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The State of Liberal Democracy in Africa

Resurgence or Retreat?

by **Tony Leon**

Executive Summary

For much of the post-colonial period, Africans tended to live under one-party dictatorships. Today, even the most despotic of African leaders wish to have their leadership affirmed by elections. Democracy is increasingly seen as the only legitimate form of government in Africa, but regular multiparty elections are not synonymous with good government, rule of law, and economic development. Indeed, corruption, repression, and underdevelopment continue to scar much of Africa.

Instead of paying attention only to the trappings of democracy, African reformers should focus on building free societies characterized by the separation of powers, checks and balances, an independent media and judiciary, restriction on presidential power, term limits, and so on.

Africa's transition to liberal democracy is unlikely to happen without far-reaching economic reforms; in fact, all liberal democracies are also market-oriented economies. Regrettably, many African countries are not only politically repressive but also economically *dirigiste*. Increased economic freedom and

the emergence of a vibrant private sector can bring about direct economic benefits, such as higher incomes, and indirect benefits, such as decentralization of power.

As the cases of Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe show, the spread of liberal democracy in Africa can be checked by a number of important inhibitors. Unresolved inter-ethnic power struggles often lead to tensions or conflicts. Abundant natural resources can shield irresponsible governments from the necessity of economic reforms and pressure from taxpayers. Similar problems bedevil foreign-aid programs in Africa. Finally, Africa continues to suffer from "big-man" politics or "imperial" presidents.

Fortunately, as the case of Botswana shows, most of the aforementioned inhibitors need not be fatal to the emergence of a relatively liberal democracy. Inter-ethnic tensions could be successfully handled through devolution of power and genuine federalism, along the Swiss lines, while corruption could be better combated by laws that limit the power of the executive and increase government transparency.

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Democracy is increasingly seen as the only legitimate form of government in Africa.

Introduction

The incomparable paradoxes of Africa include a continent which is richly endowed with human and mineral resources and yet is the poorest continent in the world; a continent which has tracts of arable land large enough to feed continents, yet which cannot feed itself; a continent which is blessed with lakes and large rivers and yet suffers from droughts and where her people die of thirst; and, the strangest paradox of all—the poorest continent on earth which has some of the world’s wealthiest leaders.

—Sam Mpasu, former minister of education, Malawi¹

Sub-Saharan Africa (Africa hereafter) contains 48 countries.² In its 2007 book entitled *Challenges of African Growth*, the World Bank notes that African nations range from “sophisticated, middle-income countries such as South Africa, to failed states such as Somalia; from large, oil-rich countries such as Nigeria, to small resource-poor countries such as Niger; from countries that have come out of conflict and have experienced tremendous recent success, such as Mozambique and Rwanda, to countries trapped in conflict, poverty, and poor government such as Somalia.”³

However, for the bulk of the post-independence period (i.e., since 1960), most African countries have displayed, with a striking degree of similarity, an absence of even the most basic essentials of democratic government. Thus, many scholars, policymakers, and political practitioners had regarded African liberal democracy as an oxymoron. The World Bank, for example, noted that until 1982, only one-tenth of African countries had competitively elected heads of state and, even as late as 1991, Africa “showed virtually no improvement” in its democratic fortunes.⁴

The first 30 years after Africa emerged from colonial rule were marked by the specter of one-party states, “presidents for life,” and vio-

lent usurpations of power either through assassination or military coups. Personalization of power, repression of human rights, and predatory and rent-seeking leaders were all the grim orders of the day. Mobutu Sese Seko, whose corrupt and dictatorial rule held sway over Zaire for more than 30 years, allegedly made the claim that “democracy is not for Africa.”⁵ That was a good working definition for much of the continent, at least until the end of the Cold War.

During this so-called “first liberation period,” only a few small African countries, such as Mauritius and Botswana, could have been classified as democratic. To the extent that elections in the rest of Africa were convened at all, they were mandated to affirm the incumbent’s tenure in office and were usually characterized by outright rigging and poll violence. Larry Diamond of Stanford University notes that only one African president, Aden Abdullah Osman of Somalia, was defeated at the polls between 1960 and 1990.⁶

By the end of the 1980s, out of some 150 heads of state who had governed African countries since independence, only 6 had voluntarily relinquished power—and even in those cases, after 20 or more years in office.⁷ In his book *The State of Africa*, Martin Meredith records the 1991 remark of the 84-year-old Felix Houphouët-Boigny, who, after 29 years of untrammelled authoritarian rule in Côte D’Ivoire, said, “There’s no number two, or three or four . . . in Côte D’Ivoire. . . . [T]here’s only number one, that’s me and I don’t share my decisions.”⁸

That president could well have been speaking for an entire generation of so-called “big-men” leaders who treated their countries and their countries’ treasuries as their personal possessions. They ruled without let or hindrance, taking full advantage of the so-called “liberation dividend,” which allowed them, as the post-colonial liberators, a significant degree of political leeway. That was coupled with their proxy status in the Cold War, where alignments or allegiances to Washington or Moscow were far more determinative of aid flows and international recognition than any adherence to the basic rules of good government.

Today, the democratic picture in 48 African countries that are home to some 800 million people is better than at any time since African nations gained independence. In 2009, Freedom House identified 10 African countries as “free,” 23 as “partly free,” and 15 as “not free.” By contrast, in 1980, only 4 countries were free, 15 partly free, and 27 not free.⁹ According to Larry Diamond of the Hoover Institution, democracy on the African continent is fragile, but “there are significant grounds for hope.”¹⁰ This paper will examine both the quality of varying levels of democratization and the extent to which such democratic developments are reversible.

It is certainly true that in the 1960s, the one-party state was seen as a model for development by much of Africa’s then regnant leadership. Today, it is only democracy—often admittedly of the very rickety or pseudo sort—that is seen as a legitimate form of government on the subcontinent. That has led Jeff Herbst of Miami University to conclude that, notwithstanding other dangers and the lack of democratic deepening, “as long as there is no intellectual contender to democracy, the prospect of further democratization [in Africa] remains at least positive.”¹¹

Further encouraging metrics have been provided in a range of studies that all point to the uptake of democracy on the subcontinent and some prospect for its permanence. A study by Daniel Posner and Daniel Young from the University of California, Los Angeles, contains a wealth of data that suggest that Africa is no longer synonymous with rigged elections, rapacious and unaccountable big-man rulers, and the accoutrements of predatory and vampiric states.¹²

Among their more interesting findings are the following:

- Elections are now the norm, not the exception in Africa. In the 1960s and 1970s, the subcontinent averaged only 28 elections per decade. By the 1990s, this had increased to 65 elections per decade and, in the period between 2000 and 2005, there were 41 elections in just five years.

- Elections are now increasingly contested, often vigorously. Extraordinarily, in the early years of independence, only two presidents faced any opposition at all in 26 elections conducted across the subcontinent. By the 1990s, 90 percent of elections were contested. Although, as discussed in further detail below, the nature and quality of the electoral contestation varies wildly, there is at least a “modest but meaningful” rise in the theoretical possibility of an incumbent losing power in an African presidential election. The authors rate the chances of a ruling president being ousted as slight, at just 14 percent. But it has happened with a relative frequency compared to the 1960s.
- Given the preponderant advantages enjoyed by incumbent heads of state in Africa, the most noteworthy limitation to have emerged on prolongation of incumbent rule has been the setting, and to a great degree the adherence to, formal constitutional rules on how leaders acquire and leave power. Posner and Young point to the fact that a slew of powerful incumbent African presidents, including Malawi’s Muluzi, Ghana’s Rawlings, Kenya’s Arap Moi, Nigeria’s Obasanjo, and ultimately 10 others, were forced by term-limits to leave office since 2000 alone. They draw the contrast with the situation in the 1960s and 1970s, when violent overthrow was the rule of thumb when it came to leaders’ departures from office.
- The authors surveyed 18 cases when African presidents had completed two terms of office and were barred, in terms of the relevant instrument, from seeking a third term. The incumbent had three choices to abide by the term-limit and step down; to attempt to change the constitution to allow prolongation in office; or to scrap the constitution and retain power extra-constitutionally. Significantly, not one president chose the extra-constitutional route; nine stood down voluntarily, while the other

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nine tried to change the constitution, and in one-third of the cases (in Zambia, Malawi, and Nigeria) they were rebuffed. Of the six who successfully amended their constitutions, all six went on to win the subsequent election.

Posner and Young draw an important conclusion. Instead of presenting a taxonomy of African democracy, classifying regimes as “full democracies,” “façade democracies,” “hybrid democracies,” “at-risk democracies,” and the like, it is more worthwhile to examine whether or not the behavior of the political actor is rule-bound and therefore subject to constraint. While they caution that the existence of “formal constraints on the exercise of power” is no inoculation against misuse of power, it is nevertheless illuminating of how the “rules of the game” have changed profoundly and, on balance, for the better in Africa.

