welfare uses to which the political class has put Botswana's great wealth in diamonds, in sharp contrast to those oil-rich states whose elites have siphoned off the national wealth into private bank accounts. But little attention has been paid to the remarkable successes of the women's movement in Botswana, and the significance for Botswana's present and potential future democratic political life of these successes and the resulting position of women in society and polity.

Including "women" as actors in a narrative of democracy and democratization is, on the most basic level, a question of equity and of the meaning of "democracy." Of course, in the history of Western liberal democracy — still the model for much of the discussion and certainly the model adopted in Botswana — women were denied political rights, along with children, servants, laborers and slaves, and gained those rights only after long and difficult campaigns. Women in most of Africa have had the right to vote since independence, so the question of equity is not whether women have the right to vote, but whether they are active players within politics, and, within scholarship, whether their actual actions, organizations or attempts to influence the quality of their lives by some political means are seen as part of the process of democratic politics or democratization. To include "women" in the narrative at this level means asking whether any, some, many women are

able to act as "citizens," who have some stake in, understanding of, and effect on political decisions, or whether they are only "subjects," whose relationship to the government is one of loyalty and dependence by them in exchange for paternalistic care for their welfare.[4]

At a second level, we will argue that the existence of active women's rights campaigns tells us something about the state of democracy or democratic openness in a political system, if we ask: what in this system makes it possible for the women's campaign to begin, to keep going, to succeed in some areas and not in others? What in the system works to block women's demands, and what alternative routes to change exist? Analyzing how women's groups have been able to use openings in the political system also leads to questions about whether other groups seeking greater equity or rights might use the same strategies.

At a third level, we will argue that examining the political system in itself is crucial but not sufficient to understand how the Botswana women's movement came into being, won significant victories, and has been able to consolidate and protect those victories against backlash and move even further. What underlies women's groups' political clout is a class alliance of working class and petit bourgeois women, an alliance of classes formed by the dynamics of capitalism in Southern Africa. To look at women's rights campaign successes, then, is to look at gendered class formation — working class and petit bourgeois as well as the cattle and diamond bourgeoisie — as a crucial part of understanding democratization.

Finally, we will ask what the potential role of such women's groups and of women as a political constituency might be in a transition to a more participatory form of popular democracy in Botswana. Botswana has been characterized and criticized as a bureaucratic democracy, one in which the bureaucrats in the civil service, many of them expatriates, develop policy, leaving the politicians to implement it. Botswana's stability has often been attributed to an absence of class and ethnic-based politics or at least any successful attempts at such forms of politics. To put it slightly differently, political stability in Botswana can be linked to the successful mystification and denial of ethnic as well as class difference and discrimination under the hegemonic myth that, "We are all Batswana," despite the differential treatment that continues to exist and the extreme polarization in incomes that characterizes the economy (CSO 1991, 1995; Brothers et al. 1994; Nteta et al. 1997; Solway 1994).[5] Political domination by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) since independence, once again validated in the October 1999 elections, has rested on an alliance between the diamond and cattle bourgeoisie and rural farmers, an alliance based on diamond-driven economic growth and a commitment by the BDP to meet the basic needs of the rural poor. Various factors are seen as undermining support for the BDP — the levelling of diamond revenues and slowdown in growth, low wages, unemployment, inflation, rising crime, controls on trade unions and controversial wildlife policies all cut

into the party's support (Solway 1994:73-75). The very success of Botswana's economic development (increasing education, urbanization and wage employment) and the openness of its liberal democracy are creating challenges to the bureaucracy and to BDP domination and potentially opening new political spaces. These challenges include a younger generation of better-educated politicians who are more willing and able to contest policy formulation by the bureaucracy, and a greater mobilization of interest groups that seek to contest the formulation of issues within a public political discourse. In this potential "new transition" to a more popular form of democracy, women's groups that pursue the interests of working-class women as well as those interests shared by women across class lines could potentially be a significance force. Thus to look at the potential embodied in women's rights mobilization is to go beyond formal liberal democracy and to explore the possibilities for greater substantive political and economic democracy in Africa.[6]

Mobilizing for Women's Rights

Central to the development of a women's rights discourse[7] and of a women's equal rights movement in Botswana has been the Citizenship Law of 1982-84 and its successful challenge in the 1990s. The Citizenship Law changed citizenship in Botswana from being based on birth in the territory, as it had been since independence in 1966, to a basis in birth by descent; and for married women, the citizenship of the father only, not the mother, henceforth determined the citizenship of the child. A woman citizen married to a foreigner could no longer pass her citizenship, with its significant educational and economic benefits, to her child. The existence of such a discriminatory law (based according to its defenders in African patrilineal custom) operating within the context of the South African Defense Force terrorized Frontline States, and opposed by women's groups, was not unique to Botswana (Dow 1995:70).[8]

Countries in the Southern African cone share a colonial history as a labor reserve, an anti-colonial, anti-minority rule history as Frontline States, and, since the election of the African National Congress in South Africa in 1994, the possibility of creating a viable regional political economy through the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Each country has its own particular trajectory, strongly influenced by its own political economy. In Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa, majority rule was gained through political and military struggles by movements with Marxist ideologies, all of which recruited women on the basis of their commitment to women's emancipation. But only in South Africa (Seidman 1999) and, to a lesser extent, Namibia (Becker 1999) — the two countries that gained majority rule only in the 1990s — are there progressive constitutional gender provisions *and* women militants actively

engaged in government and politics, trying to move their societies toward such emancipation. In fact, Zimbabwe in 1999 turned sharply backward, wiping out rights women had gained in the 20 years since their "victory" in the liberation struggle.[9]

Botswana gained independence as a bourgeois, bureaucratic state through a generally peaceful, colonially-mediated process, with no particular commitment to the emancipation of women beyond the right of suffrage and the same ambiguities about women's status embedded in its Constitution as could be found elsewhere in Southern Africa. Yet in Botswana we find a vigorous *and successful* women's rights movement, whose victory in overturning the Citizenship Act further mobilized women to oppose other laws and practices, brought "silenced" issues into open public debate, pushed a process of change in men's attitudes as well as women's, and pressured government to move significantly against women's subordination. How was this possible?

The Citizenship Act was passed in 1982 (amended in 1984) after its presentation at rural *dikgotla* (village meetings), in which the government claimed it was received positively. Opposition voiced by urban women was rejected as unrepresentative of Botswana women's views. Organized opposition began in 1983 at a conference on Women and Development organized by the (two-person) Women's Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs, which called on government to end all laws that discriminated against women. From that conference grew publication of materials to educate women about their rights and about discriminatory laws.

In 1986-87 the various women's rights activities coalesced into Emang Basadi! — "Stand Up, Women!" — adapted with a pointed change from the national anthem, which urges men to "stand up and defend the nation," but women to "stand up beside your men." Emang Basadi defined itself as an "action group" rather than a service group, and set out to influence state policy and practice, operating independently of government and political parties in order to avoid silencing or censorship. (Its leaders included those who had worked on a Women's Unit-produced study of rape in Botswana, which got as far as having the illustrations drawn before the Ministry of Home Affairs suppressed it on the grounds that it would give a bad name to Botswana by admitting the prevalence of rape.) At the time of Emang Basadi's founding, no political party was advocating for women's rights. The leading opposition party, the Botswana National Front (BNF), identified itself as a left party, but had no platform on women's interests and no Women's Section, only a Youth Section dominated by young men.

Emang Basadi's first strategy was one of education and information gathering. It sought ways of educating poorer urban women and rural women about their rights, and of building a network of urban women wage-workers and women in producer cooperatives. It launched a campaign of collecting affidavits from women who were married to or had children with non-citizens, in order to

try to demonstrate that the "foreigners" involved were predominantly South African refugees, many of them ethnic Batswana, not rich white expatriates or Zimbabweans or other Africans seeking university places and university and government jobs, as was sometimes alleged by defenders of the Act. Emang Basadi argued that the effect of the Citizenship Act was to render these women's children stateless.

Adding the Legal Challenge

The Citizenship Act was scheduled for review by Parliament's Law Reform Committee in 1990, but it was not changed. Frustrated by parliamentary intransigence, women from Emang Basadi joined with the local branch of a regional women lawyers group, the Women and Law Project of Southern Africa (WLSA), in support of a suit challenging the Citizenship Law, filed in 1990 by Unity Dow, a lawyer and director of the Methaetsile Women's Information Center, a women's rights information center in Mochudi, 30 miles north of the capital, Gaborone. Unity Dow's standing was based on the fact that she is married to a U.S. citizen and her daughter had been denied a passport. Dow (1995) argued that the Citizenship Law discriminated against her on the grounds of sex in violation of Section Three of the Bill of Rights of the Botswana Constitution, which provides that "...every person in Botswana is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual ... whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex..." (p. 31).

The government attempted to use an appeal to customary law, arguing that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were premised upon "the traditional view that a child born to a married couple 'belonged' to the father in all ways, including citizenship and guardianship" (Molokomme 1994). But both the High Court and the Court of Appeal upheld Dow's challenge and the Citizenship Law was referred back to Parliament for revision in 1992. High Court Judge Martin Horwitz's decision, upheld on appeal, explicitly argued that since society had changed, women "can no longer be viewed as being chattels of their husbands," and the Constitutional provision takes precedence (Dow 1995:39).

The government, however, continued to stonewall, and women activists again increased their pressure. In March 1994, Unity Dow led a group of more than 50 women married to foreigners to the passport office demanding passports for their children, and after refusing to leave the government offices without at least receiving receipts for acceptance of application fees, they got them. They also got substantial publicity in the local, regional, and international press, and on the Internet African news services, to the embarrassment of the government. In this period of the run-up to the election, Emang Basadi moved to direct involvement

in electoral politics, adding recruitment and training of women candidates to their campaigns of education and information gathering.

In the 1990s the Botswana National Front was undergoing changes, largely influenced by its soon-to-be governing mentor in South Africa, the African National Congress. The growth of trade unions and of urban residence in general, along with increasing dissatisfaction among young people with the educational and job policies of the BDP, had swelled BNF membership and support. The combination of ANC influence and pressure from militant women in the Youth Section resulted in a strong women's plank in the 1994 BNF platform, including a provision that 30 percent of positions in all party structures, including parliamentary seats, would be reserved for women, the remaining positions to be contested by women on an equal basis with men (BNF Secretariat 1994:10). The October 1994 election results jolted the BDP. In the old Parliament, with 34 regularly elected seats plus 4 Specially Elected by the parliamentary majority on nomination by the President, the opposition BNF held only three seats compared to 35 held by the BDP. The new parliament, expanded to 40 elected seats plus 4 Specially Elected, had 13 BNF seats (none won by women candidates) and 27 BDP seats (2 won by women), plus the 4 BDP members Specially Elected, of whom 2 were women. That new Parliament, with its stronger voices for women and with a BDP majority inclined to take women's voices more seriously, was finally willing to move on the Citizenship Act.

It did so in a very different political and military environment from that in which the Act had been recommended, passed and largely debated: the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The threat of raids disappeared, and the 1994 election victory of the ANC was followed by an offer of South African citizenship to (almost) anyone resident in South Africa. To say the least, this defused the South African refugee issue and made it politically easier for Parliament to accede to demands for a new law. In 1996 a new Citizenship Act took effect that equalized gender provisions within the citizenship-by-descent rule.

The Dynamics of Victory

The challenge to the Citizenship Law was an important movement-building and consciousness-raising project for women's rights advocates in Botswana. It showed that neither a political nor a legal strategy by itself was enough, but that a legal challenge rooted in and supported by political mobilization could win. Choosing a potentially successful case, such as the Citizenship Law, which presented a clear opposition between patriarchal custom and the "modern" Constitution, opened the way for further challenges to discriminatory legislation and practice.

The defenders of the Act tended to focus on specific claims about tradition and customary law, namely, the "tradition that children 'belong' to the father," an

argument that they lost, in this case, to the claims of "universal" non-discrimination in the "modern" Constitution. The debate in the society, from letters in the press to dinner table conversations, cut to the deeper level of what is at stake by expressing the fear of what will happen to "society" if women are "out of control," that is, out of the control of men. The Citizenship Law thus became a symbolic expression of defense of the "male sex-right system," those relations of male power over women that pervade to different degrees all of family, economic, cultural and political life in every contemporary society. Challenging the law then became a symbolic expression of opposition to those often unacknowledged relations of male domination that pervade contemporary life in Botswana. That is, what began as a demand for equal rights was transformed into an unmasking and direct challenge of male power. The striking down of the law catalyzed further challenges to that power, further changes in discriminatory legislation by Parliament, further mobilization by women to gain political power, and further transformations in *mosadi* identity.

Keboitse Machangana of Emang Basadi, speaking of the Citizenship Act victory in *Mmegi* (May 30-June 5, 1997), said, "Since then, there has been no looking back," a sentiment echoed, but from the opposite "side," by the government's attorney in the case, who argued that "...if gender discrimination were outlawed in customary law, very little of customary law would be left at all" — it would be thrown out, he said, along with some 30 named statutes, and "large parts of the Common Law..." (Dow 1995:20, 22). To which one can easily hear female cheers of "Yes!"

Other discriminatory legislation has been changed without additional court cases, including the Employment Act, the Mines and Quarries Act, and the Deeds Registry Act. After much criticism of the requirement that girls who fall pregnant must leave school and not return until the following year, in a different school — the major cause of girls dropping out of secondary school — the policy has been changed to allow them to return to the same school and to sit for their exams if in their senior year. The Law Reform Committee has been charged with evaluating all legislation for gender bias. Emang Basadi opened an office with staff and issued a Women's Manifesto urging the government to approve the draft National Policy on Women and elevate the Women's Affairs Unit to a Department, which it did (Emang Basadi 1995).

Botswana has now signed the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Emang Basadi, WLSA, and other women's groups have launched a campaign to get the Southern African Development Community countries (now including South Africa) to change gender discriminatory laws. Gender has been adopted as an area of development within SADC; the Gender Unit is located in Botswana and Emang Basadi activists have been appointed to its staff. In 1997 the UNDP announced a $1.8 million Gender Pro-

gram for Botswana, which emphasizes training and support for advocacy. SADC has adopted a target of 30 percent women in each member parliament by 2005 (Molokomme 1997).

In 1994 a Human Rights Center, Ditshwanelo, was created in Gaborone by NGOs. One of Ditshwanelo's concerns is domestic violence, and in mid-1995 they did a study on abuse of domestic workers and then launched a project to organize them. A police Task Force to investigate domestic violence has been created in Gaborone, after initial police protests that it would be too expensive. The first rape crisis group, Women Against Rape (WAR), had been formed in 1993, but by 1995 rape cases were beginning to be taken more seriously, at least in public discourse, and a law was passed requiring rape cases to be heard in camera. However, according to Emang Basadi, which did its own investigation and report, rape cases have been increasing and only a minority of cases are prosecuted.

In 1993 sixteen women's organizations formed themselves into an NGO Coalition, bringing the previously more service-oriented groups like the Botswana Council of Women into common action with Emang Basadi. Together they have expanded education efforts, which include pamphlets, conferences, workshops, radio, newspaper articles, and meetings around the country during the run-up to the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. Rural as well as urban women had heard Emang Basadi's radio program and came to hear "what is the oppression that women are talking about" and to get information on their rights, and many wanted to know how to form women's groups in their villages. Many participants urged the NGOs to continue workshops after Beijing to provide "leadership skills and assertiveness training" so that women would have the confidence to "venture into the political field" instead of "whispering their ideas to a man" to speak for them (Davies 1995).

Women Voters, Women Candidates: "Vote a Women! Suckle the Nation!"

Emang Basadi also expanded its electoral actions, with annual national conferences starting in 1996 that focussed on different aspects of gender, development, and equal rights. The 1997 sub-theme was "Issues Women Will Vote for in 1999," six critical areas based on the Beijing Program of Action.[10] Participants wore tee-shirts proclaiming, "Democracy without a woman in power belongs to the past," and warning, "Dear President, Members of Parliament, Councillors and All Candidates: In 1999 we will vote for those who advocate for women's rights. Are you one of them?" (*Mmegi* March 14-20, 1997). When Miss Botswana, Mpule Kwelagobe (a champion runner whose reported ambition is to be a pediatric neuro-surgeon and work against child abuse and AIDS), won the Miss Universe contest in 1999, Emang Basadi incorporated her victory into their campaign to promote women's political aspirations, taking out an advertisement in the national press:

> To all young Botswana women we say: the sky is the limit, Mpule has set the pace. Mpule has proved that women can take Botswana to greater heights. *Cast your vote for a woman in the coming general elections* (*Daily Mail & Guardian*, July 8, 1999; emphasis added).

The political struggle to elect women to office and questions about the relationship of women's rights groups to political parties continue to be extremely difficult and contradictory. As we have seen, the Botswana National Front significantly changed the game in the 1994 elections by committing to 30 percent female representation in their parliamentary delegation, although the significance of that commitment was much more in raising the issue of female representation than in carrying it out. The female representation was doubled from two to four (4.5 percent to 9 percent), but with no BNF woman MP, two regularly elected BDP women and two Specially Elected ones.

The tensions between women's rights groups and political parties had surfaced bluntly in May, when some women's groups joined with some women leaders from the BDP to organize the Botswana Caucus for Women Parliamentarians and Councillors. A public meeting to launch the caucus was prefaced by a march, complete with signs reading, "Basadi! United We Stand, Divided We Fall!" and "Vote A Woman! Suckle the Nation!"[11] Three women from the BDP showed up, but the BNF boycotted the meeting and instructed its women members not to attend, on the grounds that the caucus was open only to parliamentarians and councillors, and, perhaps more to the point, that the executive committee was made up of five BDP members with five seats left for everyone else.

Such attempts at cross-party collaboration among women office-holders failed, but the movement's overall strategy of pushing all parties to include women's issues and women candidates succeeded dramatically in the 1999 elections, proclaimed the Year of the Woman by the press (Mogapi 1999). However, these gains were made through the re-elected ruling party, the Botswana Democratic Party, not through the Botswana National Front, which had seemingly demonstrated the vote-getting potential of a women's plank (although not of its women candidates) in the 1994 elections. A combination of active cooptation of women's issues by the BDP and splintering into factions by the BNF led to women increasing their representation in Parliament from four to eight (18 percent of the total), all BDP, at the same time that the opposition seats were reduced from thirteen to seven. Re-elected President Festus Mogae appointed ten women to top positions in government and the public service, including the Ministers of Local Government and Health, Assistant Ministers of Local Government and of the Office of the President, and head of the National Bank.

The differential in resources between the BDP and the opposition parties, including access to the state media and to *dikgotla*, whose *diKgosi* are primarily

BDP supporters, impacts particularly on women candidates: the BDP can actively recruit women candidates by promising to place them in safe seats and to contribute resources to their campaigns; the opposition cannot do so, and the smaller number of women candidates fielded by the opposition (four by the two splinter parties of the BNF) and their defeat reflects this disadvantage. Retaining the women's vote seems to be a continuing concern of all parties, but what impact on policy, leadership, and social practice the BDP's proclaimed "pro-woman position" will have remains to be seen.

Keboitse Machangana, executive director of Emang Basadi, attributed the changes — and the 100 percent increase in women MPs — to Emang Basadi's Political Education Project, but acknowledged that much more remains to be done to increase women's political mobilization and reach the "internationally set minimum of 30% that now is our minimum target" (*Botswana Gazette*, October 27, 1999). Women's rights advocates of course continue to face significant opposition at all levels of society and government. The gaining of equal legal rights has brought into visibility the wide-spread system of male domination expressed in laws, customs and discourse, but the transformation of relations of domination has just begun, particularly in personal relations. Some victories are ironically sweet: Unity Dow, the lawyer whose challenge to the Citizenship Law catalyzed so much, now sits as a High Court Judge. Some struggles are bitterly hard: gender discourse has expanded to include domestic violence, rape, and sexuality, but men's power over women in personal relations is very resistant to change. Botswana has the highest rate of HIV infection in the world, and women's rate is higher than men's. Prevention strategies that rely on education about contagion will fail as long as male dominance leaves most women unable to protect themselves against infection because they lack the right or the power to refuse unsafe sex.

Women's Rights and Democratic Openness

What does this successful challenge tell us about Botswana's political system? First, it points to some aspects of the system commonly criticized — the bureaucratic and paternalistic modes of policy formation, the use of the *kgotla* for mobilizing loyalty for the government, and the common tactic of the ruling BDP simply to stonewall when confronted with a requirement, in this case, a court ruling, to make a change it does not want to make.

The use of *dikgotla* by government is claimed by its political proponents and accepted by some scholars as a form of democratic communication that can reach people throughout the country, and the *kgotla* is also sometimes claimed as a successful adaptation of "indigenous African democracy" to the modern political world (See Holm and Molutsi 1989 for contrasting views). It would be foolish to claim that the *kgotla* never allows ordinary citizens to express their opinions on

things they care about or that the government never listens and responds. But the voices likely to be heard in the *kgotla* reflect its structure and history as a hierarchical patrilineal institution. Although since independence women have had the legal right to attend and speak in *kgotla*, historically they did not have these rights, and continuing traditional practice in rural areas means that few women speak directly instead of "whispering their ideas to a man" to speak for them. *Kgotla* discussions are led and dominated by men from the dominant local Tswana group, which can be expected to have a chilling effect on women (and on "minority" men) who might wish to speak in opposition to the views being expressed.

By contrast, when Emang Basadi and other women's groups, in the run-up and follow-up to the Beijing Women's Conference, held meetings for women in rural areas, women often expressed interest in women's rights, curiosity about Emang Basadi, and desires for help in learning how to speak-up in *kgotla* instead of asking men to speak for them. Of course, attendance at such meetings was self-selective. But without claiming that they represent the "true" views of all women in the rural areas, they make clear that who speaks and what they say is always contextual, and that it is biased to privilege or to cast as a desirable model of "indigenous African democracy" the particular form of "local democracy" that most embodies traditional male domination. Such privileging by the government can be seen as representing an alliance between national male elites and local male elites — a perfectly understandable political ploy, but not a relationship that scholars should mistake for a model of "local democracy."

When women's groups responded to the BDP's resistance to change and its continued claims that only "a few women" objected to the Citizenship Law with a Constitutional challenge, and won a court ruling in their favor, the BDP continued to stonewall on changing the legislation, and the bureaucracy resisted changing its rules to accord with the court ruling until pressured by direct demonstrations. As we have seen, the law was changed only after the 1994 elections, when the election of 13 members of Parliament from the BNF, with its commitment to women's rights and representation, demonstrated the potential electoral power of urban women.

Yet despite these forms of governmental resistance and attempts to delegitimate the women's movement as consisting of only a "few women," the growth and success of the women's rights campaigns indicate many ways in which Botswana has a genuinely democratic system. No one questions the stability of Botswana's liberal democracy. But critics have questioned how substantive it is. Many governments in many times and places have claimed that they respect the rule of law, and have honest multiparty elections, an independent judiciary, a free press, citizen rights to free speech and political organization, a military that respects the legitimacy of the civilian government, checks on government corruption, and a Constitution that guarantees all these things, and those claims have not been worth the proverbial paper they were written on. The women's rights campaign's mobiliza-

tion and successes clearly demonstrate that there is substance to all these claims in Botswana: all of them were necessary for the replacement of the Citizenship Act of 1982-84 and the continued successes of the movement.

The women's rights movement mobilized outside any government control; it has been strongly supported by the opposition press and has used radio to reach women in many areas; it had the security of knowing it was dealing with a securely civilian government dependent on maintaining electoral majorities; whatever happens in the *kgotla*, women's autonomy in the electoral process was protected; the judiciary ruled in opposition to the government, with impunity, and the Constitution was shown to have teeth. The BDP dragged its feet on implementing the court decision, but it did not publicly question its legitimacy or criticize the ruling that henceforth the Constitution was to be understood as forbidding gender discrimination.[12] Finally, the electoral success of the BNF in 1994, with its commitment to women's rights, shows a genuine contestation in multiparty competition that the continued BDP dominance of Parliament may conceal. The BNF's 13 out of 40 seats gave it the opportunity to be a genuine opposition within Parliament, and it took that opportunity. Of course, it remains to be seen whether the opposition — now again fragmented — will ever be able actually to win control of the government, and whether a peaceful transfer of power will take place.

But having another party or parties with enough seats to form an active "loyal opposition" has since 1994 created a different political dynamic in Botswana, as well as sending a warning to the BDP that it should be more responsive to women's rights. This greater substantive democracy opened the way for the revision of the Citizenship Law and the overturning of other discriminatory laws. Throughout the campaigns for women's rights, women in groups and as individuals have made fruitful use of the openness of Botswana's political system to push gender issues into political discourse and to bring about notable changes in the public discourse on gender.

Women's Rights and Class Formation

The openness of Botswana's political system made women's rights successes possible. But openness in itself doesn't automatically bring organized groups into being. What has made women's mobilization, successes, consolidation of gains and the dynamic generation of newer goals possible is the formation over the century of educated, urbanized sectors of women, working class and professional, largely in control of their own cash incomes and their own political choices — in other words, gendered capitalist class formation.

As capitalism rips apart old relations of production and reproduction in its search for wage labor, it also rips apart old kinship relations and old gender

relations. In these critical periods of social and economic disruption and change, gender relations are also undergoing forced transformations — and space is opened up for women to challenge both old and emerging relations of male domination before the new ones can solidify. Such a space, a liberatory moment in capitalist social transformation, has been opened up in Botswana, and women's groups have seized it with alacrity.[13] The particular history of changes in relations of production, from pre-colonial times to the present, has structured "women" in Botswana into particularly contradictory but therefore also potentially liberatory situations. Women in different class and demographic locations are recreating themselves with new identities and new political consciousness.

This is not an argument that capitalism liberates women. It is an argument that capitalism, in destroying old modes of production in which women's physical and social survival depended on their maintaining subordinate roles in kinship relations of production, and replacing those modes with the individual wage, creates the potential conditions for the emergence of struggles by women for liberation from male domination. But it is a very contingent relation. For such struggles actually to emerge, much less to succeed, seems to require women's access to economic independence and the social and political conditions for some sectors of women to create themselves as "working and professional women" — that is, to create themselves as a potential political constituency for women's interests.

