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## **U.S. Support for Democracy in Africa: Discrepant Orientations of Anglophone and Francophone Africa towards Democratic Practices, Good Governance & Human Rights**

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***Abstract:** President Obama's first trip to Africa as US President in July 2009 took him to Ghana. The president used his 2009 trip to articulate his broad and ambitious policy of engagement towards sub-Saharan Africa. His pronouncements during the trip to Ghana generated high expectations for a new dawn in the relationship between the United States and Africa. The U.S. President made Ghana his first stop on the continent because he was probably highly impressed by the institutionalization of democratic processes in the country. While in Ghana, the president highlighted that country's commitment to peaceful democratic transition and establishment of effective governance practices. Obama also called on other African leaders to follow the example of Ghana by creating democratic institutions, embracing good governance practices, and showing respect for the human rights of their citizens. During his second trip to Africa from June 27-July 2, 2013, President Obama and the First Lady traveled to Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania to meet with leaders from government, business, and civil society, and to reinforce U.S. commitment to expanding economic growth, investment, and trade; strengthening democratic institutions; and investing in the next generation of African leaders. The U.S.-Africa Summit of August 6-7, 2014, convened by President Obama in Washington, D.C. was no doubt initiated to advance the political agenda of his previous two trips to Africa, and also to establish stronger economic and cultural ties with Africa. The 2014 summit brought together an unprecedented number of African leaders to Washington, D.C. for a two day conference that covered a broad array of topics ranging from health care, trade and investments, security and terrorism, to good governance, democratic institutions and human rights. His third trip to Africa as President, took Obama to Kenya and Ethiopia from July 24-July 28, 2015. This visit was historic on two levels: it was the first time that a sitting American President had visited each of these countries as well address the African Union. In Kenya, Obama held bilateral meetings with Kenyan officials and attended the 2015 Global Economic/Entrepreneurship summit, an annual conference that brings together entrepreneurs, business leaders, and international organizations to discuss global economic and business issues. This trip built on the success of the August 2014 U.S.-Africa Leader's Summit and continued America's efforts to work with countries in sub-Africa, including Kenya, to accelerate economic growth, strengthen democratic institutions and improve health and security.*

*A partnership between the United States and Africa is as important as it is strategic because both partners must work together in order to function effectively in a complex global environment that is increasingly plagued by terrorism, political instability, devastating public health epidemics, economic inequalities, poor governance and the failure to effect credible administrative reforms in a number of African nations. This paper proposes to examine the content of U.S. support for the establishment of democratic institutions and good governance practices in Africa since the onset of democratic transitions in Africa in the early 1990s. A review of American support for Africa's democratic transitional process is important because the United States was*

*instrumental in supporting and facilitating the political discourse and initial processes that constituted the foundations of many transitional efforts in Africa. This task will be accomplished against the backdrop of the inability, unwillingness, or failure of some African nations to fully embrace the democratic processes and institutions upon which such US support is supposed to be predicated. It is apparent that the Anglophone nations in West, East and South Africa have been more responsive to the political practices advocated by the United States and its western allies and are in fact reforming their political institutions and administrative processes and procedures. By contrast, most Francophone nations in West and Central Africa are content with the status quo. Why is there a discrepancy between the English-speaking and French-speaking African nations toward embracing democratic and good governance practices? It is to answering this question that this paper aspires to accomplish through a comparative analysis of the performance records of a select number of Anglophone and Francophone states in West and Central Africa. How have these English (Ghana, Botswana, and South Africa) and French-speaking (Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) countries fared since President Obama first acknowledged the great strides made by Ghana during his 2009 visit?*

**Keywords:** Administrative reforms, democracy, democratic practices, democratic transitions, human rights, good governance, Anglophone and Francophone Africa

## **Introduction**

Over two decades ago, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa embraced some form of transition to democratic governance. According to Ihonvbere and Mbaku (2003), the contestations that shaped these transitions in the early 1990s were informed and influenced by widespread agitations for human rights, social justice, multiparty politics, good governance, accountability, gender equality and respect for sociopolitical pluralism. During this third wave of democratization that swept across of Africa, the United States was instrumental in supporting and facilitating the political discourse and initial processes that constituted the foundations of many transitional efforts in Africa. Unfortunately, the euphoria and celebrations that accompanied this wave of democratic transitions in the region have all but evaporated. As a matter of fact, in some instances, that spirit of hope and optimism has been replaced by deep skepticism and frustration on the part of African scholars, civil society organizations, ordinary African citizens and the international community. Attempts to institutionalize democracy in the continent have failed to materialize largely because of the inability or unwillingness of some African leaders to foster the momentum of the 1990s by engaging in or committing to credible political reform agendas through the creation of democratic institutions and the embracement of good governance practices. To that end, some of the regimes that came to power with reformist agendas in 1990 “have become authoritarian, exploitative and as corrupt as their predecessors” (Ihonvbere and Mbaku, 2003, 8). By most accounts, there has been a diversity of outcomes with respect to the progress (or lack thereof) that has been made toward promoting and sustaining democracy in the region since the early 1990s. In many sub Saharan African nations, the single party state that existed prior to the advent of multiparty politics in the continent has been replaced by a variety of hybrid regimes that are incompatible with the ideal liberal democratic framework that was advocated and recommended by western nations, donor institutions and other external partners. By contrast, some other sub Saharan African nations, have made great strides toward adopting credible reformist democratic agendas characterized by

the establishment of democratic institutions and the implementation of good governance practices as discussed above. Clearly, a key problem that has impacted the effort to accurately assess the progress or failure of democratic transitions across the continent since the 1990s has been the failure to accurately conceptualize or define democracy in a manner that is compatible with the goals, visions, values and political environments of the fifty four African nations.

### **Conceptualizing and Defining Democracy in the context of African Politics**

While the desire to establish more democratic forms of government in Africa has become one of the most important issues on the political agendas of many African nations and external actors since the early 1990s, conceptualizing and defining democracy in a manner that is suitable for the continent continues to be problematic, if not elusive. Part of the problem with conceptualizing and defining democracy in a manner that is consistent with African values or beliefs is that the western or liberal democracy that the west felt would be the appropriate prescription for ending the increasing poverty, corruption and human rights abuses that Africans had suffered under authoritarian regimes since the 1960s has not been as successful as anticipated. As Brendalyn Ambrose (1995, 15) points out:

Liberal democracy is a late product of market society because the first need of the market was for the liberal state, not the democratic one to be successful. The democratic dimension was only added when the working class that had been produced by the capitalist market society had been strong enough to get into competition, strong enough to demand that it should have some weight in the competitive process.

In her view, liberal democracy resulted from capitalism and Africa does not have a history of capitalist development and evolution because the conditions that favored the growth of liberal democracy in the west do not exist in Africa. She maintains that what Africa needs is a type of democracy that will address Africa's current social, cultural, political and economic realities (Ambrose 1995, 19). Generally, democracy is conceptualized as the process of transforming a group, community or state into a democratic entity. Consequently, when a society attempts to transition to democratic governance it embraces an arrangement that is shaped by a supreme power that is vested in the hands of the people through elected representatives, established laws that guarantee political equality, practice of the democratic spirit, empowerment of people to determine who governs and what policies and programs those who govern should pursue, established laws and mechanisms to ensure that those who govern are responsible, responsive and accountable to the people who bear the weight of their governance, opportunities for citizens to participate in the management of their affairs, respect and promotion of fundamental human rights, participation of citizens and their elected representatives in the crafting of laws to ensure justice in society and the prevalence of the rule of law for all (Ambrose 1995, 19).

The application of the concepts of liberal democracy (such as civil society, the state system, and the ideals of democracy which include, freedom, equality, justice and fraternity) in Africa as demanded and advocated by the west, in nearly three decades, has shown few positive signs of credible change. It is no wonder then that scholars in and out of Africa as well as other observers of the transitional process have argued that while democracy is an appropriate form of government worth adopting or experimenting with in Africa, to be successful, it must take a distinctively African character. They maintain that some elements of democracy (such as consultation, participation and consensus) have prevailed in many traditional African cultures for centuries. As

a result, it is worth noting here that in studying the transitions to democracy in Africa it is important to critically examine the generic or idealized view of established liberal democracies as a yardstick for normative comparison with the situation in Africa advanced by the democratization school. This approach compares African countries with a liberal democratic model by judging African political systems by how much they have deviated from or adhered to the ideal even though some mature democracies of the west have fallen short of the same standards. Given such comparative shortcomings, it is therefore imperative to conduct empirical research and comparative analysis so as to understand what is actually happening rather than what should happen or ought to happen (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 4).

