

# The Africanisation of Democracy<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The implementation of democracy in the world faces three marketing obstacles; namely, political conditionalities, the fact that it has to follow a step by step approach, and thirdly, the fact that there is a gap between formal democratic development and social participation. It is within the context of these obstacles that African democracy has to be established. This paper argues that the African model of political democracy has to be rooted in the tradition of an inclusive society in which a series of inequalities exist. Second, African democracy has to adapt or "assimilate, — redefine and set about utilising Western experiences that are intimately connected with its own cultural, social and political identity." Thirdly, there should be positive discrimination towards sub-Saharan Africa by the more powerful countries in so far as they should recognise Africa's capacity to decide its own future as opposed to an imported model of democracy.*

## Introduction

The world market has a new export product - democracy. This product faces three marketing obstacles. In the first place, the conditionality of democracy is a controversial issue which will have more effect on the small and weak countries than on the large and powerful ones. Just as, on grounds of economic realism, it is more difficult to intimidate China through protectionism, it will also be more difficult to intimidate it with political conditionalities. The latter practice is possible in countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania or The Gambia, which have recently been subjected to it. Second, it should be emphasised that in order to comply with the laws of the market, stages cannot be bypassed. It is very difficult to appreciate democratic development without following a step-by-step approach. It is then possible to end up with a

situation in which the impetus to multiparty systems is the most important way of maintaining a discredited elite in power. A number of examples in Africa and Latin America point in this direction, and show that processes are more necessary than declarations of intent. Third, there is a gap between formal democratic development and social participation. The prevailing assumption about democratisation is that the one produces the other. The examples of south-east Asia show that economic progress is not necessarily brought about by exemplary democratic regimes, and that economic recovery was sometimes, at least in the past, achieved through social and political repression. Despite this political situation, however, income distribution in the so-called Asian dragons is more equitable than in other historical examples of rapid economic growth.

Above all, the relationship between democracy and the market is not a fortuitous one. The obstacles to the implementation of democracy as a preferred regulatory instrument must not, however, lead to uncertainty. The idea that Africa is not ready for democracy is unacceptable. All countries, all societies and individuals are always ready for democracy. But democracy is more than political and individual freedom. The African model of political democracy will certainly have to find its roots in the tradition of an inclusive society in which a number of inequalities exist.

Rousseau believed that people could be forced to be free. His intentions were ingenuous but sincere. Montesquieu convincingly demonstrated that freedom grows step by step in the history of a society, and that it cannot be imposed. The same thing applies to democracy and its various models, from as far back as the time when Socrates was sentenced to death. Although we know that the democratic impulse is supposed to lead to political liberalisation, permitting greater transparency of public affairs and real accountability of the authorities and public participation in this system cannot be reduced to multiparty democracy or the holding of parliamentary elections. Superficial participation may result in only a fragile renewal of democracy throughout Africa (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1995). Thirty years of centralising regimes cannot be wiped out simply by legalising opposition parties. The economic system and African cultural and political values have an even longer lifetime than these thirty years.

In this essay our aim is to demonstrate that the democratic transition in Africa can be viewed in the light of the concerns outlined above. I use the term *Africanisation* to refer to the process of re-appropriation of the debate on democracy by Africans. Given that the term Africanisation of democracy may be confusing or controversial, there is a need to explain more fully what I mean by it.

### **Africanising Democracy?**

The post-independence experience of sub-Saharan Africa has gone through various re-appropriation processes whose origin may be found in the pan-Africanist movements of the 1950s. Without referring in detail to that period, it is possible

to identify at least five major dimensions of this ideological manifestation:

- In the political sphere, nationalism led to the Africanisation of administrations (a term used in the former British colonies and in countries like Côte d'Ivoire);
- In the economic sphere, there has recently been talk of economic nationalism whose first objective would be to create or strengthen an endogenous private sector (which is on the agenda in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa);
- In the cultural sphere, the proto-nationalists were already speaking of the Africanisation of "minds", or the movement to assert an otherness which influenced African social scientist and served as a basis for the "inverted pyramid school", negritude, African personality, etc.;
- In the religious sphere, both the Christian and Muslim faiths were adapted to local realities, with countless examples of the establishment of churches or specific practices (a Christian example might be the orthodox Ethiopian church, an Islamic example—the *mouride* brotherhood in Senegal); and
- In the social sphere, there has been recourse to "tradition" as a means of defense against the most aggressive aspects of the imported models, in areas as diverse as economic behaviour, forms of social organisation or the behaviour of institutions.