Much like the spread and distribution of its natural resources, the growth and sustainability of democracy in Africa have been deeply uneven. The 10 most democratic countries, that is, those that achieved Freedom House’s top rating, are, with the exception of South Africa, fairly small. Jeff Herbst posits the striking contrast between those nations and the three largest countries on the continent, home to over one-third of the subcontinent’s population. Those three nations are, at best, “partly free,” as is the case with Nigeria and its 146 million inhabitants and Ethiopia with its 82 million people. The Democratic Republic of Congo, with a population of 67 million people, is not free.¹³ The conclusion he draws is that smaller countries, by definition, have less complicated and fraught ethnic and regional tensions. Indeed, the three largest and far less democratized countries in Africa have all emerged from, or are still engaged in, ethnic and regional wars.¹⁴

The revival of democracy in Africa has helped create a more nuanced picture of Africa. For example, in its survey of Africa, *The Economist* noted that the continent “once described by this newspaper, perhaps with undue harshness, as ‘the hopeless continent,’

could yet confound its legion of gloomsters and show that its oft-heralded renaissance is not just another false dawn prompted by the passing windfall of booming commodity prices, but the start of something solid and sustainable.”¹⁵

However, the same article, while broadly positive and optimistic, indicated that the myriad of challenges Africa faces, including bad climate, widespread disease, high levels of illiteracy, and a plethora of ethnic tensions, are all compounded by “bad and corrupt government,” which *The Economist* regards as the main reason for the continent’s failure to “march steadily towards prosperity.”¹⁶

The problem of bad government is not confined to Africa. However, Africa has one of the weakest civil societies, which negatively affects the quality and transparency of the state and its institutions. Rich countries can often afford bad or incompetent governments. In Africa, bad government can destroy any prospect for economic liftoff.

Can Liberal Democracy Take Root on Africa’s Stony Soil?

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether liberal democracy has taken root in Africa, what factors mitigate in favor and militate against the fashioning of true democracy on the subcontinent, and whether liberal democracy is a necessary or appropriate form of government for Africa. It will also briefly examine different democratic experiences in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa. All of these countries embraced democracy at the start of the majority rule, but that is where the similarities between them ended. Botswana has been a democracy since independence, while Zimbabwe descended into tyranny after a short experiment with democratic rule. After many years of one-party rule, Kenya has embarked on an uneven road to democracy, while South Africa, until the end of the Mbeki presidency in 2008, showed signs of democratic stress. Below I will look at the reasons for these disparate developments.

Crucially, I will show that political freedom and economic liberalization go together.

Liberal Democracy versus Democracy

“Liberalism” is a much contested term, both in Africa and around the world. It has application to a wide range of political propositions, from the libertarianism of *laissez-faire* economics to the democratic and *dirigiste* egalitarianism of the welfare state. However, for the purposes of this paper, it will be confined to the general conclusion on the meaning of liberalism drawn by Thomas Nagel of New York University, who noted that “the sovereign power of the state over the individual is bounded by the requirement that individuals remain inviolable in certain respects and that they must be treated equally.”¹⁷

There is a wealth of scholarship that strongly suggests that many new democracies have stalled in their purpose of spreading freedom, eradicating poverty, and lessening inequality due to corruption, foolish economic policies, and predatory elite behavior. Accordingly, a liberal democracy requires more than simply periodic elections. It also means the existence of the rule of law, individual freedoms, constitutional checks and balances, proper transparency and accountability, and civilian control of the armed forces.¹⁸ That is by no means a closed list, but it does include the essential aspects of a liberal democracy.

The distinction between what might be described as “electoralism” or “democracy narrowly defined,” and a full-blown liberal democratic order, was delineated by Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University who noted that “elections, open, free and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable *sine qua non*. Governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests. . . . These qualities make such governments undesirable but do not make them undemocratic.”¹⁹

In other words, democratic procedures, such as freely contested elections, can sometimes lead to doubtful or even profoundly undemocratic outcomes. That is the central thesis of Fareed Zakaria’s *The Future of Freedom*.

In order for a democracy to service both democratic means and ends, he suggests that the adjectival qualification of “liberal” is necessary. Thus, free and fair elections must be fortified by a “bundle of freedoms,” characterized by, but not confined to, the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property.²⁰ According to Zakaria, while the two strands of liberal democracy (i.e. liberty and democracy) are interwoven in the Western political fabric, in other parts of the world they are “coming apart.”²¹

Does “Democratic Deepening” Depend on Economic Freedom?

Liberal democracy places both the individual and the rule of law at the center of politics, and protects individual claims of liberty against all assailants, ranging from the state to the church to the ethnic group and so on. In his analysis, Zakaria quotes with approval the political scientist Seymour M. Lipset, who noted that “the more well to-do a nation, the greater its chances to sustain democracy.”²² While there are some exceptions to this formula, economic development generally seems to provide the most nurturing soil for liberal democracy. The establishment of a private sector that is independent of government control creates competing centers of power. It is this broad decentralization of power that is one of the keys to democratic development.

Unfortunately, Africa is poor. The world’s GDP in 2008 was \$60.6 trillion. Of that amount, Africa created a mere \$987 billion.²³ According to the World Bank, Africa accounts for 10 percent of the world’s population, but for 30 percent of the world’s poor.²⁴ Unsurprisingly, Michael Chege of the University of Florida at Gainesville points out that although Africa has held a succession of multiparty elections since 1990, those elections have not led, in the majority of countries, to the establishment of truly liberal democracies. Zakaria also suggests that it is no coincidence that the two most advanced liberal democracies in Africa, South Africa and Botswana, have per capita incomes substantially higher than the African

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average.²⁵ In 2008, for example, average gross national income per capita in South Africa and Botswana was \$5,820 and \$6,470, respectively. The African average was \$1,082.²⁶

In the main, the evidence seems to support the proposition that the higher the level of economic development, the greater the prospect for democratic deepening. It is noteworthy that several poor African states have progressed quite significantly along the road to full democracy. Mali and Benin are two stand-out examples, but they might also be two exceptions that prove the general rule. (Their democratic continuity is also far from assured.)

Peter Lewis of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies found an “elective affinity” between democracy and markets. Lewis noted that they “both rely on open information, choice, and decentralized outflows for decisionmaking. Market systems give rise to information demands and assertive social groups that impel governments to relax controls.”²⁷ The contrary conditions often, though not always, characterize authoritarian regimes. That has certainly been the African experience. As Lewis points out, the linkage between market systems and democracy is affirmed by the fact that every single mature democracy in the world is also based on a market system.²⁸

James Gwartney of Florida State University and Robert Lawson of Auburn University have found that economic freedom is highly correlated with income and growth. Countries with higher degrees of economic freedom tend to have richer populations and experience higher growth. In their publication, *Economic Freedom of the World: 2009 Annual Report*, they also found that economic freedom is highly correlated with political rights and civil liberties (as measured by Freedom House), and with less corruption (as measured by Transparency International). People who live in countries with higher degrees of economic freedom tend to enjoy more political rights and civil liberties. They also tend to experience lower degrees of corruption.²⁹

In 2008, Larry Diamond concluded a survey of what he termed “democracy in retreat.”³⁰ He noted that while democracy had become glob-

alized, any celebration of its triumph was premature. He drew attention to the “powerful authoritarian undertow” that has caused parts of the world to slip into a democratic recession. In contrast to Zakaria’s thesis, which sees economic growth as a leading condition for the consolidation of democracy, Diamond believes that only a profound reform of both the instruments and institutions of the democratic state will create conditions for economic liftoff and the sustainability of pro-growth policies.³¹

Additionally, Paul Collier of Oxford University believes that improved democracy will not, on its own, turn around failing states. A “critical mass of educated people who work out and improve reform strategy” may be more conducive to positive change than good institutions (e.g., democracy or political rights), important as the latter indeed are.³² Whatever the causal link between economic growth and democratic sustainability, there is no doubting that box-ticking and other superficial forms of democracy avert the world’s gaze from bad government in poor countries.

**Poor Government and Plummeting
Human Development in Africa**

The historical absence and the current uneven spread of full-blown democracy in Africa are mirrored in the continent’s economic decline. The salutary example is Ghana, the first African country to achieve independence from Britain back in 1957. Although it has emerged today as a constitutional democracy, it has suffered from 40 years of bad government. As *The Economist* noted, Ghana’s “recent success needs to be set against a history of disaster.”³³ At independence, Ghana was approximately as wealthy as South Korea, but today it is 30 times poorer in wealth per person.³⁴

According to the 2006 *United Nations Human Development Report*, Africa’s grim statistics are unrelentingly negative. The poorest 23 countries in the world in terms of human development are all African. Primarily due to the spread of HIV/AIDS, life expectancy in Africa has dropped to just 46 years, while an estimated half of all Africans lack access to

decent water and 30 percent are permanently undernourished.³⁵

Larry Diamond draws a direct correlation between the historic and, in many areas of the continent, continuing absence of liberal democracy, and chronic underdevelopment. He notes that “the survival figures are not unrelated to the data in respect of quality of governance.”³⁶ Alongside the countries of the former Soviet Union, he notes that Africa is still “the most badly governed region in the world. This may help explain why Africa ranks dead last, and by a wide margin, in its average Human Development Index Score.”³⁷