As Decker and Arrington (2015, ix), explain, any discourse in and out of Africa about improving the continent's social, political and economic landscapes inevitably focuses on democratization. Discussions about politics, economic development, social welfare, human rights, environmental sustainability, natural resource exploitation and public health are often associated with the overarching concern with democracy in African countries. This discourse implies that with Democracy will come all the positive changes that many Africans desire. But if Democracy is the answer to so many of the major problems plaguing Africa, what has it not been more easily implemented? Decker and Arrington maintain further that observers in and out of Africa about the democratic process often speak as though there is a road map to the democratization process in Africa or that there is a framework or template for democracy in Africa. The reality, they stress, is that despite sustained pressure on African governments to democratize most states are not considered true democracies and not all believe that democracy is the solution to many of the challenges that they face in their daily lives and political systems. We are left wondering if democracy is truly possible or even desirable in Africa. Is it possible for us to conceive of good governance without attaching it to *democracy*? Is democracy a one size fits all endeavor or could there be Africanized democracies that reflect the unique political, economic and social cultures of each individual state? Is democracy antithetical to African beliefs and values? Are African leaders being misled by outsiders to believe that it is the only appropriate political system to implement? These are fundamental questions that should inform any discussion of the success or failure of democracy on the continent (Decker and Arrington 2015, ix). Admittedly, if the concept of democracy as discussed above is not a one size fits all process with a template that must be used in every environment where democratic transitions are being undertaken, then it must be seen as an evolving system that is not absolute and can be made adaptable to different environments based on the unique social, political, cultural and economic values of those environments.

In that context, how should democracy in Africa (or African democracy) be defined? Several scholars and African leaders have offered recommendations concerning the definition of democracy in a fashion that reflects Africa's unique environment. Nwauwa Apollos (2005, 2) believes that the role of Africans in pushing for democratization based on their local conditions (a phenomenon which he refers to as "second independence") should not be overlooked in any analysis. Broadly speaking, if a group of people have the ability to choose and replace their leaders through regular free and fair elections, they have an electoral democracy. This says nothing about the actual quality of the political system, however, because competition does not ensure enough high levels of freedom, quality, transparency, social justice or other liberal values. Electoral democracies make these values more achievable but they do not ensure them. A liberal democracy, on the other hand, is one that is governed by the rule of law and that protects property and civil

liberties. The state also provides equality under the law, due process, checks and balances, protection of minorities and freedom of expression. An open media and an active civil society are other important features. Some scholars suggest that the basic premises of liberalism, such as the importance of the individual are not necessarily relevant to African cultures. Instead alternative mechanisms of authority such as ethnicity, patronage and violence may be more important (Decker and Arrington 2015, x). It is therefore important to examine the ways in which Africans have constructed, are constructing and reshaping democracy to fit their own ideals and agendas. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere described Democracy as follows:

Democracy means that the people must be able to choose freely those who govern them and in broad terms determine what the government does in their name. It means that a government must be accountable to the people; it must be responsive to views expressed freely through a political machinery that the people can understand and use. They will only understand and use it if that machinery makes sense in terms of their own culture and is accessible with the framework of their own income and educational levels (Decker and Arrington 2015, x).

Decker and Arrington note that Nyerere's definition of Democracy has a decidedly liberal bent although it is important to remember that he ruled Tanzania for 21 years as a semi autocratic one party state. They argue that like most African leaders, his government fell somewhere along the autocracy-democracy spectrum or continuum. They maintain further that there are democratically elected governments that do not protect civil liberties, just as there are some autocratic governments that do (Decker and Arrington 2015, x). Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo also offered his impressions about democracy in Africa. A central figure in the third wave of political decentralization in Africa, he led the Nigerian government for three years after the military ruler, General Murtala Mohammed, was assassinated in an abortive coup in 1976. Once civilian rule was re-established in 1979, Obasanjo stepped down from power. Though he was a military man, he was also a strong proponent of democratization.

He argued that democracy was the best and most humane form of power but insisted that it must take a distinctly African form (Decker and Arrington 2015, 2-3) Decker. He maintained that the pursuit of justice was essential to the democratic process as were the following essential and vital ingredients: trust creation and confidence building between leaders and the populace, periodic elections of political leadership through the secret ballot, creation of an appropriate political machinery, promotion and defense of human rights, political communication, decentralization of political power and authority and education and political education (Decker and Arrington 2015, 3)

Obasanjo firmly believed that political authority must be institutionalized instead of taking on a patrimonial character. He insisted that "those who govern must not behave as if authority or power is their personal property and something they can hand down to their heirs" Instead they should acknowledge that they are only representatives of the nation and not the owners of proprietors of sovereignty (Decker and Arrington 2015, 3). Democratization is a complex historical process by which a country moves away from authoritarian rule toward a political system that is more democratic and participatory. South African Political Scientist Shireen Hassim argues that:

"any desirable form of democracy must encompass the civil and political rights advocated

by liberalism, the socio-economic freedoms at the heart of socialism and the cultural freedoms envisaged by Feminism” (Decker and Arrington 2015, x). Democratization must enable the voices of the marginalized, particularly women to be heard in formal institutions of the state and ensure that representation leads to greater equality for the vast majority of citizens. It should also “encompass the movement toward the recognition of women’s sexual autonomy, bodily integrity and rights to cultural self-definition”. In other words democratization is about creating a space for the inclusion of larger numbers of votes and interests, both within and beyond the realm of formal politics (Decker and Arrington 2015, x).

Despite the progress that has been made to embrace more transparent and accountable forms of governance in some Sub-Saharan African countries over more than two decades, political regression has indeed occurred in several countries in the region. In describing the progress or lack thereof of political democratization in Africa after more than two decades, Larry Diamond refers to a trend known as *democratic progress and retreat* (Decker and Arrington 2015, 4). On the one hand, there are more electoral democracies in Africa today than ever before. Between 1980 and 2007, the number of democracies on the continent doubled while the number of authoritarian regimes decreased from approximately one half to one third. On the other hand, many of these democracies are poor in quality and can be easily reversed. On the other hand many of these democracies are poor in quality and can be easily reversed. For example, Diamond & Plattner (2010), argue that countries such as Cameroon that embraced the transition to a more accountable form of government have actually retreated to its authoritarian practices of yesteryears. Earl Conteh (1997, 15) echoes those sentiments by remarking that while the number of democratic states in Africa has increased since the 1990s such growth has been characterized by an irregular two steps forward and one step backwards approach In January 2012, a massive insurgency tore through Northern Mali fueled by the influx of heavy weapons from Libya’s 2011 civil war. When government forces could not contain the rebellion, a faction of the military staged a coup d’état and overthrew the democratically elected president from power. Islamists used this as an excuse to seize control of the North from the rebels and implemented Islamic law (sharia law). The crisis came to an end in January 2013 when French forces intervened and recaptured the embattled northern region. Six months’ later elections were held and some semblance of democracy was restored to Mali. Significant democratic backsliding has also occurred in Togo, Gabon, Guinea and Uganda with the repeal of constitutional term limits (Decker and Arrington 2015, 4). Other problems include a lack of adherence to the rule of law, infringements on freedoms of expression and association, widespread corruption and discrimination against women and members of the *lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities*. Freedom House, a nongovernmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on issues related to Democracy, political freedom and human rights conducts an annual survey that evaluates the state of global freedom as experienced by individuals. Freedom is measured according to the enjoyment of political rights and civil liberties. A country that is labeled free is one where there is open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life and an autonomous media. One that is partly free has limited respect for political rights and civil liberties. Finally, in a country that is not free basic political rights are absent and civil liberties are widely and systematically denied. According to the most recent Freedom in the World Report, 22% of countries in Sub-

Saharan Africa were free, 37% were partly free and 41% were not free (Decker and Arrington 2015, 5). When broken down by population, 13% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa was free, 51% was partly free and 36% was not free. Ghana was the country with the highest rating meaning that its citizens enjoyed the most political rights and civil liberties while Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea had the lowest ratings (Decker and Arrington 2015, 4-5).