Patrick Chabal speaks of the appropriation phenomena that are more distant in time. Thus the Kongo Kingdom and the system of "prazeiros" of the crown in Mozambique at the beginning of European, and more specifically Portuguese, penetration may demonstrate forms of adaptation of imported systems in what is known as "political Africanisation" (Chabal, 1994). Chabal (1994:202) further refers to the Japanese example in order to explain his argument more clearly: "... in the case of Japan, it does seem universally accepted that the process by which Japanese society assimilated, appropriated, redefined and set about utilising the Western experience was intimately connected with its own cultural, social and political identity".

It seems to me that using the same line of argument in analysing the potential for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa will afford a new approach which could, by political analogy, be associated with the idea of *ideological affirmative action*. The term *affirmative action* is associated with the civil rights movements in the United States. The aim was, and still is, to create through legal measures the possibility of more equitable distribution through what is known as positive discrimination. Positive discrimination is highly controversial today, but continues to be a point of reference for struggles of minorities — African-American, Native American, Hispanic, Indian, and women — in the United States.

The image of equity associated with affirmative action makes me think that the more powerful countries need to recognise the necessity of positive discrimination

towards sub-Saharan Africa as well. And the most appropriate form this could take would be, purely and simply, to recognise Africa's capacity to decide on its own fate, as opposed to an imported model. The image is particularly powerful in that, as we have seen, the United States, since the birth of the concept of technical cooperation with President Truman's Five Point Doctrine, was always the country most tempted by political conditionality. We shall analyse this issue in more detail below. As for the *ideological*, this is characterised in sub-Saharan Africa by the immediate choice that politicians and intellectuals are compelled to make between the modern and the traditional.

The *modernists* draw their inspiration from the concepts of liberal democracy, and analyse social reality in terms of the need for modern forms of organisation of political power that entail a smaller state and a larger civil society. The embryonic, and sometimes marginal, nature of civil society is merely an inconvenience which does not constitute an impediment to the projection of this ideology. The *traditionalists*, who to date have dominated the African political scene, emphasise the community, the *real Africa* or *African-ness*, a discourse which constructed its own motives and promoted a gnosis that delimits the perception of the other and lends dignity to otherness. These two ideologies — modernist and traditionalist — are characterised by acculturation in the case of the former, or by the lack of a dynamic vision in the case of the latter. African political regimes, including the new democratic processes, have frequently mixed these two ideologies, hesitate in choosing between them and find themselves at an impasse.

Affirmative action, which has a strong demand-making, even mobilising, aspect, is then, an analogy which also serves to demonstrate the need to shake off this lethargy. In so doing, it is important not to fall into the error of thinking that Africa is *different or unique*, in its political evolution. Alienation from the surrounding environment and the knowledge afforded by comparative politics would be disastrous. As Chabal says (1994:4): "... there is nothing specifically African about politics in Africa, or rather there is nothing which is more specifically African in the politics of Africa than there is specifically European in the politics of Europe". What is involved is a process of reappropriation that we propose to approach from four main angles: the syndrome of the historical vacuum, formal authority systems, the informalisation of politics and the universalisation of the democratic model.

### The Vacuum Syndrome

One of the major problems in the processes of building democracy in Africa is failure to recognise the historical dimension. A number of authors have drawn attention to this failing. Mkandawire (1995) and the team organised by the Council for Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) have been the most vocal (Chole and Ibrahim, 1995). These authors call attention to the artificiality

with which changes are made in political systems — yet another manifestation of the simplistic vision of Africa's complexity, a paradox whose origins are to be found in the thesis of African inferiority.