However, it was only after decades of sustained economic failure and democratic regression that some international institutions acknowledged that Africa’s economic problems had political as well as economic causes.³⁸ Drawing on 45 years of the African economic experience, for example, the World Bank found that “the impact of poor policy typically accounted for between one-quarter and one-half of the difference in predicted growth between African and non-African developing countries.”³⁹ Regrettably, a range of commentators, from Columbia University economist Jeffrey Sachs to pop stars such as Bono and Bob Geldoff, dismiss or minimize the importance of good government as a key determinant of economic performance. Instead, as Peter Lewis argues, “aid optimists” prefer to blame Africa’s enfeebled growth on “unfavorable geography, capital shortages, and lack of access to global markets.”⁴⁰

Democracy needs to deepen beyond periodic multiparty elections. Indeed, the World Bank itself now recognizes that to raise growth, countries must build what it calls institutional capacity—including the protection of property rights, the enforcement of contracts, the promotion of civil society, and the prevention of corruption through enhanced constitutional checks and balances.⁴¹

The Advantages of Liberal Democracy for Africa

African countries with similar opportunities, and often facing the same advantages or disad-

vantages, performed differently depending on the policies they implemented.⁴² The striking contrast between neighboring Botswana and Zambia, both landlocked and resource-rich countries that were granted independence in the same period, is a case in point. At independence in 1964, Zambia was Africa’s second richest country, whereas Botswana was referred to by a departing British colonial official as a “useless piece of territory.”⁴³ However, Botswana adopted market-friendly economic policies anchored in and bolstered by, a democratic environment that propelled it into a group of upper-middle-income countries. Zambia, meanwhile, languishes at the bottom of the income rankings, with a per capita income level barely distinguishable from what it had in 1960. Botswana’s per capita income, adjusted for inflation and purchasing power parity, was \$12,420 in 2007. It was \$167 in 1960. Zambia’s was \$1,220 in 2007. In 1960, it was \$984.⁴⁴

Botswana’s democratic journey since independence in 1966 will be examined below. However, government nationalization of the copper mines and the installation of a one-party state that lasted for 25 years should be considered mileposts on the Zambian road to ruin. Zambia’s transition from the somewhat benign authoritarianism of Kenneth Kaunda (1964–1991) to the elected kleptocracy of his successor Frederick Chiluba (1991–2001) exemplifies the dangers inherent in superficial democratizations. During his time in office, this democratically elected leader of Zambia stole tens of millions of dollars. In 2008, a British court found that Chiluba conspired to steal \$40 million, while the Zambian government claimed that it recovered \$60 million by freezing his assets at home and overseas.⁴⁵ Zambia only started to recover when Chiluba’s successor, Levy Mwanawasa, began to pursue market-friendly policies and greater democratic accountability after becoming president in 2002. However, his death in August 2008 and the flawed election of his successor in November 2008 point to the fragility of Zambian democracy.

Rapacious asset-grabbing by predatory political elites is often found in completely

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autocratic environments, like Sudan and Gabon. But, as Zambia shows, it can also occur in nominally democratic countries. Thus, much of Africa presents a dismal picture when it comes to corruption. Consider the annual Corruption Perceptions Index, published by Transparency International, which rates countries on a scale from 0 to 10, with the lower number denoting a higher perception of corruption. According to the 2008 CPI, out of the 47 African countries reviewed, 30 scored below 3 and 14 scored between 3 and 5. Only three African countries scored above 5. They were Botswana, Cape Verde, and Mauritius.⁴⁶ In contrast, Denmark, the least corrupt country in the world in 2008, scored 9.3.⁴⁷ Predictably, the three least corrupt countries also received top ratings among the African countries surveyed by Freedom House.⁴⁸

The prevalence of corruption causes a variety of problems. It can discourage private investment, while at the same time trapping the poor into dependence on ineffective or non-existent delivery of public services. Collier provides an instructive example of corruption in Chad. As he writes, “In 2004 a survey tracked money released by the Ministry of Finance in Chad intended for rural health clinics. The survey had the extremely modest purpose of finding out how much of the money actually reached the clinics—not whether the clinics spent it well, or whether the staff at the clinics knew what they were doing—just where the money went. Amazingly, less than 1 percent of it reached the clinics—99 percent failed to reach its destination.”⁴⁹ Good government matters far more in countries where state services, or lack thereof, can literally mean the difference between life and death.

Accountability is the enemy of opaque government practices and official secrecy. But in many, if not most, African states, the latter is widespread. The Open Society Institute’s Justice Initiative, for example, promotes adoption of freedom of information laws, improvements in the criminal justice system, and, crucially, the establishment and protection of effective rights of citizenship. Drawing from its practical work in these crucial fields across

Africa, the organization recently concluded, “Political processes and government functions remain largely personalized and arbitrary in most countries, while institutional foundations are quite weak. As a result, abuse of state power continues to go largely unchecked.”⁵⁰

Accordingly, countries that became more democratic between 1975 and 2000 grew at a faster pace than their less democratic counterparts.⁵¹ Crucially, the study found no evidence to support the “so-called authoritarian advantage” for economic development sometimes proffered in Asia and Latin America. Instead, the study found that “it is difficult to escape the association between non-democratic rule and economic failure in Africa.”⁵²

But even in African democracies, the rule of law and the rule of strong men continue to vie for dominance. Liberal democracy is a powerful antidote to political authoritarianism. Its spread, however, faces certain key inhibitions.

The Ethnic Inhibitor

No region on earth exhibits Africa’s propensity for conflict and civil war. Since decolonization, nearly 40 percent of African countries have experienced civil war. Violence still rages in the eastern Congo. This conflict has, over time, drawn in 10 countries and cost millions of lives. Little wonder that in 2007, 70 percent of the 70,000 United Nations peacekeepers engaged worldwide were deployed in Africa.⁵³

Not every conflict in Africa is caused by ethnic tensions. Somalia, for example, is an ethnically homogenous state. But most of Africa’s violent ruptures relate to ethnic or religious differences. The European colonizers paid little heed to the existence of homogenous and ethnically distinct African societies during the great carve-up of the continent in the late 19th century. Colonial boundaries either broke asunder traditional African societies or, more ominously in terms of future conflict, in some cases enclosed together hundreds of diverse groups with little or no common interests to bind them together.

At independence, the borders of these makeshift states with varied, often volatile, ethnically mixed populations were left intact. It is

possible that partitions, like the one that separated Pakistan from India in 1948, would have had their own violent consequences. But the persistence of the colonial status quo and, more importantly, the failure of the colonial powers and the independence leaders to make meaningful constitutional arrangements to account for ethnic differences, have cost Africa dearly in economic terms. For example, studies show that countries that experienced a civil war had an average income that was about 50 percent lower than countries that did not undergo such conflict. Investment ratios for both human and physical capital were also about 50 percent lower in post-conflict countries.⁵⁴

But beyond its economic effects and the extraordinary levels of human suffering wrought by ethnic conflicts, ethnic loyalties have inhibited democratic consolidation and political accommodation of minorities. As far back as 1979, sociologist Pierre van den Berghe warned that “if your constituency has the good fortune to contain a demographic majority, racism can easily be disguised as democracy. The ideological sleight of hand of course is that an ascriptive racially defined majority is a far cry from a majority made up of a shifting coalition of individuals. . . . [M]ajority rule in Africa can thus easily become a veneer for racial domination.”⁵⁵ Politics of identity, in other words, will trump the politics of interest.

Most political parties in Africa have shallow ideological roots. They are far more defined in both their policies and voters’ perceptions by ethnic or regional cleavages. As a result, politics is often reduced to a zero-sum struggle between majority winners and excluded minority outsiders.⁵⁶ In the absence of constitutional arrangements that accommodate minorities, like those that can be seen in Belgium or Switzerland, majorities tend to dominate, and opposition tends to be weak and alienated. Of course, as Jerry Muller of the Catholic University of America observed, ethnically defined political identities are not peculiar to Africa. Indeed, the peaceful post-World War II European settlement followed a previously violent process of ethnic separation. “In areas [of Europe] where the separation has not yet

occurred [such as Yugoslavia] politics is apt to remain ugly,” he wrote.⁵⁷

The persistence of ethno-nationalist conflicts in several key African countries has also inhibited the flourishing of broadly based civil society organizations and trans-ethnic national institutions. Even in sophisticated countries, such as South Africa, the recent spate of xenophobic violence, which erupted in May 2008, indicates the prevalence of destructive ethno-nationalist sentiments. Muller suggests that while liberal democracy is, by definition, racially and ethnically inclusive, it works best in political units that are largely ethnically homogenous.⁵⁸ Of course, it is not simply tribal identities that cause civil unrest and ethnic strife, but the deliberate incitement to violence of some unscrupulous leaders. As Robert Guest of *The Economist* notes, “Most of today’s conflicts owe their persistence to modern politics, not primordial passions.”⁵⁹

The Resource Curse

Ethnicity is not the sole democracy-inhibitor in Africa. Nearly one-third of African states are resource-rich, and Africa is a major producer of the world’s most important minerals and metals, including gold, diamonds, platinum, petroleum, and gas.⁶⁰ The immediate economic advantage derived from such mineral abundance varies due to price fluctuations, and is countered by the adverse effects that high commodity prices have on domestic exchange rates and the consequent underdevelopment of the local export industry.⁶¹ Nevertheless, oil in particular has had an almost entirely negative effect on widening democracy in Africa’s oil-producing nations—especially Angola, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, and Sudan. Not a single one of Africa’s oil-exporting nations has been rated as “free” by Freedom House.⁶²

South Africa and Botswana, both mineral producers, did achieve such a rating, but neither of them has oil. According to Herbst, “A political economy based on hard mineral exports, most notably oil, fuels authoritarianism, because so much of the country’s total export revenue is captured by the central gov-

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ernment. Relatively large financial flows help support governments that would otherwise have collapsed, and makes it very hard for authoritarians to walk away from power.”⁶³ Interestingly, significant oil reserves have recently been discovered in Ghana.⁶⁴ It remains to be determined whether that country’s recent and impressive democratic rankings will be affected by its new windfall.