While there are many reasons to explain the lack of progress, one of the most important is the fact that the institutional arrangements inherited by the new democrats were not capable of effectively handling the demands of the people for increased participation in both political and economic markets. In fact, many of these new leaders attempted to use the same *undemocratic, exploitative, antiquated, violent and insensitive* political structures and methods to govern in the new era. Especially of the note is the fact that the new democrats were attempting to use these anachronistic structures to deal with ethnic conflict and poverty, two of the issues that had not been dealt with effectively by the ancient regime that had contributed to the collapse of authoritarianism in the continent. The result has been the failure of the new post-cold war governments in Africa to reduce destructive ethnic conflict, deal more effectively with poverty especially among women, children and rural inhabitants and provide the enabling institutional environment for wealth creation. These so called new democrats have also failed to institutionalize democratic governance in their respective countries and make national political and economic systems more inclusive-most institutions are still dominated and women remain on the political and economic periphery where they have been for the last 50 years. Throughout the continent, these new democrats are unable and unwilling to cope and deal democratically with even modest opposition groups and several organizations especially women organizations that are emerging to represent and speak for hitherto marginalized and excluded constituencies (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 41). Most of the post 1990s leaders inherited economies that had been bankrupted by many years of plundering and neglect. Poor management and high levels of political and economic instability had forced most of the skilled labor resources to migrate to more stable and lucrative economies. Significant amounts of capital had fled to the West and perverse economic policies promoted by opportunistic politicians and civil servants had closed destroyed most opportunities for domestic wealth creation. Thus, in the early 1990s, the new democrats inherited nonviable, bankrupt and highly unproductive economies, most of which were incapable of meeting even the basic needs of their populations. As these new democrats took office, they were faced with enormous problems which even the most skilled and competent politicians could not easily resolve. From Mandel and Mbeki in South Africa to Obasanjo in Nigeria, these new leaders faced enormous challenges, as the people, were demanding quick and immediate changes to the problems plaguing their societies such as poverty, inequity and inequality in the distribution of resources, lack of access to health care especially in the rural areas, rising and often out of control HIV/AIDS infection rates and the continued marginalization of certain groups such as women, children, rural inhabitants, ethnic minorities and those forced by circumstance to live on the urban periphery (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 41).

However, in order to examine the extent to which African nations have made progress towards transitions to more democratic systems of governance or have failed to do so, I would be using core elements of liberal democracy to assess the different orientations of Anglophone and Francophone African nations to democratic practices. My reason for using these elements is that the form of democracy that African nations were encouraged to develop in the 1990s was shaped and influenced by those elements. These elements or governance indicators include: responsive or

participatory democracy, respect for human rights and freedoms, adherence to the rule of law, the existence of an independent judiciary, vibrant or robust civil society, a viable and effective opposition and a free and independent media.

### **Factors that Fueled the transition to Multi-Party Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa**

As Abdul Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield maintain (2009, 1), it was a combination of internal and external factors that created effective pressure for political transition in Africa. The first external factor that provided an impetus for political transition in Africa had to do with the end of the cold war. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of superpower rivalry, Africa lost its strategic importance to the former cold war protagonists. Consequently, many of the continent's dictatorships which had been supported by the United States and its western allies and by the Soviet Union and its satellite states lost their financial and military assistance. In the absence of the significant development aid and budget subventions that had supported them many of these authoritarian regimes soon collapsed (Ihonvbere and Mbaku, 2003, 28).

In the mid 1980s rising debt levels became an important constraint to economic growth and development in Africa. To assist African nations to manage their external debt more effectively and plan for economic growth and development the IMF and World Bank became actively involved in conditional lending to the continent. However, in the 1990s, As John Wiseman (1995, 3) maintains, the Bretton Woods institutions added political conditionality to the list of requirements to be met by African nations. As a result, to qualify for additional loans from either the IMF, World Bank or developed nations, African States had to be willing to implement a variety of policy reforms including reductions in the sizes of their government sectors, devaluation of their currencies, deregulation of their international trade sectors and greater reliance on markets for the allocation of resources. Ultimately, the World Bank required that potential borrowers engage in reforms to improve the efficiencies of their economic and political systems as a condition for additional credits from the international financial community. As a result of these developments the World Bank and IMF became important external stimuli to the reform and prodemocracy movement in Africa (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 28).

Following the end of the Cold war, United States foreign policy was revised in favor of countries around the world that were making an effort to establish transparent, participatory, and accountable governance structures and market based economic systems. As a result of America's new foreign aid approach, countries that were embracing democratic transitions and opening up national resources to more citizens than before benefited from American foreign aid disbursements. The change in policy forced many countries in Africa to work toward the democratization of their political systems in order to remain eligible for U.S. aid (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 29). In the late 80s and early 90s many developed nations established new aid regimes which required that development be disbursed on the condition that recipient nations demonstrate the extent to which they had established transparent and participatory governance structures. Political conditionality was soon formally adopted by the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as part of their foreign aid policy. They were determined to use their development aid programs to push for democracy, free markets and good governance in developing nations (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 29). In essence, the international community saw the wave of democratizations as opportunities to usher in political

and economic liberalization in Africa as well as integrate the continent into the neoliberal global economic system. The international context was thus responsible for the incessant calls for political liberalization and multi-party elections across the continent (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 2).

Internal factors also contributed to the transition to democratic governance in the continent. By most accounts, the February 1990 National Conference in Benin ushered in an era of political liberalization in Sub Saharan Africa that culminated in the introduction of multiparty elections in most African countries in the 1990s. As Ihonvbere and Mbaku (2003, 32), observes, Benin's Conference Nationale was considered significant in Africa's political transition because it was the first such effort in the continent and the one that set the standards for the others. Unable to support a corrupt political leadership structure that was sustained by laws and institutions from the independence era that fostered the exploitation of the masses, abuse of their basic rights and freedoms and the existence of a dismal economy, the citizens of Benin forced President Kerekou to submit to the establishment of a national conference as well as accept the peoples' demand for institutional reforms. Unlike previous reform efforts which had been dominated by the urban elite in Benin, membership in the national council, whose responsibility was to craft a new constitution for Benin, reflected the nation's diverse ethnic and social cleavages (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 32).

Benin's national conference had a significant impact on political transition in Africa because it paved the way for others to follow. As it was the case in Benin, national conferences across Africa generally developed the modalities for transition to democracy and immediate national elections to pick a government responsible for leading the country to democracy. In the 1990s, Africa witnessed the birth of national councils or sovereign conferences in countries such as Mali, South Africa, Congo (Brazzaville), Zaire, Niger and Togo. Most of these conferences were driven by agendas that included: determining its mandate, selecting those to participate and defining its agenda. The vast majority of these conferences were characterized by large representation which included individuals from a variety of civic organizations and political parties. As Mustapha & Whitfield (2009, 1), note, the movements for political change across the continent consisted largely of civil society organizations, marginalized politicians who had lost the favor of their respective governments, ethnic minorities that felt discriminated against, workers and trade unions, students, women's organizations, religious organizations and human rights activists. Their calls for institutionalized and competitive elections, respect for civil and political liberties and a departure from authoritarian rule were shaped and influenced by five decades of discontent under exploitative and opportunistic regimes whose efforts were focused on economic plunder, suffocation of civil society, denigration of popular forces, destruction of the environment, oppression of women, abuse of human rights and impoverishment of minority and vulnerable groups including many ethnic nationalities and women, poor governance, lack of accountability, gender inequality, no social justice and disrespect for sociopolitical pluralism. (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 4-7).

As previously mentioned, groups that were historically marginalized and disenfranchised intensified calls for good governance, freedom, economic wellbeing that had been repressed by authoritarian postcolonial regimes. Domestic groups in various Sub Saharan African countries envisaged the transition to democracy as an opportunity to gain greater political inclusion, accelerate the demilitarization of politics, enjoy greater economic and social amenities and witness

the loosening of presidential authoritarianism (Mustapha and Whitney 2009, 1). Internal struggles for democratic governance systems date back to the struggle for independence. In the early 1960s, Africans fought to end colonial dictatorships in order to establish laws and institutions that fostered peaceful coexistence and sustainable development (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 29). Unfortunately, the new countries, adopted constitutions that allowed a few individuals to completely dominate and monopolize post-independence political economies. As a result, the majority of Africans continued to be denied access to political and economic markets. The demonstrations that erupted across most of Sub Saharan Africa in the late 1980s were a continuation of the struggles for more effective governance systems that prevailed during colonialism and hastened its end. During the 1960s, Africans protested against colonial oppression, corruption, excessive intervention in the economy and the lack of access to political and economic opportunities. These protests that were largely characterized by strikes, demonstrations, marches and boycotts, were generally designed to force the state to repeal certain laws and statutes that were usually deemed to be unfair, distribute free and public goods more equitably, force civil servants to become more efficient, reduce overcrowding at local universities and hospitals and improve working conditions for public servants. Essentially such protests were aimed at benefiting some group in society. The protests of the late 1980s, however, were geared towards comprehensive institutional reforms involving reconstructing the post-colonial state to provide countries with more effective governance structures and sustainable economic infrastructures. While the protests of the late 1980s often began with demands by interest groups seeking to maximize some narrowly defined objective, they soon evolved into a struggle for state reconstruction (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 31). Because regime legitimacy in Africa is driven by popular evaluations of government performance, support for democratic transitions was going to be based on whether newly established democratic governments deserved legitimization because they will be more effective than their predecessors (Moseley 2007, 318).