The location of women in Botswana's contemporary urban economy reflects the sexual division of labor that existed within Northern Tswana agriculture and cattle herding at the time of British colonial contact, the incorporation of Bechuanaland into South African capital accumulation as a (primarily male) labor reserve, internal patterns of accumulation and privatization of land, and current disjunctions in Botswana's economy produced by the end of significant demand for migrant labor. The dry climate of Botswana means that girls have been needed less for farming. The significance of cattle-herding has meant that boys were needed as herders; and with the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa, young men were recruited as migrant laborers. The result was that girls attended school as often or more often than boys; with the expansion of education after independence, their attendance and their literacy and education levels increased, and in the 1980s, as wage employment expanded significantly, they moved into jobs usually filled by men in much of Africa. A small, but significant, proportion of these women gained university or professional training. The gendered construction of Botswana's working class over time, coupled with the leadership provided by petit bourgeois professional women, has led to the construction of a particular form of female class identity. We share Scott's view that class consciousness is not inherent in certain relations of production, but results from choices made in particular circumstances, so that, "Identity becomes not a reflection of some

essential reality but a matter of political allegiance" (Scott 1988:88) — in the case of Botswana, a form of "women workers'equal rights" politics.[14]

This argument about the significance of gendered class formation for women's rights campaigns is part of an overall argument that political systems cannot be understood without connecting political processes to relations of production. It is not an argument that capitalism creates democracy, as it demonstrably has not done so in numerous countries throughout the world. It is also not an argument that democracy necessarily works best in a capitalist system. It is at once both a narrower and a broader argument. It is narrower in arguing that in one place, Botswana, certain changes wrought by capitalism in a society with a certain gender division of labor have created the conditions for the formation of female working and professional classes, who have been able to constitute themselves as a political constituency with political leadership within the country's particular modern political economy. It is intended to be a broad argument that women are not likely to be able to mobilize effectively, win victories and protect their gains unless they are liberated from dependence on kinship-based relations of production. In theory, at least, a state, whether liberal democratic or state socialist or anything else, could choose to transform relations of production in ways designed to create economic autonomy for women. But few have even tried, and changes in laws to give women equal rights even by well-intentioned governments in the flush of independence may produce more backlash than forward motion unless accompanied by serious restructuring of relations of production: witness Zimbabwe (Seidman 1984) or China (Stacey 1983). It is also intended to be a broad argument that even with changes in relations of production that create greater female economic autonomy, little change may take place in non-economic gender relations unless the political system is sufficiently democratic and open for women to mobilize independently of government and party and set their own agendas: witness the Soviet Union.[15]

Women's Rights and Possibilities for Popular Democracy

From the political economy of democratization perspective, a key question is: what role could the Botswana women's movement play in a coalition of popular forces trying to challenge, limit and restrain the power of national and international dominant class forces, that is, of capital?

The Botswana opponents of the women's movement have tried to trivialize it as only a movement of a few rich women, but in addition to the inaccuracy of "a few," the leaders of Emang Basadi and other women's groups are not female equivalents of the "male elites" of neoliberal democratization theory. In contrast to the dominant class as embodied in the male elites, whose wealth is derived from cattle and diamond interests and often reflects the historical transformation of traditional royal wealth and power into modern private ownership of resources and

political power, the women's groups leaders are more accurately petty bourgeois — university lecturers, lawyers, journalists, teachers, civil servants and other professionals, and a few self-employed businesswomen.

These women are clearly privileged relative to the majority of Botswana women, urban as well as rural; but very few have ties to the dominant property-owning class, despite the success of some of them in gaining political or judicial office. Whose interests they will "in the end" pursue is precisely the question, not a foregone conclusion. Although many are highly educated, well-paid women, it is hardly a novel historical development to find "left" leaders among the petty bourgeois intelligentsia. The crucial point is not the class they belong to but the class(es) they ultimately identify with and work to benefit. Botswana women's groups have from their beginnings had stated goals that focus on the needs of poorer women, women workers and women in rural areas; there are no goals that address the particular interests of women professionals in the Women's Manifesto of Emang Basadi or the plan put forth by women in SADC.

No other organized group in Botswana from outside the ruling elites has been as successful, particularly in such a short time, as the women's rights movement. It has been very effective in using openings within liberal capitalist democracy to move toward long-term goals of genuine equality and social justice. But as it keeps pushing for economic as well as legal rights and equality for all women, it will eventually run into the barriers that liberal capitalist democracy maintains against working-class mobilization and militancy. Given the size, growing self-consciousness and potential political significance of the female working class, it seems that sooner rather than later the leadership of the women's movement will face a clear class-alliance choice, and will likely divide.

This division will also reflect attempts by the ruling party, which does clearly represent the interests of the dominant class, to coopt women's rights issues, and, if possible, some of the leaders themselves, in order to contain and moderate women's demands so that they do not threaten the interests of capital. From this perspective, some of the movement's "victories" are themselves paradoxical. Appointing Unity Dow to the High Court is a significant step for women, but it also has the effect of removing her from politics and from Gaborone. Appointing Emang Basadi activists to the SADC Gender Unit brings a strong feminist perspective to bear on regional issues, but it also reduces these activists' focus on Botswana.

These contradictions are a *given* of operating within liberal capitalist democratic politics; the question is how well women's rights activists continue to maneuver within them. Some women's rights leaders can be expected to ally with the dominant class and define "women's equality" as legal equality, that is, as "legal equality within already existing classes,"[16] and "women's representation" in terms of the number of female bodies in government, not in terms of the pro-woman or pro-woman worker politics of those holding office. But others will come to argue

(as some in the opposition parties already do) that it is capitalist development itself that is generating impoverishment and exploiting class and gender inequality to maximize profits. Those leaders could side with urban and rural women workers and push for longer-term goals of economic redistribution and social justice, in the process acknowledging class divisions among women and redefining the collectivity "women" in class-conscious terms.

Even the experience of pursuing legal rights, often seen as the pursuit of individual legal rights for women equal to those possessed by individual men, has within it a collective moment that could form the basis of a counter-individualist discourse. Equal gender rights claims are expressed as the demand for individual equal rights, but on behalf of the collectivity "women." Such claims, whether advanced in courts on the basis of the Constitution, or to employers, or within public discourse, are advanced on behalf of "women" as a group. In the Dow case one of the government's arguments was that the Botswana Constitution is not supposed to recognize "group rights," reflecting the concern of the ruling party that a precedent would be set that could then be used by the so-called "minority tribes," as is in fact currently being done by the Wayeyi (Nyati-Ramahobo 1999).

But the politically significant point is much more than a legal one: women working together for collective rights and interests bring the discourse and practice of collective political struggle forcefully into Botswana's political life, challenging both dominant traditional political values and the dominant liberal capitalist democratic discourse in which the players are cast as the powerful, whether the government, the ruling party, corporations, or traditional leaders, who confront the individual citizen, voter, employee or subject. The process of campaigning for women's equal rights and women's representation brings women together in collective practice and creates the space in which new ideas, new goals, and new understandings of the barriers to genuine equality can be constructed. It also creates organizational networks and gives women a sense of their potential power when organized, thus making it more difficult for conservative forces to reverse gains.

But is it realistic to see a new, more class-conscious and working-class-based women's movement in Botswana being able to join with trade unions and civic groups to bring about significant changes in the division of power and wealth? One problem is the question of organizational leadership for such a coalition. After the 1994 elections, it seemed as though the BNF might be poised to take such a role, and to include women's rights militants within its leadership. The BNF added a "women's lobby," and at the party congress in July 1997, a woman's rights advocate, Motsei Madisa from the University of Botswana, was elected Deputy Secretary General over male opponents, and three other women were elected to hold "shadow portfolios."

However, in April 1998, the BNF dissolved into vitriolic factions: one faction split away as the Botswana Congress Party, led by the BNF vice president, Michael

Dingake, and taking Deputy Secretary General Modisa, 11 of the 13 BNF MPs and more than 800 party activists with him (*Mmegi*, January 10-16, 1997). Despite attempts to convince BNF voters in 1999 that the BCP represented the most democratic elements of the BNF, all but one of the 11 BNF MPs who split and formed the Botswana Congress Party were defeated, restoring the BNF as the official opposition, but in a much weakened and demoralized form. The "old" BNF did indicate its support of women's rights by nominating three women for the Specially Elected seats, including Keboitse Machangana, the director of Emang Basadi, and another women's rights activist (since these seats are filled along party lines, there was no chance these women would be elected). There thus appears to be some potential in either the BNF or the BCP for creating a left party that includes women's issues and women leaders — a greater potential in fact than their apparent ability to form a united opposition. Unless the opposition overcomes its factionalism, it will be poorly placed to offer leadership to such popular forces as may exist or emerge.

There are also serious problems with the current trade unions. For any coalition of popular forces to emerge, unions must assert greater militancy, aggressively move to organize workers outside basic industry (particularly women workers), and develop the capacity and the will to challenge the laws that restrict them. As discontent over low wages, unemployment, and government restrictions increases among workers, there is at least a potential for the development of a more militant labor movement.

The prospects for developing a more popular form of democracy in Botswana are long-range and problematic, but they are genuine prospects, based in the continuing dynamics of capitalist development and its reflections in liberal democratic politics. The 1999 elections seem to reflect those continuing dynamics in the gains made by women, even though the opposition faced demoralizing losses. But the losses of the opposition, and particularly of the newly-formed Botswana Congress Party, in the 1999 elections do not seem to represent a structural political shift back to the Botswana Democratic Party. Rather, they seem to be most explainable as the result of voters' loyalties to the name and tradition of the Botswana National Front, coupled with the well-known Setswana disapproval of open conflict, particularly the kind of physical violence that characterized the BNF/BCP split. The gains for women reflect the greater seriousness with which all parties took women's issues and women candidates, and the fact that it was BDP women who were elected reflects the greater ability of the incumbent and wealthier party to get any of its candidates elected. The BDP gained some legitimacy and, probably, some support, at least from urban women voters, by its strong statements in favor of women's issues and by President Mogae's appointment of women to high positions. But questions remain about how much difference the presence of BDP women in government will make in the lives of the majority of urban and rural women, and whether they

can hold the loyalty of women voters and the support of Emang Basadi for "all" women candidates in future elections.

The long-run effects of continued urbanization, of a growing proportion of the population becoming dependent on cash incomes, and of both growing employment and unemployment as job growth lags behind labor force growth should create fertile ground for increasing trade union organizing and potential militancy, and for increasing numbers of urban voters — women and men — who act in terms of their working-class interests rather than in terms of their ties to rural villages. In the long run, the younger generation of opposition political activists who sparked the BNF/BCP split in the face of internal BNF authoritarianism will have their day. These developments, put together with increasing growth in the women's rights movement and the generation of new, perhaps more working-class based demands as old ones are met, could lead to significant future challenges to BDP domination and to the limitations that formal liberal democracy has so far placed on politics in Botswana. Whatever happens, the women's rights movement will be a significant part of it.

The restraints imposed on African societies by the power of global capitalism, whether through the IMF and the World Bank or by particular foreign investors and governments, mean that creating real political and economic democracy is a very long-term project. But possibilities for keeping a progressive agenda alive, as John Saul has argued for South Africa, depend on pressure from below by popular forces. Women's groups that put the needs of working class and poor women at the top of their agendas can form a critical part of such forces. As scholars, we must give these women the prominence of place they deserve in our narratives of African democratization.

Conclusion: Taking Women Seriously

The mobilization and success of the women's rights movement in Botswana shows that democracy in Botswana is far from an empty formal claim. The women's movement has depended for its success on the substantive reality of a working liberal democratic system — a system of respect for the law and the Constitution, an independent judiciary, a free press, rights to free speech and political organization, checks on corruption, and the clear legitimacy of a civilian government that depends for its continued power on free and fair elections. The Botswana case makes clear how important it is for a women's movement to be autonomous, independent of political parties, and therefore able to generate its own agenda and priorities. The political base for the women's movement — a fully proletarianized sector of female workers and a pool of leadership and resources from a petit bourgeois female professional sector — reveals the paradox of capitalist development as it plays out in Botswana, producing class polarization

and disproportionate female poverty at the same time that it produces the female class base for a movement against inequality.

Claims about democracy are being made all over Africa today: examining whether women's movements exist and how successful they are can go a long way in evaluating those claims. All of the factors in this analysis of the women's movement in Botswana — economic as well as political — can be used to make such evaluations. Claims that state-led social change is improving the status of women are also being made, as in Uganda, and the Botswana case can be used as a comparison to evaluate those claims. Women make up more than half the voting population in most African countries and women's movements exist across the continent. Many of those movements are part of the opposition to authoritarian governments; others are trying to gain access to "democratic" governments. Both women's rights movements and forces supporting popular democracy face great obstacles throughout Africa. If internal opposition were not enough, the restraints imposed on African societies by the power of global capitalism, whether through the IMF and the World Bank or by particular foreign investors and governments, mean that creating real political and economic democracy is a very long-term project. But possibilities for keeping a progressive agenda alive, as John Saul has argued for South Africa, depend on pressure from below by popular forces, and women's groups must be taken seriously as a potential part of such forces. They must also be taken seriously on their own terms, as movements for women's equal rights, even if such broader popular coalitions do not develop in their countries. As scholars concerned with possibilities for the growth of democracy, we must expand our definitions of "democracy" to mean systems that include women equally with men, and give the women who are fighting for that equality the prominence of place they deserve in our narratives of African democratization.

NOTES

I lived in Botswana for two years, January 1987 through January 1989, during which I engaged in participant-observation at organizational meetings and conferences of Emang Basadi and at other conferences, and engaged in informal conversations and interviews with activists. I revisited Gaborone in 1995. I am indebted to Judy and Gay Seidman, without whom none of this work would have been possible. Athaliah Molokomme and Leloba Molema generously helped me understand Emang Basadi and organizing for women's rights in Botswana. I would like to thank the Institute for African Development at Cornell University, David Lewis, Director, and Joan Mulando and Jackie Birch for their support.

1 The phrase is from Saul (1997b). He contrasts it to the "political science of democratization," the defense of neoliberalism and elitist-run "democracy" characteristic of American political science advocates of "polyarchy," which seems to be the 1990s version of what 30 years ago some of the same people called "pluralism." In this view "democracy" only works if political elites are pretty much left alone to run things, class politics never, never arises, and extensive

guarantees of freedom of movement for "privileged economic interests" (Diamond 1993:105, as quoted in Saul, 1997a).

2 For explicitly Marxist versions of the counter-narrative, see Saul (1997a, 1997b) and citations therein. The grass-roots strain in the counter-narrative can be found in the special issue on democratization of the *African Studies Review* (Newberry 1994a), particularly in Newbury (1994b; Tripp 1994; and Robinson 1994). The neoliberal/male elites narrative is exemplified in Diamond et al. (1988). Women get one reference in the index, referring to two women's groups in Nigeria within a long list of voluntary associations. Women are not mentioned in the article included on Botswana, although some male non-elite social categories are noted.

3 On the base "-tswana" are built Bo/tswana, the nation; Ba/tswana, the people; Mo/tswana, an individual of the Batswana or a citizen of Botswana; Se/tswana, the language or culture; and a long list of government programs, parastatals and private corporations, the largest of which is the gold-mining parastatal, "Debswana," from "DeBeers" and "(t)swana." Other Setswana used below: *mosadi*, a woman; *basadi*, women; *kgotla*, a traditional Tswana community meeting place, from ward to polity level, open-air, sometimes roofed, in which adult men (and after independence adult women) meet to discuss community problems; leadership and decision-making, on policy and on disputes, are exercised by the *Kgosi* at the polity level, and by lesser headmen at lower levels; plurals: *dikgotla* and *diKgosi*.

4 Mamdani (1996) is the provocative and useful source of this distinction. He suggests in an aside that "women" as a class might be considered "subjects" rather than "citizens" in Africa, but doesn't pursue that idea, although he seriously uses gender as a category of analysis in examining particular movements, laws, policies, and so forth, and uses the exclusion of women from political rights as a negative criterion in evaluating political systems.

5 Statistics for Botswana, here and below, are drawn from these sources. Botswana's wealthiest 10 percent receive roughly 40 percent of income; the bottom 40 percent roughly 10 percent, *about the same proportions as in the United States.* Botswana is classified as a "middle income country" by the World Bank, with a GNP per capita approaching U.S.$6000 per year.

6 For arguments about "popular" vs. liberal democracy, focussed on South Africa, but including women's groups as part of a potential political base for change, see Saul (1997a).

7 Implicit in this analysis is the argument that Western feminist equal rights discourse is appropriate for analyzing the transformation of gender relations in Botswana. It is the discourse many women in Botswana themselves use, and it has not been imposed on them by outside feminist agitators. In Africa, as in China, correct ideas do not fall from the sky. They are constructed in relation to the experience of daily life. Feminist ideas find fertile ground when they help women make sense of their own daily experiences, and to more and more women in Botswana, these ideas do make sense, as they do elsewhere where changes are being wrought in relations of production and reproduction by globalizing capitalism. The particular issues and images used by Botswana women activists emerge out of their particular context, a rapidly urbanizing society focussed on "development," in which people expect to rely on their children for support in old age. It is also a society in which "feminism" was a fighting word in the 1980s and only started to emerge into activists' discourse in the late 1990s. I use "women's rights" or "equal rights," following the strategic usage of Botswana activists. Some of these same activists joined with others from Southern Africa in 1995 to edit the *Southern Africa Feminist Review* to promote the growth and sharing of "feminist discourses" in the region and to network with others "working for the cause of women's liberation and the liberation of the oppressed citizens of this continent" (SAFERE Editorial Board 1997). See Seidman (1993, 1999) on shifts in ANC strategy and discourse from 1970 through the late 1990s.

8 Dow lists Lesotho, Swaziland and Zambia in Southern Africa, as well as Uganda, Mauritius, and Gambia. Similar laws in Zimbabwe are criticized in Women Voters Association of Zimbabwe (1995:145).

9 In April 1999 the Zimbabwe Supreme Court ruled unanimously that “the nature of African society” dictates that women are not equal to men, and that “women should never be considered adults within the family, but only as a junior male, or teenager,” overturning the 1982 Legal Age of Majority Act, which had accorded majority status to women (and men) at the age of 18, and had provided women with a range of legal rights not recognized in customary law: to marry without parental consent or payment of bridewealth, inherit property, own a passport or a business, open a bank account, enter into legal contracts, and vote. Only the right to vote was retained. Zimbabwe had previously signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). But the Court justified its ruling on the grounds that “the majority of Africans in Zimbabwe still live in rural areas and still conduct their lives in terms of customary law,” rejecting any argument that international conventions like CEDAW have precedence over customary law. Compare this to the Botswana ruling. Zimbabwe women’s groups, shocked by the decision, took to the streets to protest, and were threatened with contempt of court (*Daily Mail & Guardian*, May 7, 1999; June 10, 1999). See Seidman (1984), for historical context.

10 Poverty alleviation and economic empowerment; education and training; health and population; decision-making and power-sharing; violence against women and women’s human rights; and the girl child.

11 Motherhood as a model of female nurturant strength is a recurrent part of Botswana women’s political discourse, and women or men do not usually see actual motherhood as a barrier to women’s standing for office. Male political discourse itself has historically included nurturing images in praise poems for *diKgosi* — praising a *Kgosi* as the milk-giver or the giver of porridge and meat, or urging him to “carry the nation on your back in a calf-skin sling,” as babies are carried by mothers and older siblings (Schapera 1965:116-18, 162). Having children is a mark of adulthood, and since women in Botswana are expected to contribute significantly to their children’s support, wage labor and remunerative office-holding are not seen as in conflict with maternal responsibilities. A candidate without children would be more suspect. When women candidates have been verbally attacked while speaking, they are not challenged with: “Who is taking care of your children?” — everyone knows that a kinswoman or a maid is doing so. Women are asked, rather, “Where is your husband? Why don’t you go home and cook for your husband?” — an expression of social tension toward women who are apparently not under the authority of their husbands.

12 Again, the stark contrast with Zimbabwe appears. Press reports from the *New York Times* to the various African internet news services have described President Mugabe’s interference with the Zimbabwean judiciary when he disagrees with it, including his marching into court and dismissing the whole proceeding.

13 Capitalism’s destructive potential has operated differently in different parts of Africa, with the incorporation of much of Southern Africa into capitalism as a labor reserve for mines most clearly showing the pattern analyzed here. Where colonial capitalism imposed plantation agriculture or cash-crop cultivation, engaging both male and female labor under male control, such liberatory moments do not seem to have been created, and instead capitalism reinforced kinship-based production relations and male domination. Similar effects seem to have happened, and continue to happen, in areas in which market coercion and development agencies rather than colonial state coercion push/draw men into cash-cropping, imposing on women the dual burden

of working on (but not controlling profits from) their husbands' cash crops and growing food to feed their families. Specific historical analyses of other parts of Africa would be necessary to see how the contradictions within capitalist social and economic transformation play out for women there.

14 For a description and retheorization of class as modified by gender, including a "female peasantariat" with different political consciousness from the male "peasantariat," see Van Allen (2000); a fuller description and retheorization is in progress.

15 Much has been written about the tremendous gains women made in the Soviet Union and other countries using the soviet model — access to education, jobs, promotion on merit, health care, birth control, child-care, child support for single mothers — most of which have now been destroyed by capitalism. Much has also been written about party control of the definition of women's issues and its prohibitions against women organizing to generate their own demands, resulting in almost total lack of change in male attitudes toward women and toward the traditional sexual division of labor, and only limited gains in women's political office-holding. See, for example, Molyneux (1981); Gaylen (1996); Mamonova (1984).

16 As sectors of women's movements in Western capitalist societies have done. The National Organization for Women, which socialist feminists used to deride as "liberal feminist," has transformed itself, with some former leaders splitting off, into an organization focussed on the interests of working class, minority and poor women. NOW was one of the few national organizations that actively lobbied and picketed against the infamous welfare repeal legislation pushed by President Clinton before the 1996 election, legislation that destroyed entitlements for poor women and children that had been in place for more than 50 years. Labor unions were noteworthy by their absence, as were most organizations on the Left.

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Transition from Apartheid[1]

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ABSTRACT

The end of apartheid in South Africa has often been considered a miracle as well as a beacon of hope for the rest of the continent. This article takes a more sober view. Despite the massive changes toward a democratic and open society, black South Africans have not won social and economic justice. The poor are still black and the rich predominantly white. This limited democracy, that is, judged simply in terms of voting in democratic elections, mirrors the thesis put forward in the transition studies literature. Drawing on ideas from Antonio Gramsci and Frantz Fanon, I argue that the South African case offers an addendum to transition studies highlighting how ideology and hegemony are critical to the processes of actively creating a legitimate polity. I argue that a limited transition was far from assured. It was neither determined by domestic capital nor from such forces as the IMF and World Bank but involved strategic homegrown choices including an ideological capitulation to neoliberal policies and a marginalization of more radical projects advanced by the South African left.

> *To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is "psychological"; they "organize" human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.*
>
> Gramsci (1971:377)

Why has so little changed in the seven years since the end of apartheid? South Africa remains a country of extremes, of great riches and great poverty, where the poor are still black and the rich predominantly white. How were the dreams of freedom and social and economic equality so quickly dashed? The answers are complicated and are partly a result of processes of depoliticization resulting from an elite model of transition. By becoming calculable and instrumental, negotiation "normalizes" politics and re-inscribes the struggle against apartheid. Post apartheid South Africa has been integrated into global capitalism at the very time when the world has witnessed increasing inequalities. In South Africa, despite the growth of a sizeable black middle class, GINI curve coefficients (a measurement of income inequality) have not changed with the end of apartheid. The accusatory finger at the IMF or the West obscures important determinants in the contested terrains of homegrown South African politics.

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Insight into the production of the past has been indebted to deconstructionist theories. While deconstruction is suggestive, especially in the way it illuminates the foundation of the new regime in myth, and hiding the radical contingent processes in which it came about, I find the almost total skepticism of "reality" too strong. In the following essay, I will offer an addendum to what is called the transition to democracy literature using the ideas of Frantz Fanon and Antonio Gramsci. From the Italian revolutionary Gramsci (1971:275-76), I take the idea of an *interregnum*, which can be viewed as a moment of radical openness and possibility as well as repression and cynicism, and I will apply it to the negotiation period in South Africa. Gramsci's idea of hegemony also helps to provide a corrective to overstressing the rewriting of the past simply as a text deconstructed from context. Hegemony can be conceived of as processes of political, economic, and social consensus involving interplay of force and consent and implying a struggle or contestation in a number of different spheres of society at the same time. Hegemony is by definition contested and never absolute, shifting and pragmatic and never principled.

From the Algerian revolutionary, Fanon, I take the criticisms found in the essays, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of Spontaneity" and "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," included in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon remains one of the most serious and dialectical theorists of national liberation. His critique of the nationalist project and proclamation that "the single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" is strangely applicable to the African National Congress (ANC). Yet rather than simply shout "treason," I want to consider part of its logic and investigate a problematic he spoke of nearly 40 years ago, that is the "absence of ideology" (Fanon 1967b:186) in the African revolutions and the need to fill that void with a humanist project that begins from the lived experiences and needs of the people. My interest is not so much the rewritings of the past in a foundational or social myth for the sake of the "nation" but the issue of ideology in the anti-apartheid struggles itself. By ideology I do not mean it simply as a reflection of the social composition of the anti-apartheid movement but as it expresses the power of cognition to become a force of change in the world. To quote Lenin (1961) against the Leninists, "cognition not only reflects the world but creates it" (p. 212).