Angola is one of the most egregious examples of a venal and despotic state fueled by oil. The large-scale production of oil off its Atlantic coast in the 1960s extended and fueled the 40-year-long Angolan civil war. During that period, 1 million people out of a population of 13 million were killed and 1.7 million people were displaced.⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch has alleged that the Angolan leaders have “lost” more than \$4 billion of state revenue between 1997 and 2002.⁶⁶ The cycle of civil war and violence was, at important times, aided by revenues from the extractive industry, and while peace has returned to Angola, the resurgence of violence in the neighboring and mineral-rich Democratic Republic of Congo points to a continuation of a similar problem in that country.

Two recent international initiatives have yielded mixed results in taming the authoritarian and violent impulses fueled by the fight over mineral resources. The world campaign against so-called “blood diamonds” has resulted in the “Kimberley Process”—an instrument designed to improve levels of transparency and accountability that are among the two most important prerequisites for democratic reform.⁶⁷ This joint initiative by governments, industry, and civil society imposes extensive requirements on its members to certify shipments of rough diamonds as “conflict-free.” That could stem the flow of illicit stones, which are often used by rebel movements to finance wars in Africa. Among the 74 signatories are Angola, Côte D’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone.

Another attempt to establish principles of good government in Africa is the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative that was put into place by the British government in

2003. The EITI creates a framework for transparency and accountability in mineral-rich countries. For example, it requires greater financial disclosure from state-run and private extraction companies and from governments in developing countries. Unfortunately, the only African country that is fully compliant with the EITI criteria is Liberia.⁶⁸ The EITI process is voluntary, requiring honest accounting, legislative enactments, and careful monitoring. Those are precisely the hallmarks of good government that are absent from many of the African states that signed the EITI initiative, but have not complied with the EITI requirements.

Foreign Aid: Democratization’s Friend or Foe?

There must be several forests’ worth of studies chronicling the failure of international aid to alleviate poverty in Africa. Robert Guest writes, “Some African leaders sometimes talk of the need for a Marshall Plan. But Africa has received aid equivalent to six Marshall Plans [since independence]. . . . Between 1960 and 1992, Africa received aid totaling roughly \$400 billion [adjusted for inflation]. But whereas the original Marshall Plan was a triumph, aid to Africa has failed to alleviate the continent’s poverty.”⁶⁹

Some commentators believe that aid can benefit populations in countries where sound economic policies are practiced within a democratic framework anchored by the rule of law.⁷⁰ However, that conclusion has been challenged by a range of scholars who found no conclusive evidence that in a good policy environment foreign aid has a positive effect on economic growth.⁷¹

The failure of foreign aid to improve economic growth rates and human development in Africa has not inhibited calls and commitments for its increase. In 2005, for example, Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University called for a doubling of aid for the world’s poorest nations.⁷² That same year, the G8 had committed itself to doubling aid to Africa to \$50 billion per annum.⁷³ Although those totals have yet to be seen in reality, the G8 has put far

too much emphasis on aid and debt relief as solutions to Africa's problems. Africa needs to embrace economic and political reforms as solutions to underdevelopment.

While the G8 has also committed itself to addressing the rich world's distorting agricultural tariffs and subsidies, which harm African exports, it is noteworthy that trade liberalization has not progressed in recent years. The failure of the Doha Development round of negotiations on trade liberalization places a question mark over future realization of that commitment.

Far more controversial in reach and doubtful in outcome have been attempts to use foreign aid as leverage to promote and reward democratization in Africa. There are several examples where a combination of foreign pressure and domestic opposition led to the transition from one-party or military rule to multiparty systems. Kenya in 1991, for example, comes to mind. Still, even in those countries, results have been mixed. It is striking that recently the incumbents have retained power after blatantly flawed elections.

It is arguable that multiparty elections, even the flawed ones, create more democratic space than the perpetuation of one-party rule. But while aid conditionality has had some success in widening the electoral arena, it has been far more ineffective in the more complex task of deepening and developing democracy and its supporting institutions. In his thoughtful study on foreign aid and democracy promotion, Stephen Brown of the University of Ottawa concluded that "autocrats often survive the pressure for democratization. Political conditionality, as currently applied, can be evaded. Many African governments quickly learn how to make the minimum necessary reforms to retain their levels of aid: allowing opposition parties to compete but not win; permitting an independent press to operate, but not freely; allowing civic groups to function, but not effectively; and consenting that elections be held, but not replace the ruling party."⁷⁴

As Brown points out, countries ranging from Ethiopia to Uganda have implemented the bare minimum of reforms to pass interna-

tional muster.⁷⁵ In any event, far too many democracy-assistance programs are technically biased and fail to assess whether democracy has taken root or not. Too often, donors and international democracy promoters treat symptoms rather than causes, and lack the on-the-ground experience or expertise to monitor the efficacy of institutions and their personnel.

There has been strong support in the United States for the principle of conditionality and selectivity that was placed at the heart of the Millennium Challenge Corporation—a key aid initiative of the Bush administration. It ostensibly provides objective criteria—based on good government, sound economics, and pro-poor policies—that the recipient country has to meet in order to receive aid.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the MCC has come under criticism for dispensing aid to corrupt countries like Senegal.⁷⁷ At least the MCC has been relatively transparent in its use of third-party evaluations, like those published by Freedom House. The MCC may be an improvement on the previous ways of dispensing aid, but it is important to note that the MCC adds to, rather than replaces, other aid programs.

The approach of Africa's leadership to democracy-deepening is striking for its lack of appreciation of civil society. Take the African Union's New Partnership for African Development that was pioneered by then presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and presidents Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria in 2001. NEPAD is an attempt to obtain increased levels of international aid, debt relief, and investment in exchange for improvements in democracy and good government.⁷⁸ Yet its founding documents contain no reference to any political formations other than the ruling parties and governments. Perhaps that omission explains, in large part, NEPAD's lack of success in democratizing Africa over the past nine years.

The Imperial Presidency Redux

The previous section leads to the central and perhaps most important challenge to democratization in Africa: the entrenchment

Liberal democracy is a powerful antidote to political authoritarianism.

The failure of foreign aid to improve economic growth rates and human development in Africa has not inhibited calls for its increase.

of political elites due to the very absence of democratic counterweights and independent institutions. The survival of neo-patrimonialism or the imperial presidency, together with its withering effects on the creation of democratic checks and balances, remains a key obstacle to genuine democratization in Africa.

In almost every African country the welcome improvements in the general democratic outlook need to be weighed against the survival, and often the supremacy, of “neo-patrimonialism,” known in Africa as big-man leadership. As the Ghanaian scholar H. Kwasi Prempeh noted, “African presidents may be term-limited but by all accounts they have not been tamed. . . . [T]hey have emerged from recent rounds of democratic reform with their power extant. . . . [T]here’s more personal liberty and improved opposition space, but African presidents still control resources and patronage, [which] means that capture and control of the presidency is still the singular ambition of Africa’s politicians.”⁷⁹

We will observe this phenomenon at work to varying degrees in each of the four countries under specific review below. However, most African countries today continue to bear witness to the perpetuation of presidential dominance and the absence of effective democratic counterweights. The results in each case may vary, but the causes appear to be common.

For example, very few African democratic transitions have been characterized by fundamental root-and-branch constitutional reforms. Constitutional conferences have been dominated by “issues of access,” such as free elections, media freedom, term limits, and so on. Often little, if any, attention has been given to establishing and deepening democratic checks and balances. Even in countries where an entirely new constitutional order was created, like in South Africa between 1992 and 1994, the creation of a political framework buttressed by a bill of rights, separation of powers, and the creation of independent institutions proved largely ineffective in practice. The overwhelming political weight of the newly elected majority party allowed it to breach many of the constitutional edifices intended to counter overconcentration of power.

The continued one-party dominance of many African democracies—for reasons of ethnicity, the so-called “liberation dividend,” and opposition feebleness—has further reduced the efficacy of constitutional designs and allowed the majority party leaderships in various countries to misuse and abuse their power.

Also, the democratic experience in Africa is relatively new. As a consequence, legislatures and municipal and regional governments often display a pathological dependence on the president and his patronage. Oversight of the executive and the creation of critical citadels of countervailing power have so far yielded very mixed results.