### **Assessing the success and Failures of transitions to Democratic Rule in Africa since the 1990s**

Most experts on democratic transitions around the world have observed that after more than two decades of attempts at transitions to more transparent and accountable governance systems across Sub-Saharan Africa, the political landscape has changed in some instances but not as dramatically as it was anticipated in other instances. As Mustapha and Whitfield (2009, 2) argue, it is important to assess the extent to which domestic and international expectations of African democratization have or have not been met. It is also important to examine major trends and patterns in the politics of African states during the era of democratization and then assess what these trends and patterns mean for the process of democratization. In terms of trends one cannot help but admit that democratization led to some “tectonic movements” in African Politics. One indicator is the way African leaders get into power and leave office. The number of African leaders leaving power through coups especially after 2000 has decreased while the number leaving power voluntarily or through electoral defeats has increased since 1990. The process of ascending to power through constitutional changes in Sub Saharan Africa is beginning to be affected by constitutional changes which stipulate presidential term limits and by the proliferation of elections (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 2). Political rights and civil liberties have improved in several countries and worsened in others. On the other hand, the era of democratization has also been characterized by continuities with past political practices. In many countries, democratization has

been halting, incomplete and frequently reversible. In countries such as Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon and Zimbabwe, things seemed to have worsened in the era of democratization as stable semi-authoritarian regimes have become less stable and more authoritarian. The inconsistent nature of the democratic process has bred disappointment leading Richard Joseph (1998) to use the term "virtual democracies to describe the strange admixture of democratic forms and illiberal practices that still characterize many democratic nations in Africa. To that end, the euphoria of the early 1990s has been replaced, since the late 1990s, by a pessimistic outlook (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 3).

Recent research echoes the sentiments of Richard Joseph, Abdul Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield. Few countries in Africa have succeeded at consolidating democracy and the process remains fragile in many countries. Ihonvbere and Mbaku (2003, 39), argue that the euphoria that characterized the late 1980s and early 1990s prodemocracy grassroots organizations has dissipated or has been significantly tempered. Today only a few of the scholars and analysts who were optimistic about the continents prospects for transitions to democratic governance in the 1990s remain. In many countries in Africa, the possibility of returning to authoritarian governance remain quite high. For example, the relatively significant gains made in democratizing Cameroon's politics since 1990, when political competition was legalized, have since been lost as the incumbent government has resorted to its pre-1990 repressive tactics and opportunistic leadership. In Zambia Frederick Chiluba failed to keep the promises he made to transform critical domains and institutionalize democratic rule in Zambia. Instead he adopted the same repressive and exploitative tactics that kept Kenneth Kaunda in office for most of the country's post-independence period (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 40). As determined by Kieh (1999, 110), over half of Africa's 53 states were still under some form of authoritarian rule. In Togo, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya, the sons of former authoritarian leaders took over power in the early years of the new century.

Clearly, the assessments of Africa's progress towards democratic governance since the 1990s discussed above indicate that only few countries in Africa have been able to consolidate democracy. Herbst (2000) uses peaceful transfer of power through elections as an indicator of the deepening of democracy and identifies Benin, Mauritius and Madagascar as multiparty democracies. However, he notes that in Benin and Madagascar, the democrats who led these country's democratization efforts were replaced through elections by autocrats. In Benin, former dictator Mathew Kerekou replaced Nicephore Soglo and in Madagascar, Albert Zafy's position was captured by Didier Ratsiraka. Many of these old guard politicians now pose important obstacles to their respective countries transitions to democratic governance programs. Even though they were returned to power through the democratic process, they have become less and less democratic as they attempt to destroy the opposition and prolong their tenure in office. In 10 or so countries elections have brought only a single transfer of power. These include Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Sao Tome, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zambia. In most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, there have been either no elections at all or elections without any transfer of power such as in Cameroon. Ghana and Senegal, it must be not be noted, had nationwide elections in 2001 with successful and peaceful changes. Uganda successfully completed elections in 2001 but there was no change in regime and South Africa undertook its second democratic transition in 1999 with Thabo Mbeki replacing Nelson Mandela as head of state. Continuing with this tradition of genuine change in South Africa, Jacob Zuma

replaced Thabo Mbeki in 2009 as head of State of South Africa. There was also a successful transition and regime change in Kenya in 2002. The ruling African National Union(KANU) was defeated at the polls by a broad coalition of opposition political parties called the Rainbow Coalition under the leadership of Mwai Kibaki. Uhuru Kenyatta replaced Kibaki in 2013 in a successful transition that was accompanied by regime change (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 40).

Despite the progress that has been made to embrace more transparent and accountable forms of governance in some Sub-Saharan African countries over more than two decades, political regression has indeed occurred in several countries in the region. In describing the progress or lack thereof of political democratization in Africa after more than two decades, Larry Diamond refers to a trend known as *democratic progress and retreat* (Decker and Arrington 2015, 4). On the one hand, there are more electoral democracies in Africa today than ever before. Between 1980 and 2007, the number of democracies on the continent doubled while the number of authoritarian regimes decreased from approximately one half to one third. On the other hand, many of these democracies are poor in quality and can be easily reversed. In January 2012, a massive insurgency tore through Northern Mali fueled by the influx of heavy weapons from Libya's 2011 civil war. When government forces could not contain the rebellion, a faction of the military staged a coup d'état and overthrew the democratically elected president from power. Islamists used this as an excuse to seize control of the North from the rebels and implemented Islamic law (sharia law). The crisis ended in January 2013 when French forces intervened and recaptured the embattled northern region. Six months' later elections were held and some semblance of democracy was restored to Mali. However, Mali's future continues to be unstable as various factions, including the threat from Islamic militants, continue to seek for power in Mali. Significant democratic backsliding has also occurred in Togo, Gabon, Guinea and Uganda with the repeal of constitutional term limits (Decker and Arrington 2015, 4). Other problems include a lack of adherence to the rule of law, infringements on freedoms of expression and association, widespread corruption and discrimination against women and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities. Freedom House, a nongovernmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on issues related to Democracy, political freedom and human rights conducts an annual survey that evaluates the state of global freedom as experienced by individuals. Freedom is measured according to the enjoyment of political rights and civil liberties. A country that is labeled free is one where there is open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life and an autonomous media. One that is partly free has limited respect for political rights and civil liberties. Finally, in a country that is not free basic political rights are absent and civil liberties are widely and systematically denied. According to the most recent Freedom in the World Report, 22% of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa were free, 37% were partly free and 41% were not free (Decker and Arrington 2015, 5). When broken down by population, 13% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa was free, 51% was partly free and 36% was not free. Ghana was the country with the highest rating meaning that its citizens enjoyed the most political rights and civil liberties while Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea had the lowest ratings (Decker and Arrington 2015, 4-5).

While the lack of progress towards credible transitions to democratic rule in Africa can be attributed to several factors one of the most important reasons is the fact that the institutional arrangements inherited by the new democrats were not capable of effectively handling the demands of the people for increased participation in both political and economic markets. In fact,

many of these new leaders attempted to use the same undemocratic, exploitative, antiquated, violent and insensitive political structures and methods to govern in the new era. Of special note is the fact that the new democrats were attempting to use these anachronistic structures to deal with ethnic conflict and poverty, two of the issues that had not been dealt with effectively by the ancient regimes thus leading to the collapse of authoritarianism in the continent. The result has been the failure of the new post-cold war governments in Africa to reduce destructive ethnic conflict, deal more effectively with poverty especially among women, children and rural inhabitants and provide the enabling institutional environment for wealth creation. These so called new democrats have also failed to institutionalize democratic governance in their respective countries and make national political and economic systems more inclusive. Most institutions are still dominated and women remain on the political and economic periphery where they have been for the last 50 years. Throughout the continent, these new democrats are unable and unwilling to cope and deal democratically with even modest opposition groups and several organizations especially women organizations that are emerging to represent and speak for hitherto marginalized and excluded constituencies (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 41). Most of the post 1990s leaders inherited economies that had been bankrupted by many years of plundering and neglect. Poor management and high levels of political and economic instability had forced most of the skilled labor resources to migrate to more stable and lucrative economies. Significant amounts of capital had fled to the West and perverse economic policies promoted by opportunistic politicians and civil servants had closed destroyed most opportunities for domestic wealth creation. Thus, in the early 1990s, the new democrats inherited nonviable, bankrupt and highly unproductive economies, most of which were incapable of meeting even the basic needs of their populations. As these new democrats took office, they were faced with enormous problems which even the most skilled and competent politicians could not easily resolve. From Mandel and Mbeki in South Africa to Obasanjo in Nigeria, these new leaders faced enormous challenges, as the people, were demanding quick and immediate changes to the problems plaguing their societies such as poverty, inequity and inequality in the distribution of resources, lack of access to health care especially in the rural areas, rising and often out of control HIV/AIDS infection rates and the continued marginalization of certain groups such as women, children, rural inhabitants, ethnic minorities and those forced by circumstance to live on the urban periphery (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 41).