The historical perspective — invoked to combat the idea that democracy is built in a vacuum — leads certain authors to take another look at the excessive importance attributed to the state in the first decades of independence. According to this view (Bayart *et al.*, 1992, and Monga, 1994), two phases of the consolidation of the structure of the state in Africa can be distinguished: The first (characterised by the historical transition from liberation movements to independence) attempted a modest reform of the colonial system, instituted the single party, monopolised the economy, established a militant nationalist policy and evolved from a persuasive authority into a coercive authority. The second (characterised by the new processes of democratic transition) was involved in applying more burdensome external conditionalities, such as structural adjustment; it has established multiparty systems, passed from a rural to a more urban center of political gravity and accepted deregulation and reduction of the structural sphere of the state. Nevertheless, both types of state have points in common: imitation of the models, the dual nature of social relations, the manipulation of ethnicity, and recourse to ideological justifications that simultaneously combine modernist and archaic visions. Consequently, the most important challenges of representation and legitimacy remain intact. During decolonisation, this issue was relatively simple. The nationalists had to legitimise their role as representatives of the colonial subjects (Chabal, 1994). The means of ensuring this legitimacy very rarely involved elections, and the final proof of success was recognition by the colonising state of one movement as its official interlocutor.

According to Chabal, it may thus be concluded that this form of legitimisation has much more to do with erosion of the legitimacy of the *other* than with *representativeness per se*. The nationalist character of the movement was accordingly more important than its representativeness in terms of numbers. It is not by chance that one of the ways of resisting the pressure from the national liberation movements was to assert that they could not claim to be legitimate representatives. And conversely, one of the most important points on which those movements insisted was securing recognition by international organisations for their status as legitimate representatives. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the most capable of understanding this philosophy, even took on the role of a judge of representativeness. "This instrumental quality both of legitimacy and representation did not provide secure foundations for the post-colonial political order. The legitimacy of power and the nature of representation in the newly-created nation-state were now largely determined by the greater goal of constructing its nationality and guaranteeing its sovereignty" (Chabal, 1994:137), instead of broadening its base of support. The role of creating the infrastructure of nationality came to

constitute the sole measure of legitimacy. Thus, historically, the basis for the justification of power was somewhat narrow. Nationalism as an integrating discourse was constructed as a modern legitimacy, in imitation of the model of the nation-state. Nevertheless, for internal consumption it rapidly became apparent that it was an abstract, even ahistorical, category. Hence the need to turn to an internal regulation of society centering on the concept of ethnicity.

The first clarification to be made, in line with what we said earlier about the appropriation of the concept of an ethnic group, is that there is no direct and logical relation between *ethnic group* on the one hand and ethnicity on the other. As Archie Mafeje (1995:6) says:

There is a general recognition among the most perceptive that ethnicity is an urban phenomenon, one that derives from the struggles for political power and economic privilege at the national level. Historically and sociologically, this is not difficult to explain, since nationalist politics in Africa has of course always been centered in the urban areas. Although this reality did not pre-dispose the nationalist movement to ethnicity, the competition between various actors disputing the same field of urban action ended up by bringing this factor into the political arena.

In present-day Africa, ethnic groups are no longer very numerous, but ethnicity exists. Anthropologically and sociologically, the term tribe or ethnic group implies a sense of collective existence shared by those designated as such. This type of existence is no longer to be found nowadays. It is difficult, if at all possible, to find communities that previously shared the same locality, language and culture. Occupations are diverse, economic and class interests vary, geographical dispersion is very wide and the linguistic frontiers are becoming increasingly more complex.

As an exercise in provocation, we should try sending urban elites, who make much of their ethnicity, to their home villages in order to practice their professed ethnic consciousness. From another standpoint, try to differentiate between the Hutu and the Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi (who have shared language, territory and culture for several centuries), or, to go even farther afield, look at the situation of the blacks in the poor neighborhoods of Los Angeles through the same prism. In all these cases, political interpretations will be found that cannot with certainty be fitted into the definition of an ethnic group.