There have been recent instances of African parliaments pushing back against executive overreach. For example, in July 2008, the Kenyan parliament, now controlled by the opposition, passed a motion of no-confidence in President Kibaki’s finance minister. In contrast, just three years before the country’s anti-corruption chief John Githongo was fired when his investigations came too close to the presidency. That experience had led him to conclude that “a whole era, starting in the mid-1990s when African governments at least tried to take corruption seriously, is over.”⁸⁰ Nigeria, which has become a synonym for corruption in Africa, visited the same fate on the head of its anti-corruption commission, Nuhu Ribadu. After he was dismissed earlier in 2008 from his post for probing corruption at the highest level of state, he described Nigeria’s mode of government as “gangsterism.”⁸¹

There appears to be little appetite among opposition forces to reform government and its institutions. Rather, most opposition activists driving political change in Africa have, in Prempeh’s view, “been motivated by the near-term goal of forming government themselves.” He cites the case of Ghana, where enthusiasm for the reforms demanded by the New Patriot Party “waned appreciably once they obtained office.”⁸²

The judicial branch, in many countries, has shown a big improvement since the 1960s. In many jurisdictions, it has acted as the most effective counterweight to presidential over-

reach. However, the experience varies in different countries and there still appear to be too many instances where the courts shrink from taking on the executive power.

The first African Human Rights Court that has sat in Arusha, Tanzania, since June 2008, is a hopeful development in the institutionalization of a continentwide protection of human rights. The court's jurisdictional remit empowers it to give binding judgments against all parties, including signatory states, which violate the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. However, only 24 out of the 53 members of the African Union have ratified the Arusha protocol and are, thus, subject to its judgments.⁸³

Unfortunately, pan-African institutions have tended to reflect, and in many cases to reinforce, the democratic defects of the member states. For example, a 2008 report by Amnesty International notes a "deplorable lack of political will to address the human-rights violations that usually lie at the roots of political tensions and hostilities." It also states that the African Union's Peace and Security Council has "failed to fulfill its mandate to address the human rights dimensions of armed conflict in Africa."⁸⁴ A plethora of other institutions and charters, including the 1986 African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the African Commission and Court on Human Rights, continue to be ineffective because of "continuing financial and political obstacles."⁸⁵

There was considerable expectation that NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism, which contained provisions for assessment of good government in an attempt to increase international aid and investment to Africa, would yield positive results. Unfortunately, the most odious regimes, like those of Zimbabwe and Sudan, have simply opted out of the process, which is, again, entirely voluntary. The South African government was widely accused by its domestic opponents of marginalizing opposition and civil society groups from the African Peer Review Mechanism's process. As a consequence, Ian Taylor of St. Andrews University notes, "NEPAD will

remain a club of African states and the strong men who rule them."⁸⁶

Africa's Experience with Democratization: The Cases of Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa

Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa embraced democracy at the start of the majority rule, but only Botswana's democratic record remains strong. Zimbabwe became a dictatorship after a short experiment with democratic rule, while Kenya's democratic record is patchy at best. Worryingly, South Africa's democracy is under threat. These cases represent the range of Africa's experience with democratization. Below, I will look at the reasons for these disparate developments.

Botswana: A Democratic Success Story

Botswana is widely regarded as a "shining example of liberal democracy" in Southern Africa.⁸⁷ Since its independence in 1966, all elections have been freely and fairly contested and have been held on schedule.⁸⁸ The success of democracy in Botswana is often ascribed to a confluence of ethnic homogeneity and tribal traditions that checked the power of the central government. But, crucially, Botswana has for decades had one of Africa's freest economies.

Ethnic homogeneity has facilitated the establishment of democracy in Botswana. All presidents have been from the Tswana ethnic group that accounts for 79 percent of the population.⁸⁹ Moreover, there is a clear linkage between the tribal and political leaderships. Both the first president, Seretse Khama, and his son, the current president Ian Khama, were chiefs of the Bamangwato tribe, which is the most important constituent element of the Tswana tribal group.⁹⁰

Botswana's continuing democratic trajectory is also in part due to the customs and political traditions of the dominant Tswana tribe. During the pre-colonial era, the Tswana tribes were ruled by a chief whose power was limited

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by custom and law. He consulted with several advisers and was expected to discuss his likely decisions in public assemblies where villagers could express their views.⁹¹ The Tswana's support for democratic ideals was also evident in their culture. For example, the Tswana phrase "Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho," means "a chief is a chief with the consent of his people."⁹² The tradition of democratic values held by such a large part of the population undoubtedly smoothed the transition to a modern democracy.

This democratic tradition, which was left largely untouched during the British administration, has prevented the emergence of big-man rulers in Botswana. The strong institutions and democratic traditions have prevented presidents from obtaining too much power. Moreover, since the enactment of term limits in 1997, presidents have peacefully stepped down after their constitutionally allowed rule of two five-year terms.

In addition to good institutions that had their roots in pre-colonial times, after its independence Botswana's government adopted market-friendly economic policies. According to Scott Beaulier of Mercer University, "Unlike other African leaders, Khama adopted pro-market policies on a wide front. His new government promised low and stable taxes to mining companies, liberalized trade, increased personal freedoms, and kept marginal income tax rates low to deter tax evasion and corruption. In addition, Khama preserved the kgotlas and many elements of customary law."⁹³

For decades, Botswana ranked as continental Africa's freest or second freest economy. In the Fraser Institute's *Economic Freedom of the World: 2009 Annual Report*, Botswana was ranked as Africa's third-freest economy, roughly on a par with Belgium and freer than the Czech Republic and Greece. As a result, over a period of more than four decades, stretching from Botswana's independence in 1966 to 2008, Botswana's average annual compound growth rate of GDP per capita was 6.51 percent. In contrast, African growth over the same period was 0.52 percent. Botswana's GDP per capita, adjusted for inflation and purchasing power parity, rose from \$3,380 in 1980 to \$12,378 in

2008. Africa's barely moved, rising from \$1,796 in 1980 to \$1,935 in 2008.⁹⁴

Foreign aid, on which many African countries heavily depended for decades, has played a relatively minor role in Botswana's success. As Beaulier writes, "Traditionally, any connection to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank has proven the kiss of death for developing countries. . . . Botswana's leadership seemed to recognize the danger involved in depending on the IMF and World Bank. Instead of borrowing heavily from those organizations, Botswana allowed them to play an advisory role."⁹⁵

Of course, Botswana has much room for improvement. In particular, the size of the government and amount of government spending have grown in recent years. In spite of its status as a relatively free African economy, Botswana now ranks 50th out of the 141 countries surveyed by the Fraser Institute. That being said, Botswana's success story is consistent with experience in other parts of the world. Economic freedom is highly correlated with growth, but also with political and civil freedoms. Botswana has accomplished a high degree of all three freedoms and should be an example for others to follow.

Kenya: Democracy Interrupted

Most of Kenya's post-independence history happened in the shadow of a de facto (1963–1982) and de jure (1982–1992) one-party state. When the British rule ended, political power was soon consolidated in the hands of the Kikuyu political elite.⁹⁶ Comprising 22 percent of the Kenyan population, the Kikuyu formed the core of Kenya's nationalist movement and came to dominate the civil service and the private sector during the 1960s and 1970s. Civil society was suppressed and political institutions perverted to serve an ethnically based elite. Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president, exemplified big-man presidentialism almost to the point of caricature—he largely ruled by decree and through informal networks, bypassing the formal political and constitutional structures.⁹⁷

Kenyatta died in August 1978, and little-known vice president Daniel arap Moi took

over the presidency in October of that year. Seeking to redress the ethnic imbalance created by Kenyatta, Moi pursued a set of redistributive policies that favored his own ethnic group—the Kalenjin—and other disadvantaged tribes in the Rift Valley of Kenya. Although these policies were initially popular, they incited a failed coup attempt in 1982, after which Moi became increasingly repressive. Elections were rigged, the press and civil society were repressed, and opponents were jailed.⁹⁸

In the 2002 elections, Mwai Kibaki, the former finance minister, defeated Moi's designated successor, Uhuru Kenyatta. Kibaki's National Rainbow Coalition party, which later split into the Party of National Unity and Orange Democratic Movement, committed itself to a "zero tolerance of corruption" policy. Foreign investors and tourists poured into the country, and civil society and a free press were advancing democratization through increased influence.⁹⁹ The Kenyan economy picked up, experiencing some of its highest growth rates in 20 years.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, the government's anti-corruption drive soon fizzled out and, as John Githongo, the former head of the Office of Governance and Ethics, noted, corruption soon enveloped the highest ranks of the government.¹⁰¹

The December 2007 election pitted Kibaki's Party of National Unity against its former ally, the Orange Democratic Movement, led by a Luo politician named Raila Odinga. Prior to the election, the opposition's Odinga led Kibaki in all the opinion polls by commanding percentages. With half of the 210 constituencies reporting that Odinga was in the lead, the Electoral Commission of Kenya abruptly stopped the count. When counting was resumed, Kibaki surged ahead and, within hours of the result, he was sworn in to his second term at a hastily arranged ceremony. Unsurprisingly, the chief European Union monitor, Alexander Lambsdorff, said that "the presidential elections were flawed."¹⁰² Violence erupted over the confusion, with Orange Democratic Movement supporters accusing Kibaki's party of electoral fraud.¹⁰³ Some 1,700 people were killed in post-election violence, while an estimated 300,000 Kenyans were dis-

placed from their homes.¹⁰⁴ Targeted ethnic violence was mainly directed at Kibaki's ethnic group, the Kikuyu.