### **Discrepant Orientations Towards Democratic Rule in Africa since the 1990s**

A cursory review of the successes and challenges of democratic transitions in Africa provided above indicates that the greatest challenges or failures to embrace more democratic or transparent systems of governance in Africa since the 1990s have occurred in francophone African nations. While this section focuses on the discrepant orientations towards democratic rule in Cameroon, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is worth noting here that with the exception of Senegal, the remaining francophone nations across the continent have not fared well in terms of the progress that they have made to adopt more transparent and accountable forms of government. In Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Togo, Benin, Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda, the previous autocratic forms of governance that existed in these countries prior to the 1990s have been retained in one form or another and the cosmetic or rhetorical changes that have been made have failed to register credible transitions to

democratic rule. Widely seen as examples of dissolving states in the continent of Africa, the francophone nations of Cameroon, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo where the transition to democratic rule in the 1990s began with some optimism stalled and then regressed. Essentially, these are states where the integration of the various ethnic segments of these states has failed and there has been a breakdown in law and order. The second half of this section will also focus on orientations towards democratic rule of the Anglophone African nations of Ghana, Botswana, and South Africa where credible progress towards transitions to more open and transparent forms of government have been registered since the 1990s.

### **Cameroon, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo**

The political gains that were made in Cameroon following the onset of multi-party politics in Cameroon in the 1990s have all but dissipated. As a result of internal and external pressures for change, to which the Biya regime was subjected in the 1990s, the creation of parties, supposedly to compete in free and open elections, was authorized. Some degree of press freedom was allowed and a draft constitution that was supposed to establish freedoms, rights and political institutions was crafted but was not ratified. Despite the fact that the government created the appearance that it was truly committed to embracing transparent forms of democratic governance, it did not quite give up its authoritarian modes of operation. The Presidential elections of 1992 that the opposition Social Democratic Front won were accorded to Paul Biya. Since 1992, the Biya regime has coopted numerous opposition parties, amended the constitution to enable him to rule for life and has turned to the repressive methods of yesteryears. Public participation in the political process has been nonexistent because Cameroonians have become apathetic to any notion of change under the current regime. They have simply given up relying instead on some chance that divine intervention would rescue them from the political, economic and social bondage in which they find themselves. Paul Biya's sixth straight presidential victory in Cameroon in October 2011—extending his 29-year rule by another seven years—may not be an indication that all is well in the republic, and that there is no will for change. Low voter turnout and opposition accusations of electoral fraud indicate that people in Cameroon have become apathetic. As Ihonvbere & Mbaku (2003, 39-40) argue, (with respect to the fact that in several countries throughout the continent, the possibility of return to authoritarianism remains quite high) the relatively significant gains made in democratizing Cameroon politics since 1990, when political competition was legalized, have since been lost as the incumbent government has reverted to its pre-1990 repressive tactics and opportunistic leadership. Takougang and Krieger (1998) observed that if by 2010 meaningful political change had not occurred in Cameroon the nation might descend into chaos. Because those anticipated reforms did not occur, Peter Vakunta (2012) also argued that Cameroon was a nation tethering on the brink of collapse. More and more, Cameroonians are turning their hopes toward the diaspora to bring an end to three decades of stagnation, marginalization of minority groups, corruption, abuse of human rights, denial of press freedoms, mismanagement of public resources and repression under Biya. Transition to democratic or more open forms of governance in Cameroon have failed because of: a weak or coopted opposition movement, weak institutions to consolidate democracy, lack of opportunity for public or civil society participation in the democratic process, consistent support for the incumbent regime by France, the absence of external pressure from multilateral or bilateral organizations and the fact that the democratic process has not been grounded in African values and consequently has not been fully understood by grassroots and civil

society organizations which should provide the impetus for any successful transition.

### **Ivory Coast**

The social, economic and political development of Ivory Coast was inspired by Houphouet Boigny who ruled the nation from 1960-1990. Regarded, along with Senegal, as models of post-colonial development in Africa by France, the two countries pursued different paths towards democratization. While Senegal was praised for its tolerant and liberal political orientation, Cote d'Ivoire was regarded as a haven of stability and an African economic miracle until the 1990s. Consequently, democratization became the trigger that called into question the sustainability of the social, political and economic network that Boigny had constructed for over 30 years. Given the violent protests for political freedoms and transparent forms of governance that engulfed Ivory Coast in the 1990s a review of the system that had been dominated by one individual for so long was inevitable. Boigny's idea of the Ivorian nation was the result of politico-economic compromises devised by him that were shaped by three inextricably linked principles: (a) a centralized open door economic policy, (b) an indigenous bourgeoisie dependent on the state and (c) the paternalistic management of ethnic diversity (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 32). Houphouet Boigny inherited the colonial politics of controlling Ivoirian territory and transformed these principles into a national policy of development. The inheritance included primarily the production of agricultural commodities (cocoa, coffee, cotton, rubber) and a steady supply of manual labor from Upper Volta or Burkina Faso. The institution of an attractive investment code after independence facilitated the mobilization of foreign capital and expertise. In addition to this economic structure was the use of a state controlled patronage system to create an elite loyal to the person of Houphouet Boigny. The goal was to build a national bourgeoisie capable of acting as a class of local investors and entrepreneurs in an economy, dominated by foreign, largely French capital, often through the licit and illicit use of state resources. (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 32). The dominant elite belonged to a single party, the PDCI (Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire) and were distinguished by their wealth and ostentatious consumption made possible by political protection.

Boigny's politico-economic system was based on the particular management of ethnic diversity. To guarantee longevity in power, Boigny developed an ideology based on the myth of the legitimacy of members of the Akan group to govern others. To support this myth this ideology had to double as a way of managing the mosaic of more than 60 ethnicities regrouped into four linguistic families- the Mande, the Gur, the kru and the kwa or Akan. The Houphouet ideology of the natural propensity of the Baoule (subgroup of the Akan) to rule over others was without any justification and was used to disqualify other ethnicities from political power. This ideology was fiercely contested by the other groups who patiently waited for an opportunity to prove that it was wrong and democratization provided such an occasion. The economic crisis of the 1980s, an increasingly volatile population of young people who were educated but were unemployed, the physical exhaustion of the ageing Houphouet Boigny, pressure from Bretton Woods institutions and Paris for Boigny to accept structural adjustment reforms and democratize, fueled the politics of protest and violence that engulfed Ivory Coast in the early 1990s. Unlike the gradualist democratization that took place in Senegal, democratization in Cote d'Ivoire was a result of the combined effects of internal crises and external pressures. After Houphouet Boigny's death in December 1992, three Presidents succeeded him (Henri Konan Bedie (1993-99), General Robert

Guei (1999-2000) and Laurent Gbagbo (2000-2011). Under these three governments the relationship between the state and Ivoirian society continued to deteriorate with violence as the dominant mode of political articulation (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 38). The country would soon evolve from one dominated by political violence to one shaped by civil war.

Neither the election of Gbagbo in 2000 nor his assumption of office resulted in the establishment of a more orderly form of government. Indeed, Cote D'Ivoire lurched from political violence and social conflict to civil war, further dramatizing the unstable nature of its democratic process. Conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation have replaced democratization as the principal objectives of public policy in a country once regarded as very stable. Mustapha & Whitfield (2009, 42) argue that the reasons for the civil war are attributable to the unjustified policy of Ivoirite or people from the north and its physical manifestation, the identity card that became an ubiquitous symbol of citizenship in Francophone Africa. They further maintain that Gbagbo became President in a political climate of general suspicion and rumors of conspiracies and coups were common during his first two years. Each of at least twenty alleged attempts to overthrow the newly elected government was met with arrest, torture, mutilation and death. In their view, violence continued to be the preferred instrument of politics revealing an almost romantic use of force by successive governments in the face of equally violent incivilities from opponents. The forum of National Reconciliation organized by the government in 2001 to ease social and political tensions and ensure that reconciliation, consultation and respect for pluralism replaced violence as the principal mechanism for political articulation failed to materialize. President Gbagbo refused to accept the forum's conclusions which included full acknowledgement of the full citizenship of Quattara who had become a symbol of northern and mixed ethnicities sense of exclusion from full citizenship and the political system. The unresolved tensions soon degenerated into civil war and the partitioning of the country. Several actors got involved in searching for a solution including France which wanted to protect a large French population in Ivorian soil. However, when asked to defeat the rebels, France refused to implement the bilateral military agreements with Cote Ivoire arguing that the problem was purely an Ivorian matter that involved no external threat (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 43). After several unsuccessful attempts by numerous actors including ECOWAS, the UN and France to mediate peace, Laurent Gbagbo and opposition leader Soro Kigbafori reached an accord with the help of President Blaise Campaore who had longed been blamed for the rebellion. The Ouagadougou Political Agreement of March 4, 2007 was designed to end the crisis ensure the departure of foreign troops as well as the implementation of the following major actions (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 46). Gbagbo would eventually be removed from power and jailed and Alassane Quattara would assume leadership in an unstable and deeply divided Ivory Coast.