The ethnic group is in fact a social category which makes possible an internal otherness, one that undermines the national integration which the politicians themselves are calling for. It is the simultaneous use of two contradictory ideological archetypes that creates this impasse. But ethnicity is attractive for a number of reasons:

- the malleability of the concept means that it can be used in an opportunistic manner, and as a means of creating constantly changing legitimacy (what is clamoured for today is rejected tomorrow);
- given the patrimonial nature of the state, it permits a patronage system that constitutes a means for turning political capital to advantage;
- it enables politicians to present themselves to the people as traditionalists;
- it permits recourse to ethnic clientelism in cases of serious and individualised crises of authority.

As is apparent from a consideration of these historical factors, which need to be incorporated in any analysis of the nature of governance (including the impact of outward-looking economic models), they threaten the installation of democracy (Gibbon and Yusuf, 1992).

### Formal Authority Systems

Most African ruling groups, civilian and military, have responded to the nature of their societies by relying on a centralist and corporatist colonial tradition and a wide variety of authoritarian techniques. In so doing, they have "recreated" centralising administrative states with organic-statist orientations very similar to the colonial ones, and patrimonialised them. The three major aspects of this process have been first, the control of a limited pluralism and the emerging class politics in small, relatively modern, primarily urban sectors . . . ; secondly, the attempted extension and strengthening of highly authoritarian and centralising territorial administrative structures . . . ; and thirdly, the use of highly personalistic forms of rulership, politics and administration, resulting in patrimonial administrative states (Callaghy, 1986:32).

This summary by Callaghy is a good starting-point for a better interpretation of the formal structures of power in present-day Africa. In its various characteristics, the typology is no different from what is known in other situations and regions of the world. Particularly where Latin America is concerned, a similar political history can be identified in many countries. The building of the Latin American state was characterised by *caudillismo*, an essential factor in achieving a certain level of national integration. This involved the appropriation of state power by a group or class and its use for immediate and personal ends.

Despite the apparently radical nature of the national liberation movements' discourse, it is possible to detect pronounced elements of continuity which were fundamental to the development of the state in Africa, just as was the case in Latin America. In its turn the state, as the highest form of structuralisation of political space, asserted its territoriality through a legitimising discourse that incorporated elements of continuity derived from the colonial administration, in what I have previously termed *state rationality* (Lopes, 1982). The discourse of nationalist

legitimation involved a rhetoric of "modernity", in that it attempted to build a base of support using the principles of authenticity.

Authenticity is a necessary reaction in order to compensate for and even justify political power when marginalisation exists. It is something which Africans initiated as a defence even during the colonial period, and were obliged to maintain because of the persistence of the perception of African inferiority. But, let us entertain no illusions; it is also maintained because it is a part of the political structure that has now been constructed, which, although based on the form of administrative regulation introduced by the colonial power (ranging from territorial integration to selective forms of access to goods and services), also includes specific forms of appropriation. The processes of democratic transition at the end of the 1980s were to use this political capital, which Kabou terms "parasitic ideology" (Kabou, 1991) in their own way.

The first line of continuity that can be indicated is the use of authoritarian and centralising power mechanisms. What the first phase of post-colonial states achieved was, in essence, an *Africanisation* of colonial authoritarianism. Democracy, in that it seeks to dismantle an authoritarian order, should in principle reverse this reality: it should cope with protest and not avoid confrontation, disagreement and situations of opposition or even conflict. It has performed so inadequately in this respect that democratic processes have ended up aggravating conflicts to the point of rupture instead of managing them. Or, more frequently, democracy has diluted its principles in a formal structure that has not taken account of the true African political arena which operates through other ad hoc forms of linkage.

If we apply the theory of mobilisation (Lie, 1995) to rupture and change, the following elements should be included:

- The need for social interaction;
- The desirability of ways of distributing wealth;
- The conditions for conflictive mobilisation;
- The possibility of politically motivated polarisation.

When these conditions are met, the continuity of a process, such as that of African authoritarianism, can be interrupted. In reality, despite the specific characteristics of each country or situation, what transpired was the development of an artificial juridical-institutional model without the basis required to effect the mobilisation of rupture.

According to Lonsdale (1986), force has to be hidden; it has to be converted into power. Force is external, even when wielded by a society's own members — it is a hammer — while power is internal, even when exercised by invaders. It is a lever. Force admits no argument, whereas power does, even when the argument is not between equals. The exercise of power can build up vested interest with no capacity to change; collusion can lead to stagnation, and may in essence give primacy to one over another. Violence and agreement both have their limits, and all politics is a



combination of these two elements.