Widespread international pressure followed, as many countries, ranging from the United States to South Africa, refused to accept the election result. On February 28, 2008, Kibaki and Odinga signed a power-sharing agreement called the National Accord and Reconciliation Act, which recognized Kibaki as president and Odinga as prime minister.¹⁰⁵ This legitimization of a patently flawed election through *post facto* bargaining had the advantage of restoring a semblance of peace and stability. However, it came with significant cost: an implicit recognition that incumbent rule could be extended, despite significant evidence that a different outcome was mandated by the electorate.¹⁰⁶

What lessons can be learned from Kenya's history of democratic transition? The first is the recognition that Kenya has been led by big-men rulers. In the end, it is individuals, not institutions, who have forged Kenya's uneven path to democracy. Kenya's strong central authority, a holdover from the colonial period, keeps the judiciary, parliament, and the electoral commission subservient to the president.¹⁰⁷ The slow movement of political change in Kenya, exemplified in the transition from Moi to Kibaki, "is a function of the single-minded preoccupation with the replacement of incumbent leaders in the democratization wave in Africa."¹⁰⁸

Second, Kenya must build its democratic institutions. There is broad consensus within and outside Kenya that the country needs constitutional reforms that strengthen local government and help decentralize power.¹⁰⁹ There has been a push for those reforms since 1991 and many experts think the current political climate offers an opportunity for action.¹¹⁰ However, widespread corruption has eroded public trust in political institutions.¹¹¹

The third lesson is that ethnic divisions must be addressed. The idea of federalism, or "majimbo," dates back to the pre-independence era, when the British envisaged Kenya as a federation of three self-governing regions: the Rift Valley, the Western region, and the

Pan-African institutions have tended to reflect, and in many cases to reinforce, the democratic defects of the member states.

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Coast. Fearing that one ethnic group would come to dominate the Kenyan parliament, the federalists wanted self-governing ethnic groups to negotiate new federal laws with one another. This plan, which was backed by the Kenya African Democratic Union in the first post-independence parliamentary elections, was to ensure that national legislation benefited all ethnic groups and discriminated against none. Unfortunately, the Kenya African Democratic Union lost to Kenyatta's Kenya African National Union and majimbo was quickly forgotten.

Fourth, although Kenya's economy is today as free as that of the Czech Republic, much work still remains. Excessive regulation and licensing continue to provide ample opportunities for corruption. Remaining parastatals make hiring based on family and tribal connections possible. Nontransparent government procurement allows sitting politicians to reward their family, friends, and supporters with state contracts. Further privatization and deregulation will be necessary to limit corruption and nepotism.¹¹²

To be sure, Kenya is doing better than before. It has the 54th freest economy out of the 141 economies surveyed in the 2009 *Economic Freedom of the World* report.¹¹³ According to the 2008 *Media Sustainability Index* that is published by the International Research and Exchanges Board, Kenya achieved a "near sustainability" score in all of the indicators used to measure the viability of independent media around the world.¹¹⁴ Encouragingly, some 70 percent of the respondents in a Centre for the Study of African Economies representative survey viewed democracy as the most preferred type of government.¹¹⁵ But Kenyans also understand that their democracy is at risk. In December 2007, only 20 percent of the respondents felt they had a full democracy, while in August 2008 that number decreased to 6 percent.¹¹⁶

Zimbabwe: A Case of Democratic Implosion

The 1980 democratic elections that ended white minority rule in what was then Rhodesia gave rise to the hope that Africa's second most developed nation would provide an example of

racial reconciliation, minority accommodation, and majority empowerment. After winning an absolute majority in the 1980 election, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union government indicated their apparent commitment to national reconciliation. In his first cabinet, Mugabe included members of Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union, a rival nationalist organization. He also included several white cabinet members who were drawn from the Rhodesian Front party of the last white prime minister, Ian Smith.

Only a year later, Mugabe turned on the Zimbabwe African People's Union. Some 20,000 of its members were killed, and the party was forced to merge with Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union in 1987. Zimbabwe became a de facto one-party state. For the first 10 years of independence, Mugabe was handcuffed by the provisions of the Lancaster House Agreement that ended the Rhodesian civil war and prevented the government from amending the constitution. In April 1990, however, that restriction expired. Mugabe's government commenced with wholesale changes to the constitution, including the removal of some legal guarantees to the commercial farmers in the event of an expropriation.

During the 1990s, Mugabe used a combination of methods to minimize both opposition activity and support.¹¹⁷ He vastly inflated the public service payrolls and parastatals to provide jobs and patronage for his followers. He controlled the public media and much of the private media. Moreover, the security forces could be counted on to do his bidding. In September 1999, however, new opposition emerged in the form of the Movement for Democratic Change. A few months later, it helped to defeat Mugabe in a constitutional referendum that would have allowed him to seek two additional terms in office and official immunity from prosecution. Consequent to this unexpected defeat, Mugabe and his government prosecuted a violent land redistribution program that illegally, but with official sanction, expelled both white farmers and black laborers from the commercial farms. The Zimbabwe African National Union—

Patriotic Front had systematically “torn down the elaborate façade of democracy that it carefully constructed in the first two decades of its rule. In direct response to its sense of vulnerability, it began to erode civil liberties in Zimbabwe.”¹¹⁸ In essence, Mugabe and the party vandalized and intimidated all institutions and civil society, and retained their support base through “the confiscation and redistribution of privately-owned assets.”¹¹⁹

At all stages of Zimbabwe’s decline, the various regional and continental bodies charged with ensuring peace, stability, and good government in Africa—particularly the African Union and the Southern African Development Community—proved, at best, ineffectual in action and, at worst, complicit in Mugabe’s reign of terror. Mugabe’s great fortune was that his excesses occurred during the presidency of his most powerful neighbor, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. Mbeki’s own lingering resentments to colonialism, white racism, and the West provided a rich seam of personal insecurity and racial solidarity that Mugabe mined to great effect in impeding any formal and forthright action against him. While Mugabe justified his increasingly repressive and economically ruinous policies on the basis of restorative justice for the majority that was excluded from land ownership through the decades of colonial rule, his real constituency was not the African masses that he claimed to represent (but was, in fact, plundering into abject penury), but the superannuated southern African post-colonial liberation elites. Thus, the Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front, and to some extent South Africa’s governing African National Congress, were bound by a common interest.

The expropriation of land and businesses, periodic interference with the judiciary, and maintenance of price controls and exchange rates, to name but a few fatal steps taken by the government over the last decade, devastated the economy and destroyed investor confidence.¹²⁰ The annual inflation rate reached an astounding 89.7 sextillion percent (10 to the 21st power) in November 2008.¹²¹ There have been persistent shortages of foreign exchange, fuel, and food. According to some estimates, only one in 10 Zimbabweans had a job at this

time. Standards of living have collapsed, along with once relatively good education and health care systems. Longevity declined to among the lowest in the world. Zimbabwe ranked last in 141 countries surveyed in the 2009 *Economic Freedom of the World* report.¹²² Similarly, the International Research and Exchanges Board’s *Media Sustainability Index 2008* gave Zimbabwe some of the lowest ratings in Africa.¹²³

The decline of Zimbabwe shows what happens to democracy when property rights and economic freedom are attacked, and when an outspoken press, a healthy opposition, and an independent judiciary are undermined. Some hope that democracy in Zimbabwe will be restored as a result of the 2008 power-sharing agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front and the Movement for Democratic Change. That agreement confirmed Mugabe in his role as president, while making Morgan Tsvangirai prime minister. At present, however, the power-sharing government remains weak and agreement shaky. Zimbabwe may still return to the violence that marked the last decade.

South Africa: A Case of Democracy under Stress

South Africa is the sixth largest country on the subcontinent and has a population of over 49 million people. It is the only nation in Africa with a long-settled and numerically significant white minority that amounts to just over 9 percent of the population. Whites, together with the numerically less significant “coloured” and Indian population groups, form a non-black minority representing about one-fifth of the total population. South Africa’s mineral wealth is significant. The country houses the world’s largest deposits of gold, platinum, and chromium. South Africa produces close to 40 percent of sub-Saharan Africa’s GDP, and its GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing power parity, was \$10,187 in 2008. That income is, however, very unevenly distributed. For example, the richest 10 percent of households account for nearly half of the national income.¹²⁵

South Africa is quite exceptional in a sense that it is the only large, ethnically diverse, and

At all stages of Zimbabwe’s decline, the various regional and continental bodies charged with ensuring peace proved, at best, ineffectual.