### **The Democratic Republic of Congo**

Ihonvbere & Mbaku (2003, 217) maintain that the need for political reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) and the rest of Africa was underscored by three factors: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the cessation of the cold war which sharply diminished the strategic and economic importance of the DRC and the rest of the continent in western policymaking circles, the lack of interest by the United States and its western allies to continue to support the Mobutu regime and other client regimes in Africa and pressure from western governments and multilateral agencies, especially the IMF and World Bank that aid flows into

Africa be contingent upon on improvements in domestic governance systems and macroeconomic performance and intolerable economic hardship which derived partly from corruption, mismanagement and dwindling export earnings that added fuel to long standing domestic pressure for Democracy and accountability in Congo and other African countries.

Against the backdrop of pressure at home and abroad, Mobutu established the groundwork for political reforms at home when he abolished the single party state and lifted the ban on competitive politics on April 24, 1990. While Mobutu's actions signaled the beginning of multiparty politics in the DRC, he also surreptitiously launched a campaign that was designed to derail the efforts of popular constituencies that were now fully engaged in reforms to institute democratic governance in the country. The main thrust of Mobutu's strategy consisted of monopolizing institutions such as the central bank, the treasury, state owned radio and television, the police and military. Centralized control of these institutions provided the government with the resources to co-opt, intimidate, torture and silence rival politicians and popular constituencies. In addition, Mobutu and his cronies resuscitated the defunct Popular Movement for the Revolution (MPR), and its name was later changed to the Popular Movement for Renewal. The movement was instrumental in sponsoring the creation of shadow opposition groups which could be used to contest elections thus giving outside observers the impression that the DRC now had a fully functioning competitive political system. Finally, Mobutu's strategy for undermining the transition to Democracy in Congo included attempts to instigate ethno-political rivalries among the opposition groups (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 218).

Clearly, the formation of the Sacred Union, or coalition of several opposition and prodemocracy political parties in 1991 represented a new development in Congolese politics as it demonstrated the people's determination to transcend traditional political divisions in order to concentrate on what was supposed to be the final round of a protracted struggle to rid the country of internal colonialism. The formation of the prodemocracy coalition further signaled the desire of Mobutu's political opponents to forge a common front for the purpose of securing international recognition and support for their cause. Like similar coalitions established in Africa in the 1990s, the Sacred Union reiterated post-cold war declarations on democracy and human rights by western governments. Accordingly, its leaders embarked on a public relations campaign and issued clarion calls on the international community to assist their effort to dismantle the Mobutu dictatorship. However, as evidenced by recent events in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere in Africa, international support for the cause of democracy and human rights in the continent remained almost as limited as ever during the 1990s (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 218).

The effectiveness of Mobutu's strategy against the transition process was attributed to the fact that the Sacred Union was dominated by former cronies of the ancient regime, (whose political careers had been nurtured under the auspices of Mobutu's patrimonial regime) masquerading in the 1990s as democratic reformers. This contradiction in their former and current roles was clearly demonstrated by their senseless quest for power and their constant shift between resistance to, and collaboration with Mobutu which in turn enabled the latter to prolong his stay in power (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 219).

Ultimately, the lack of cohesion and a national vision on the part of the leadership of the Sacred Union, the opposition's misplaced expectations relative to Western support, and the dysfunctional state of Mobutu's military machine formed the backdrop to Laurent Kabila's ascent to power. On May 17, 1997, Mobutu bowed to popular demand for change and went into exile.

His military Generals subsequently surrendered power to Kabila and his alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (AFDL), an obscure and half-baked coalition of anti-Mobutu groups, instead of the Sacred Union. This gesture reflected the general's appreciation for the military and political implications of engaging Kabila's rebel troops in what was most likely to be a bloody conflict in the densely populated capital city of Kinshasa and the unlikely outcome that that the effort would bring about the survival of a falling regime. More importantly, the action of the military leaders signaled the unfolding of two parallel developments related to the emergence of Kabila and his supporters as a major force in the politics of post-Mobutu Congo. The first development was the erosion of support for Mobutu within the military, which for three decades was the stronghold of his regime. The second one had to do with the growing irrelevance of the Sacred Union and a dramatic decline in popular support for mainstream opposition groups. Mobutu's generals subsequently switched loyalty to Kabila to safeguard the security of their privileged status within its structures of power. In 1998, Kabila was faced with civil war orchestrated by his former supporters and mentors, Uganda and Rwanda, because of Kabila's insensitivity to their security needs, the failure of the FDL to construct a broad national base by opening the political space to civil society groups, NGOs, and opposition groups, and Kabila's re-imposition of autocratic rule on the people. After more than two years of a bloody war, the rebels failed to defeat Kabila and establish a transitional government to energize the process of political reform and national reconciliation. The failure was due to the contradictory motives and ill-conceived strategies of the rebels. They also joined forces with Rwanda and Uganda, Kabila's former allies who were resented by the Congolese people for their perceived attempts to exert influence on their national affairs (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 233).

It would take the assassination of Kabila by a disgruntled bodyguard on January 16, 2001 to diffuse the tension between the government and rebel groups. Upon his death, the political mantle was hastily transferred to his 29 year old son, Joseph Kabila. Kabila's demise cleared the way for the Inter Congolese dialogue and subsequent efforts to implement the 1999 Lusaka Cease Fire Agreement which called for withdrawal of all foreign troops from Congolese territory and the stationing of an International Peace keeping force in its place. The measures were supposed to pave the way for national reconciliation and transition to multiparty democracy. Unfortunately, more than a decade after the collapse of the Mobutu dictatorship and the death of Kabila, the DRC has not made significant progress along those lines. Public aspirations for stability and social justice remain elusive in the absence of national consensus on how and when to establish a democratically elected government. The eastern half of the resource rich country remained under the control of rebel warlords and the younger Kabila government does not command broad legitimacy nationally and internationally (Ihonvbere and Mbaku 2003, 233).

### **Ghana, Botswana and South Africa**

These three Anglophone or English speaking countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have generally been judged to be making significant progress towards deepening or consolidating democracy in their respective nations following the onset of the third wave of democratization in the continent in the 1990s. Ghana is lauded as the model of democratic governance that should be emulated by other African nations because it has successfully infused democratic ideals in its institutions and processes. Botswana's successful adoption and implementation of democratic ideals precedes that of the other two nations given that Botswana enshrined components of liberal

democracy in its constitution shortly after independence in 1966. South Africa emerged from apartheid following the release of Nelson Mandela from jail in 1991 and his subsequent election as President in 1994. Following Mandela, South Africa has witnessed the peaceful transfer of power from one political figure to another, albeit, from the same political party, the ANC. These three countries are classified as nations in which democratization is progressing, albeit, with some challenges.

## **Ghana**

From Independence in 1957 through the transition to democratic rule in 1992, Ghana was subjected to five repressive military regimes and a number of one party dictatorships. Then in the late 1980s, a combination of external (collapse of Soviet Union and fall the Berlin wall followed by calls for political freedoms to be accorded to previously oppressed populations, conditionalities imposed by multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF requiring political openness in exchange for continued resource flows to Ghana) and internal factors (economic decline and agitations by various social movements over the repressive machinery of the state, mismanagement of state resources, corruption and marginalization of ethnic groups), forced Ghanaian military leader Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings to open up the political space for greater citizen participation. He converted the ruling Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) into a political party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and ran and won the election for President in 1992. Since then Ghana has successfully managed six national elections with political power alternating between the NDC and NPP. So how has Ghana succeeded to deepen or consolidate its democratic experiment in two decades without relapse or democratic regression? Kwame Boafo (2008, 10) argues that Ghana has succeeded in effecting a peaceful and stable transition to democratic governance , against the background of many years of military rule, by: establishing a fairly effective electoral management system, ensuring that there is a strong adherence to the rule of law, establishing an independent judiciary, sustaining a vibrant or robust civil society, a critical media, a viable opposition; by affirming respect for human rights and freedoms and by establishing excellent relations with donor nations or external partners.. In addition to these elements which are all critical to the establishment and sustenance of a stable liberal democracy, Kwame Boafo, also maintains that Ghana has succeeded to build a stable democratic environment by ensuring that there is a growing commitment to democratic principles by all stakeholders through: (1) ensuring that the memories of past experiences under military dictatorship were fresh in the minds of Ghanaians who were interested in seizing on changing political fortunes to exercise their political freedoms and civil rights, (2) enhancing civilian – military relations so as to forestall a return to military rule, (3) strengthening the activities of civic organizations and think tanks in the areas of human, political and civil rights education, (4) ensuring freedom of the press, (5) disbanding paramilitary organizations, and (6) Banning former President Rawlings from visiting military explanations. Ultimately, successful transitions to democratic governance in Ghana were facilitated by the commitments of reform minded leaders as well as their abilities to draw on previous aspects of democratic practice and experience (Cheeseman 2015).