The "paucity" of theory in the anti-apartheid movement has been commented on by a range of critics. From quite different political positions, Jongilizwe (a founder of Black Consciousness) and Dave Lewis (a white socialist and trade unionist) have spoken of the "paucity of debate in the South African liberation struggle" (Jongilizwe 1988; Davies 1986:45). Bob Fine (1992) identified the source of this problem as the subsumption of socialist ideas by the popular struggle (pp. 275-284), while Anthony Marx (1992) has demonstrated how the ANC politics moved from "nation" to "class" in the 1980s.

Through its alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC was able to dominate the ideological debate, playing one side against the other. Against the workers' movement (especially the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), which with the help of white intellectuals was developing independent positions by the early 1980s), the SACP and ANC railed against "workerism," "economism," and "reformism" and accused it of a lack of concern with the popular struggle in the townships. At the same time it called Black Consciousness (BC) middle class. By the mid-1980s the ANC became hegemonic.[2] In the early 1980s the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF) was able to attract organizations formerly allied to Black Consciousness (BC) while isolating those groups to its left in the National Forum. Internationally, the ANC remained "the sole representative of the anti-apartheid struggle" and continued to use its position to raise funds and silence critics. Bob Fine and Anthony Marx are both right, but what undergirded a turn to class (Marx) and a popularism (Fine) was the Manichean and sectarian character of the ANC's positions.

I want to reconsider the "lack of an ideology" as a problematic not of strategy but of vision. My focus is not on the alienation of intellectuals from the common people (of which both Fanon and Gramsci spoke) and which can take on an especially existential character in South Africa's racial politics nor in the formation of worker/intellectuals, but in an anti-intellectualism that pervaded the anti-apartheid movement, including its intellectuals. This is especially so for the ANC, which is now the party of government as well as its ally the SACP, but it is also true of opposition groups such as the Pan African Congress (PAC), and the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO). Rather than a culture of discussion there was what Fanon (1967a) calls a "sclerosis" (p. 66).

South African politics is complex and nuanced. Hopefully, readers will forgive me the flattening of some of these issues and sometimes ignoring the myriad tendencies outside the ANC and the tensions in the ANC between the internal and external wings, between the militaries and diplomats, and between the old timers and the youth. This is a result of space constraints. My thesis is that the decades long, multifaceted struggles in South Africa that raised many questions and contained many political tendencies, did not create a sufficient culture of political education and thereby, in Gramsci's terms, an ethical idea with enough power to challenge the dialectics of a limited transition within the context of a hegemonic ideology of neoliberalism and globalization.

The Ideological Vortex of the Transitions Literature

The lessons and relationships (both positive and negative) of the now classic "Transitions from Authoritarianism" volumes (developed in the Latin American context of the late 1970s by O'Donnell et al. 1986) on South Africa have been

debated for over a decade (cf. R. Lee and L. Schlemmer 1991 and F. van Zyl Slabbert 1992). Their transition scheme was remarkably prescient, predicting much of what has turned out to be true in the South African transition. While O'Donnell et al. (1986) concentrated on elite actors, writing the necessity of limited change into a strategy of a "successful" transition, those on the left have focused on globalization and the collapse of communism as major limiting factors. My focus on these factors is confined to how they are manifested as internal ideological features of the contested terrain of the South African transition.

Perhaps I am asking too much of a post-apartheid South Africa to develop an alternative scenario, in the face of the ideological seachange reflected in the "Washington Consensus." My point is that despite the pressures from international and especially national capital, the present structure of post-apartheid South Africa is far from inevitable. It is often forgotten that the transition literature is itself a part of an ideological terrain, which promotes neoliberal globalization and silences alternative paradigms.

In this paper, I argue that continued optimism about the benefits of that state's institutional capacity building is misplaced (see Adler and Webster 1995). This overly technical approach to social questions has obscured the processes of ideological subservience among unions and left-intellectuals, which has proceeded hand in hand with the economic liberalization and the globalization of the apartheid economy. Trade union involvement in the government, for example, has not resulted in significant economic redistribution or a fundamental challenge to the economic inequalities inherited from apartheid. The decisions and strategies about transition in South Africa are linked but not wholly determined by economic pressures. In other words, the economy is part of a terrain on which neoliberal ideas are reflected but it is not an incontestable terrain.

While taking note of the demands from labor for economic redistribution and a social-welfare system, O'Donnell and his colleagues (1986) advocated a neoliberal approach to economic policy advising that a successful transition would need to separate social and economic issues from political democracy. In fact they argued that sidelining worker and social movements was crucial to allow the old authoritarian regime to agree on an election and accept its outcome.

On the surface many of the prescriptions of orthodox transition studies can be applied to the South African situation. One key development in post-apartheid South Africa that echoes the O'Donnell et al. (1986) model is the transformation of an apparently radical opposition movement into a pro business group, advocating fiscal conservatism and free market capitalism. President Thabo Mbeki represents the foregrounding of business and technocratic interests in the ANC who champion technology as an answer to the problem of national development. In other words, Mbeki's government represents the victory of technology over movement politics; that is to say, it represents the depoliticization of politics. Perhaps the same could

be said of other post-authoritarian, social democratic type organizations, but what really differentiates the ANC from other situations can be found in the ideological/territorial domain. Where, for example, Latin American authoritarian regimes claimed a national inclusiveness, South Africa's apartheid regime was exclusive. Apartheid South Africa was a minority racist regime where the majority of the population were "temporary sojourners." Their "real" national identity, it was said, was a "tribal homeland." The transition beyond apartheid was thus both a transition from authoritarianism, as in the Latin American sense, and a "liberation" from a racially/spatially defined minority rule. It meant reconfiguring what and who constitutes the nation. Thus the transition to democracy in South Africa combines elements of an anti-colonial struggle and a struggle against authoritarian rule.

Because apartheid was the last phase of "racial capitalism" in South Africa, where the expropriation and exploitation of African labor and land was key to its development, a radical restructuring of the economy was assumed to be part and parcel of the anti-apartheid struggle. Yet by the early 1990s, the goal of deracializing "civil society" was uncoupled from fundamentally restructuring the economy. In other words, post-apartheid would create a multiracial set of beneficiaries (including some of the leaders and former leaders of the ANC, SACP and COSATU) but would not deracialize apartheid's victims (over 95 percent of South Africa's poor are black). Additionally, the legacy of "decentralized despotism" remains in the rural areas (Mamdani 1996). As Lungisle Ntsebeza (1999) points out, a tension in the post-apartheid constitution is a bill of rights enshrining democratic principles on one hand, and an acclamation of the role of unelected traditional authorities on the other: "This is irrespective of the fact that a large number of traditional authorities became 'stooges' of colonial and apartheid regimes" (p. 83).

South Africa is not a liberal democracy in the sense of one law and one set of rights for all its citizens. There is a plural legislation that applies to different citizens. As Mamdani (1996) argues, mainly urban residences are governed through civil law and mainly rural residents are subject to "customary" law. South Africa's constitution enshrines a bill of rights and universal suffrage but its unelected "traditional rulers" continue to wield power over the right to land. These issues cannot be further developed here, but they do indicate the legacy of apartheid in post-apartheid rural life. The ANC's program of land redistribution has not fundamentally challenged the power structures on the land, which along with the "Traditional Leaders" include white farmers.[3] In many cases the ANC has taken over rather than challenged symbols of apartheid rule in the rural areas thereby making problematic fundamental changes. Gender remains central too. The South African constitution promotes equal rights, but property rights in the rural areas are mainly under the control of males, a legacy of how African women were bound to the reserves through forms of "traditional" male authority. Across the rural/urban conceptual

divide, the Inkatha Zulu party, a player in the negotiation process, continues to wield significant power. Additionally, while BC changed the language of struggle (positing the unity of all "non whites" against the regime) in post-apartheid South Africa the terms African, Coloured, Indian, and Zulu continued to have political and geographic relevance.

Originally developed in 1979, the "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule" project, though conservative in prescription, was generally optimistic that a wider social democracy polity and economic redistribution could be attained in time,[4] believing that "a relatively stable mix of liberalization and democratization — what Robert Dahl (1986) has called 'polyarchy' — may have the effect of freezing existing social and economic arrangements" (p. 12). O'Donnell et al. (1986) mapped out the transition scenarios in Table 1.

In South Africa, social movements were central to making apartheid in South Africa "ungovernable" in the 1980s, and pushing the apartheid regime to negotiation. Of these social movements, the civic movement (both urban and rural), including the youth as well as the trade unions, were particularly important, the latter becoming the focal point of opposition when other organizations were banned. By the late 1980s the crisis of the apartheid state pushed business and multinational capital interests and political leaders in the regime itself, to look for a viable alternative. Because of mass pressure, the strategy of "elite pacting" (O'Donnell et al. 1986:37-47) would have to include a partial incorporation of the social movements, including the Trade Unions (as part of the "triple alliance" — ANC, COSATU, SACP), though not the "Mass Democratic Movement" (MDM, the heir to the UDF) in the negotiations. This expansion of the "pact" does not change the transition thesis. It first was hoped that the inclusion of COSATU and the SACP as well as the ANC's own principles, laid out in the Freedom Charter, would guarantee a different kind of transition where the economic basis of apartheid would be fundamentally challenged and the working class institutionalized into the frameworks of the post-apartheid polity (Adler and Webster 1995, 1999). Yet according to O'Donnell et al.'s (1986) implicit zero-sum game of transition as a "compromise among class interests," negotiation

Table 1

Adapted from O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 13

	Public Institutions and governmental process	Social institutions and economic process
Substantive benefits and entitlements	Welfare democracy	Socialist democracy
Formal rights and obligations	Political democracy (polyarchy)	Social democracy

is always a capitulation to bourgeois property rights (p. 46-47) and, thus, the institutionalization of trade unions as representatives of the working class involves the "governing of their members."

The South African case indicates how the process of enlarging the elite pact has lengthened, but has not fundamentally altered the O'Donnell et al. (1986) scenario. Moreover, this process of lengthening the transition is nothing other than a means to develop an ideological consensus on what constituted the "ends" of apartheid. The value of the consensus is important because the compromise has in fact brought little benefit to the majority of the population.

What Kind of Transition, What Kind of Democracy?

The conventional concept of "transition," as a transition to an electoral democracy or "polyarchy," is starkly separate from social questions (see Table 1). Defined in terms of participation in elections it has been a quantitative rather than qualitative change. Apartheid and post-apartheid society are not opposites but operate along a continuum. Just as the United States had a limited participatory democracy (based on property, race, and gender) in the nineteenth century, apartheid in South Africa was a democracy for whites only. From 1910 to 1961 the Union South Africa had a Westminster style parliamentary government. South Africa became a republic and withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1961, but apart from ceremonial changes (from a Governor General to a State President) the Westminster style constitutional arrangements continued. Inclusion was based on race.[5] The second republic in 1984 created an executive Presidency and a racially defined "tricameral" legislature. Legally deracialized though not de-ethnicized, participation in post-apartheid South Africa is open to all, though the actual ability to participate in elections varies across the country as noted earlier in terms of the rural areas.

O'Donnell et al. (1986) map "socialist democracy" onto their picture of democratization (see Table 1), but argue that for them, "political democracy" is a worthy goal "even at the expense of forgoing alternative paths that would seem to promise more immediate returns in terms of socialization" (p. 14). This is the South African transition in a nutshell. The phrase "even at the expense" has necessitated silencing other discourses. In other words, where the struggle against apartheid had the effect of empowering a whole lay of disenfranchised people, polyarchy has the effect of disempowering them. Depoliticized, politics becomes the domain of the professionals, while the people are "sent back to the caves" (Fanon 1968:183).

The ANC's call in the late 1980s to make South Africa ungovernable simply recorded what was already happening outside their control: spontaneous daily mass mobilizations, meetings, and discussions. In the early to mid-1980s, in the factories and in the townships, a new kind of self-organization emerged. Among the youth, the cultural liberation associated with Black Consciousness proved essential; in the

factories experiences in shop-floor democracy, which were helped by young, white new-leftists, engendered programs in education, labor history as well as cultural expressions that saw the mushrooming of worker poets and myriad forms of history recorded from below. These experiments in democracy expressed a new social consciousness and an elemental humanism in Fanon's sense. In Fanon's schematic mapping of anti-colonial activity, resistance is first determined by the colonizer. That is to say the actions of the occupier "determine the centers around which a people's will to survive becomes organized" (Fanon 1967:47). With mass action a fighting culture develops, not as a celebration of the past but as new forms of social activity, transforming subjectivity of daily "ways of life" expressed in daily meetings, decisions, discussions, and actions into a new way of life.

Issues such as education and language as well as relations between children and adults, between men and women, and even question of sexual orientation (reflected in South Africa's most liberal Constitution), which had never been an issue for any of the liberation movements, were discussed. Many hoped that such participatory democracy could become a basis of a post-apartheid society. Workers speaking for themselves, histories rediscovered, new forms of political education, new cultural productions such as worker-theater and poetry were challenges to the ANC. As Frank Meintjies and Mi Hlatshwayo (1989) argued in *Staffrider*, "worker culture" expressed the "union's anti hierarchical position thus recognizing the importance of every worker's experience." They insisted that worker's self-understanding was a gird against the ruling class "determin[ing] our thinking and actions" (p. 3-4).

The problem is that these expressions of direct democracy, however flawed and limited in their practice, were celebrated but not translated into a radical rethinking of liberation theory that mapped out paradigms of social and ethical practices for a post-apartheid society. This ideological pitfall was exploited by the ANC which was able to capture these narratives and celebrate the idea of "people's power" while remaining the self appointed future negotiators.

Spontaneity and the Organization of Thought

The South African case highlights what happens when the theorizations of spontaneity do not happen, when there is no dialectical relationship between spontaneity and organization.

Fanon (1968) criticized spontaneity not simply because it needed leadership. Though democratic forms developed in other anti-colonial movements in Africa, the political leaderships subsumed them under a central administration. Confronting this "iron law of oligarchy," Fanon argued (1968) for a vigorous decentralization and rigorous dissemination and flow of ideas between the organization and the people: A painstaking explanation and checking of policy and practice based on people's needs.

Without the swirl of ideas between spontaneity and organization the "art of politics" is transformed into "the art of war." What happens if we apply this to the South African townships in the mid-1980s?

> [I]n every [locality] a government in miniature is formed and takes over power. . . Each man or woman brings the nation to life by his or her action, and is pledged to ensure its triumph in their locality. We are dealing with a strategy of immediacy which is both radical and totalitarian (Fanon 1968:132).

One weakness of the local organizations is the belief that they are the center of the world. The "nation" is proclaimed in each locality and with it a certainty that they can pass from "subject to citizen" without a transition, in one fell swoop. Fanon (1968) argues that the "mirage" of their "muscles' own immediacy" (p. 138) takes the place of a "chain of reasoning" so that in the local area there is a process toward authoritarianism and concomitantly a narrowing of discussion. Rather than confronting problems through deepening the dialogue, tactics become strategy and theory is reduced to slogan and rhetoric. Among the township youth who were in the vanguard of the struggle, there was an unrealistic sense that the new society already existed and all that was needed was more action. Rather than challenge this exhausting and increasingly dangerous activity, the ANC spoke of ungovernability and the township Leninists proclaimed a "people's war" (Mzala 1987). At the same time the multiple bannings, arrests, and states of emergency put an enormous strain on the movement as a whole.

State repression curtailed political discussion. The struggle between state and social movements became a battle for political space where the brutality of the state was reflected back and internalized as a brutality of thought. The slogan "liberation before education" appeared not only more immediate but also more radical than "education for liberation," though it was only in the latter that the idea of what kind of education for what kind of liberation could be discussed. The Manichean analysis, which helped form so much of the first phase of revolt now proves limited. Because action based on reaction depends on the brutality of the enemy, a shift in the enemy's tactics toward negotiation necessitates a reevaluation that is in fact long overdue. This is when the ideological underdevelopment becomes crucial and is exploited by the state. Political education at first means explaining the long-term objectives of the fight as well as a new attitude toward a dialectical attitude in which education becomes part and parcel of the creation of the new social being, or the "new man" and "new woman" as Fanon (1968, 1967c) puts it.

The lack of mediation expressed an ideological limitation of the mass movement. Unable to go forward, doubt crept in. Militants looked for an analysis and an interpretation of where they had come from and where they were going, but the ANC and UDF, later renamed the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), as well as the PAC and AZAPO, were never able to provide such an analysis beyond

their own presuppositions. Rather than a reworking of theory in the new reality, the ANC's call to make the townships ungovernable was presaged on both the military option and the negotiation option. Both encouraged psychological processes of disempowerment by articulating the stuff of politics outside the people's own activities. The hope that "the MK are coming"[6] expressed another "immediacy" which blocked theoretical mediation. Consequently exhausted by endless activism, the direct democracy of the civics easily degenerated into factions and self-appointed leaderships that would brook no disagreement; producing what Fanon (1968) called a "brutality of thought" (p. 147). On the other hand, the intellectual activity that had accompanied the actions of the civics and unions was slowly diverted back into ANC strategies. Under the pressure of "unity" alternative ideas became marginal. The external leadership of the ANC had always argued that its strategic goal was to force the apartheid government to the negotiation table. The call for ungovernability was the means to open up negotiations. The mass movement simply became its cannon fodder.

Certainly the SACP played an important role during the 1980s, suppressing alternative views, yet much of the oppositional movement also remained trapped by the SACP's crude Marxism and Manichean debating style that was crippling to new intellectual currents. Even though many people were critical of the SACP/ANC's "two-stage" theory, they remained stuck in the tactics of the anti-apartheid struggle. Additionally, in the context of the late-1980s states of emergencies imposed by the government, the brutality of the regime, aided by its agents, provocateurs, and third forces, ensured that violence, as described by Fanon (1968), would turn inward, thus, nurturing brutality and making an emergent dialectic of liberation all the more difficult.

In Fanon's (1968) narrative of decolonization, spontaneity alone is likely to exhaust itself. The early euphoria dissipates as everyday resistance suffers the setback of no clear victory. Ruling-class interests are forced to the negotiating table while the nationalist organization (i.e., the ANC) attempts to control the mass movement by telling them to keep faith with negotiations on one hand and threatened them with a right wing coup on the other. The movement is quieted, called on only to support negotiations.

The ANC followed O'Donnell et al.'s (1986) scenario of limiting the mass movement to supporting them in the negotiations. Though there is a great deal of difference between being called on to make the townships ungovernable and being called on to march in favor of negotiations, both expressed the need to carry out ANC orders unquestionably:

> The party leaders behave like common sergeant majors, frequently reminding the people of the need for 'silence in the ranks.' This party that used to call itself the

> servant of . . . the people's will, as soon as the colonial power puts the country into its control, hastens to send the people back to their caves (Fanon 1968:183).

Immersed in populist rhetoric, top ANC leaders recognized the division between the ANC leaders and the movement. The point was to give up the old populist rhetoric and accept the new dispensation as Jon Maree (1997) argued in "The COSATU Participatory Democratic Tradition and South Africa's New Parliament: Are They Reconcilable." For Maree they are indeed reconcilable if it was understood that the terrain of politics is a lot more difficult than rank and file democratic demands. In other words, Maree, who had been a champion of worker rights, was now echoing a line that the SACP had earlier pushed against the workers (and the "workerists"), namely that they did not understand the complexity of transition politics and (without the party's leadership) they could not develop more than a trade-union consciousness. In this latest phase Maree represents an attack on the rich memory and culture of direct democracy developed in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Left's Ideological Capitulation

To understand the marginalization of the independent left and its project of transforming South African society it is necessary to retrace the end stages of apartheid.

It is at the point of apartheid's "opening" (which can be dated from the unbanning of the anti-apartheid organizations and the release of Mandela in February 1990) that the ideological underdevelopment of the movements became crucial as the ANC gained the ability to control the process. Between February 1988, when the democratic opposition was made illegal, and February 1990, when Mandela was released, COSATU represented the internal anti-apartheid movement. On the face of it, one would think that this would bolster the power of the unions, yet they had already been made ideologically subservient to the ANC, which was busily behind the scenes working out compromises with business. And, while at the time the class character of the movement seemed assured by pro-worker rhetoric, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe underlined the movement's ideological confusion. Stunted by the SACP's dominance in theoretical matters, the workerists had always emphasized practical action. And while militants had advocated independent trade unions, and had, for example, supported the Polish *Solidarnosc*, analyses of "really existing socialism" were left in the desk draw.

Apartheid's opening came almost the same time as the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. The collapse had a debilitating ideological effect on ANC, SACP, and their supporters who were left in an ideological vacuum. The accompanying "disillusionment," argues Dale McKinley (1997), "combined with the new

conditions of negotiation, made the movement more susceptible than ever to a strategic and ideological accordance" (p. 105).

The collapse of Communism was addressed by the SACP in three ways. The first was a defensive reaction, which had some resonance among some militants.[7] The second, developed by party leader Joe Slovo (1991), mirroring Communist Parties in Europe, was to move toward the "middle road" of social democracy and dovetail with the ANC leadership. The third, to the left of Slovo, was developed by a leading party intellectual, Jeremy Cronin (1990). This approach gestured toward a flexible "western Marxism" in place of the SACP's Leninism.

Ironically, after the collapse of Communism and the SACP's ideological reformation, the "new" SACP saw formerly critical left-intellectuals swarming to it. One of the great ironies, notes Mike Morris (1991), was the "the rapid movement into the SACP of a large grouping of leftists who were its strongest left wing critics" (p. 16). South Africa's critical Marxists, opines Nash (1999), were unable to develop their very reason for being, namely a capacity for critical reflection (p. 79-80). Coming from organizations that had formerly been at odds with it,[8] the SACP appeared to be the last place left-intellectuals could still have some influence after the end of apartheid. The centrifugal pull of the independent-left to the ANC and SACP included strident workerists and independents like Alec Erwin (now a Minister for Labour in the ANC Government) and Moses Mayekiso (of the National Union of Metal Workers), who had been instrumental in developing a "workers charter" (as a counter to the Freedom Charter), as well as key leaders of civic organizations who had previously had an independent base. Tragically this shift came at exactly the same time that the SACP was advocating a compromise with capital.[9]

While the disillusion and disbanding of a critical-left seemed to come all at once (Morris 1991), it had its roots in the ANC and SACP's ideological dominance in the unions (COSATU), and in the civics and youth organizations (UDF). Though these organizations continued to contain independent views, the independents were not able to match the organizational power of the ANC/SACP. It is the ANC/SACP's hegemonizing ability, in other words, to marginalize other discourses, that remains central in post-apartheid South Africa.

By the mid-1990s, talk of fundamentally restructuring the economy had disappeared as the ANC embraced a monetarist approach. Mandela reflected this change. He slowly moved from his declaration, on being released from prison in 1990, that it was "inconceivable" for the ANC to modify the Freedom Charter to uncoupling these principles from the negotiation talks. In the early 1990s, Mandela's message was contradictory. He reminded union delegates at a COSATU special congress in September 1993 (a speech reprinted in *African Communist* as "Will the ANC sell-out Workers"):

> How many times has the liberation movement worked together with the workers, and at the moment of victory betrayed the workers? . . . You must support the African National Congress only so far as it delivers the goods (p. 7-8).

But, on May Day 1994, Mandela made clear his economic policy in a different arena, the *Sunday Times*:

> In our economic policies . . . there is not a single reference to things like nationalization, and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology (quoted in Marais 1998:146).

The 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) represented a shift in ANC discussion of "growth through redistribution" but still expressed a compromised position with some input from left-intellectuals. Begun as a debate in COSATU, it spoke of the need for the government to nationalize strategic areas and establish new public corporations. However, the later RDP white paper dropped all discussion of redistribution and embraced the free market system, private initiative, and competition. These shifts were not in a separate realm from the ideological, as Marais (1998) has aptly put it:

> [T]he discourses of "reconstruction and development" has also been enlisted as the broad ideological frame for another hegemonic project geared at servicing the prerogatives of the more privileged sectors of society (p. 244).

This prerogative would become abundantly clear with the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR), which unlike the RDP was introduced without any discussion. However some on the left, unwilling to accept defeat, still hang onto the idea that GEAR, not the early drafts of RDP, was the aberration.[10]

GEAR heralded a new period of "fiscal conservatism" that would see "redistribution" only as a result of *never never* trickle-down policies. It was a neoliberal program which emphasized cutting state spending, reducing corporate taxes, encouraging a flexible labor market and worker wage restraint while speeding up privatization. With GEAR the ANC made the shift from social democracy to "new labour." This shift indicated that the challenges of extreme inequality and debilitating poverty, and the demands of social movements that helped bring it to power and continued to vote for it, would at best be marginal concerns.

Pessimism of the Intellect in the Interregnum

Many on the South African left had articulated the hope of socialist democracy. Even the populist Freedom Charter spoke the language of direct participation and was tied to the idea of a structural change in the ownership of land — "all who work on it" — and in the control of factories — "by the people." Yet post-apartheid

South Africa has abandoned these goals. The neoliberal economic agenda has reinforced the highly unequal society inherited from apartheid. But at the same time an oppositional political culture has not been allowed to develop. Instead, a whole layer of experienced organizers from civic organizations and trade unions have been seconded to government departments, thereby, creating a significant loss of seasoned activists and helping to sow ideological confusion among the rank and file. The militancy of the 1998 "year of fire" strike action, was too easily subsumed into a COSATU "job summit" which, despite all its rhetorical opposition, ended up endorsing GEAR. This development indicates how the institutionalization of the trade unions has weakened not strengthened the rank and file worker organizations. The culture and consciousness of shop-floor participation, once held sacrosanct by the "workerists" of FOSATU and COSATU, has begun to dissipate. While some unions have fared better than others, all have capitulated ideologically to the ANC and experienced a loss of autonomy. Subsumed under the weight of its leadership, critical voices in the unions are rarely heard (see Gentile 1999:101).

Now institutionalized (both formally and informally), the union leadership in government has too much to lose from leaving it. O'Donnell et al.'s (1986) insight that the participation of unions might result in "an increase rather than a decrease in the overall inequality" (p. 12) has become reality. The unions are regarded by many as a kind of privileged sector from which the non-unionized and unemployed find little benefit. Always a minority, the far left has become extremely marginal having been taken off guard by the speed of events.