Applied to the situation under discussion, this vision implies the possibility of building democracy through the use of either force or power. My view is that, depending on the protagonists, one or the other was used in the recent African democratic transition, but both were at one in making demands, although they proceed from different premises. Whereas the holders of political power — the elites, to generalise — were more interested in using force, part of society was definitely expecting an expansion of power (empowerment).

This contradiction led to a breakdown of the traditional forms of authority without the corresponding replacement by a *democratic order*. Limited by the formal vehicles of representation, aware of the use of force and conscious of the possible mobilisation for a desired rupture and change, society turns to forms of power that very often deliberately opt for conflict (Lie, 1995). This explains the collapse of a number of African states, of which Somalia, Rwanda, Chad, Liberia, Mozambique, Angola and Sierra Leone are the most prominent cases.

### The Informalisation of Politics

It is important to encourage the expression of civil society, to give it a voice and an opportunity to participate at the various levels of government and decision-making. But is this a *prior condition* for development and growth, or a *requirement* which would be better expressed through civil society itself? Must this be a demand made through the exercise of force or of power? The pre-colonial period points to five main elements which should be respected in any serious attempt at institution-building:

- Codes of reference that play the same role as modern constitutions;
- effective counter-powers;
- effective participation of organised social groups in decision-making;
- highly decentralised economic structure;
- rapid adaptation of the systems to the social changes produced in society.

On the basis of these five elements, it is possible to conceive that in pre-colonial times, in most parts of Africa, the citizens were involved in social participation, whereas in modern times they are involved in production. There is nothing extraordinary or, once again, genuinely African about this. All societies pass through a period when social capital decreases.

The context in which the new democratic processes are taking place very often invokes these values of the African pre-colonial period as demonstrating the base of support that democracy can have in Africa (Rudebeck *et al.*, 1996). The same argument was previously invoked in relation to socialism, which supposedly also found its inspiration in the pre-colonial way of life. Thus there will be a direct relation between the modern forms of expression of African civil society and this political and cultural heritage.

The political reality is, however, much simpler. The centrifugal forces of power have indeed given rise to new forms of social organisation, but these have more to do with the impoverishment of the state and the decline of its patrimonial capacity, and with growing urbanisation, than with the remote past. Hence the organisations of civil society are tacked on the modernist/traditionalist discourse of the state; and the ideological impasse has not been overcome. Nevertheless, attempts are being made to establish a dichotomy which sees the state as bad and civil society as good.

In Africa, both the state and civil society present specific characteristics at a specific historical period which indicate to us the need for a more firmly based and less anecdotal argument. By way of example, Monga (1994) uses the term populist inflation to designate the difference between political supply and social demand, expanded by external factors that tend to provoke what is referred to as civil disobedience, which involves nullifying public intervention through collective indiscipline. These are powerful images for drawing attention to the context in which democratic processes take place in Africa.

New forms of authoritarianism may arise within the structures of civil society which tend to make opportunistic use of the state. In this context, many of the energetic protagonists in civil society are in fact prominent representatives of the state, wearing different hats as the situation requires. These combinations permit a proliferation of statutes and arguments which render analysis difficult.

There is increasing evidence of informalisation of political relations, which increasingly necessitate the use of the same techniques for establishing linkages with the formal sector as those used in the economic sphere. The increasing pace and scale of the phenomenon in Africa are of considerable magnitude. They challenge a citizenship which is already hybrid, and they alienate the new political structures, which move onto an exogenous level, and thus come to call for the same treatment as the economy.

As a counterpoint to this development, a passion is emerging for constitutionalism, institutional debate and parliamentary values. This passion is confined to urban elites who find in this field, as they did in the past in others, an opportunity of ensuring new historical continuities of dominance, this time under cover of new values.