## **Challenges**

Despite Ghana's success at consolidating and deepening its democratic experiment thus

far, challenges that could threaten the nation's stability and democratic process, if they are not properly managed, still persist. For examples: (1) Ghana needs to reduce its extreme dependence on the international system at the expense of developing indigenous productive sectors that would minimize such dependence. No nation has been completely built through external support. An effort should be made to reduce dependence on external financial support while developing local productive sectors. A national development policy needs to be crafted that does not rely on impressive macro- economic indicators endorsed and appreciated by development partners while they mean nothing to the person on the street. (2) Ghana also needs to ensure that the problem of ethnicity does not undermine the electoral system and the stability of the nation. Though Ghana is not ethnically polarized like other nations in the continent, voting patterns along ethnic lines will continue to pose a danger to the nation's democratic growth-*The Ewes cannot vote mostly for the NDC while the Akans vote for the NPP*. Urbanization and high levels of migration should help people grow out of their ethnocentric shells. Politicians must be aware of the harm they do on the campaign trail when in place of addressing issues, they mobilize instead along ethnic lines, oblivious of the harm it does to national stability or unity. (3) The Ghanaian democratic experiment is also threatened by the lingering perception of corruption in high places. Ethical leadership is needed if the trust and confidence of the people would be bolstered. Where leadership is perceived as corrupt the masses lose faith in the democratic process and may lead to frustration and social expression. (4) Ghana's stability also risks being undermined if attempts are not made to improve the ranks of the poor and unemployed. Sustained poverty may undermine the trust people have in the government and the legitimacy they grant to the democratic system of government in general and the ruling class in particular. The economic status of citizens is almost as important as their civil and political liberties and holds the key to the growth of democracy and sustained stability. There is always a threshold, a defining moment, a point where the convergence of desperation and frustration borne out of severe economic deprivation would lead to political implosion and this would undermine any stable polity.

### **Botswana**

Widely acclaimed as Africa's senior or longest surviving democracy, Botswana is the one country in Sub-Saharan Africa that has been experimenting with democratic ideals since independence in 1966. Abundant research from Botswana scholars and observers of the political scene in that nation, all argue that Botswana has done what no other country in the continent has succeeded to accomplish: blend elements of Tswana culture with core aspects of modern democracy to engineer a unique but nonetheless stable parliamentary form of democracy: How has Botswana succeeded to sustain the democratic experiment. David Sebudubudu and Bertha Osei-Hwedie (2006, 35), posit that Botswana's multiparty democracy has been portrayed by various scholars as a shining example of a living democracy primarily because of relatively free and fair elections, political tolerance, multiparty competition, the rule of law that includes a legal system that protects the rights and freedoms of citizens, democratic rules and procedures, free public and private press and a strong civil society. Within the context of a liberal democratic polity in Botswana as portrayed by the definition above, the authors, examine the role of parliament, political parties, bureaucracy, civil society, the media and judiciary, in an effort to determine whether these institutions function effectively enough to sustain Botswana's parliamentary/parliamentary democracy.

## Challenges

Botswana has succeeded in establishing a mixture of a parliamentary/presidential democratic system in which the president occupies a dominant power position. In terms of the state of democratic governance in Botswana, the Botswana Democratic Party's good management of the economy is acclaimed within the country and beyond because of high growth rates and public expenditure on social services like water and health clinics throughout the country. Moreover, the low levels of corruption, by African standards, have earned Botswana the label of democratic governance. Holm maintains that the success of the government's development plan and the positive impact of social and welfare programs make the BDP a formidable electoral challenge. The fact that the opposition benefits from the policies of the ruling BDP makes it difficult for the opposition to mount credible criticisms of public policies. It is pertinent to note here that despite impressive growth rates and the availability of social services a large number of people remain poor and income equality remains high. Also, unemployment has risen from 21% of the force in 2001 to 24% in 2003, which is too high for a well to do nation, thus reflecting problems with the diversification of the economy.

Botswana is the longest, stable parliamentary democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, its mixed record of democratic governance suggests that there are limitations and room for improvement due to reasons such as: (a) Weak parliamentary oversight and parliamentary opposition seriously challenges the democratic process. (b) Weak civil society and an inefficient media have left more room for the government to maneuver without much oversight of the executive, fortunately the executive has managed to same extent to promote democratic governance with respect to the rule of law, tolerance of associations and political parties and promotion of economic growth and the provision of social services. (c) The lack of serious opposition challenge to the ruling party and predominance of the BDP suggest a not so efficient multiparty democracy. (d) A weak civil society and media also indicate some elements of democratic governance are still lacking. (e) This leaves only the judiciary as the last bastion of protection of civil rights and freedoms of citizens and check government arbitrariness and corruption. In terms of the above mentioned challenges, Botswana's parliamentary democratic system appears to be overly rated when compared to emergent multiparty systems in the Southern African region (Sebudubudu and Osei-Hwedie 2006, 50).

## South Africa

South Africa emerged from decades of apartheid rule by the election in 1994 of a government led by the African National Congress, headed by President Nelson Mandela. This momentous event marked an important milestone not only for South Africa but for Africa generally. The transition from apartheid rule to democracy signaled the end of formal colonial or settler rule in South Africa. On one level, the new South African Democracy appears robust and substantive. While there has been no alternation or turn over in office at the national level, free and fair legislative elections have been held regularly with universal franchise and multiparty competition and there is an independent judiciary, a critical press and a rigorous civil society. On the other level, there are at least two grounds for questioning the quality of the new Democracy. First the strength of the ANC undermines the constitutional separation of powers and the accountability of the executive to the electorate. Secondly, the ANC is widely accused of having

betrayed the working class and the poor by adopting new liberal policies that serve the interest of capital and therefore represent continuity from the apartheid era. While there is some merit in each critique the formal procedures of representative democracy are not inconsequential and more importantly, an arrangement of classes and interest groups, besides capital, wield power, albeit, in different ways (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 134).

The very economic growth and change that seemed to sustain apartheid also served to undermine it. The demand for semi-skilled and skilled labor drove the rapid expansion of public education albeit of racially unequal quality. Despite restriction on Urbanization, the settled African population grew steadily. The result was that by 1980 there was an organized African working class and an aspirant middle class both of which resented the remaining and severe restrictions on their standard of living and opportunities for upward mobility as well as the denial of political rights (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 134-135). At the same time rapidly growing numbers of unemployed and landless poor provided a ready constituency for direct action. Militant trade unions combined with resistance in the townships to push the apartheid state to limited concessions and later negotiations. The ban on the ANC was lifted and Nelson Mandela was released in 1990. Formal negotiations led to an agreement over an interim constitution and transitional power sharing and then to the elections of 1994.

### **The Institutional foundations of South African Democracy**

The legislature elected in 1994 also served as a constitutional assembly to complete the process of drafting a new constitution. In 1996, it passed a liberal constitution that rejected a consociational power sharing arrangement but set real constraints on executive power. In contrast to the apartheid era, it is the constitution and not the parliament that is sovereign because: (a) The constitution provides for a separation of powers between the different branches of government including the executive, judiciary and legislature and a set of independent statutory bodies such as the Auditor General and the Electoral Commission. The Reserve Bank is independent but by act of Parliament, is not under the constitution. (b) The constitution also provides for a separation of powers between tiers or levels of government: national, provincial and local government. (c) The third constraint on executive power stems from the inclusions of a Bill of Rights that stipulates not only civil and political freedoms but also socio-economic rights (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 135). While political power rests with the ANC, economic power in the neoliberal tradition is controlled by international and domestic capital. Foreign and domestic business elites wield influence in South Africa mostly behind closed doors and on the golf courses and business men and international agencies such as the World Bank and IMF exerted influence in the early 1990s to ensure political stability within the ANC. The ANC has firmly established itself as the party of black business, the black middle class and professionals and will place the needs of these groups before those of the slum dwellers, unemployed, rural constituents and the youth. Many members of the new super-rich black elite are ANC members (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 142-143).