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resource-rich African country to be rated “free” by Freedom House.¹²⁶ After the end of apartheid, South Africa enacted a widely admired and sophisticated liberal democratic constitution. Its provisions include full voting rights for all, a judicially enforceable bill of rights, an elaborate raft of fundamental individual freedoms, and a swath of independent democracy-enhancing institutions and watchdogs. The constitution also provides for a series of checks and balances against presidential and executive overreach, including term limits and separation of powers. Since the enactment of its constitution, South Africa has held four largely free and fair parliamentary elections and its 400-member parliament provides political voice for a number of political parties. Each of South Africa’s nine provinces has a provincial legislature and a provincial chief executive, and there is a third tier of government at metropolitan and local levels, so that South Africa has a quasi-federal dispersal of political authority.

Economically, South Africa’s first democratic government inherited a large budget deficit, a volatile currency, gyrating interest rates, and an inflation rate between 15 percent and 18 percent. It was also bequeathed a GDP growth rate per capita of -1.3 percent.¹²⁷ Due to prudent macro-economic management, the African National Congress government managed to reduce the deficit and inflation, and create an environment more suitable for investment. During economically ebullient times, the ANC government oversaw low interest rates and, in 2007, a budget surplus. The South African economy has grown by an average rate of over 4.5 percent between 2004 and 2008. A black middle class numbering some 3 million adults has emerged, in part, because of that growth. The size of the social welfare state expanded. In 2008, for example, it was estimated that more than one-quarter of the population received at least one form of social grant from the government.¹²⁸ Reporting to Parliament in 2006, President Mbeki was able to claim that, on the basis of sustained positive and uninterrupted economic growth since 1994, access to housing, electricity, water,

health, and education had improved.¹²⁹ Unemployment, which increased significantly after 1994, fell slightly in recent years, although it still remains at around 25 percent of the working-age population on a narrow definition and 40 percent on a broader measure.¹³⁰

Shortly before the commencement of his presidency on 1994, Nelson Mandela declared “human rights will be the light that guides our foreign policy.”¹³¹ In recognition of South Africa’s continental preeminence, the country became a leading member of multilateral institutions in Africa and the developing world, and was elected to a nonpermanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2007. Crowning its emerging leadership role on the world stage, South Africa was chosen to host the Soccer World Cup in 2010.¹³²

Dark Clouds on South Africa’s Democratic Horizon. There is, however, a darker side that clouds the progress that South Africa has made since 1994. First, the government has failed to address the problem of unemployment. To put a dent in unemployment, a GDP growth rate between 6 percent and 7 percent annually would have been required. That this target was never achieved, in the most beneficent international economic conditions, was a consequence of misguided government policies. Those mistaken policies included the imposition of labor-market rigidities that were mandated by the governing party’s alliance with the trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and the South African Communist Party, and the diversion of national resources into policies of wealth transfers to those oppressed by apartheid. While it was politically and morally necessary to re-balance the apartheid legacy, it is clear that high rates of growth rather than wealth transfers are needed to move South Africa forward.¹³³

Second, tensions have developed between the government’s grandiose plans and its ability to deliver on its promises. For example, by 2007, the government spent 5.7 percent of GDP on education. That figure was among the highest in the developing world and on par with much of the developed world. Between 2000 and 2007, 20 percent of the national budget

was spent on education.¹³⁴ Yet, in a 2007 survey, which measured reading ability of primary school students in 45 countries, South Africa came last, behind countries like Iran, Indonesia, and Trinidad and Tobago.¹³⁵ Similarly, in a 2003 survey that measured science and math ability of 8th graders in 45 countries, South Africa came last, behind Ghana, Botswana, and even the war-torn Palestinian territories.¹³⁶

Third, the government has been enforcing racial quotas in government procurement policies, public sector appointments, and even in the private sector. That policy requires that black South Africans be appointed in technical and management positions even though the education system has failed to deliver enough skilled non-white labor. Unsurprisingly, by 2008, the public service recorded a vacancy rate of over 330,000 posts.¹³⁷ This lack of capacity, at the precise moment when poor South Africans expected the most of their government in terms of service delivery, was most apparent at the municipal level. “During 2005, there were protests in 90 percent of the 136 failing municipalities that receive central government assistance and there were 881 illegal and 5,085 legal protests in municipalities through 2004–2005.”¹³⁸

The skills shortage was exacerbated by the continuous emigration of skilled young, largely white, South Africans since 1994. The South African Institute of Race Relations estimated the number at over 800,000 between 1996 and 2007.¹³⁹ While this emigration was a reflection of the global value of skills it was also attributable to shrinking domestic opportunities due to affirmative action and to the surge in violent crime. South Africa is wracked by soaring levels of crime, reflecting the failure of the state to deliver on one of its most basic functions. In 2006–2007, over 19,000 people were murdered in South Africa. That was seven times more than the murder rate in the United States and 28 times more than the murder rate in the United Kingdom.¹⁴⁰

Perhaps the most calamitous government failure has been in the realm of public health. Once again, this failure was not due to a lack of resources. The government increased spending

on health from 7.9 percent of its total expenditures in 1997 to 9.9 percent in 2006, placing the country in the same league as Hungary, Greece, Israel, and Poland.¹⁴¹ Yet life expectancy in South Africa fell from 58 years in 2000 to 51 years in 2006.¹⁴² That decline was largely due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, the causes and treatment of which were disputed by President Mbeki just as the epidemic gained ascendancy in South Africa. The decline in life expectancy contributed to South Africa’s slide in the UN’s Human Development Index, which measures human welfare around the world. South Africa fell from 103rd place out of 174 countries surveyed in 2000 to 129th place out of 182 countries surveyed in 2009.¹⁴³

Fourth, the government has massively intruded in the private sector, even though it performs much better in terms of delivery than the government. The difference between the performances of the public and private sectors was recorded in the 2009–2010 competitiveness survey conducted by the World Economic Forum. South Africa scored very poorly in the areas under state control. According to the Forum, “The business costs of crime and violence (133rd) and the sense that the police are unable to provide protection from crime (106th) do not contribute to an environment that fosters competitiveness. Another major concern remains the health of the workforce, ranked 127th out of 133 countries, the result of high rates of communicable diseases and poor health indicators more generally.”

But South Africa’s private sector scored relatively well. In the accountability of private institutions, for example, South Africa came in fifth place. The same goes for “the evaluation of the country’s financial markets, which have increased in rank from 24th last year to a very high fifth this year, indicating strong confidence in South Africa’s financial markets at a time when trust has been eroded in many other parts of the world.” The country did “reasonably well in more complex areas such as business sophistication (36th) and innovation (41st).”¹⁴⁴

In its pursuit of a policy of “Black Economic Empowerment,” the government has massive-

Aided by massive majorities in parliament, the African National Congress overcame constitutional obstacles and succeeded in centralizing political and economic power in its hands.

Asserting that a certain outcome is good “by African standards” is inherently patronizing and racist.

ly intruded in the private economy, subjecting much of it to “transformation charters” that requires companies above a minimum level of turnover and personnel to dispose of 25 percent of their equity to black interests. This has come at a high economic cost: some \$30 billion in equity transfers have occurred since 1994. Moreover, many of the deals are highly leveraged, some up to 100 percent. This is likely to be unaffordable in the long run.¹⁴⁵

The Black Economic Empowerment policy has also created rent-seeking that had a corrupting effect on the governing party. In 2007, Kgalema Motlanthe, the then-secretary general of the ANC who was to become the President of South Africa after Mbeki’s demise, admitted that “this rot is across the board. . . . [A]lmost every project is conceived because it offers certain people a chance to make money.”¹⁴⁶ Indeed, South Africa’s current president, Jacob Zuma, faced unresolved allegations relating to 783 counts of bribery (which were withdrawn in 2009) and the former national commissioner of police, Jackie Selebi, is currently being tried on charges of corruption and defeating the ends of justice. Not surprisingly, South Africa, which was ranked 38th place in the 2001 Corruption Perception Index, fell to 55th in 2009.¹⁴⁷

Fifth, South Africa’s foreign policy under Thabo Mbeki’s presidency was at odds with the humanitarian principles that the government claims to promote. That led Michael Gerson of the *Washington Post* to call South Africa “a rogue democracy.” The author was reflecting on South Africa’s role in the United Nations where it was “the only real democracy” to block discussions about human rights in Zimbabwe, Belarus, Cuba, and North Korea. South Africa also voted against a resolution against the Burmese junta, and watered down a UN Security Council resolution on Iran. In the General Assembly, Gerson noted, “South Africa fought against a resolution condemning the use of rape as a weapon of war because the resolution was not sufficiently anti-American.”¹⁴⁸

Disconnect between Democratic Potential and Current Realities. Part of the explanation for the paradoxes that South Africa exhibits can be found in a number of democratic inhibitors.

Those include the persistent racial politics, the centralization of power (particularly in the hands of the president), and the corresponding failure of some (although not all) of the key constitutional checks and balances.