What is largely missing in the transition debate is an analysis of the ideological capitulation necessary for a limited transition. The dominant discourse is not about addressing the social and economic legacies of apartheid but strategies of class compromise within neoliberal capitalism. Resistance is reduced to reconciliation with reality. In other words, with the transition to "bourgeois" democracy we reach the end of the dialectic, and in Francis Fukuyama's (1993) view, the "end of history."

The idea of hegemony (as far as I understand Gramsci's (1971) conception of it) does not forego a discussion of a fundamental reorganization of society but reconfigures such a discussion into the development of a "counter hegemonic" project, or perhaps better, a principled humanist one. This discussion depends on a relationship between the intellectual (understood as a social group) and the lived reality of the mass of South Africans who are reaching toward self-understanding. What Gramsci called "the philosophy of praxis," or what Fanon called the "untidy idea" of self-determination is both movement and goal, both a consciousness full of contradictions and an absolute humanism. The committed intellectual is a product of this contradictory relationship (Gramsci 1971:445; Fanon 1968:150). The necessity to think through what kind of society one is for is a necessary part of the national and international movement, and an exchange of ideas does not

happen without a conscious organization of thought, a philosophic clearing of the head, and confrontation with past failure. Put simply the transition in South Africa did not include a full discussion of future scenarios.

To problematize the "certainty" of the idea that "There Is No Alternative" (TINA) to today's neoliberal globalized capitalist economy with its laws, orders, and mind-forged manacles, we have to reassess the very "openings" created by the movements against apartheid, not only as symptoms of crisis in the "interregnum," but also as fields and processes of contestation. The possibility of redistributive reforms (the strategy of much of the South African left) is suddenly implausible. What does this say about democracy? It underlines how the democratic transition in South Africa is about power, about creating consent behind predetermined socioeconomic policies. Though hegemony is "ethical political, it must also be economic" (Gramsci 1971:261). It focuses our attention on how power works. In contrast the social and political program developed through dialogue is transparent and, "therefore," in Fanon's (1968) sense, a humanism which should constantly deconstruct the workings of power.

In Africa today we confront the economic authoritarianism of structural adjustment where the daily lives of the majority of people document its anti-humanism. South Africa is no exception. The neoliberal shift has created more unemployment as well as an ideological justification for it. It has shifted the blame for poverty from the apartheid state to the free market, and thus onto the poor themselves, individualizing the process and obscuring the living legacy of the structural victims of apartheid.

But, ideology is not simply an illusion or false consciousness; it is a lived experience. The creativity of cognition is especially fertile in periods of crisis and uncertainty, aptly characterized by Gramsci (1971) as a period when the old is dying and the new cannot be born. In this "interregnum," ideology plays an exaggerated role. The battle of ideas in culture and in politics becomes extremely important; the "organic" (or organizational) linkages between the "popular" and the "intellectual" (understood as a social group) become critical. The new reality engendered by the mass movements (its new subjectivities) demand new concepts. This new beginning while located in the activities and democratic self-expression of the social movements also seeks, by entering into the field of contradictions, to transcend them.

South Africa proves the importance of Gramsci's (1971) adage "optimism of the will and pessimism of the intellect" (p. 175n). Against apartheid there was plenty of optimism of the will, and many were willing to die for the cause, but in the analysis of the transition there has not been enough pessimism of the intellect. The technicist hopes of institutionalized class compromise are not only counter productive but obfuscating.

One aspect of hegemony is the degree to which dominant groups name reality. At one level, Thabo Mbeki can go on for years speaking the language of the struggle, creating confusion and deflecting pressures by putting people to sleep (Fanon 1968:169). At another level, the Government can continue to use co-opted trade unionists and communists as enforcers of its policies and "acting as a bulwark against any bid to mount overt, leftist challenges against government conduct and policies" (Marais 1998:264). The stretching of the rhetoric of liberation to enforce pro-business economic policies is in fact a legacy of the contested terrains of the last decade. As Jeremy Baskin (1991) warned nearly ten years ago, where the unions had been accused of being communists in the post-apartheid era "the charges will be packaged differently: there will be less talk of 'communist' and more of sabotaging national reconstruction" (p. 465). Yet at another level, Mbeki's continual reference to "the struggle" (*Business Day* 1997), even if it is for "silence in the ranks" (Fanon 1968:183), betrays a deeper insecurity. How long will the masses of black people in South Africa wait for fundamental improvements in their lives?

The process of hegemony is one of silencing or marginalizing not only other ideas but also other ways and other processes of thinking, especially when legacies of apartheid — the extreme inequalities and extreme poverty of much of the population — remain deeply entrenched. In the 1970s, Steve Bantu Biko (1978) had probably gone the furthest to try to develop a counter-hegemonic ideology. Understood in its cognitive, rather than organized sense, Black Consciousness (BC) was absolutely central to the new stage of struggle in the late-1970s and early-1980s. Though there has been a tendency to play down and rewrite the contribution of BC, one of its most astute critics, Neville Alexander (1993) argues that it "made it possible for the youth especially to understand how the cultural revolution was an integral and a decisive part of the struggle for the total liberation of the black people" (p. 41).[11] Biko's (1978:83) notion that "mind" played a potent role in the process of liberation has too often been dismissed as a psychological stage rather than ongoing problematic. However, it found its most exciting and sustained development in cultural productions, where part of the building up of self-confidence of the people became an expression of everyday reality and an envisioned future. BC was not able to develop after the death of Biko (see Gibson 1988). The ANC exile machine recruited BC militants as they fled the country in the late-1970s; internally the prisons provided ANC "universities" for retraining. A shell of its former self, BC degenerated while its iconography and ideology were incorporated into the ANC, which remained the "sole" representative of the struggle.

Both in and outside the ANC/SACP, radical intellectuals (astounded by the power of the revolt of the townships in the 1980s) did not sufficiently deal with their own limitations and theoretical inadequacies after the collapse of Communism.

Just as it immobilized much of the international socialist movement, the collapse of Communism paralyzed the South African left, which had for too long been dominated by the discourse of the SACP. There was no theoretical reckoning, instead, once sidelined, the left drifted closer to the SACP.

Conclusion

As the rhetoric of the "national democratic struggle" dissipates into that of an "African Renaissance," new struggles will develop. The question is whether such movements can develop their own voices and develop a "higher conception of life," as Gramsci (1971) puts it, and whether intellectuals can hear the voices. The answer is far from clear. In post-apartheid South Africa the armed criminal gangs may be the only option for the unemployed young people. These gangs could easily become politicized and operate along the lines of a "lumpenproletariat" described by Fanon (1968) either as a revolutionary or counter revolutionary force (p. 129-30). Movements will emerge, just as they continue to do around the world, articulating new needs and new goals, and the conditions in South Africa certainly cry out for them. Yet the material and ideational legacy of apartheid and its opposite will remain debilitating. For all the sacrifice and struggle, the present seems a disappointment. This realization may engender a more critical thinking and, consequently, challenge intellectuals to develop new theoretical interventions and reflections and tap into the cerebral sediment in people's experiences. The struggle over the production of the past includes the recovery of radical democratic ideas and experiments in the people's struggle for a new way of life.

Ideological hegemony of a limited transition has remained crucial to present day South Africa where resistance without a concurrent battle of ideas moves along familiar lines reproducing old ways of being and thinking. A critical engagement with South Africa's transition has also made clear that what remains central from Fanon's (1968) thesis on national liberation is not what we mostly remember him for, the cathartic effects of violence, but the sharp critique of the nationalist project. In its place he envisions a humanist program built on the experience of direct democracy and participation. This he believes is Africa's gift to the world.

Are the problems of post-apartheid South Africa unique or do they repeat those of other African independence movements, which, upon taking over power, were unable to extricate themselves from the structures and discourses of the old regime? Did the South African anti-apartheid elite have a choice? Did it jump into a homegrown structural adjustment or was it pushed away from a genuine redistribution that would attempt to rebalance and redraw the social and economic map of apartheid?

The negotiated settlement provided the framework for continued "white privilege," which has been made all the more hegemonic through the development

of a black middle class. Perhaps then South Africa provides the best opportunity, against Fanon's (1968) predictions that it was impossible, to see the development of a "productive" African bourgeoisie. Yet the social cost of creating this small middle class, without any guarantee of benefit, will be high, and the legacies of apartheid, on which it is built, perhaps higher.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank Lenny Markovitz and Tilo Stolz for comments on a draft of this paper.

2 The vitriolic and sectarian debate harkened back to Lenin's, *What Is To Be Done*. It is represented by a number of articles in the SACP journals *African Communist* and *Sechaba* like "The Dangers of Legal Marxism" (Ruth Nhere 1984) and "A Trade Union if not a Political Party" (Toussaint 1983), the debate about "workerism" can be found in *The South African Labour Bulletin* (cf. vol. 12, 1987). Yet this "debate" never critically engaged their own terms and problematized their own positions.

3 The land question, which has recently had profound consequences for post colonial Zimbabwe may have even deeper social consequences for South Africa where it pre-dates apartheid by 35 years (i.e. 1913). If democracy is to develop, and if it is to be rooted in property, addressing the issue of land redistribution and the power of the chiefs over land remains crucial.

4 Adam Przeworski was probably the most optimistic arguing that "the typical democratizing coalition is likely to adopt a Keynesian economic project" (O'Donnell et al. 1986:62).

5 The 1910 constitution included a non-racial property-based male franchise in the Cape. In 1936, Cape Africans were disenfranchised and instead elected four white representatives. Cape "Coloureds" were removed from the common voters roll in 1956 and similarly represented by white MPs until 1968.

6 MK is the abbreviation for the ANC armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation).

7 For example, see Pallo Jordan's "The Crisis of Conscience in the SACP" (1990), which replies to Slovo's "Has Socialism Failed" (1990).

8 Recently the Trotskyist "state capitalists" (that is, the group that defined their existence by an analysis of "Communist" Russia as state capitalist) joined the SACP, thus, underlining the continuing dominance on the left of the SACP on one hand, and the ideological capitulation, or perhaps better the theoretical paucity, of the anti-Stalinist left, on the other.

9 The shift from left critic to power player is epitomized by Stephen Gelb, who expressed the move in an article titled "There Is No Alternative . . . for Now" (1991) and later became a co-author of the ANC's neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) agenda.

10 See Marais (1998:185-95) for a discussion of the left's lack of vision hidden by its "will too strategize." In an article in *New Left Review*, John Saul had advocated an institutional building approach that resonated with left unionists; Patrick Bond, who had been involved in drafting some of the RDP, insisted in *International Viewpoint* that the program had a non-capitalist logic, and Vishnu Padayachee and Azghur Adelzadeh in *Transformation* teased out its "progressive" elements. With such a hailing of the RDP, GEAR came as a shock, rather than the next stage.

11 The idea of Black Consciousness as a "middle-class" movement misses its power as a liberatory ideology. Instead a dialectical and historicize critique, Black Consciousness is, in a typically Manichean move, considered a middle-class township movement equated with the Soweto Committee of Ten and Dr. Motlana. For a different, yet critical view of Black Consciousness, see Gibson (1988).

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Gender, Development, and Democratization in Africa[1]

LISA AUBREY*

ABSTRACT

This paper queries the link between gender, development, and democratization in Africa while focussing on ongoing political transitions in Kenya and Ghana. This paper looks specifically at the marginalization of women in the public life of politics, while men continue to both control state structures and determine the neophytes in the public domain. It also looks at specific women leaders in Kenya and Ghana who traverse the public and private domains, pointing to the artificiality of that dichotomy. This paper also interrogates whether or not this dawn of political transitions can bring democracy back in without bringing women in, with the same equal citizenship rights as men. The paper also demonstrates how this query is relevant in evolving democracies, as well as in sustained liberal democracies.

The public life of politics in postcolonial Africa is rigidly gendered. In formal institutions and arenas of governance, and in decision and public policy making, women remain marginal actors. Even in the 1990s decade of evolving political transitions from civilian autocracies and military dictatorships to "democracies" of varying hues, the majority of women remained relative outsiders to this historic process of change. Moreover, at this critical juncture in the re-negotiation of the social contract between the state and society, the voices of the majority of women appear to be either muted or muffled by those of men.

There are, however, two exceptions. First are the few women who are elected or appointed to public office, or who have risen to prominence because of ascription and/or extraordinary accomplishments.[2] The degree to which these women are able to make their voices heard relative to gender issues depends on the nature of the larger state structure and the ideological orientations of the women themselves. The second exception is the few women who are hand picked by prominent men in the state because they follow their male-centric ideological orientation (Okeke 1998; Aubrey 1997; Mama 1996; Fatton 1989). These women are least likely to speak about women's issues in a way towards empowering women as a gender group. They are clients of the state who fear losing their patronage from the state.

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Important to note is the fact that gender inequality in the public life of politics is not uniquely African or "Third World." It is a global phenomenon to which several scholars have directed their attention.[3] The public life of politics is being used here to refer to the public service arena to which one can be elected by the populace or appointed by the state or government to represent and/or serve the citizenry. It includes the various branches of government, the civil service, and other institutions of the state, which have the constitutional right and responsibility to govern. It does not include organizations that exist outside of state and governmental structures.[4]

Various compilations of statistics on women in public life worldwide offer us the following data for contemplation with regard to gender inequalities. Until the mid-1990s, worldwide only 9 women had been elected the Heads of State in the twentieth century, and only 15 had been elected the Heads of Governments. Two of the elected women Heads of Governments were elected in Africa — in Burundi in 1993 and in Rwanda in 1993-94 (WIDNET 2001). Additionally, only in 9 countries worldwide did women represent more than 15 percent of government ministers or members of government, even though women represent at least 50 percent of the citizens in these countries. One of those 9 countries is in Africa — the Seychelles with women constituting 31 percent of its Ministers (WIDNET 2001). There are some African countries that had no women ministers or members of government in 1994, the year this research was conducted. They are Libya, Morocco, Comoros, Somalia, and Sudan.[5] On average, in the mid-1990s women comprised only 4 percent of members of parliamentary assemblies in Africa North of the Sahara, and only 8 percent in Africa South of the Sahara (WIDNET 2001). Comparatively, in other parts of the world, among some of the world's noted and sustained (as well as "model," some would argue) liberal democracies, the following statistics hold true: fewer than 13 percent of congresspersons in the United States are women; approximately 12 percent of the members of parliament in the United Kingdom are women; in the French Parliament 9 percent of the members are women; in Germany nearly 30 percent of the legislators at the national level are women; and, in Japan less than 9 percent of the national legislators are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2001). Although women feature more prominently in public life in some countries than in others, men clearly dominate women in public life worldwide, in both sustained liberal democracies and newly evolving democracies. And liberal democracies, according to these statistics, do not have a substantially better track record than evolving democracies. Anne Phillips (1991:60), a noted scholar of democratic theory, regards one of the major challenges for liberal democracies to truly evolve into genuine democracies as the breaking of the 5 percent glass ceiling.

One of the most compelling arguments which attempts to explain the dominance of men in public life is that the state is dominated by men who propagate a patriarchal ideology in both foreign and domestic affairs, and who use various

modes of power, including force and authority, to sustain their domination. The state has yet to become hegemonic (Fatton 1989; Jaquette 1984). Concomitantly, the virtual absence of women in public life is the flip side of the same coin. The patriarchal disposition of the state disempowers women as it empowers men, the spillover of which creates a gender hierarchy that subordinates women, as a gender group, to men. This is also a global phenomenon (Charlton 1989). Specific to the African context, gender hierarchies are resultant of both internal processes and external contact. That is, the genderedness of public life and the subordination of women (1) are embedded in African traditional cultures, (2) were exacerbated in the periods of Islamic expansion and European colonialism, (3) are stringently enforced by postcolonial state policy and practices, and (4) are reproduced by the gendered cultures of politics.[6] By cultures of politics, I refer to a concept coined and defined by political scientist Pearl Robinson (1994), as "political practice(s) which (are) culturally legitimated and societally validated by local knowledge" (p. 39). I am arguing further that these cultures of politics are also strictly gendered, and have thus fostered political inequalities between men and women in public life, which serve to limit women's access to power and to the state.

It is women's challenges to the state for engenderization, as a means of achieving gender equality and as a means of democratization, which lie at the base of many women's discourses and struggles (Mikell 1997; Nzomo 1997; Tackie 1996; Khasiani and Njiro 1993; Mukabi and Kabira Adhiambo-Oduol 1993). For example, some women's struggles are demanding the inclusion of more women in the formal institutions of governance and policymaking as a show of democratic faith, gender awareness, and respect for the citizenship rights of women on the part of men (DFID 1998; Tackie 1996). Some women's struggles have gone even further in demanding that additionally the state rethink and hopefully refute its patriarchal ideology (Maina 1994; Mukabi-Kabira 1993; Adhiambo-Oduol 1993; Mama 1996) and thereby change the structure and ideological configuration of the state itself.

For example, some engenderization proposals and suggestions have called for strategies for change which range from affirmative action (DFID 1998; Tackie 1996), the mainstreaming (or malestreaming) of women especially through economic empowerment (Dolphyne 1997; Gachukia 1993), the demasculization of language (Adhiambo-Oduol 1993; McFadden 1994), outright confrontation with men (Aidoo 1995; McFadden 1995; Tibbetts 1994), feminized education (Obura 1996:259; Abagi 1994) and, women replacing men as Parliamentarians (Nzomo 1997; Tackie 1996), and Heads of Government/Heads of State (Aidoo 1995) through democratic elections. These proposals represent the interest aggregation and the interest articulation of women who are using the fissures in the polity to secure greater gender balance and equity, as well as more democratic space for all citizens. These proposals further represent an expansion of women's claims to participation rights in processes that are directly democratizing of the public sphere

— a sphere that has historically been considered a natural domain for men, and a tabooed domain for women. Both in Kenya and in Ghana, for instance, these proposals have the potential of moving the majority of ordinary rural women beyond (very often) avowedly apolitical stances as economic actors working for community and national development, toward becoming more empowered, politicized citizens working for development and democracy simultaneously (Aubrey 1997; Ake 1996; Ake 1994).

These aforementioned proposals represent the ideas of mainly (although not entirely — see Nzomo 1997:243-244) the formally educated, more urbanized women who are conversant with regime transition and pro-democracy discourses. Many of these women are academicians. Some have the support of a few men who are democrats and are politically sensitizied to gender inequalities and women's plight.[7] To their credit, these women (and men) have espoused an agenda for change, which prioritizes gender education and conscientization for the wider citizenry — their actions parallel their rhetoric. Although the overriding aim of their proposals is to directly and/or indirectly redress the political marginalization (and exclusion) of women resulting from the gendered nature of public life, questions abound as to whether or not their views reflect the views of the "ordinary" rural woman, and hence the majority of women in Africa (Ake 1994). It is important to note that women are not a monolithic group, othewise we romanticize women's political and ideological solidarity. In as much as women are united by gender, they are divided by factors such as class, race, educational differences, ethnicity, religion, occupational differences — differences that cross-cut gender and affect their attitudes toward politics and their participation in public life (Lewis 1988; Bujra 1986; Staudt 1980).

Research has shown that the energies of the average woman, that is the non-urban, non-elite, non-formally educated woman, may not be concentrated on issues which they perceive to be overtly political — albeit not because these women are not political (Tsikata 1989). Their energies may not be vested in politics because the state, in its repression from the national to the local level, has disallowed engagement and punished citizens for participating in politics, particularly women who step into the realm of men and "disrespect" the state (Aubrey 1997; Manuh 1993; Tibbetts 1994). As a result, many women selectively exit and disengage from the political realm to avoid abuse from the state (Aubrey 1997; Fatton 1989). Moreover, they may also not vest their energies in politics because the state has failed to be an effective paternal figure and safety net provider for the welfare of the larger citizenry. Hence citizens look to themselves and non-state actors, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for the protection of their general welfare and security (Semboja and Therkildsen 1995; Oquaye 1996). As some pundits have asked us, "What then does the participation in politics (specifically voting) and democratization mean to an African woman who is a

rural dweller facing illiteracy, unsafe drinking water, unsanitary health facilities, poverty, and an overall precarious existence?" (Ake 1994:20).

The work of several scholars suggest to us that the condition of this disempowered rural woman is largely resultant of the power imbalances between state and society, and between men and women; and their arguments are theoretically, and empirically convincing (Aubrey 1997; Nzomo 1997, 1992; Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989). Hence, it is logical to argue further that the conditions of this woman rural-dweller are not likely to change if the anti-democratic nature of the state and the gendered cultures of politics do not change. Without an opening up of the political system to the diverse voices of the populace, she and other citizens may not secure the democratic space or the participatory opportunity to make her plight known to those who have the power to both change her condition, and to, more generally, hold the state accountable for its responsibiltes to citizens.

Gwendolyn Mikell (1997:4) argues that in this era of transition politics and democratization, women are focussed on an agenda of "bread, butter, culture, and power," which she interprets as both the basis of an emerging African feminism and a critique of state policies that discriminate, exploit, and perpetrate violence against women. She also sees women's agenda as problematic for the state in its responses to women's demands for (1) democratization, (2) opening up more spaces in public life for women, and (3) creating and executing state policies which foster socioeconomic security and broader development for all citizens (Mikell 1997). Claude Ake tells us that the challenge for the democratization process in this historic period of transition is the creation and the practice of a system of governance that is created by people to govern themselves, which goes beyond abstract political rights to incorporate citizen's concrete economic and social rights. Moreover, Ake states, democracy is empowering of ordinary people (women and men), uplifting them to participate in their own governance, and to secure their material interests. More simply put, democracy moves us beyond the question of whether "to eat or to vote" (Ake 1994, 1996). It both enhances the quality of life, which is the essence of genuine development ***and*** democracy, and it encourages participation of ***all*** — economically, socially, politically, and environmentally. Ake (1996) believes that women and other marginalized groups whose political, economic, and social life circumstances are the most underdeveloped, especially small-scale farmers who in many countries are disproportionately women, ought to be at the center of this process.

Kenya and Ghana: Two Cases in Point

An examination of the public life of politics in postcolonial Kenya and Ghana illustrates quite clearly the problematic political marginality of women. It further speaks to the ways in which competing and contradictory forces engaged in

the current democratization process are dealing with tense power relations with each other, as well as with the issue of unequal gender relations in the public life of politics. Through cultures of politics that are highly patriarchal, the state has systematically and progressively sought to keep women out of the political world of men, while at the same time giving the false impression of being gender conscious and acting on that consciousness (Nzomo 1997; Mikell 1997; Mama 1996; Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989). The state has also seduced and used non-official structures especially NGOs, which most times include women, to accomplish this end (Aubrey 1997; Oquaye and Katsriku 1996; Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989). To a large extent, the state has succeeded in its efforts to deny women access to its structures and to political power, yet it has simultaneously failed to stifle the larger pro-democracy movement of which many women are also part (Mutunga 1999; Ninsin 1998; Drah and Oquaye 1996). Summarily, the Kenyan and Ghanaian cases illustrate the interlinkages and the dialectics of state and civil society as they are at crosspurposes engaged in "strategies and counter strategies of power" (Pringle 1989). The Kenyan and Ghanaian cases also, very crucially, query the viability of democratizing feminist movements within the current political contexts in both countries.

Both Kenya's and Ghana's postcolonial cultures of politics have created public lives of separate realities for women and men. Men, for the most part, control the arena of high politics.[8] That is, men in Kenya control the state and its varied institutions of governance, while women currently constitute less than 4 percent of the Members of Parliament. In Ghana, women fare a bit better but their representation is still disproportionately low. Of 200 Members of Parliament, only 19 are women (9.5 percent). Additionally, men via the state have disproportionate power in formulating and/or influencing public policies, which affect all strata of society. The effects of many of these (non)policies, from land tenure to health care to school lunches to domestic violence, are detrimental to women and children, yet the state has refused to sensitize itself sufficiently to the gender dimension of the social consequences of these (non)policies (Aubrey 1998; Mikell 1997; Macharia 1997; Manuh 1993; Nzomo 1992). Moreover, the state has refused to take progressive steps to consider women's gender-equity demands generally and seriously (Mikell 1997). Instead, the state continues to castigate those who raise issues which it perceives as contrary to its interests, legitimacy, and sovereignty — issues that are both specific to women as a gender group and to society at large. In Kenya, one of those women that the state has criminalized is Professor Wangari Maathai (Aubrey 1997:83-85).

For much of the postcolonial period, patriarchal state authority in Kenya and Ghana has remained, in large part, effectively unchecked internally because of authoritarian and repressive rule, alongside military rule in Ghana. In Kenya, authoritarianism and repression have been characteristic of periods of both the

Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi governments (Kenyatta was president from 1963 to 1978 and Moi president from 1978 to the present) despite spans in which both Presidents served de-jure multiparty states with constitutionally required checks and balances. From 1963 to 1982, Kenya was a constitutional multiparty state, although this was more on paper than in practice, especially from 1969. In 1982 after years of de-facto one-party rule, Kenya's constitution was amended, under Moi, to legalize the one-party state. It was only in 1991, nine years later, during the early awakening of the transition toward democracy in Africa that the Kenyan Constitution was amended to make provisions for the return to multipartyism, thereby allowing for the re-emergence of broader civil society and their constitutional right to participate in politics (Mutunga 1999; Kibwana 1996:v-vi; 128-130). Most of the political actors who re-emerged *and were recognized* in public life were men.