It may be said that civil society cannot be reduced to a single and identifiable structure. It may contain within it anti-democratic, hegemonistic and populist practices. Very often in Africa, dominated social groups are able to find defenders in society, without these necessarily being *legitimate and representative*. Lemarchand (1992) refers to a persistent tendency among political scientists to place the state and civil society in completely distinct niches, the first inhabited by predator species and the second by harmless doves. The difficulty lies in delimiting the boundary between the state and society as a problem instead of an established fact.<sup>2</sup>

Civil society is a mirror of society, but not the only mirror. Normally, it is a mirror which develops in counterpoint to the state, if we follow liberal theory. But in addition, this is normally a phenomenon which develops against the background of a strong citizenship (Putnam, 1993). The legal relation between the individual and the state on the basis of this relationship deserves study and reflection. Here, too, a rapid adaptation to the syndrome of the vacuum is not desirable. If, as Putnam does for Italy, we undertake a detailed analysis of the educational system, communications and economic integration needed to desegregate the local units in order to create territorially broader networks of linkages, we shall, in fact, be creating the conditions for a better understanding of the formal-informal relationship in modern African politics.

The African state may be authoritarian and strong, but it is also weak. The reason why it is omnipresent in the discussions is that civil society is still in its early stages, its ambitions are not well known and consequently have not been widely disseminated and discussed, and its structures are poorly organised.

For Monga (1994), the state will only cease to be the center of private interests when it becomes possible to practice a certain *social regulation* that stabilises the different modes of social production. This means taking into account the inconsistency between collective and community aspirations on the one hand, and those of individuals and citizens on the other. There is in the propensity to authoritarianism no "ill will" which would serve to explain the situation. Despite the inadequacy of methods and concepts, the aim is to integrate individuals into the democratic process.

One of the possible ways of channeling the energies now being dissipated in informal politics is by strengthening what Nzongola-Ntalaja (1995) regards as the new social movements in Africa. According to him, the current situation is comparable to the independence movement of the 1950s and 1960s. But this time there is the possibility of using external pressure for positive purposes, once the democratic debate raises Africa to the universal level and brings it out of the forced isolation in which it existed for three decades. But are the conditions for appropriating the model realistic?

### **The Universalisation of the Democratic Model**

The marginalisation of Africa made it possible for certain influential groups to wield a spectacular influence on the shaping of politics. Although the United States intelligentsia has not at first sight been particularly interested in Africa, it was their country which, until now, has taken the lead in imposing political conditionality on the continent. Its influence is exercised either directly or through the United Nations; or, in a more pronounced form, through the Bretton Woods institutions. As this vision of the world is consistent with the tenets of the neo-liberal economic policies designed and adopted by the World Bank and IMF, both of them with

headquarters in Washington, D.C., it has become customary to call this package the *Washington consensus*. According to Moss (1995), various American organisations are intensively involved in designing policies that universalise *American values* seen as a universal matrix of democratic representation. The result has been to transform various areas of the world into socio-political testing grounds. This reality is particularly striking in Africa.

Moss is convinced that despite the fact that the reality often contradicts what Jefferson thought, American values have been influenced by a liberal philosophy, conceived by John Locke, which believes in the virtues of capitalism, individual liberties and human progress. He also considers the way in which these principles are applied in the United States as *obviously* desired by all of the world's poor. On the basis of this evidence, most Americans do not understand that their form of society can be associated with ideology, but consider that those who classify these "universal principles" as ideology are deceiving themselves. Here again the principle of classifying as ideological those who dispute reality, as seen by the hegemonic approach, applies.

The Lockean ideology has been transformed into an American national myth that influences the country's decision makers. American interventions are justifiable only if they intensify belief in the myth and respond to the need to expand it. Thus, it is natural that the promotion of human rights and democracy should be officially designated as a cornerstone of American foreign policy — a "moral imperative", "historical demand" or "universal appeal"; (Moss, 1995). For this same reason, it does not make sense to most Americans to ask themselves about the reasons for instituting democracy. They prefer to discuss the modalities for attaining it, since they believe that all of the poor are awaiting the liberation that is assured by Western/style values. The idea of universalisation is very close to the debate on globalisation, which proclaims universal values based on Western values, thus creating hegemonies that can arouse desires for counter-hegemony, emancipation and liberation.