South Africa has a very strong trade union movement that is designed to provide improved wages and employment conditions to workers. In 2000, there were 460 registered trade unions with a membership of 3.5 million and just over half of these belonged to one or the other of the 19 unions affiliated with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The power of the trade unions lies not in their use of industrial protests but in the threat of such action, their entrenched position in union friendly labor institutions and their influence within the ANC. There

has been little strike action in post- apartheid South Africa because there has been little need for it. The high point of union power was in the 1990s when COSATU secured desired reforms of labor legislation. Institutions and policies designed in the 1920s to protect the interest of skilled white workers were extended and strengthened in the 1990s to protect the interests of the skilled black workers who comprised the backbone of COSATU. The 1995 Labor Relations Act provided for centralized bargaining between employers and unions, procedures for the arbitration and settlement of disputes and strong restrictions on dismissal by employers (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 144).

### **Challenges Impacting South African Democracy**

While South Africa's democratic transition has registered impressive gains as discussed above, it has also been plagued by several challenges. Ironically, many of the same checks and balances established by the constitution have proved to be ineffective in the face of a generally centralized governing party with overwhelming electoral support. For example, the constitution provides for a parliamentary system with a parliament that is elected by the citizenry (the National Assembly by direct election, the national council of provinces by the provincial legislatures), and a President who is elected by and is accountable to Parliament. However, local, national and provincial legislatures are elected separately and each level of government enjoys considerable autonomy from the others. There is even an independent Financial and Fiscal Commission to guide the division of government revenues-vertically between the different tiers and horizontally between the different provinces and municipalities. In practice, the system is a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system and more unitary than federal. The national executive has come to predominate and the national legislature and sub- national tiers of government have been reduced to minor roles (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 135).

The legislature has proved to be the weakest institution of state. It has done little more than pass legislation prepared by the executive and has rarely even tried to hold the executive to account. Parliamentary portfolio committees play only passive roles. This is due largely to the heavy hand of the ANC, which redeployed members of Parliament and was quick to suppress independent action. For example, when the Finance Committee dared to examine the government's policy of inflation targeting in 2000, the entire ANC membership of the committee was summoned to a personal dressing down by the President (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 136). Provincial governments have also failed to use the power accorded to them by the constitution thus leaving the national government in control of power in terms of policymaking and the allocation of resources. The passivity of the South African legislature is due in large part to the combination of the electoral system and the dominance of one party. Given the passivity of the legislature and provincial governments and the inclusion of rights in the constitution, it is not surprising that the Constitutional Court has become a prospective player in policy making. At the same time that power has been concentrated in the executive branch it has been centralized in the executive himself especially when Mbeki took over as South African President. The reason for the concentration of power in the executive, especially the Presidency, may be attributed to the fact that there has been a centralization of power within the ANC and Mbeki's intolerance of opposition inside and outside the party, suggested that his personality was part of the problem. Mbeki was described as a man with a devotion to long term strategy and an egocentric view of his own place in history. His passion for centralized power was rooted in a life time spent in exile in an ANC that

was wedded to a vanguard role. A vanguard conception of armed struggle easily led to a vanguard conception of political and economic management (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 138).

The South African government was constituted as a government of national unity in 1994 and since then the ANC has held dominant sway over the political process leaving only a handful of cabinet positions to other parties. The ANC has secured about two thirds of the total vote in each election, although the relative strength of opposition parties has shifted considerably. The ANC won 7 of the 9 provinces in the 1994 elections, gained partial of an 8<sup>th</sup> in the 1999 elections and won control of the 9<sup>th</sup> in 2002 when it lured legislators from other parties to defect to the ANC. The ANC retained control of all 9 provinces after the 2004 elections. The continued dominance of the ANC does not mean that there have been no changes in the party political landscape. On the contrary there have been dramatic changes among opposition parties such as the National Party (NP) or the party of apartheid reborn as the New National Party (NNP) the Democratic Alliance (DA), have remained active in opposition politics. In 2005 the NNP disbanded and most of its members were absorbed into the ANC). Overall South Africa is a *dominant democracy* in which the governing party is largely immune from effective challenge hence there is little or no uncertainty about election results and the electoral system provides for only weak accountability (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 138-140).

### **The State of South African Democracy**

The post -apartheid South Africa has witnessed the emergence of various movements shaped by different groups none of which has remained dominant. The power of different groups has changed over time. The early 2000s saw the growing power of black business men and women in the ANC and the decline in trade union influence. Black empowerment moved to the center of state policy. Corruption, especially in the award of state contracts in the name of Black Economic Empowerment or BEE was pervasive. Much of the leadership of the ANC is preoccupied with sharing in the opportunities for rapid financial enrichment. Critics wonder whether the enthusiasm of the political elite for sharing in these opportunities may not have led them to enact the policies that create these same opportunities (Mustapha and Whitfield 2009, 149) Trade Unions retain power in specific forms. In terms of policy making their power lies in inhibiting undesirable changes to the status quo. Trade Unions have mobilized massively against labor market policy reform and against reforms of the public sector especially in education. Their mobilization is within the ANC alliance rather than in the street or workplace. Some social groups enjoy little power outside the ANC. For example, the rural and urban poor lack organizational muscle and the electoral systems effectively deny them the power to hold elected representatives to account. The emergence of new social movements may be seen as demands by the poor and others who have been denied a place at the table. Despite these challenges, South Africa is recognized as a vibrant or dynamic democratic state which is making credible attempts to refine its democratic processes so as to embrace more transparent democratic forms of governance.

### **A Policy Framework for American Support for Democratic Transitions in Africa**

The preceding discussion of discrepant orientations towards democratic practices by Anglophone and Francophone sub-Saharan African countries requires that the United States re-examine its support for democratic transitions in Africa so as to ensure that such support is designed to enable affected African states to undertake credible transitions to more open and

accountable forms of governance, shaped by African values, as opposed to western neo-liberal principles. To that end, a policy framework for American support for democratic transitions in sub-Saharan Africa should include assisting in the removal of dictators, freezing their bank accounts, and restricting them from traveling to US by imposing VISA restrictions on them, reducing military assistance to nations deemed to have reneged or regressed from embracing democratic values, strengthening civic or civil society organizations and empowering women, improving economic conditions in Africa by imposing conditionalities on them, for future allocation of resources, if economic institutions are ineffective because of a lack of good governance and internal legitimacy, forgiving the debt of poor African countries, providing resources to African scholars to engage in research on best practices for democratization, organizing workshops and seminars across the continent where the public can engage in civic education about democracy, assisting with Institutional Change by supporting the establishment, development or strengthening of critical state institutions-such as constitutions, the media, civil service, electoral systems, the judiciary, encouraging inter-African exchange of information on Democratization and generally inter-African cooperation, directing human development to such areas as health, education, food security and empowerment of women and mobilizing the international community to reduce senseless bloodshed and human rights abuses by imposing arms embargoes on governments and political groups that thrive on brutalization of opponents and fail to embrace more accountable forms of democratic governance. The issue of respect for the human rights of Africans by African leaders and societies may be better understood and practiced if a new paradigm is devised that clearly addresses different perspectives about individual and collective rights in the continent (Cohen, Hyden and Nagan 1993).

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper has attempted to re-examine American support for democratic transitions in sub-Saharan Africa amid discrepant orientations towards democratic practices, good governance and human rights by Anglophone and francophone African nations. A preponderance of the literature on transitions to more open and accountable forms of government in Africa since the 1990s speaks about the impressive efforts that Anglophone nations of Africa have made towards transitioning from previously autocratic political systems to more transparent and accountable forms of governance. By the same token, there is credible evidence from the same scholarly sources that articulate the unwillingness or inability of francophone sub-Saharan African nations to embrace these new forms of governance apparently because the status quo serves the interests of the political leaders of these countries and their external mentor-France. The various economic, cultural and security arrangements that France established with its former colonies in Africa in the 1960s have enabled the French to maintain unprecedented influence in the domestic and external affairs of nations such as Cameroon, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in over fifty years after independence. Sustained by institutions such as La Francophonie and France-Afrique, French leaders since De Gaulle have supported African leaders, even if those leaders were engaged in practices that stymied efforts at democratic transitions and transparent governance, as long as French strategic interests (political, economic and cultural) were advanced (Martin 1997). By contrast, the British have not sought to exert undue influence in the internal affairs of its former colonies in Africa and have largely left leaders and citizens of those nation to embrace the kinds

of democratic transitions that are compatible with their values and historical experiences. It is against this background that this paper proposes a thorough re-examination of American support for democratic transitions in Africa in large part because it was American leadership (with the support of its western allies) that stimulated, energized and supported the movements for transitions across Africa in the early 1990s (Kpundeh 1992). Given that it has been over two decades since these historic events occurred in Africa, this paper proposes that America re-examines its support for democracy in Africa by crafting a policy framework that would truly reward those African nations that have clearly demonstrated measurable changes towards more accountable forms of government, consistent with African values of democracy, and withdraw or deny support to those that continue to embrace the status quo.

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