Likewise in Ghana, from Nkrumah in 1957 to Rawlings currently, postcolonial state politics has been riddled with authoritarianism, repression, and, unlike Kenya, spates of coups and military rule. Charges of authoritarianism and repression have been made, with substantiating evidence, against civilian and military regimes alike (Ninsin 1998; Hansen and Ninsin 1989). Ghana has had several broaches with multiparty, democratic, civilian governance — notably 1957 to 1960 under Nkrumah, October 1969 to January 1972 under Busia, September 1979 to December 1981 under Limann, and January 1993 until the present under two administrations of Rawlings (former military ruler). Military regimes have numbered as many, the last of which, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) under Rawlings, usurped political power on 31 December 1981 in a *coup d'etat*, and remained in power for an unparalled 12 years (Ayee 1999, 1997; Ninsin 1998; Hansen and Ninsin 1989). At the assumption of office, the PNDC immediately suspended the 1979 civilian, multiparty constitution suppressing citizens' rights (Ayee 1999; Ninsin 1998). Twelve years later, just 5 months after Kenya amended its constitution, Ghana followed suit and amended its constitution to legalize political activity again. On 18 May 1992 the ban that the PNDC had placed on politics was lifted (Ayee 1999; Ninsin 1998). And again, similar to Kenya, in spite of this critical constitutional change in favor of civil society, women still remained virtual outsiders to public life.

In both Kenya and Ghana, opposition civil society groups that had been suppressed flourished and brought vibrancy back to public life as civil society was empowered by constitutional changes. Political elements — parties, interest groups, and other politically viable organizations such as civil society organizations (CSOs), of which NGOs are part, sprang up. Partly as a result of constitutional changes in Kenya in 1991 and in Ghana in 1992, the number of these groups multiplied exponentially from approximately two or three hundred to double these figures. Today, NGOs in both countries approximate between 900 to 1,000, and

probably more.[9] Yet, many of these groups, especially non-women-specific professional bodies, are politically dominated by men, especially at the leadership level.[10]

It is an understatement to say that the surfacing of both opposition parties and civil society organizations did not automatically create participatory spaces for women. Unspoken but understood and institutionalized, the cultures of politics had reserved political parties for men, and, alongside that had directed women to join non-govermnental organizations (NGOs) — organizations that were expressly non-political, non-partisan, and not interested in contesting for state power (Geisler 1995; Boulding 1975). Many NGOs had embraced these organizational characteristics mainly to satisfy demands of (1) foreign donors as benefactors who would not fund political entities, and (2) the state as it nursed the fear and paranoia that NGOs might pose organizational opposition (Aubrey 1997; Ndegwa 1996; Oquaye and Katsriku 1996; Bratton 1990, 1989). Moreover, women numerically dominating the NGO sector fits squarely with the notion of the apolitical woman interested more in the domesticity of the private sphere, and uncomfortable and unefficacious in the highly politicized environment of the public sphere (Scott 1995; Phillips 1991). As such, many NGOs tend to have an overwhelmingly narrow and de-politicized focus and rhetoric, either directly or indirectly linked to development. Additionally, their organizational notions of development are not overtly, in concept and in practice, linked to democracy (Ninsin 1998; Ndegwa 1996); and, their agendas have little, if anything, to do with women becoming involved in the public life of politics (Aubrey 1997), although, some argue with some credulity, this is beginning to change. For example, in Ghana, the leadership of one of the most hailed and the most vilified registered civil society organizations, 31st December Women's Movement of which the First Lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings is the President, espouses highly political rhetoric claiming the empowerment women as one of its overarching objectives (GAPVOD/ISODEC 1999:2), as long as women's empowerment is not in conflict with the policies, practice, and priorities of the government.

The functions of political parties and NGOs in both Kenya and Ghana have been expressly different from each other — the former, politics and democratization and the latter, development. Hence, they have drawn different gender constituencies to their organizational memberships. With regard to political parties, the political party, Kenya African National Union (KANU), which has ruled the state since independence through the governments of Kenyatta and Moi along with the emergent opposition, (which included in the 1992 elections, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD-Asili), the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD-Kenya), the Democratic Party (DP), The Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK), the Democratic Movement (DEMO), and other smaller parties) have focussed more on the contestations for state power in the 1992 elections and subsequent post-election state control. They have done this

instead of revisiting and querying the authoritarian and patriarchal nature of the state, as the some pro-democracy proponents, including some women, had hoped (Nzomo 1997; Ake 1994). The picture this paints is that "democratizing the opportunity to rule" among men in high politics is the primary raison d'etre of the democratization process. In this case, the winning party merely expects to change hats with the outsted party (should the latter lose the election) and continue to dominate the state machinery without changing the regime or interrogating the state patriarchy. Kenyan scholar of gender and politics, Maria Nzomo, in reflecting on the 1992 multi-party elections in Kenya and women's efforts to penetrate male political parties and win parliamentary seats, bemoans the ominous male state, and anti-democratic status quo. Nzomo (1997) states that

> women must face up to the fact that the Kenyan political machinery and society are still dominated by men who are not willing to share power with women. Indeed, the status of women in this first multi-party Parliament confirms my earlier assumption that men resist the entry of women into the political arena; and when she does enter she is allocated positions of relative powerlessness and then ignored (p. 246).

Nzomo's observation fits not only Kenya, but Ghana as well. The emerging opposition against Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC) in 1992 (formerly Rawlings' PNDC) spawned numerous parties including former Presidential candidate Adu Boahen's New Patriotic Party (NPP), former President Hilla Limann's People's National Convention (PNC), Lt. General (Rtd) Emmanuel Erskine's People's Heritage Party (PHP), and millionaire businessman Kwabena Darko's National Independence Party (NIP) (Ayee 1999). These parties became the estates of these men who wield considerable power in public life. Women played miniscule public roles in these parties. For example, in Parliament (1992 to 1996), which was boycotted by the opposition because of "fraudulent manipulations" and "systemic rigging of the ballots," there were only 16 women of 200 parliamentarians, totalling 8 percent of all members. And two of the women (25 percent of the total number of women elected) had won on independent tickets, hence were not linked to the ruling party.[11] Further statistics about women in politics in Ghana underscore the marginality of elected or appointed women in public life: 10 of 110 elected District Chief Executives are women (9 percent); 2 of 18 Cabinet Ministers are women (11.1 percent); 4 of 24 members of the Council of State are women (16.7 percent); 6 of 37 Ministers of State are women (16.2 percent); 4 of 34 Deputy Ministers of State are women (11.8 percent), none of 15 Chief Directors of the Civil Service are women (0 percent), and 15 of the 153 Directors of the Civil Service are women (9.8 percent).[12] These figures are hardly sterling considering women represent over half of the Ghanaian population, and 55 percent of all registered voters in Ghana. They become even more bleak when it is realized the extent to which Ghana is regarded as the "shining star of democracy in West Africa."[13]

Nzomo's assessment of women's marginalization in public life in Kenya captures the essence of gender inequalities in the public life of both Kenya and Ghana true-to-form. While few women are able to penetrate formal state structures or other structures that theoretically have the opportunity to capture state power (i.e., parties), women far outnumber men in memberships of NGOs (particularly those in local and rural development), which have little chance and perhaps even less interest in contesting for state power (Aubrey 1997; Pradervand 1989). The patriarchal (il)logic here appears to be that women in non-governmental structures will less likely be in strategic positions to challenge men and the state if their memberships and their energies are concentrated in stratas of apolitical civic associations that are not likely to engage in civic activities in the realm of high politics. Instead of checking and balancing state politics of men, and fighting to secure some state power for women, the patriarchal (il)logic is that women will be engrossed in efforts to advance the socioeconomic positions of women's groups, the needy, local communities, children, and the nation. Women will endeavor this through a wide-range of NGO development activities — activities that are closely linked to wives' domestic work in the private sphere of the household (Aubrey 1997; Scott 1995; Phillips 1991). A multiplicity of studies confirm that such activities might include farming, cattle grazing, sewing, bead and jewelry making, ballast chipping, basket weaving, and food selling for income-generation.[14] Some women view these activities as empowering; and some Ghanaian women leaders further observe that those women who become empowered and liberated through these activities make a point to continue to conform to call their husbands "Miwura" (my master), and do not feel less empowered or disempowered by doing so (Dolphyne1991:75).

Elise Boulding (1975), in providing information about gender and power differentials to the United Nations, offers an explanation of why NGOs have attracted such high women memberships. Her explanation further speaks to women's exclusion from public life. Boulding (1975) states, "The phenomenon of the women's NGOs stems in part from the inability of women to get men to give priority to decentralism and nonviolence, and in part from the fact that men could not perceive women as individual human beings in their own right, let alone as partners in major public enterprises" (p. 340-346).

Boulding was not speaking about Kenya and Ghana, or Africa specifically when she wrote this. She was instead commenting on a global phenomenon. That women would have virtually no choice but to create alternative organizations, external to the state, for them to express their civic rights as bonafide citizens and as the only means for them to aggregate and express their interests as a gender group, makes a damning indictment on the state, citizenship, democracy, and the social contract. The following questions immediately come to mind: Where is "choice" that is fundamental to democratic practice? Doesn't a citizen, regardless

of gender, have a right to participate in the structures and institutions of her/his government and state on an even keel with other citizens? Is the social contract between the state and women citizens different from the social contract between the state and men citizens? Does the state have a greater responsibility toward men than it does toward women? Moreover, that the Kenyan and Ghanaian states would steer women toward apolitical civic associations while it (men) engage power and politics in public life, is tantamount to blocking women from participation in civil society in a way that it does not block men; thus, further entrenching gender inequality in the public life of politics and reinforcing the gendered cultures of politics that maintain this inequality.

Kwame Ninsin (1998) makes a very important argument that helps us to interrogate who is part of civil society and who is not. Knowing who is "in" and who is "out" is essential for analyses of gender inequalities in public life. Ninsin states that *not* all non-state organizations, NGOs, and civic associations are inherently civi1 society organizations. He makes a fine distinction between civic associations that are apolitical and do not have political agendas, and civic associations that are political and do have political agendas "at one time or another." He states that the former *are not* part of civil society because they are not active in the political realm, while the latter are part of civil society because they are active in the political realm. Ninsin further argues that, the latter — the civic associations with political agendas "at one time or another" — become, on one hand, leading voices of "pro-democracy civil society" when they are driven by an agenda of democratic transformation. On the other hand, they become "alternative civil society" when their political agenda obstructs (instead of promotes) the course of democracy.[15]

There are various women's NGOs in Kenya and Ghana that traverse the apolitical civic association spaces and the political civic association or "civil society" spaces that Ninsin describes, and some have developed, despite patriarchal (il)logic, overt political agendas. When in the realm of civil society and the public sphere of politics, some of these NGOs have championed the causes of democracy and (sometimes, though not always) gender equality in their capacity as pro-democracy civil society. Some examples of these organizations are FIDA-Kenya, FIDA-Ghana, National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Kenya, and Ghanaian Women's Initiative Foundation (GAWIF).

Likewise, some women's NGOs have emerged as leaders of alternative civil society and have blocked the cause of democracy and gender equality. The largest women's organization in Kenya, *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* Organization (Kiswahili for the Progress/Development of Women), which claims a membership of 1.5 million rural and urban women, and which touts itself as a development NGO, has taken a lead role in alternative civil society. It has, however, had to contend with women pro-democracy civil society organizations, as well as powerful individual

women democrats. MYWO's alternative civil society counterpart organization in Ghana is the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM). Although the organization claims to have a political agenda of women's empowerment, its proximity to the PNDC and the NDC governments since 1981 and 1993 respectively, has compromised its position as an autonomous women's organization. DWM (in its current operations) is the brainchild of the first lady, and a "mass organ" grown out of women's support of the 31 December Revolution that brought the PNDC to power. As the PNDC lost repute in Ghana, so did its appendage creations. Many argue that DWM has been a major barrier to women's empowerment and women's political development as a gender group in Ghana.

Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO) in Kenya

Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO), throughout its history has had close interorganizational relationships with the state in Kenya. Its organizational lifetime has spanned both postcolonial presidents, its roots having been laid by the colonial officials and their wives and female relatives in 1952 (Aubrey 1997:45-46). The organization has had 10 chairpersons since Kenya's independence in 1963 (or 50 percent) who have been closely and openly tied to the state in an official capacity, through marriage or family/ethnic ties, and/or because of sharing a patriarchal ideology aimed at limiting the rights, access, and participation in the public life of politics of the gender group of women.

Archival records of MYWO indicate that only one of the chairpersons, Ruth Habwe, who was Chair from 1968 to 1971, attempted to promote gender sensitivity, and gender equality. During her term, "MYWO passed several resolutions concerning the rights and demands of women. One of the resolutions called for equal employment terms with men in the public and private sectors. Another resolution was for an increase in the number of places for women students at the University of Nairobi" (for a more indepth discussion of MYWO's history see Aubrey 1997:56).

Habwe's ideas toward gender equality were different from most her predecessors and successors. The first African chairperson of MYWO from 1961 to 1963, Phoebe Asiyo (who later became a Member of Parliament) was also very political and fought against colonial authoritarian rule. She engaged MYWO in the struggles against colonialism and the imprisonment of Kenyatta and other men and women leaders of Mau Mau. Habwe's other predecessors, however, Jael Mbogo (1963 to 1967) and Elizabeth Mwenda (1967 to 1968) had more depoliticized agendas that focussed primarily on expanding organizational membership, building nursery schools, and promoting handicraft exhibitions, with financial assistance from the state.

Habwe's successors en masse did not carry on her fervor of gender equality in public life. Her immediate successor, Jane Kiano, the longest serving chairperson

of MYWO, who is also the wife of the then Minister of Commerce, publicly stood against women's liberation and equality, and did not really fight for women's rights directly. In an interview about MYWO while she was Chair, Kiano said, "Our aim as an organization is not to fight anybody and certainly not to fight men. We view harmony as the foundation for working together and understanding each other. We don't have any group whose militant approach can alienate men. We are out for mutual cooperation and mutual coexistence is our ideal" (Otieno 1982:29).

Kiano was careful to pacify men and the state while she built MYWO into the (rumored) largest women's development organization on the continent of Africa by expanding national membership and securing substantial amounts of material, technical, and financial assistance from foreign donors, the state, and local philantrophists. She was careful not to bruise male egos by making demands for women's rights and gender equality; therefore, she walked a tightrope and did not publicly disturb the gendered cultures of politics. Ironically, she was at the time and still is, as an individual, the epitome of a liberated woman and a feminist. She institutionalized MYWO as a non-political, non-governmental women's development organization, while she simultaneously stifled women's civic rights, gender equaltiy, and the engenderization of public life for the larger gender group of women. Kiano, wife of a then cabinet minister, is also from the same ethnic group as Kenyatta.

Kiano's successors, between the years of 1984 and 1989, served only short periods because of a major financial quagmire and alleged mismangement of MYWO. Theresa Shitakha, who was Chair from 1984 to 1985, was blamed for the disarray of the organization and was sacked by the state which also announced at the time its assumption of responsibility of the women's organization. Fol1owing Shitakha was Mary Mwamodo, a long time member of MYWO, who was made interim Chair from 1985 to 1986. Thereafter, the state appointed Francisca Otete, a government civil servant to run MYWO's affairs, which would give the state overseeing power. She was the caretaker of MYWO for 3 years (1986 to 1989), during which time (in 1987) the state formally and officially affiliated MYWO, usurping its already precarious non-governmental autonomy. Hence, in doing this, the state moved MYWO from alternative civil society to the state, as an appendage directly under the state's and male control. Explanations by the state and the new KANU-MYWO, however, insisted that it was still an NGO.

It is the period of 1989 to 1999 which illustrates most directly MYWO as a force of alternative civil society, not only stifling gender equality but also forcefully arguing and acting against democratization, and attempting to block the cause of pro-democracy civi1 society. Wilkista Onsando (KANU-MYWO Chair from 1989 to 1991 and MYWO Chair 1991 to 1996) and Zipporah Kittony (MYWO Chair 1996 to present) both came to the helm of the organization under questionable means that Kenyan women and other members of the larger populace vehemently

protested. There is overwhelming evidence that men and the state hijacked both the 1989 and 1996 elections. Moreover, it is also an "open secret" that Kittony had disproportionate chances to win the 1996 MYWO election because she is from the same ethnic group as Moi and was raised in the same household as his sister. She was the KANU hand-pick.[16]

Onsando, in her authority as Chair of MYWO, campaigned forcefully against democratization, especially in 1991 to 1992 amidst peoples' protests and foreign donor threats of aid withdrawal. She supported Moi in his claims that democracy was a foreign imposition and was antithetical to African culture. She and others in MYWO leadership assisted the state in paying women off to declare their support for the one-party state and the Moi government. She, using the name KANU-MYWO, threatened pro-democracy forces, particularly the Law Society of Kenya, for their challenges to the state to democratize. She also admittedly mobilized KANU-MYWO members to discredit and misoginize human rights activist, pro-democracy proponent and opposition party sympathiser, Professor Wangari Maathai, and further to destroy the property of the Green Belt Movement (GBM: an environomental NGO that Maathai coordinates). In a final ditch attempt to stifle the democratization process and to defeat the forces of pro-democracy civil society, Onsando publicly stated, "We have full confidence in the President (Moi), the ruling party (KANU), and the leadership of this country, we would like multiparty advocates to know that they have no support from the women in this country" (Aubrey 1997:82-83). But the inevitable happened anyway, in December 1991, the state was pushed by the forces of democratization to (1) recognize pro-democracy civil society, including state opposition; and, (2) to officially disaffiliate MYWO from the state. Otherwise, MYWO could not regain its status as an NGO, however superficial.

Zipporah Kittony, on her part, has maintained the agenda of Onsando. Despite the dissaffiliation of MYWO from KANU, MYWO remains unofficially tied to KANU, and a pivotal actor in alternative civil society. As a women's organization, it continues to stand in the way of the progress of democracy and gender equality in Kenya, as it buttresses the reluctance of the state to make greater reforms toward democracy. Kittony, for instance, immediately prior to the 1997 presidential elections, spoke against the candidacy of Charity Ngilu, one of two women in the presidential race, and the candidate who was seen by many as the only one who could secure enough votes to defeat the incumbent Moi. Kittony, under the auspices of MYWO, stated that women were not ready to rule the country and thusly the electorate should not vote for Ngilu. Not long after this, Kittony publicly professed to be a women's rights activist.[17] Public sentiment seems to suggest that she is distrusted and not well respected by many pro-democracy forces, especially those demanding gender equality. In her official capacity, Kittony is seen as an embodiment of the state's and alternative civil society's machinations

to obstruct gender equality and the deepening of the democratization process in Kenya. Kittony is currently a nominated Member of Parliament from the KANU party.

31st December Women's Movement (DWM) in Ghana

31st December Women's Movement (DWM) describes itself as a national NGO with a membership, according to various sources, of between 1.5 and 2.5 million women in the rural and urban areas of Ghana above the age of 18 (Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989). It is the largest women's organization in Ghana, and perhaps on the continent of Africa. On paper, it rivals MYWO in size.[18] DWM has various interorganizational linkages with the state in Ghana, through various ministries, and with foreign NGOs and government organizations such as Saka Gakki International of Japan, USAID, and UNDP, respectively, on whom it depends for financial, technical, and/or material assistance for the implementation of its development programs and projects (DWM n.d.:14-15). Its program guidelines describe the function of the organization as "the economic, social and cultural emancipation of Ghanaian women" (DWM n.d.:4). Additionally, it clearly states that it is a "feminine organization . . . particularly careful to avoid any rupture or conflict with the social group or the couple" (DWM n.d.:5).

DWM's president, since 1984, two years after its creation (Tsikata 1989:87), is Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, the first lady of Ghana and the wife of the President of the Republic of Ghana Jerry John Rawlings. Nana Konadu (as she is called in Ghana) has been one of two chairpersons of DWM in its near 20 year history (the first chairperson served only two years and is rarely spoken of) and she, as an individual and the wife of the President, as well as the leader of DWM the organization, has remain closely tied to the governments of Rawlings personally and politically, as well as unofficially and officially (Ninsin 1998; Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989). She is the embodiment of the space where public and private converge, collapse, and collide.

Nana Konadu, like Kiano in Kenya, is the epitome of a liberated woman and a feminist. For Nana Konadu, according to her rhetoric, women's political participation is paramount to (and necessary for) women's emancipation in all other spheres of life (DWM n.d.:2; GAPVOD/ISODEC 1999:2). For this, she has been both hailed and vilified. For example, there are those who oppose the political stances that she takes as leader of DWM and self-appointed defender and spokesperson for the Rawlings governments. Most vocal in this group of critics are men, especially opposition politicians, though not exclusively (Ankrah 2000; Atiemo 2000; Bansah and Anas 2000; Biney 2000; Coomson 2000; Kufuor 2000). By contrast, there are those who support Nana Konadu in her leadership capacity of DWM, and as a defender and spokesperson for the Rawlings governments

(Ablekpe 2000; *Graphic* Reporter 2000; Haizel 2000; Owusu-Sekyere 2000; Pratt 2000; Quaicoo 2000). Many of these supporters are women clients of the most powerful woman in Ghana. One client is public figure and politician Cecilia Johnson, General Secretary of DWM and Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, and former Deputy Minister of the same (Coomson 2000). These two camps of opposers and supporters have emerged very prominently as Nana Konadu is at the center of major public debates and Ghana draws closer to its 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections, to be held December 8.

DWM has an organizational lifetime of nearly 20 years, having been borne out the 31 December Revolution, which was brought on by the Provisional National Defence Council's (PNDC) "peoples' revolution." DWM's organizational lifetime has spanned both military and civilian regimes — the former PNDC regime from 1981 to 1993 and the National Democratic Congress regime (of 2 elected civilian administrations) from 1993 to the present. It has supported both suppression of peoples' rights under military rule, and it has supported (sometime reluctantly) democratization under civilian constitutional rule. Likewise, in its dialectical behavior, while organizationally representing women it has supported the state in its misoginization of women traders and other working-class women — alleging that they are hoaders, profiteers, *kalabule*[19] and prostitutes (Mikell 1997; Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989).

Nana Konadu is an enigma for many. She is not an elected official in the state structures, yet she wields power. She is the wife of the President, yet a woman who has more power than many powerful men. To speak to her multiplicity, again like Kiano in Kenya, Nana Konadu is intelligent, politically savvy, articulate, poised, versed in international affairs and respected in her own right by many Ghanaians and many in the international community. Concomitantly, there are many in Ghana, women and men, who feel that Nana Konadu has both the leadership skills as well as the leadership position and opportunity to advance the cause of equality of women and fairness for all workers, but has failed to do so because she has focussed more on defending government policies uncritically, and defending her husband. Many in the international community share the same sentiments. Nana Konadu to them is seen as an obstacle in the pursuance of women's and peoples' rights, hence an obstacle to democracy. To some, she is seen as more of an obstacle, than her husband the President of Ghana Jerry John Rawlings. For example, her recent attempts to control the television and print media, to discredit opposition parties (i.e., the New Patriotic Party-NPP) with "untruths" relative to their relationship with the World Bank and IMF, and to justify Rawling's purchase of a presidential jet without Parliament's approval have caused many opinion leaders and other citizens in Ghana to request that she practice restraint[20] and that she should (to paraphrase) "get some rest" (Anas 2000; Ankrah 2000; Atiemo 2000; Bansah

and Coomson 2000; Biney 2000; Kufuor 2000). Other opposers have simply said, "Nana Konadu must shut up!" (Bansah and Anas 2000).

The history of DWM has either been one of schizophrenia or one of careful calculated political manipulations for women's space in public life without disturbing patriarchal and middle-class interests. Or it has been a history that is a mixture of both.

DWM came into existence on 15 March 1982, and was described as a mass organization, a voluntary non-governmental organization, women's wing of the revolution, a revolutionary organ, a self-supporting NGO, and one of the organizations the revolution gave birth to (Manuh 1993; Tsikata 1989). Its organizational objectives, according to its leaders, were symmetrically aligned to the PNDC. Together they were co-fighters in the struggle to rid Ghana of "its moral, economic and politcal decay" (Manuh 1993:186), hence PNDC and DWM were to work hand in hand. Among the general and yet somewhat vague objectives of the PNDC government were anti-imperialism, national independence, economic reconstruction, democracy, accountability, anti-corruption, popular power, workers' rights, acknowledgement of class struggle, and restructuring of social and political relations (Graham 1989:47). The PNDC further rationalized that in order for women to work toward these objectives for the nation, they had to be liberated — and that the revolution had to instantly liberate women. Hence, as a gesture to action Rawlings presented a rifle to a DWM member at an inauguration at a branch in Northern Ghana to symbolize both the emancipation of Ghanaian women and the call for women to become equal to men in social and political life (Manuh 1993:185-186; Tsikata 1989:82).

The fervor with which Rawlings had begun PNDC rule soon lost momentum due to severe economic crises (1982 to 1983) that reverberated in all spheres of society — public and private. In April 1983, the PNDC capitulated to multilateral and bilateral lenders demands to rid Ghana's political environment of militancy, anti-imperialism, and populist democracy in exchange for access to foreign financial and other resources. The PNDC compromised and began to systematically rid those most ideologically committed to the revolution (Graham 1989:60-62; Ninsin 1989:34-36). Shortly thereafter, Nana Konadu assumed the position of President of the 31st DWM and began programs she thought would make a difference in the economic circumstances and daily survival of Ghanaian women, especially grassroots women.[21] One such program is the Day Care Centres Program, a program which allowed market women (and now women in other occupations as well) to leave their children with childcare providers so that they could go about their daily work to earn their living (DWM n.d.:7).

Nana Konadu has continued her worked with DWM since that time with other programs, yet the Day Care Centre program is the most active. Her idea of political empowerment of women has taken a back seat to the building of childcare centres,

bakeries, and *kenkey* and *gari* producing centers — activities that are extensions of childcare and food preparation in the home, and activities that have received funding from foreign donors. DWM is not a significant recruiter of women who are to be integrated into the public life of politics in Ghana. The reason is not solely that the average women's time is absorbed with working out childcare and family meals. The reason is also partly that Nana Konadu does not spend time on political recruitment for the larger group of women in DWM's membership. It is very significant that when Nana Konadu spends time with DWM groups, she spends time explaining government policies, and urging support for the NDC vis-à-vis opposition parties (Owusu-Sekyere 2000). Since the NDC won the 1996 election on "bread and butter" issues in the rural area, specifically rural electrification, water, roads, health, education improvements (Ayee 1999:329-330), she preaches "continuity." And many people fear political instability if there is not political continuity (Ayee 1999:330).