It is absurd to think that the forms of collective expression around the world have to be identical, just as it is absurd to think that codes of moral and political conduct must be identical. It is too easy to fall into explanations that create more problems than solutions. The reality is more complex, and necessitates questioning of the universal model. The "self-evident" truths customarily associated with the democratisation process in Africa are that democracy is a demand on the part of civil society, that democracy is the primary vehicle for African values, and that democracy is the way out of the crisis. Any one of these sees democracy as a panacea, capable of eliminating contradictions, difficulties and subtleties in the African political experience. Together, the three suggest a way out based on a broader dynamic interpretation of society.

The society-centered analysis has been used both by Marxists like Barrington

Moore and by non-Marxists. Nevertheless, while the former emphasised the role of socio-economic structures and the national bourgeoisie in building the nation-state, the latter have spoken of the traditional and the modern and the role of the middle class in bringing together the two extremes (Rudebeck *et al.*, 1996). These are more sophisticated starting-points than the Lockean vision, and form part of a complex picture on which the concerns of many researchers are currently focused. According to Rudebeck and Tomquist (1996), there are six main theses relating to the building of democracy:

- That of the non-Marxists who claim that socio-economic modernisation and a strong middle class create democracy;
- That of the neo-Marxists, who believe that capitalism itself, by destroying political monopolies and authoritarianism, creates a working class capable of forcing democratic change;
- The personalistic interpretation, involving negotiations among the elite and top-down democratisation;
- The liberal thesis of civil society against the state;
- The neo-institutionalist current of good governance; and
- The thesis of the benefits of the social virtues, trust and cooperation, which may be termed *social capital*.

This analytical scheme is applicable to the realities of Africa. None of the democratic transitions fails to exhibit a mixture of the theses outlined above. If we accept that individuals take decisions on the basis of the quality of the information available, it is not difficult to imagine that a part of this complexity did not form part of the intentions of those who designed the processes of democracy currently being tried out. This does not mean, however, that these elements are not present. It is even possible to go further and accept the questions of Monga (1995) as to whether the forms of participation currently proposed are ethnic, or whether they are simply a matter of revenge against the state, with consequences that have not yet been studied, given that they have often provoked total disruption as in the case of Rwanda and Burundi.

The democratic model can ignore, in the name of universality, processes of social fragmentation which, instead of transforming democracy into a panacea, rather ignites conflicts. A breakdown of authority without effective conflict management mechanisms can create a vacuum of legitimacy which may then precipitate a conflagration. Therefore the globalisation of the democratic imperative may, between the erosion of the authoritarian order and the absence of new values, be expected to be transformed into a platform for violence. This is possible especially when elections take place in a context of confrontation between various proposed authorities, rather than one of negotiation with a view to achieving broad consensus. Under these circumstances, elections may become vehicles for war (Lie, 1995), exacerbating the strategies of insubordination and indiscipline. The

only way out is the acceptance of affirmative action to permit the appropriation by Africans of the democratic model, including its underlying values, which offers an opportunity to counter the trends and shortcomings analysed here. This is an essential condition for success in establishing new forms of political, social and economic regulation in Africa.

## Notes

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1. Extract from a book on the African crisis being published in Portuguese under the title "Compasso de espera: o fundamental e o acessorio na crise africana", Afrontamento, 1996.
  2. Axelle Kabou (1991), in a collection of anecdotes illustrating these reactions, gives expressions such as: "I'm black, blacks didn't invent the computer, so the computer is anti-African"; "Technology degrades family life and human relations. Even occidentals themselves admit this, so Africa must reject technology"; "We are victims of colonisation, and accordingly the Europeans have to pay us compensation". Many more examples could be given to illustrate rejection of a dynamics of development that is based on supposedly intrinsically African values. Axelle Kabou even speaks of genetic-cultural claims.
  3. A good example of what Lemarchand is denouncing is afforded by the works of Patton Jr., listed in the bibliography. His thesis is one which uses precisely these analogies, and does not hesitate to classify the state as a predator.
  4. There has been various recent examples, for instance, in Niger, Guinea-Conakry, Gabon and even Côte d'Ivoire.

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