Nana Konadu has made many political choices because of national economic circumstances, class interests, then women's interests. And she has also observed the Ghanaian gendered culture of politics, to some extent for grassroots and other women of the working class. Her political choices have not directly increased the number of women in the public life of politics, except for key women clients. Her first commitment is definitely to the NDC government of her husband, and then women, after class considerations. Nana Konadu institutionalized DWM as a development organization (doubtfully an NGO because it is so closely tied to government and certainly not a civil society organization because it is not pro-democracy) while she simultaneously stifled women's civic rights, gender equality, and the engenderization of public life for the larger gender group of women.

An anomaly in the public life of politics in Ghana, Nana Konadu herself does not play by the rules of the game as prescribed by the gendered cultures of politics. She wrestles men and is ruthless. She further demonstraes that the public/private divide is a false one, for she traverses both and is very powerful in the one in which she, as a woman, is forbidden.

Conclusion

The cases of both MYWO in Kenya and DWM in Ghana do not bode well for the making of democratizing women's movements, much less democratizing feminist movements. Instead, they are exemplars of systems maintaining "state feminism." State feminism has been defined as "state controlled women's organizations and institutions which address women's issues in a non-threatening way and often act against the interests of women" (Sisulu et al. 1991:9). State feminism serves ultimately to maintain the status quo of the public life of politics, and to repress women's engagement in civil society. There are counter movements, how-

ever, which are inextricable and symbiotic parts of the pro-democracy movements pushing headstrong for women's rights and gender equality. Women scholars, as well as activists from Nairobi and Accra to Kakamega and Bolga, are the flag-bearers of these movements. Some enlightened men are supporting them, for there cannot be genuine democracy without gender equality. Hence, the clamour for gender equality in the public life of politics must continue to feed the democratization movement. It must be relentless, for as Pearl Robinson (1994) insightfully points out, "A consideration of gender and democratization begins with the recognition that political liberalization will not *a priori* install gender equity as one of the rules of the political game" (p. 49).

There are those in the state and in alternative civil society that are able to reconcile greater democratic space for *men only* in public life, while women ingratiate themselves to men and the state through organizational arrangements that promote various forms of state feminism, such as "femocracy" or the first lady syndrome (Mama 1996; Okeke 1998), both of which are systems in which female autocracies parallel and serve male dictatorships while advancing conservative gender ideologies to the detriment of democracy and gender equality — like MYWO in Kenya and DWM in Ghana.[22]

Democracy and development, especially political development for women in particular, remain unfinished on the gender dimension until (1) ordinary women (and men) have the effective right to participate no less than equally in the public life of politics as socially, culturally, economically, and politically empowered persons; and, (2) the patriarchal ideology of the state is replaced by one which generates and honors consensus from both empowered women and men. This must be ensured by the renegotiated social contract between the state and society that is evolving from the current political transitions. This is, however, not only the work for evolving democracies, but also the work for established liberal democracies as well. It is no small task, since genuine democratization and genuine development aim to change the entire world.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank Soyini Madison, Senior Fulbright Scholar at University of Ghana, Legon, Merinda Aubrey, and Stephen Ndegwa for reading, commenting and making suggestions for this paper. This idea for this paper came from a conference of *Feminist Movements: Origins and Orientations* held in Fez, Morroco in May 1999 at which I was invited to be a presenter. I would like to thank the co-participants of the conference for their suggestions, especially Dr. Fatima Siddiq, the conference organizer. I would also like to thank colleagues at the University of Morocco Institute of African Studies. My current research is a comparative study of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake in Kenya and 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana from which I am preparing a manuscript.

2 Prime examples of women who rise to prominence because of ascription are some queenmothers in Ghana. See various woks of Gwendolyn Mikell and Takyiwaa Manuh. Others who rise

because of extraordinary accomplishments are women like Professor Wangari Maathai and Charity Ngilu of Kenya.

3 For discussion of global gender inequality see, among other works, Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) and Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, eds, *Women and Politics Worldwide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

4 The definition that I am using for public life was informed by a study conducted by a research team from the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, Legon, and Development and Project Planning Centre, Bradford, UK. My definition however is narrower. While I focus on governmental structures, they also include the private formal sector, NGOs, and religious and traditional institutions.

5 As of May 1999, Morocco had 2 (.6%) women legislators of 325, and Sudan has 21 (5.30/o) of 400.

6 I build this argument based on readings of various scholars over long periods of time, notably Gwendolyn Mikell and Pearl Robinson.

7 See the work of Kole Shettima on Nigeria which illustrates some men's sensitivity to women's plight. Also noted are Professor George Benneh for courses he has taught on gender at Legon, and Wilbert Tengey, the Director of the African Centre for Human Development in Kokomlemle, Accra.

8 I am defining high politics as those maneuvers and counter-maneuvers which take place between and among major institutions of the state that are given/and assume the responsibility for governance and which have the power to enforce compliance of the polity.

9 These figures are from NGO registration offices in Nairobi and Accra, and may be underestimated. Additionally, the *Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations in Ghana* (Ghana: GAPVOD/ISODEC) was recently launched.

10 This follows a trend observed by Pierre Pradervand, *Listening to Africa*: (New York: Praeger, 1989) in the late 1980s, and begs the question of why some women shy away from leadership positions.

11 Some Parliamentary records for this period indicate that there were 14 women members in Parliament, not 16. I would like to thank Yaw Frimpong, Program Assistant for Civic Programs of the National Democratic Institue (NDI-Ghana) for helping me to try to unravel this query.

12 These figures are gleaned from the Women in Public Life Fact File disseminated by the National Council on Women and Development.

13 Steve Terrevachia, Resident Representative of NDI, made this observation about politics in Ghana in an interview with me May 2000.

14 See the volume of Women in Development (WID) literature.

15 Ninsin (1998;43) defines civic associations as "organizations which are formed by certain social groups for the pursuit of a set of goals and objectives that are determined by the general interest of its members." A civic association may or may not have a political agenda, and it may or may not be independent of the state or government.

16 I was made aware of this by several audiences in November of 1997 when I traveled to Kenya on invitation of FIDA-Kenya and USIA Kenya office.

17 See the *Daily Nation* newspaper, especially April 15, 1998 for Kittony's claims to be an activist, and for Kittony's and other state sympathizers rejection of Ngilu, see the *Daily Nation* the latter part of 1997 leading up to the December elections.

18 MYWO reports a membership of 1.5 million and is thought to be the largest women's organization in Africa. DWM may rival or exceed this number, and may itself be the largest.

Neither organization has systematic methods of counting members that can be validated relatively easily.

19 *Kalabule* refers to “any kind of corruption or profiteering, including the selling of any goods above the official controlled prices.” Middlepersons were oftern referred to *kalabule*. This practice and term were popular during the Acheampong years. The explanations come for writings of Kevin Shillington and Mike Oquaye.

20 The private newspaper *The Guide* has been running a bi-weekly report on House debates on the presidential jet. Also, it was the editor of *The Ghanaian Chronicle* who suggested that Nana Konadu “get some rest.” See May 26-May 28, 2000 issue.

21 It is my contention that Nana Konadu assumed the position of President of DWM to assist women to cope with the dire economic circumstances that the country was facing at the time, including food shortages. It is further my contention that she assumed the position to help Rawlings deal with political backlashes from the populace for turning against the revolution, against labor. I am *not* suggesting that Nana Konadu had absolutely no political aspirations.

22 Although I make a comparison between MYWO and DWM, I duly note that Nana Konadu as wife of the President is in a position to wield more power than any of the MYWO leaders, including Kiano.

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Popular Definitions of Democracy from Uganda, Madagascar, and Florida, U.S.A.

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares three studies of popular definitions of democracy. The goal of the paper is to explore the universality of democratic notions and norms. We accomplish this goal by disaggregating definitions of democracy, and reporting the results of empirical studies that asked Ugandan and Malagasy citizens to define democracy. We then compare these results to a parallel study that asked Americans living in Florida to define democracy. The principal finding is that despite methodological differences the response trend was the same for all three studies. The majority of people defined democracy in terms of "freedom," and generally specific individual freedoms, as opposed to elections, political participation, elements of good governance, economic development, or other common factors. Based on this finding we assert that normative implications of liberalism in popular definitions of democracy can inform both theoretical and policy oriented analyses of democracy in Africa.

Introduction

As African countries complete their second cycle of elections it has become clear that the results of democracy's "Third Wave" (Huntington 1991) have been less than stellar in Africa. The globalization of democratic ideals and practices is greater today than at any other point in history, but there are very few places in Africa where western-style liberal democracy is being consolidated (Diamond 1999).[1] There are still many authoritarian governments in Africa and a number of alarming cases of state collapse (Reno 1998; Zartman 1995; Lyons 1995). In some cases democratic elections have been co-opted by ruling elites as a mechanism for lending authority to otherwise authoritarian regimes, rather than creating competitive processes for the attainment of power.[2] The result of the Third Wave for most African people, therefore, appears to be a perpetuation not of democracy or authoritarianism, but rather some gray area in-between.

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The meaning of democracy in Africa is ill defined. Definitions that focus predominantly on the electoral process (O'Donnell 1999) compete with others that mandate more liberal qualities (Diamond 1999) or even particularistic social or economic outcomes (Ake 1996). The ill-defined status of democracy in Africa contributes to confusion about how we should approach the subject. As stated by Peter Lewis (1996), "there is little accord over the central concerns for structuring a research agenda or the relevant methods for analyzing the politics of reform in Africa" (p. 126).

Despite the lack of a dominant theory of democracy in Africa, the list of variables considered by most scholars is very consistent. To date, attention to economic, social-structural, institutional, human rights, rule of law and political processes (or combinations of these) dominate literature addressing African democracy (Callaghy and Ravenhill 1993; Sandbrook 1993; Widner 1994). Justification for attention to all these factors is strong. The history of democracy suggests that strong economies, flexible but enduring institutions, respect for human rights of expression and association, generalized expectations of transparent elections and methods of overcoming excessive pluralism are all important for maintenance of democracy. Attention to these variables also yields the consistent conclusion that the prospect for democracy in Africa is poor and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

We believe that part of the challenge facing democratic theorists is that the foundation of our knowledge of democracy, and its resulting categories and variables, is based upon western definitions of democracy. Little attention has been paid to the way that people in Africa conceptualize democracy. Indeed, even most empirical studies addressing the nature of African democracy look to structural elements of democracy (such as elections, national conferences, legislative make-up, etc.) (Bratton and van de Walle 1997) rather than local views or definitions of democracy. In an age in which universal suffrage elections are the *sine qua non* of government legitimacy, we believe that identifying what the people themselves understand by democracy may grant considerable analytical leverage both to democratic theorists and policy makers in Africa.

In this study, we test the universality of democratic notions and norms. We accomplish this by conducting random sample surveys that ask citizens in Uganda and Madagascar to define democracy. We then disaggregate these definitions into component parts or elements and compare them across regions. We then look to the American case as a standard measure to see if the way in which Ugandan and Malagasy people define democracy differs greatly from the way Floridians define democracy.

The results of the combined studies show that people in Uganda, Madagascar, and Florida give very similar definitions of democracy. This similarity is apparent despite methodological differences between studies. Respondents in all research

sites emphasized notions of freedom in their definitions of democracy. We used this finding to guide us through the many possible avenues of analysis, ultimately choosing to focus our analysis in two principal areas. First, we assert that our data identify a strong current of liberal political values in Africa. It supports setting the bar for democracy high and the use of a rigorous definition of liberal democracy in our evaluation of African democracy. Our data contradicts those who claim that we must depreciate our expectations of democracy due to cultural or developmental constraints unique to Africa. Based on our data, we believe that the potential for democracy in Africa is equal to the potential for democracy in other regions. Second, we find that the element of liberal philosophy is just as strong in our African cases as in American conceptions of democracy. The emphasis on liberal values (individual rights and freedoms) in our respondents' definitions of democracy demonstrates a strong connection between liberalism and democracy that offers support for distinctly liberal approaches to democratization in Africa.

Defining Democracy

Despite methodological differences between our three studies and the ad hoc manner in which we have assembled our comparisons, the majority of people in the samples from all three countries have defined democracy in liberal terms. Let us briefly define what we mean here by the concept of liberal democracy. We are borrowing from a classical definition of liberalism that focuses on freedom for the individual. Specifically, we are borrowing from John Stuart Mill's (1984) conception of individual liberties constrained only by the greater collective good of society. Whereas some classical scholars (Bentham 1969) define liberalism as individual freedoms at any cost, including, for instance, the freedom to kill someone, we have included only those concepts of freedom that are commonly viewed as positive. Thus if a person defined democracy as the freedom of speech, religion, association, or the press then we have considered this as empirical support for liberal conceptions of democracy. If a person defined democracy as freedom to commit murder then we excluded this from supporting a liberal conception of democracy.

We do recognize the potential threat of all freedoms to democracy. For instance, the freedom of speech can become the freedom to slander or the freedom to incite via hate speech. The freedom of the press can become the freedom to libel and defame one's political opponent. The freedom of religion can become the freedom to create hatred and significant social cleavages. And, the freedom to associate can become the freedom to revolt or even overthrow the democratic government itself. However, we once again borrow from Mill to justify a normative approach to liberalism in which commonly positive freedoms are not only sought, but cherished.

On a final note about our definition of liberalism, most scholars today define liberalism along the lines of Larry Diamond (1999) as a "political system in which individual and group liberties are well protected and in which there exist autonomous spheres of civil society and private life, insulated from state control" (p. 3). This is a derivation of Locke's assertion that certain constitutional structures act to guarantee the personal freedoms that help to secure democracy. While we recognize the importance of democracy's procedural elements (separation of powers, elections, etc.), we have not included this in our definition of liberal democracy. Our study is largely inductive and wholly empirical. We have categorized our definitions based on responses from survey participants. Few of these participants included multiple elements (both procedures and freedoms) in their definitions. We therefore can include only that which participants said in their definition. We cannot presume that they necessarily would include particular procedures in their definition, even if we agree with Diamond that these procedures act as necessary guarantors of those freedoms.

Definitions of Democracy from Uganda

The results from Uganda are drawn from a set of two questions. The first question asked "Have you heard of the idea of 'bringing government to the people,' or 'democracy'?" The phrase "bringing government to the people" was employed because it was a common part of the current Ugandan government's political rhetoric, and because it invited people to think broadly about the relationship between government and the people. The word "democracy" was included as the phonetic equivalent in the respective local language. The first question yielded results in which 67.7 percent of the 433 respondents said that they had heard of "bringing government to the people" or "democracy," while 32.3 percent (140) gave negative responses.

The second question asked those respondents who had heard of democracy to define the term. The second question generated 230 definitions. This open-ended question generated a wide variety of response, but three basic themes in the definitions were easily identified. The largest category (47 percent) mentioned various freedoms in their definitions of democracy. People most often referred to freedom of speech, but freedom of movement, as well as economic freedoms were also mentioned frequently. The second most common theme concerned some notion of popular participation in government (30 percent). Responses coded in this category included reference to citizen participation in government, such as voting or any other allusions to popular influence on government. The third category (22 percent) included all other definitions. In this miscellaneous group, democracy was often associated with ideas of peace, unity, equality, and development.

Table 1

Response to the question, "Could you please tell me what democracy means to you?"

Response	Percentage
Freedom	47
Participation	30
Miscellaneous	22
Total	100

N = 230.

Table 2

In your opinion, what does the word "democracy" mean?

Response	Percentage
Freedom (incl. freedom of speech, association, etc.)	64
Development	6
When the country is independent/independent of foreigners	3
Collaboration/people work together	3
Government of the people/participation in government by people	5
Other	19
Total	100

N = 447.

Definitions of Democracy from Madagascar

Respondents in Madagascar were asked the question: "In your opinion, what does the word democracy mean?" This was the first political question asked of the respondents. Other questions aimed at assessing democratic values followed. Respondents were not given a choice of answer categories, but rather responses to the democracy definition question were recorded in an open format in the local language and then translated and coded at a later date. The only uniform response pattern was "freedom" which accounted for 64 percent of responses. This includes respondents who named specific freedoms, liberty, or freedom as a whole.

Definitions of Democracy from Florida

In contrast to the Uganda and Madagascar studies, in Florida the survey was conducted by telephone as opposed to face-to-face. The question asked was: "I would like you to briefly tell me what democracy means to you." Respondents were not given a choice of answer categories. Interviewers coded the responses by marking one of multiple categories on the survey instrument or by adding a new

Table 3

I'd like you to briefly tell me what democracy means to you?

Response	Percentage
Freedom	14.8
Freedom of Speech	7.7
Freedom to do what they want*	11.2
Freedom of choice	13.1
Right to vote	3.8
Ability of the people to govern	7.7
The Constitution	1.6
Equality	3.2
Religious	0.7
Economic	1.9
Other**	20.5
Don't know	13.8
Total	100

N = 1003.
* Respondents often added that this expression of freedom related to lawful actions.
** The "Other" responses were not coded as they were too diverse.

response category. Despite the differences in how the surveys were conducted, the results are similar to Uganda and Madagascar with the largest aggregate response category being "freedom," at 46.8 percent. The remaining categories reflect governance issues more than procedures.

Analysis Of Data

This research examines four different independent variables to explain why respondents answer "freedom" when asked what democracy means to them. We also use these same variables to examine the group of respondents that offered "Don't Know" when asked the same question. While we are limited in our variables, the variables we do have are well known for their influence on political behavior and the shaping of political attitudes. Almond and Verba (1965) provide the most renowned use of income and education variables, but the variables have gained more current usage through such scholars as Russell Dalton (1988). They have also become important in the exploration of political behavior in Africa (Bratton and Liatto-Katundu 1994). These variables, like age and gender, have become so common that they are used regularly by the General Social Survey of the University of Michigan's Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

Independent Variables

Gender. Gender is coded with a 1 for male and a 2 for female. As in most social science research we believe that gender matters (Tripp 2000; Bratton 1997; Salinas 1993; Williams 1989).

Income. Income was measured differently in the three countries that make up this study. In Florida, respondents were asked to place themselves between different ranges of income. In Uganda, the interviewer made a subjective estimate of the wealth of the household interviewed based upon a visual inspection of the home and a discussion about goods production. In Madagascar, a socioeconomic section was a component of the survey. All produced goods, livestock, salaries, gathered goods, and other sources of income were aggregated in a single economic indicator by placing an economic value on each item based upon the average market value of that good in that region over the course of the year. Because of the different ways in which income was measured, we have chosen not to use it as an independent variable in the combined analysis, however we do use it in the individual country analysis.

Education. Education was also measured differently in each country. In Florida and Madagascar it was measured in years of education. In Uganda it was measured at the different levels of education, such as "some primary school," "primary school," "O levels," etc. We decided to re-code the Florida and Madagascar data on education to a format similar to the one used in Uganda. We ended up with an ordinal variable that ranges from 0 to 4. As in previous research, we expect education and income to be the most important factors in assessing political attitudes (Almond and Verba 1965:315).

Age. Age was measured the same way in all three samples. It was measured in years and ranges from 18 to over 90 and is treated as an interval variable. Increased age is a well-known predictor of increased political participation (Blair 2000). Similarly age and the accumulation of life experience is likely to influence perceptions of democracy.

New Democracy. We hypothesize that a respondent from a newly democratic country may view democracy differently from respondents in a more established democracy. Therefore, we created a dummy variable with Florida taking a value of 0 and the other two countries taking the value of 1.

Dependent Variables

Freedom. This variable is a dichotomous variable. Respondents who answered "freedom" in response to the question defining democracy were given a value of 1, all others were given a value of 0. While respondents in all three countries mentioned many types of freedom, for the purposes of the statistical analysis we

combined the different freedom responses. The primary reason for doing this was to make sure we had a sufficient number of observations to conduct the analysis. We do believe that the concept of freedom is wide ranging and that combining the different interpretations is a reasonable approach.

Only respondents who offered an answer were included in the creation of the variable. The number of respondents who offered an answer to the democracy questions varied considerably across countries. In Florida about 13 percent of the sample said they did not know. In Uganda about 41 percent did not know and finally, in Madagascar some 67 percent offered don't know. Because of the high number of "don't know" in the African countries we decided to examine this group of respondents separately.

Don't Know. We created a dummy variable for respondents who said they did not know what democracy means. Respondents who did not know were given a value of 1 and those that could offer a definition were given a 0. The number of respondents who offered an answer to the democracy questions varied considerable across countries.

The Sample

One of the challenges of this project was to combine samples from Florida, Uganda, and Madagascar. We realize that it would be better if all the studies had used the same sampling strategy and contained the same questions. Below is a

Figure 1. A model of factors associated with a definition of democracy that mentions freedom.

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
Sex Education Age *Income New Democracy	Mentioning "Freedom" as the Definition of Democracy

* Not used in the model containing all 3 countries.

Figure 1-2. A model of factors associated with people who say they don't know what democracy means.

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
Sex Education Age *Income New Democracy	Doesn't Know What Democracy Means

* Not used in the model containing all 3 countries.

brief description of the sampling strategy for each of the surveys. However, each study was conducted with a different original purpose. The idea of comparing the data came after the data collection and was a result of anecdotal evidence and discussions between the authors.

The Florida sample comes from a monthly survey of 1000 randomly selected households conducted in April 1997. The core survey is a survey about economic issues. It is a telephone survey using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. The sample was drawn proportionally based on the population of the 67 counties in the state of Florida. This means that if someone lives in a more populated county, his or her likelihood of being selected for the survey is higher than someone who lives in a sparsely populated county.

The Uganda survey was conducted from May through September 1994. Four districts were purposively selected for the study, one in an urban area, the capital city of Uganda, Kampala, two in ethnically Bantu districts, Luwero (Baganda) and Hoima (Banyoro), and one non-Bantu district, Lira (Lango). In each district, one sub-district was selected based on logistical considerations only. Within the sub-district, villages were randomly selected. Within villages, the final selection of all 436 respondents was accomplished by random methods based on lists of village residents provided by village authorities.

Comparison of demographic characteristics between the sample and 1991 Ugandan census figures confirm that the study's sample frame accurately reflects the population. The survey instrument was translated into vernacular languages and back translated into English to check for translation errors and to achieve congruence between vernacular versions. The surveys were conducted face-to-face in the relevant local language.

The Madagascar sample was part of a project that employed a quasi-experimental research design in an effort to compare the impacts of conservation and development activities on political perceptions in rural areas. Three regions were selected (in northern, central and southern Madagascar), all near national parks. Villages were selected purposively in order to ensure the validity of the design categories where half of the villages under study were target villages for conservation and development projects, and half of the villages were not target villages. Village selection priorities included geographic location (how far from a road, broad distribution around the peripheral zone), resource access, and ethnicity. In Ranomafana the work zone included ten villages, five target and five non-target, plus Ranomafana Village itself. In Andohahela and Masoala, the work zone included eight villages: four target and four non-target. Overall this is not a random sample of Madagascar. Like Uganda, this study does not draw upon the Malagasy population as a whole, but rather specific populations drawn from targeted regions. Within the three regions and in the target and non-target villages, respondents were randomly selected from the whole of the adult population. The total sample size

for the three regions is 1,358. These surveys were conducted face-to-face and in the relevant local languages between October 1997 and September 1998.

Data Analysis Strategy

The first goal was to identify a common set of variables. Because of the different survey instruments and the different ways variables were measured, we were limited in the variables we could use. Fortunately, all the variables available for analysis are well-known predictors of political behaviors and attitudes. We have tried to take a conservative approach with these data. Our goal is not to present the last word on definitions of democracy, but instead to highlight the similarities we found across these diverse countries in spite of the different way the samples were drawn and the data collected.

The Findings

In an effort to explore the cumulative effects of gender, age, and education on freedom definitions of democracy, we employed a logistical model. Logistic regression is well suited for our dichotomous dependent variables. We chose to use regression so that we could explore the independent effects of each variable, in the presence of the others and the additive effect of all the variables examined. If readers are familiar with interpreting the results of statistical analysis they can jump to the tables below. If readers are not familiar with statistical analysis, please see footnote 4.

The analysis reported in Table 4 includes only respondents who offered a definition of democracy. Those who answered, "don't know" were removed from

Table 4

Logistic regression Analysis of the freedom response for all countries

Variable	Entire Sample
Gender	−0.1015
	(0.1075)
Age	0.0022
	(0.0003)
Education	−0.1278
	(0.0741)
New Democracy	−0.4808**
	(0.0916)
N	1469
Number saying Freedom	647
* $P < 0.10$	** $P < 0.05$
(Standard Errors in Parentheses)	Model fit $p = 0.1439$

this analysis. Following common practices, we searched the output for significant independent variables that help explain changes in the dependent variable. In this model, and most of the individual country models, the defining characteristics of these models are a lack of variance. While whether a person lives in a new democracy (Uganda or Madagascar) yields significantly different results than if a person lives in an established democracy (Florida), the overall model fails to meet the minimum criteria. It is too easy to dismiss this model by saying that it only has four variables. If education, age, and sex cannot help us explain why someone offers freedom as an answer to our question about what democracy means, what will? We posit that what we are seeing here is broad-based consensus that crosses gender, age, education, and national borders. The individual country models below offer us further insights into this phenomenon.

As mentioned previously, income was measured differently in all three surveys. We therefore did not consider this variable in the analysis above. However, we were able to include it in the individual analysis and the results of its importance varied.

The Madagascar analysis deviates from the Florida and Uganda data. In Madagascar income significantly influences perceptions of freedom. The higher a person's income, the more likely s/he is to define democracy in terms of freedom. More importantly, the combined effects of income and education have an even greater impact. This is not surprising for, as noted above, education and income have been identified as primary factors in political attitudes for more than three

Table 5

Logistic regression analysis of the "freedom" response for Madagascar, Uganda, and Florida

Variable	Madagascar	Uganda	Florida
Gender	0.4134	−0.1151	0.0141
	(0.2155)*	(0.2867)	(0.1539)
Age	−0.0024	−0.0041	−0.0029
	(0.0081)	(0.0101)	(0.0045)
Household Income	0.0003	−0.0704	−0.0567
	(0.2107)	(0.1647)	(0.0341)
Education	0.0097	−0.2327	−0.0302
	(0.2107)	(0.1622)	(0.1351)
Education/Income Interaction term	−0.0005	N/A	N/A
	(0002)**		
N	439	220	709
Number saying Freedom	158	118	328
Model fit	$p = 0.0004$	$p = 0.3924$	$p = 0.4400$
* $P < 0.10$	** $P < 0.05$	*** $P < 0.01$	

decades. Why then is it significant in Madagascar, but not in the Florida or Uganda samples? The first answer is the level of education and income. Absolute poverty in the Malagasy regions is comparatively high, and education is significantly lower than in the Uganda and Florida samples. The effect of education and income at the most base level may be greater than at incrementally higher levels. Second, the sample was only rural in Madagascar and it was urban and rural in Uganda and Florida. Finally, people who have higher incomes are commonly the same people who have higher education. When this happens, it is possible that one variable will eliminate the significance of the other. So, in a case such as ours, it is prudent to introduce an interaction term and explore the data to see if an interaction is present. The open format of the democracy question resulted in a low response rate. Those that answered the question tend to have more education and income than those who did not answer the question. While this is not a surprising finding, it does introduce a bias. This effect is lower in the Uganda and Florida samples. We posit that this effect is lower in the Uganda and Florida samples because of higher levels of income and education, and because of the way the democracy question was asked in Uganda.

Uganda and Florida had very similar results. Neither model had any significant variables and both failed to meet the minimum requirement of goodness of fit. We did include an interaction term for education and income, but in both of these models the interaction term was insignificant, so it was removed. Again, the usual variables that social scientists have had success with in helping to understand political attitude and behaviors could not help us understand why some people, a very large proportion in all three studies, centered their definitions of democracy on notions of freedom.

The lack of significance in the Florida model offers little analytical insight for those seeking a deeper understanding of democracy in new democracies. Some may contend that the Florida sample is not representative of public opinion about democracy in the United States as a whole, and indeed, we cannot claim that Florida is representative of the United States based on these data alone. However we feel that the findings of a nationwide survey would not differ greatly. Florida is the fourth largest state in the United States, has a diverse population, and is home for many people who came from eastern and mid-western sections of the United States.

Don't Know Responses

Clearly this model is much more robust than the model on freedom responses. The data suggest that in all the countries: women, younger respondents, those with less education, less income, and those living in a new democracy are less likely to be able to define democracy. These findings fit well with extensive research done in

Table 6

Logistic regression analysis of the don't know response for all countries

Variable	Entire Sample
Gender	0.5554***
	(0.0975)
Age	−0.0207***
	(0.0032)
Education	−1.3138***
	(0.0741)
New Democracy	−1.1808***
	(0.2156)
N	2710
Number of Don't knows	1241
* $P < 0.10$	** $P < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
(Standard Errors in Parentheses)	
Model fit	$p = 0.0001$

the United States and around the world in new and more established democracies. In the new democracies of Uganda and Madagascar education is likely the key to lowering the number of people who can't define democracy.

In the individual country models, gender is negative and highly significant. In all three cases it suggests that men are more likely to respond to the question than women. Age has a significant influence in Madagascar and Florida, but the direction of the influence is opposite. In Florida, the younger respondents were less likely to be able to answer the question and in Madagascar the older a respondent is, the more likely s/he is to have answered the question. Age is not significant in Uganda.

The coefficient for income is negative in Uganda, therefore, those with lower levels of income are less likely to offer a definition for the democracy question. Lower levels of education are associated with respondents being unable to answer the democracy question both in Florida and in Uganda. However, in Madagascar the combined effects, seen in the interaction term of education and income is very significant, suggesting that people who have lower education and incomes are more likely to be unable to respond to the question.

As noted previously, we consider the most important factor in these data to be the emphasis on freedom in these definitions of democracy drawn from widely disparate research sites. In Uganda and Madagascar, histories of limited political and economic rights can be postulated as an explanation for the emphasis on freedom, but in the Florida sample, no such justification is available. In Florida, we might have expected respondents to give simple procedural definitions associated

Table 7

Logistic regression analysis of the don't know response for Madagascar, Uganda, and Florida

Variable	Madagascar	Uganda	Florida
Gender	0.4215***	1.0291***	0.7188***
	(0.1324)	(0.2410)	(0.2385)
Age	0.0160***	−0.0005	−0.0521***
	(0.0048)	(0.0782)	(0.0082)
Household Income	−0.0002	−0.5824***	−0.1039
	(0.0001)	(0.1483)	(0.0567)
Education	−1.2042	−1.2326***	−0.9275***
	(0.1346)	(0.1975)	(0.1749)
Education/Income	−0.00029***	N/A	N/A
	(0.0001)		
N	1333	421	817
Number of Don't Knows	894	201	108
Model fit	$P = 0.001$	$p = 0.0001$	$p = 0.001$
* $P < 0.10$	** $P < 0.05$	*** $P < 0.01$	
(Standard Errors in Parentheses)			

with democratic election rituals. However, we find that Floridians, along with the African rural poor, emphasize freedom in their definitions of democracy.

Another important aspect of these data is that none of the proffered definitions are negative in tone. While not unexpected, this is an important finding because it demonstrates that people are not fundamentally cynical or disillusioned concerning the idea of democracy. Although it is likely that our respondents would have voiced concerns with the performance of democratically selected leaders and specific government policies, it is clear that democracy itself is viewed positively.

Of course, definitions alone, especially definitions of abstract ideals such as democracy, are subject to a wide variety of interpretations. It is possible that many people who associated democracy with freedom assumed that a notion of popular sovereignty was implicit in their response, since freedom, especially freedom of speech, is likely to be a strong form of participation, especially in village settings from which the vast majority of our African sample was drawn.

It is also true that popular notions about democracy are probably more strongly associated with government performance than indicated by the definitional data reported here. Indeed, in a study of factors associated with consolidation of democracy in Ghana, Zambia, and South Africa, Bratton and Mattes (1992) found that "intrinsic" factors "based on an appreciation of the political rights and freedoms that democracy embodies when valued as an end in itself," were more-less evenly

balanced with "instrumental" (i.e. economic factor) evaluations of democratic regimes (p. 2). However, we note that our findings parallel the findings of Bratton and Mattes who found a slight tilt toward "intrinsic"attitudes towards democracy.

Implications of the data

Defining Democracy in Africa

One of the principal problems facing students of African democracy concerns how democracy should be defined in Africa. Indeed, across the world questions about how to define democracy preoccupy students of comparative politics. David Collier and Steven Levitsky (1997) argue that democracy's third wave has offered scholars a challenge as it presents the world with more than 550 "subtypes" of democracy. They assert that in an effort to analyze new cases, scholars have pursued two potentially contradictory goals: to increase conceptual differentiation in order to capture the diverse forms of democracy that have emerged, and to clarify democratic definitions in order to avoid conceptual stretching. We believe that our data speaks directly to definitional concerns. Specifically, we demonstrate how our data illuminates a recent scholarly debate between Guillermo O'Donnell (1999) and Larry Diamond (1999) concerning how "minimalist" definitions of democracy should be understood.

Joseph Schumpeter's (1942) minimalist view of the democratic method as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (p. 242) is a useful starting point for typologies of democracy. The minimalist view is one of the most popular espoused by theorists and the dominant view adopted by western policy analysts. The reason for this marriage to minimalism is clear; it sets the democratic bar at a level that is high enough to guarantee some element of popular participation in the political process, but low enough that regimes can implement it with relative haste regardless of the existent political culture.

The common criticism of this minimalist view is that competitive elections do not in themselves act as a guarantee for the inclusion of public voice. Guillermo O'Donnell (1999) seeks to recast the minimalist definition into what he calls a "realistic" definition. The main revision he advocates is broadening the minimalist threshold of fair and institutionalized elections with some political freedoms to include particularistic legal and historic factors. That is, democracy is differentiated from other political types not only by elections, but also by a legal system that backs rights and freedoms and guarantees equal rights under law. O'Donnell (1999) argues that this includes a universalistic wager, "everyone is expected to accept that, barring exceptions detailed by the legal system, everyone else enjoys the same rights and obligations that she has" (p. 18). O'Donnell focuses on a set of laws

allowing for the popular expression of certain freedoms as opposed to focusing on whether those freedoms can actually be realized by the general public. The "right" to freedom is therefore not the same as "having" that freedom. In broadening the minimalist definition of democracy, one of O'Donnell's goals is to grow space for empirical explorations of democracy; this is also our goal.

Larry Diamond (1999) argues, like O'Donnell, that "accountability of rulers to the ruled and government responsiveness to the diverse interests and preferences of the governed are basic goods," (p. 2) is a normative assumption. He then seeks to expand the minimalist definition of democracy beyond that expressed by O'Donnell to include liberal freedoms to better address the outcomes of a country's democratic growth. "Increasingly in the twentieth century, the freedoms of the individual to think, believe, worship, speak, publish, inquire, associate, and become informed, and the freedoms from torture, arbitrary arrest, and unlawful detention — not to mention enslavement and genocide — are recognized as universal and inalienable rights" (Diamond 1999:3). Specifically, liberal democracy extends the formal and intermediate conception of democracy requiring vertical legitimacy of power for military leaders or other actors not accountable to the electorate, horizontal accountability of office holders, and provisions for political and civic freedoms, as well as individual and group freedoms (Diamond 1999:10).

Diamond (1999) ends his definitional foray with an appeal for developmental democracy. "From this perspective, the presence of legal opposition parties that may compete for power and win some seats in the parliament, and of the greater space for civil society that tends to prevail in such systems, constitute important foundations for future democratic development" (p. 12). This view advocates the growth of parliaments, renewed constitutionalism, civil society accountability, and human rights. Democracies that are liberal may fall short of democratic ideals. However, less liberal democracies "may still have some serious flaws in their guarantees of personal and associational freedoms" (Diamond 1999:13). The developmental democracy Diamond advocates necessarily holds liberalism as a goal. In this way, Diamond places a normative value on liberalism in democracy. Liberalism, he continues to argue, provides good protection for these rights. Moreover, it provides the citizenry the armaments necessary to protect themselves from a reversal of democratic fortunes.

The difference between O'Donnell and Diamond concerns Diamond's endorsement of liberalism as not just a procedural goal but as a normative value. While it is hard to argue with the sentiment, we find the acceptance of such a norm in the face of significant ethnic and historic heterogeneity in democracy's third wave to require empirical analysis. In contrast to O'Donnell, we are not questioning whether all young democracies culturally support the use of the same bar.

Despite our normative apprehensions, our principal empirical findings support Diamond's position. We find that people are defining democracy in similar ways

across countries, cultures, economic levels, sex, and age. We also find that these definitions are grounded in personal freedoms, which implies that liberal democratic notions prevail in the countries under study.

Policy Implications

Perhaps the most significant facet of the current revival of interest in African democracy is that it is dominated by liberal versions of democratic theory. Other scholars have noted the expansion of liberalism in Africa. As stated by Gyimah-Boadi, "considerable progress has been made in the 1990s in terms of securing relatively free and fair elections, reduction of official arbitrariness and civil liberties, some limits on state power are being established in some countries" (1998:27-8). Based on principles of individual rights and open competition in both politics and economics, liberal models of democracy have been ascendant in Africa since the 1980s. Prior to that time, socialist definitions of democracy dominated political discourse. Socialist democratic theory placed far more emphasis on the role of the state in the organization of both political and economic arenas. A detailed account of the reasons for the decline of the socialist model in Africa is beyond the scope of this essay, but for our purposes, it is important to note that the decline of the socialist model has considerably narrowed policy debates about African democratization. Socialist calls for all-powerful "people's states" capable of steering African nations out of economic dependency are mute, while liberal demands for multi-party political competition and privatization of African economies are ubiquitous.

Our data demonstrates that both Africans and Floridians associate democracy primarily with various freedoms — a finding that supports the strong link between liberalism and democracy asserted by many democratic theorists. With regard to the history of liberal democracy, it is often remarked that respect for liberal values, especially as these values are reflected in policies designed to secure rights and privileges of individuals, has tended to precede the expansion of democratic practice (Zakaria 1997). Historical arguments aside, values associated with universal suffrage are so deeply engrained in the contemporary era that, outside of some Islamic states, the democratic process (i.e., free and fair universal suffrage elections) is today, virtually the only foundation for political legitimacy (Plattner 1998). Thus, while it is difficult to imagine political legitimacy in Africa completely divorced from universal suffrage elections, our data can be interpreted to suggest that African politicians may be able to create considerable political capital outside of electoral mechanisms by guaranteeing basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property.

To be sure, there are many potential pitfalls for any who might wish to impose the ideal liberal "night watchman state" in Africa. The need for social services and economic development in Africa is pressing, but it is also true that African governments are unlikely to be able to satisfy these demands. The potential for abuse of

Africans at the hands of western and comprador capitalism is also great, but again, with the collapse of the socialist development model, it is unclear how African governments can avoid the unequal development associated with capitalism. In fact, African governments have few resources and few planning alternatives. Given this daunting situation, it seems that African politicians may increasingly embrace liberal philosophy as a basis for bargaining with their electorates. No doubt issues surrounding provision of services by central governments will be important for relations between African states and their societies, but our data suggests that the preservation of individual rights and freedoms might also become an important aspect of political discourse.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this paper are very preliminary. Our studies were originally conducted independently, and our samples reflect the goals of the individual projects. Despite methodological differences, the common definition of democracy in all three countries lends to the normative assumption that democracy is imbued with meaning not by the processes and procedures of the state, but by the personal freedoms that it offers. We have explored cross-nationally the influence of income, education, sex, and age on the way people defined democracy. However, the limitations of our data have prohibited us from taking the cross-country analysis forward. Thus while we have been successful in determining commonalities in *how* people define democracy, we have not been successful in explaining *why* people define democracy in a certain way or offering a comprehensive series of factors that explain democratic definitions across country studies. We therefore feel that this exploration does not provide answers, but rather offers us valuable questions worthy of future exploration.

NOTES

1 Such cases include smaller countries such as Sao Tome and Principe, Mauritius, and, to a lesser degree, Malawi, Namibia and Mali (Diamond 1999).

2 For example: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gabon, Zambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Guinea, Togo and Zimbabwe (Diamond 1999). Arguably Madagascar may well be moving into this category following the second presidential elections in 1996 to 1997.

3 According to Hyden (1992), "Governance. . . is the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm [sic]. . . Legitimacy is the dependent variable produced by effective governance" (p. 17). In this paper we use the term governance to refer to efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in government apart from procedural considerations (such as elections).

4 The following paragraphs provide an explanation of what the different terms and numbers in the models mean and how to interpret them.

P-values tell us whether a variable has a significant independent association with change in the dependent variable. This change, if significant, can either be positive or negative, depending

on the sign in front of the slope coefficient (the first number reported after the variable name). Generally, in the social sciences a *p*-value of .05 or less is considered significant. However, because of the exploratory nature of this research, we have chosen to report *p*-values up to .10. Simply put, this means that in similar samples we can expect the same results 95 out of 100 times with a *p*-value of .05 and 90 times out of 100 with a *p*-value of .10.

Significant variables have an asterisk "*" next to the slope coefficient. For example, if income is positive and has an "*" then we can say that income has significant independent association with the dependent variable, such as the increased likelihood of someone choosing freedom as their definition of democracy. If there is no *, then that variable has no independent association with change in the dependent variable.

Another statistic we refer to is "model fit." Model fit refers to the strength of the model. We are using the generally accepted threshold is .05 or less. A *p*-value of more than .05 means that the overall strength of the model is poor and that the results should not be trusted, regardless or whether some variables are significant. This is the case for our first model in Table 4 where the variable "New Democracy" was significant, but the overall model was not.

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Information Technology and Democratic Participation in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the nature of political communication and democratic participation in Africa to determine whether these technologies are changing the face of politics on the continent. It analyzes who has access to the forums; topics that are discussed; what influence these digital forums have on political decision making; and the extent to which they replicate or differ from the affective and emotive manifestations of political interaction in the "real" world. It concludes that a lot more people are getting a lot more information, but that this does not translate into a significant expansion in the numbers and categories of those who engage in, and hence influence, the direction of politics on the continent.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1990s, a confluence of internal and external factors produced significant conjunctures in the political landscape of Africa. The effects of these developments on democratic politics had not been seen since the early 1960s, when most post-colonial states encountered their first experiences with constitutional government (see Tettey 2001). Principal among these was a revival of democratic optimism, not only across the African continent but also around the world (Villalon 1998; Ihonvbere and Mbaku 1998; Makumbe 1998; Chabal 1998; Ogbondah 1997). Unprecedented transformations in the sphere of information and communication technologies (ICTs), around the same period fuelled the optimism. Various scholars have argued that the political and technological changes are dialectically linked as revolutionary catalysts that will consolidate the "third wave" of democracy and help extend democratic dispensation around the globe.

Indeed, since the emergence of these "coincident revolutions" (Kedzie 1997), there have been extensive discussions about the democratizing influence of ICTs. What makes these developments significant is the fact that the technologies are believed to have such powerful transformative capabilities for political participa-

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tion that could not be remotely imagined by early thinkers of democracy. Aristotle, for example, asserted that democratic practice could not be successful beyond the Athenian model. According to him, the gathering of large numbers of people at a single location was impossible, thereby imposing tremendous limitations on the practice of democracy when populations expanded beyond that of ancient Athens. This argument was reiterated by venerable political thinkers of the nineteenth century such as Montesqieu and Rousseau. They decried large-scale democracy because it could lead to a government that "neither knows nor implements the public's will" (Snider 1994:16). While the sustenance of democratic systems bigger than ancient Athens has debunked the views of these early thinkers, there nevertheless appears to be an increasing distance between citizens and rulers. This development has led to concerns that the sovereignty of the citizenry and the primacy of their will in political matters may be eroding as they are progressively moved away from the center of political activity.

It is in the midst of this concern that ICTs have been touted as a panacea for bringing the body politic back into the center of politics. Kedzie (1997), in an analysis of the relationship between ICT connectivity and democracy in various regions of the world, argues that there is a positive relationship between the two and that the former begets the latter. His regression analyses, with particular reference to Africa, yielded similar results.

The perception that ICTs are a critical ingredient for democratic governance in Africa has resulted in various initiatives that are meant to strengthen civil society, assure transparency in government, and make it easier for citizens to access information, engage in democratic discourse, and affect the direction of policy. Among the most extensive of these programs are the $15 million Leland Initiative being undertaken by the USAID in about 20 countries, the Economic Commission for Africa's "African Information Society Initiative," and the Canadian International Development Research Center's "Acacia Initiative." The conviction underlying these efforts is encapsulated, in the following assertion, albeit in an extreme form:

> To the extent that the United States and other Western democracies aim to encourage the development of democracy worldwide they do so primarily through programs to improve economic development, education, health, legal reform, etc. The causal connection supporting those programs is no stronger, and in most instances quite a bit weaker, than can be inferred in the case of networked communication technology (Kedzie 1997:83).

This paper attempts to ascertain the validity of this causal linkage between ICTs and democracy in Africa. It argues that while the technologies have expanded the amount and sources of information that are potentially available to citizens, they have not resulted in any significant transformations in the way government

is run or how politics are conducted on the continent. The paper starts with a discussion of the relatively new literature on the connection between the new information technologies and democracy, outlining the main perspectives that define this body of scholarship. It then proceeds to analyse the implications of the developments in ICT for democratic politics in the specific context of Africa. Particular attention is paid to issues of information access, the purposes for which most people use the technologies, and whether government actions bear out the promises of "cyberdemocracy." The final section provides a brief analysis of political discussions among Ghanaians on two Internet forums. The purpose is to situate the preceding discussion in the context of a specific case. The section analyses the nature of political communication and democratic participation to determine the extent to which this technology is changing the face of Ghanaian politics at the dawn of the new millennium. Specific questions to be answered include: (1) Who has access to the forums? (2) What topics are discussed? (3) What influences do these digital forums have on political decision making in Ghana? And, (4) To what extent do they replicate or differ from the affective and emotive manifestations of political interaction in the "real" world? For instance, do they support the following assertion?

> Where conventional politics is suffused with ideology, the digital world is obsessed with facts. Where our current political system is irrational, awash in hypocritical god- and values talk, the Digital Nation points the way towards a more rational, less dogmatic approach to politics (E. Katz and T. Lieber, cited in Wilson III n.d.).

ICTs and Democracy

The literature is filled with arguments to the effect that ICTs have the potential for transforming political interactions among citizens and political authorities in a manner that suggests the empowerment of the former and enables them to influence policy decisions. This "utopian" view of the relationship between technology and politics also contends that ICTs will become the magic equalizer that allows hitherto marginalized segments of society to participate significantly in the political process. The invaluable role that communication technologies such as faxes and electronic mail played in the dissemination of information by, and eventual success of, pro-democracy forces in Eastern Europe is widely cited as empirical evidence to support this assertion.

Jones (1994) refers to the case of James Mancham, the deposed Prime Minister of Seychelles, to illustrate the tremendous power of information technologies in awakening civil society. Using a single fax machine from his residence in the United Kingdom, where he was in exile, Mancham embarked on a three-year campaign of political information that flooded all 600 fax machines in the

Seychelles with political information. This action affected the political atmosphere in his home country in a manner that allowed him to return in 1992.

The belief in the democratizing potentials of free and diverse information flow, and of attendant technologies, is not new (see Tettey 2001). Seventeenth century liberal theorists articulated the positive relationship between media freedom and democracy, while the printing press of the early nineteenth century is argued to have made it possible for ordinary people to access political information relatively cheaply and conveniently. The development of television and radio also allowed the circle of political participation to be expanded beyond politicians. Meiklejohn (1960) contends that democracy derives from popular sovereignty, so its sustenance requires a politically active, hence a well-informed, citizenry.

Since the perceived positive connection between information and its technologies of dissemination, on the one hand, and democracy, on the other, is not new, it is important to explore what ICTs bring to the democratic process that is qualitatively different from existing mechanisms. According to cyber-libertarians, the technologies have certain intrinsic characteristics that enhance the interaction between governments and citizens. They provide "a vast network of liberated and equal citizens of the world capable of debating all facets of their existence without fear of control from national sovereign authorities" (Barlow, cited in Hague and Loader 1999:6; see also Toffler 1980). These features include reciprocal interactivity among many people; a global network that is not constrained by territorial boundaries; uncensored speech; the ability to challenge and cross-check official views; and the development of transnational civil society.

Implicit in the above capabilities of ICTs is the belief among utopians that citizens will be able to develop the concept of "democratic autonomy" (Held 1996). This means that citizens will have the opportunity to participate "in all decisions concerning issues which impinge upon and are important to them" in an atmosphere of freedom (Held 1996:310; see also Crede and Mansell 1998). A significant opportunity that ICTs are expected to provide in terms of participatory democracy is the supposed equality that it fosters among citizens (Kedzie 1997:26). It is argued that socioeconomic barriers that prevented certain groups from participating in the political process will be eliminated as a result of technologies which can be accessed from even the remotest locations and from which individuals' opinions can be disseminated without the intervention of any gatekeepers. Also implicit within this perspective is the assumption that citizen involvement in cyberpolitics will ensure that governments become accountable to the citizenry.

Chatfield (1991) argues that the "information revolution ... shows promise to offset the control mechanisms of both governments and corporations. New patterns of information dissemination follow highly centralised networks, rather than the old hierarchical structure. As a result, communication becomes more interactive, with less opportunity for governmental or corporate intrusion" (p. 159).

He contends that there is an absence of "noise" in ICT-mediated communication, due to the fact that this form of communication allows citizens and political groups to directly access information and interact with other actors in the political system. As a result, it becomes difficult for traditional gatekeepers to infuse political information with the same level of ideological bias that characterizes most contemporary forms of interaction between citizens and politicians.

Those who believe in the transformative and democratizing power of the new technologies opine that the speed with which ICTs permit information to be disseminated allows victims of political persecution to elicit extensive and speedy external support for their situation in a manner that is unprecedented. They point specifically to how these technologies have made it easier for human rights organizations around the world to keep tyrannical governments in check. In the past, significant time-lags between the actions of repressive governments and the response of human rights organizations enabled tyrannical regimes to escape international scrutiny. In the view of utopians, the new information technologies have created the enabling circumstances that allow effective monitoring by civil society organizations, thereby making it possible to prevent certain kinds of human rights abuses from taking place. As one human rights activist points out, "if you catch a government while it's trying to hide its repressive acts, that embarrasses them nationally and internationally. And one of the best ways to stop human rights violations is to embarrass the violators" (cited in Jones 1994:154).

The "utopian" perspective on ICTs has not gone unchallenged. "Dystopians," on the other hand, have a pessimistic view of the impact of these technologies (see Hamelink 1997). They argue that ICTs will just produce a façade of democracy and popular participation because the elite manipulate information technologies to fit their institutional and personal agendas. This perspective on the link between technology and power is given much visibility in the literature on "reinforcement politics" which argues that the technology serves the interest of those who dominate the prevailing structure of influence (Kipnis 1990; Pitt and Smith 1984; Danziger et al. 1982). Other skeptics, such as Wright (1995) berate the claim that ICTs promote good governance. He argues that instead of making government better the technologies have rather made it worse, resulting in a "hyperdemocracy" — that is, a political cacophony in which different groups jockey for political advantage and politicians engage in "impulsive passage of dubious laws" (p. 16).

Access, Voice and Transnational Civil Society

To what extent are the expectations of "utopians" likely to be realized in the African context? It seems that they fail to take into account the presence or absence of certain enabling circumstances that will allow citizens to use the technologies in the first place. Using the technologies to influence political choices implies that

citizens have access to the technologies in the first place. This is not a given, due to a variety of factors. Among these factors are economic status, geographical location, educational attainment, gender, and literacy in the dominant language of the technology. Differences among citizens in these areas, means that certain segments of society cannot participate on an equal footing in the political process via ICTs.

According to the 1999 Human Development Report, "the fusion of computing and communications — especially through the Internet — has broken bounds of cost, time and distance, launching an era of global information networking" (UNDP 1999:57; see also Kedzie 1997:34). This glowing picture is far from the reality for a significant number of Africans for whom no bounds have been broken. In fact, for most of these people, there seems to be decreasing possibilities for accessing the technologies as they battle to maintain a minimum level of sustenance in the harsh economic realities that beleaguer them.

While more than 50 million households in the United States and almost 50 million in Europe have access to at least one computer (UNDP 1999:58), the situation in Africa is significantly different. In Ghana, only 1.6 people per 1,000 had personal computers in 1997, compared to 270.6 in Canada (World Bank 2000:266). The small number of those on the continent who have access to the technology are obviously the urban elite. Thus, instead of the technology making it possible for more people to participate in the political process on an equal footing, it is only enhancing the participation of an elite few. This situation effectively excludes the majority of urban and rural dwellers from taking advantage of the democratic potentials of ICTs (see Everett 1998:386). As Galbraith (1994) observes, "nothing sets a stronger limit on the liberty of the citizen than a total absence of money" (p. 2). In fact, while the growth of ICTs is leading to decreasing costs in the North, and hence an expansion in the number of those who can afford the technologies, trends in the African situation are different. Currency devaluation and high import duties on computers, for example, do not allow the benefits of decreasing costs to seep down to the majority of the population in these countries. Consequently, the assertion that declining technology costs have allowed "a diversity of voices and cultures to be aired" is largely unsubstantiated in the African context.

It is important to point out that even within the category of the fortunate elite, access to computers does not necessarily translate into access to the Internet and the presumed possibilities that it offers for increased democratic participation. There is another hurdle that needs to be cleared in order to participate in this virtual community; that is the means to log onto cyberspace, beyond owning a computer. There are computer owners who cannot enter the cyber world of politics because the cost of doing so is beyond their means. On the average, it costs about $100 a month to maintain an Internet connection in Africa, compared to $10 in the United States (UNDP 1999:62). This is clearly outside the means

of most people, including those who might own personal computers. In South Africa, for example, those who use the Internet have incomes that are about seven times the national average (UNDP 1999:62). It is no wonder that only 0.1 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population has access to the Internet, compared to 26.3 percent in the United States (UNDP 1999:63). In sum, the use of the Internet for purposes of political participation will, at best, just replicate the enormous divisions between the "haves" and the "have-nots" or, at worst, distance and marginalize the majority from the political process even further. Such differences are not limited to individuals but have been found to exist among civil society organizations as well, with a tendency for well-resourced organizations not to share information with the less-endowed ones (see Firoze et al. 1999:17). This restricts the number of people involved in the process of building "social capital" (Putnam 1993) which constitutes a core base from which to construct a "strong democracy." Social capital accumulation on an inclusive scale connotes civic engagement and citizen interaction beyond a small coterie of economic and political elites. The marginalization of the subaltern classes erodes the principle of democratic citizenship as defined in Dahrendorf's (1990) conception of elementary rights. Implicit in these rights is the necessity of citizens' access to information. It is in view of the imperative of information access that Hallovan (1994) provides the following warning:

> As the information society develops it will not be possible to achieve the goals of citizenship or to exercise the appropriate rights and responsibilities in the absence of information and communications systems that provide the information base and the opportunities for access and participation for *all* citizens. Accountability and responsibility demand that those who espouse development and globalization take this into account (p. 183).

Another critical variable that needs to be taken into account in terms of evaluating the use, or potential use, of the Internet for political discourse is to assess the kind of material that "surfers" go to the net for. Castells (1997) notes that "while governments and futurologists speak of wiring classrooms, doing surgery at a distance and teleconsulting the Encyclopaedia Britannica, most of the actual construction of the new system focuses on 'video-on-demand,' tele-gambling and VR theme parks" (p. 366). In the African setting, the high cost of travelling in cyberspace means that individuals who have to pay for their stay there are more likely to retrieve or send information quickly. They are less likely to engage in extensive and meaningful discourse that is capable of affecting the political process (see Jensen 1998:v). Firoze et al. (1999:12-13), in a survey of Internet use among human rights organizations in Southern Africa, found that there is no proactive use of the technology and that a significant amount of time was used to surf the net without any clear focus. This finding about political activity in the virtual world

reflects the view that "most people do not have the time, interest or patience for the grind of policy discussion" in the regular world of politics (Varn 1993:22). In spite of the lure of ICTs, it is unlikely that this fundamental lack of political disposition will change, especially when such change requires financial investments that are not available to most people.

It is also significant to point out the macro-level constraints affecting access to the technologies. A primary focus in this regard is the level of infrastructural development on the continent. While it is generally accepted that the basic measure of access to telecommunications is one telephone for a hundred people, the teledensity in much of the continent is far less than that. This low density is also concentrated in the urban areas, thereby making it nearly impossible for most people to use modems or broadband technologies to access the web, even if they had other necessary variables in place. While studies have shown that "the internet is the fastest growing tool of communication ever" (UNDP 1999:58), and that almost all African countries are now online compared to only 16 in 1996 (Jensen 1998), it is critical that we interrogate the homogenizing assumptions that are enshrined in it. A more relevant question is: for whom is the Internet "the fastest growing communication tool"? Without doubt, the response to such a question in the African context confirms that access to ICTs and their use is limited, with large disparities among individuals, countries, and regions. In 1998, for example, South Africa had about 600,000 email users compared to only about 100,000 for the rest of the continent. This means that less than 1 in every 5000 people had access to the technology (Jensen 1998:iv). Indeed, there are still people for whom the radio or the television has not yet arrived (see UNDP 1999:58).

It is a fact that about 80 percent of all interactions on the web (graphics, instructions, communication, etc) are in English. This raises concerns about the kinds of people who can participate in the political discourses that take place on the web and other interactive sites. For the vast number of Africans, who fall into the illiterate category, access to these digital discussions is not autonomously available. It is in this respect that the Human Development Report (1999) asserts that "[i]n Benin, for example, more than 60% of the population is illiterate, so the possibility of expanding access beyond today's 2,000 Internet users are heavily constrained" (p. 62). While it gives us some idea about the extent of access to ICTs, the use of literacy rates as a basis for speculating on the possible numbers of Internet users reveals certain limitations. These figures only tell part of the story since there are other adults who are literate, but not necessarily in English, the dominant language of the Internet. An appreciation of this limitation clearly indicates that the above assessment in the Human Development Report is more conservative than may be warranted.

The issue of access is conflated by gender differences in the use of the technology. Estimates all over the world indicate that males dominate the Internet. Surveys of Internet users in 1998 and 1999 show that "women accounted for 38%

of users in the United States, 25% in Brazil, 17% in Japan and South Africa, 16% in Russia . . . 7% in China and a mere 4% in the Arab States" (UNDP 1999:62). The reasons for these disparities have their origins in sociocultural variables that have appropriated the technological realm as an arena for males. The marginalization of women as a result of illiteracy is even worse due to the fact that 50 percent of them are illiterate compared to 34 percent of men (World Bank 2000:233). The delineation, by gender, of Ghana's 1997 adult illiteracy rate shows that 23 percent of males are illiterate, compared to 43 percent of females (World Bank 2000:323). There is also an economic dimension to the relationship between gender and technology. In Africa, for example, men tend to have relatively higher incomes than their female counterparts and are, therefore, more likely to afford economic access to the technologies than the latter. It is instructive to note that all over the world, the "typical internet user is male, under 35 years old, with a college education and high income, urban-based and English speaking" (UNDP 1999:63).

Another area where the ICTs-democracy connection is highlighted is in the development of a strong transnational civil society. Such a society, which will be unencumbered by territorial boundaries, will foster solidarity among different groups, combine resources to monitor state actions, and compel governments to succumb to intense pressure from a ubiquitous group of global citizens. As the Human Development Report (1999) notes, in relation to globalization and the knowledge society:

> Cutting across the tradition of national communities is the rise of on-line communities, drawn together by politics, ethnicity, interests, gender, work or social cause. Using the network, they fire up debates and rally instant responses, bringing a new lobbying power to the previously silent voices on the global stage. At the same time network communities can forge closer local communities, providing community information and making local government more transparent (p. 58).

This image of a transnational and networked civil society, however, neglects to interrogate certain fundamental questions that are germane if this new political configuration is to be internally democratic and function effectively. For example, who, in these "cyber communities," have authority to articulate democratic voice on behalf of a people? Do their views reflect the positions of those on whose behalf they claim to speak? Are there particular conditions under which global solidarity can be garnered? Everett (1998), in an analysis of the Latin American context, observes a paradox in the use of the Internet by transnational civil society. She notes that "the issue of who gets to represent 'Latinos' and 'Colombians' is still one of class, power, and access to technology. While the Internet may make self-representation possible for a small elite, it has also made it more difficult for other voices to be heard" (Everett 1998:387).

The same situation seems to obtain in Africa as well, as illustrated by the following case involving the San/Basarwa of Botswana. Some domestic supporters of the San/Bawarwa have been unfavorably disposed to the Internet protests being conducted by international civil society groups to highlight the plight, and compel the government to improve the situation of these indigenous people. These domestic civil society groups argue that the concerted bombardment of state officials with e-mail protests may, in fact, hurt their cause. This is because the government might become more intransigent instead of cooperative, as a result of the bad publicity it is getting. It is their contention that they know best how to elicit concessions from the government without antagonizing it, something that members of the cyber civil society do not appear to know. The San case is also significant in another respect. It clearly provides an insight into the distanciation that characterizes the relationship between the victims of state repression and their, undoubtedly well-intentioned, supporters from the outside. This situation is ironic, because while the Internet is making it possible for transnational civil society to confront repressive governments, they are unable to use the same means to dialogue with those on whose behalf they claim to speak.

One of the assumptions that utopians make is that whatever information is put on the Internet will automatically find an audience which will access and act upon it. This assumption ignores the political, economic, and cultural biases that structure the relationship between civil society organizations around the world. Transnational civil society groups tend to coalesce when they solidarize around issues that are of mutual interest. Such was the case with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank/International Monetary Fund demonstrations in Seattle and Washington D.C., respectively. In those cases where such common linkages are absent or not strong, the ability of single-location, idiosyncratic civil society organizations to galvanize support from external democratic forces is not as successful.

Part of the enthusiasm about the Internet is that it will enable citizens to gain access to such information, irrespective of their location. Such a possibility is exciting for local African civil society groups because it will, ostensibly, enable them to effectively monitor and hold governments accountable. To realize this objective, they need to have access to the requisite information about governments and their activities. It is worth noting, however, that access to such information by local groups is limited because over 90 percent of it is stored and managed in the United States and Europe (UNDP 1999:60). This fact, coupled with the various constraints discussed earlier, means that the remote sources are not available to many African civil society organizations. Consequently, they cannot take significant advantage of the opportunities that those sources and their wealth of information might provide (see also Firoze et al. 1999).

The State's Response to Digital Democracy

There is an assumption among "utopians" that governments will be voluntarily responsive to the information that is disseminated through the Internet for purposes of affecting decision-making (see Varn 1993:21). This overly optimistic view neglects to take into account the fact that most governments in Africa look at the ceding of any kind of power as a zero-sum game to which they are not positively inclined. African governments are therefore not likely to create the enabling environment for the Internet to influence the direction of politics in a way that does not fit into their own positions. For example, there was tremendous outpouring of indignation and condemnation on the Internet over the incarceration and conviction of Ken Saro Wiwa, the Nigerian environmental activist who was critical of Shell's operations in western Nigeria. While this cyber-activism contributed in getting the attention of western governments, some of which instituted sanctions against the Nigerian government, General Abacha ignored all appeals for clemency and ordered the execution of Saro Wiwa and other environmental campaigners involved. A similar lack of responsiveness can be seen in Botswana where the government has not been moved by various electronic campaigns directed at highlighting the plight of the San population. Obviously, "it may be too much to expect politicians and professionals to cede power to people through facilitating electronic interactivity" (Hague and Loader 1999:10).

It is worth pointing out that there are cases on the continent where governments have been accused of trying to control the Internet so that it does not become a mechanism for destabilizing their regimes or diminishing their power. In Zimbabwe for example, a conflict erupted between the country's Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and the state-controlled Post and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) over who should have control over the top level domain (ZW-TLD) (Media Institute of Southern Africa 1997). The concern from the ISPs is that if PTC is allowed to control the industry, it can exclude those companies whose services may not be acceptable to the government. This fear is borne out by a case of "Internet censorship" in Zambia. In this instance, ZAMNET, an ISP, was compelled to remove "The Post," an independent newspaper, from its website after the paper published a story that drew the wrath of the government (Levin 1996). ZAMNET, undoubtedly, took this step in order to protect its business interests, which could be jeopardized if it was seen as providing the forum for the dissemination of "anti-government" information.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Internet opens up opportunities for pro-democracy forces to circumvent or possibly subvert dictatorial regimes (Jones 1994:151), the impression that the government may be monitoring the Internet is not comforting to a lot of people who are resident on the continent. While those who are geographically located in other parts of the world may be able to

voice sharp, and indeed visceral, comments about political issues from outside, most local people who have access to the technology are more apprehensive about doing so in a public way. This is because of fears that their identity may be revealed and that they may suffer unpleasant consequences as a result. It must be stressed that these fears are not unfounded. In spite of the belief that the Internet provides anonymity, this anonymity is in fact not absolute and it is possible for those who have the resources and the expertise to identify the source of a message and draw conclusions about who might have sent it. A series of Internet threats about an impending coup in Ghana, by a group calling itself the "Ghana Armed Liberation Movement," drew the following response from the Minister responsible for National Security. "Let me assure everyone in our dear and beloved country that our security forces are fully alert and are perfectly capable of dealing with such lunatic fringes of the country's democratic dispensation" (Ghana Review International 1999). This statement contained a veiled message that the state was capable of pursuing its detractors, even in cyberspace. In a sense, therefore, the disturbing possibility of an Orwellian panopticon in cyberspace is a constraint on how freely citizens can function in whatever political space is available.

Optimists of the digital democratic revolution contend that the technology allows citizens to gain access to decision makers through the interactive opportunities that are available and the instant feedback loops that they provide (see Fervoy et al., cited in Everett 1998:389; Grossman 1996). The realization of this scenario, specifically because of ICTs, can however not be assumed. This is because, in both the real and virtual worlds, the decision to respond to, or incorporate the views of, citizens lies with the policy makers and politicians who may choose to be receptive or not. The fact that the Internet allows easier and faster mechanisms for sending information does not translate into an automatic influence on the political process. In fact, some of the African government web sites on the Internet have outdated information and do not offer the opportunities implied in the technology (see Levin 1996). In a lot of cases, one is not likely to even get a response regarding an inquiry. Most of these sites are bedeviled by the twin limitations of non-functional e-mail addresses and the technology's inability to change the bureaucratic inertia that characterizes the state apparatus in much of the continent. As Halloran (1994) correctly points out, "we need to remember that provision is not the same as use, and that information technology cannot be equated with communication" (p. 169). Even in the United States where the promise, if not the reality, of teledemocracy is most extensive, most Congressional law makers are overwhelmed by email, and most are loathe to having email (Meeks 1997:78). To expect a magical response towards the democratizing potentials of ICTs by African politicians, most of whom are not wont to political accountability, will be far-fetched at this time. Consequently, we must challenge the glowing tributes paid to the Internet and its related technologies as the magic bullet for democratization. It is inaccurate to presume

that there is an "absence of 'noise' in new communication networks [that] permits the flow of information with fewer ideological filters and allows citizen groups to grasp a more accurate picture of political events" (Chatfield 1991:159).

Instead of interactivity between citizens and government, the best that most of these sites offer is a one-way flow of information that might not even be current and adequate. In some cases, the poor maintenance of these sites makes it impossible to find information that is claimed to be available on the sites. The Government of Ghana web page, for example, has several dead links, which make it impossible for citizens to get access to material. Attempts to access it produces messages such as "The requested URL/republic/index.html was not found on this server" (Government of Ghana web site). This situation does not support the view that ICTs will make government transparent to the citizenry (Talero 1997; Institute of Governance 1996). The African situation is even worse than what goes on in the developed world where numerous research findings show that governments display

> a greater willingness to utilize ICTs to put out information to citizens than to use them as a vehicle for citizen feedback and participation; . . . a tendency to focus on providing public service information to 'users' and 'customers,' as opposed to outlining information and justifying policies for 'citizens;' and third, in the rare cases where input from the public is sought, a tendency to seek aggregate 'consumer/citizen' views (via e.g. electronic opinion polling, referenda, etc.) on predetermined issues rather than to encourage discourse and deliberation amongst citizens and allow an input to agenda setting (Hague and Loader 1999:13).

It is obvious that, just as in the real world, most, if not all, African governments do not conceive of the citizenry as partners in government (see Richard 1999). Hence the ICTs as currently available to citizens and employed by governments do not seem to provide the necessary fillip for the invigoration of the democratic process among the mass of the population and in their interaction with government.

Ghanaian Cyber-Forums: A Case of Exclusivity, Diasporization, and Hierarchy

The contents of two Ghanaian Internet discussion forums were monitored between November 1999 and March 2000. Particular attention was paid to discussions that had a political dimension, that is, those dealing with the economy, the conduct of politics, political actors, legislation, and ethnicity. An analysis of the contents reveals a significant amount of informative reports that provided a fairly extensive insight into political developments in the country. They also provide avenues for fiery debates about various social, political, and economic issues that are of importance to Ghanaian society. There is, therefore, no doubt that these sites offer a wealth of information — facts and opinions — to those who are able to

access them. What makes these forums interesting for the purposes of this essay are the nature and tone of the discussions, who are involved in them, and the social hierarchies that are constructed in this virtual world. These aspects of the forums are important in helping us to access their potentials, at least in the short term, as conduits for the promotion and consolidation of democratic politics in Africa.

The discussions that take place on the web are certainly not qualitatively different from what obtains in the real world of nasty, acrimonious politics. They essentially do not contribute much to advancing a discourse that promotes democratic ideals. Most submissions do not focus on assessing the merits of individual arguments, policies, etc. and critiquing them. By and large, discussions degenerate to name calling and vituperative partisanship that appeals to ethnicity in most cases. The following contribution illustrates the point:

> When Rawlings came to power he quickly eliminated all non-ewes from his inner circle either by blackmailing or death squad using his commandos. Next he eliminated all non-ewes from top military positions either by forced retirement or blackmail with a charge that will force you to leave the country. Next he recalled all non-ewes from the diplomatic missions abroad and replaced them with ewes. Next he eliminated all management positions in the government sector by charging people with embezzlement and forcing them to abandon their positions. He replaced them all with ewes (Ghana Forum website).

Engaging in such inflammatory and unsubstantiated claims tarnishes the credibility of the discourse that takes place on the net and makes it difficult to galvanize support for shared democratic aspirations within a virtual civil society. Instead of helping to transcend parochial primordial sentiments, the forums are becoming spaces where demagoguery stifles the pursuit of democratic ideals. As Wilhelm (1998) points out, these forums lack sustained deliberation of political issues. Discussions are, generally, fleeting and so do not build up a critical synthesis on issues that will be capable of affecting the course of politics.

Instead of offering a space for rational political discourse, the forums seem to spawn irrational emotion. In the midst of concerns about the overly ethnicized nature of discussions on one of the forums, a call by one contributor that allegations of tribalism need to be substantiated evoked the following reaction:

> I am wondering about the depth of your reasoning capacity. You have the right to air your view other than that it would have been more sensible if you had not responded at all (Ghana Forum website).

If a call to substantiate allegations elicits this kind of response toward a member of the forum, it is obvious that most individuals, who are on the fringes of the socioeconomic structure, even if they had the economic wherewithal to participate, will be unwilling to expose their intellectual vulnerabilities. One of the reasons

for the caustic nature of some of the discussions is the relative anonymity that surrounds participation on the net. This allows contributors to use language and make claims that they would otherwise not engage in because of the protection from identification and accountability that the medium offers.

An analysis of the origins of the postings clearly indicates that the majority of participants are located in the developed world, with most of the postings coming from the United States. This finding supports the argument made earlier that cyberpolitics privileges a certain minority whose access to the mediating technology is determined by their geographical location in those parts of the world where access is relatively easier. Furthermore, the very nature of the discussions eliminates certain categories of citizens from participating with the same level of authority and equality that is accorded others who are considered “qualified” to voice their opinions on matters under discussion. The fact that conferment of an “authoritative voice” in this context requires an up-to-date and a relatively broad base of knowledge, as well as the use of an exclusionary language (English), is very significant. The forums have, without question, become a space for the hierarchical construction of intellectual prowess, with far-reaching implications for the validation and legitimization of voice. They are made up principally of middle-class, highly educated people, as borne out by contributors’ declarations or their institutional linkages that are obvious from their addresses.

Those who do not have the language skills to express themselves to the level expected are demeaned and their views do not shape the direction of discussions. This atmosphere is clearly intimidating to a lot of people who may have contributions to make to the discussions, but are discouraged by their handicaps in such areas as sophistication of expression, for example. A contributor unearthed the class bias of who is considered “legitimate voice” on the forum when he/she stated that “in a forum where individuals contribute to ideas, it is important that the title Dr. be revealed” (Ghana Forum web site). Far from being an avenue where citizens, irrespective of their class location, can participate in political deliberations, this forum is an exclusively elitist space, where subalterns’ voices are unheard or at best marginalized. Essentially, while contemporary discourse attempts to locate the Internet in the ideal of the free and open public space, the ideals of the public sphere — equality, inclusiveness, truth, and trust — find little expression in the world of the net (Dean 1997; Margolis, Resnick, and Tu 1997). Assessment of these forums also produces evidence to corroborate Streck’s (1997) contention that, while individuals may not know each other in person, their interactions produce a history that becomes the basis for the social construction of hierarchy. Based on this history a political structure emerges that elevates the “knows” over the “know-nots,” severely limiting the extent of diversity and equality that is experienced on the Internet. The preceding findings contradict Kadende-Kaiser and Kaiser’s (1998:469) depiction of Burundinet as a free network for

the expression of views and ideas. Their observation appears to be based on a superficial assessment of interactions on the Internet. An insightful understanding of the power dynamics involved in cyber discourses, and an appreciation of the invisible barriers to free expression on the Internet, require that we go beyond the veneer of seemingly unrestricted postings.

A critical goal of the study was to evaluate the extent of democratization within these forums since they are supposed to be the political spaces from which democracy in the larger society can be engendered and/or reinvigorated. The assessment produced some interesting revelations. There was a tendency to appeal to censorship when unpopular or hostile views were expressed. A corollary to this tendency is the double standards that govern interactions. When those who share the same views on an issue subject the other side to unpleasant allegations, insults, etc., they claim the right to do so in the name of free speech, no matter how outrageous that might be. However, if the negative posting is directed to members of that group and political actors whom they support, then their belief in free speech suddenly vamooses. They advocate condemnation of the "offensive" postings and demand that the perpetrators be denied access to the "decent forum."

It was quite enlightening to observe that those groups/individuals who argued that they had the right to criticize any public official whose position on issues, ethnic attachments, or policies they did not agree with were vehemently resentful when those they revere are subject to the same treatment. The example of the debate about criticism of President Rawlings and the Asantehene is instructive. While the president's political opponents argued that he was fair game for criticism because of his position as a public official, they objected to any attempts to criticize the Asantehene, because he occupies a revered position as the king of the Asante people. Thus, contrary to Katz and Lieber's view that ICTs will reduce the demagoguery and dogmatism of traditional politics (cited in Wilson III n.d.), the actions of participants in these Internet forums suggest that those attitudes are very much in vogue in cyberspace.

Conclusions

The findings from the foregoing discussion support Ott's (1998) admonishment to attenuate the utopian enthusiasm about the democratizing impact of ICTs in Africa. There is no denying the fact that the technologies have made it possible for a lot more people to access a lot more information. This fact does not, however, translate into a significant expansion in the numbers and categories of those who engage in, and hence influence, the direction of politics on the continent.

Most of those who have access to the new media are the privileged of society. Marginalized segments of society are still unable to rupture the nature of extant politics through ICTs because of economic, language or other constraints. The

evidence supports various observations, which conclude that, by and large, the goings-on in the world of cyberpolitics reflect, rather than challenge, what is taking place in the real world (Hess 1996:224; see also Barber 1997; Carstarphen and Lambiase 1998; Everett 1998:388). "We find that utilizations of 'virtual democracy' have tended to be relatively conservative rather than transformative" (Walker and Akdeniz 1998).

Technology cannot be the magic bullet that suddenly causes African politicians to turn a new leaf, embrace scrutiny of their activities by citizens, and incorporate the views of civic groups in policy deliberations. The cost of doing so vis-à-vis their personal interest is too much for politicians to willingly accede to. It is therefore important to resist suggestions such as Kedzie's (1997), which overate the causal links between ICTs and democracy and advocate a position that diminishes the imperative nature of crucial catalysts of democracy such as education and economic development. Without improvements in these areas the democratizing potentials of the technologies will remain a mirage. Without efforts to narrow the access gap in the use of ICTs, and to engender responsiveness on the part of governments, the Internet and its associated facilities will remain tools for producing overwhelming amounts of information, rather than means for genuine deliberative and participatory democracy. In conclusion, I must point out that this discussion of the challenges confronting the use of the new information technologies for the promotion of democracy is not meant to deny their contributions toward the advancement of African democracy. Its purpose is to ensure that we do not further marginalize certain groups in society and give ourselves a false sense that a democratic El Dorado is inevitably around the corner. In this respect, it is important for donors and other enthusiasts of "electronic democracy" to join forces with skeptics to critically evaluate the efficacy of these technologies in the context of African democracy. Such collaboration will enhance the chances of building democracies that are more inclusive, responsive, and effective than those that the continent has hitherto experienced.

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