Beginning in 1997, the ANC set out, as a matter of deliberate policy, to capture the state and much of civil society under the rubric of its self-declared “national democratic revolution.” Although the ANC no longer followed an entirely socialist economic course, its agenda sought “a racial rather than a socialist transformation of South Africa.”¹⁴⁹ The governing party explicitly rejected the concept of the state as a neutral, nonpartisan entity. Instead, it endorsed the notion of “the state as an instrument in the hands of the liberation movement.”¹⁵⁰ In one of its most influential policy papers, the ANC affirmed and embraced the Leninist notion of crushing the old order “to extend the power of the national liberation movement over all levers of power: the army, the police, the bureaucracy, intelligence structures, the judiciary, parastatals and agencies such as regulatory bodies, the public broadcaster, the central bank, and so on.”¹⁵¹

To facilitate this state capture, the ANC had established a “national deployment committee” in 1998 to ensure the hiring of ANC apparatchiks across the state bureaucracy, in the private sector, and even in parts of civil society. Within a decade, the crucial bastions of constitutional oversight and accountability—from the public broadcaster, through the watchdog of government corruption, to the national director of public prosecutions—were placed in the hands of people hand-picked by the ruling party.

The ANC succeeded in monopolizing power partly because of its electoral dominance (in the 2004 general election, it received 70 percent of the vote) and by the persistent racial cleavages in the electorate. According to the analysis of the Democratic Alliance, the main opposition party, the ANC received 81.8 percent of the black African vote in the 2004 general election, while the DA received 79.9 percent of its support from whites.¹⁵² In the April 2009 parliamentary elections, the support for the ANC slipped back a little and the opposi-

tion improved its standing. Still, most South Africans went on voting along racial lines.

While South Africa has a relatively advanced industrial economy and clear class formations, politics and electoral outcomes are often reduced to a form of “ethnic entrepreneurship.”¹⁵³ The ANC used the politics of racial solidarity and the invocation of struggle against apartheid as a potent and durable tarpaulin to keep its increasingly disparate constituency, which ranges from rural peasants to empowerment billionaires, under one roof. Race politics was also invoked by Mbeki to prevent real debate, forestall criticism, and overcome calls for policy changes on a range of his most controversial and failing policies. Those included his refusal to combat AIDS and his appeasement of Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

The parliament, constitutionally accorded crucial and significant powers to check executive and presidential overreach, failed for the duration of the Mbeki presidency (1999–2008) to fulfill its purpose. Given its huge majority, the governing party ignored opposition and the legislature itself showed little appetite for acting as anything other than as an echo chamber of the presidency. Ministers routinely avoided or were shielded by a partisan Speaker from answering critical opposition questions. Overall, South Africa’s proportional representation electoral system—characterized by closed party lists and the absence of constituency representation—has encouraged legislative docility and tamped down the rise of independent legislators.

Indeed, South Africa’s parliament under Mbeki appeared to be characterized by the pathological dependence on the president, which Kwasi Prempeh identified as one of main inhibitors to democratic deepening. Under Mbeki’s baton, the president handpicked every provincial premier, executive mayor, provincial minister, and the director generals of the departments of state. However, Mbeki lost his power-struggle with Jacob Zuma and was “recalled” as president of South Africa in September 2008. There also appeared to be a pushback by the ANC against the over-concentration of power in the hands of the president.

There are some positive signs since the 2009 elections that the government is displaying a more tolerant approach to opposition forces, including the ANC breakaway party, the Congress of the People, than had been the case until then.

The South Africa judiciary is the most crucial barrier that the constitution erected to prevent political overreach. It has been subject to huge pressures for “transformation.” On one level that pressure was understandable, given that 97 percent of South African judges were white males in 1994. The rebalancing of the judiciary was an important early task of the Judicial Service Commission that was entrusted by the constitution to vet and recommend jurists for appointment. However, a large number of politicians appointed to this body (15 out of 25 members) made the Commission less independent. Although the judiciary has, in key and controversial cases, held the ring against the government, judges have been increasingly subjected to attacks when their judgments went against the interests of the ANC and its leaders.¹⁵⁴

There have also been legislative moves to speed up stalled land redistribution by widening government powers to expropriate property and to diminish constitutionally protected rights of judicial recourse for property owners.

Moreover, the ruling party captured control of the state broadcaster at an early stage of the democratic transition. Elsewhere, however, the media exists outside formal state control. Unfortunately, for much of the democratic transition, the media displayed a posture of deference toward the government. In contrast, over the past three years, a plethora of independent radio stations and print media have proven increasingly critical of government excesses.

South Africa has the largest number of non-governmental organizations on the continent and some of them have acted in an independent watchdog role. Similarly, a strong democratic advantage that distinguishes South Africa from many African countries is the existence of an independent, ideologically distinct, and vocal opposition in Parliament and at the local gov-

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ernment level. The Democratic Alliance, for example, has been able to win power in most of the municipalities in the Western Cape. In 2006, the DA took control of Cape Town, the country's second largest city. In the 2009 provincial elections, the DA ousted the ANC as the governing party of the Western Cape.

South Africa's political evolution since the end of apartheid is instructive. Most scholars agree that South Africa's democratic constitution contained plenty of checks and balances that were intended to ensure government transparency and accountability. Aided by massive majorities in parliament, the ANC overcame constitutional obstacles and succeeded in centralizing political and economic power in its hands. It turns out that the constitution is only as strong as the public sentiment supporting it. At present, the country is on an uncertain path—in some areas moving away from liberal democracy and the rule of law, yet in other areas reanimating the earlier ethos of protest and democratic pushback.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

The causes of continuing democratic failure are complex and, sometimes, country-specific. But, as the British historian Martin Meredith wrote, "although Africa is a continent of great diversity, African countries have much in common, not only their origins as colonial territories but the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced. Indeed what is striking about the 50-year period since independence is the extent to which Africans states have suffered so many of the same misfortunes."¹⁵⁵

There is a real desire on the part of many Western governments to help alleviate the consequences of those "misfortunes," but there are also real limits to the effectiveness of outside interventions, however well considered. The international community needs to view its future policies and its diplomatic engagement with Africa with the knowledge that what the continent needs most is good government and the institutions that reinforce it.

Toward that end, here are some specific policy recommendations for the international community in general and for Africans in particular:

1. Africans and their international partners should not lower the bar when it comes to African policies and institutions. They should never condone fraud, theft, and corruption. African rulers are not exempted from universal democratic norms and standards. To do otherwise is profoundly insulting to many brave—indeed heroic—African democratic activists. Asserting that a certain outcome is good "by African standards" is inherently patronizing and racist.
2. The African Union should amend its protocols to require all member states to allow internationally supervised elections. Depending on the degree of electoral sophistication and on the specific history of the country in question, such supervision may need to begin months rather than days before the election takes place. As an absolute minimum, independent international certification must be required relating to the integrity of the voters roll, opposition must be allowed access to state-controlled media, and any laws that protect incumbent presidents from so-called "insult" or defamation must be repealed.
3. No internationally or regionally supervised political settlement should condone the consequences of flawed or failed electoral processes. For example, in Kenya and Zimbabwe, the African Union and the international community effectively legitimized stolen or deeply flawed elections by fostering governments of national unity. There should be no continental or international support for rigged polls, especially those that perpetuate the rule of dictatorial incumbents. Where any election on the continent fails to meet

the commonly accepted standards of freedom and fairness, it should be repeated.

4. Africa and its institutions require both reform and differentiation. There should be, for example, an inner core of AU members comprised of the dozen or so countries that Freedom House has certified as “free democracies,” an outer core of those countries that are “partly free,” and a peripheral core of those categorized “not free.” The AU should also take into account member states’ membership in the African Peer Review process, the African Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, and the African Human Rights Court. In terms of its current constitution, the AU does not differentiate between member states. Nor does it provide any practical penalty for states that violate democratic practices. Voting privileges for African countries should increase with improvements in their democratic rankings.
5. There should be less inhibition on the part of the more successful African countries to take a more defined leadership role on the road to democracy and development. African leaders have tended to avoid such an approach, preferring instead the “politics of solidarity.” That has often led to pan-African efforts based on common lowest denominator, efforts that were acceptable to the weakest and least democratic African countries. It is necessary for African states to break the shackle of “solidarity politics.”
6. Rein in presidential and executive power. Even in the most sophisticated democracies in Africa, the power of the president is so great that it tends to overwhelm the independent and democracy supporting institutions. The general adherence to term-limited presidents has not led to a diminution of presidential power. All African states

should revisit their constitutions to consider controls on presidential dominance. Presidential power remains a key impediment to democratic deepening. Those African countries engaging in constitution-writing processes, or revisions, need to place the issue of presidential power prominently on the agenda. It certainly cannot be left to some future political resolution or negotiations. A number of practical and constitutional steps can be considered in this regard:

- Restrict presidential appointments at the executive level by prescribing a maximum number of ministers and deputy ministers.
- Require presidential appointments to conform to minimum merit-based standards.
- In order to prevent the filling of independent constitutional offices with partisans or politically malleable figures, presidential appointments should require either a super-majority of votes in the legislature or a degree of concurrence by the political opposition in such appointments.
- Ban members of the executive and their immediate family members from joining private company boards or benefiting from state privatizations.
- Require all public investment projects to be put out for competitive bidding as a means of inhibiting both graft-taking and presidential patronage.¹⁵⁷
- Disclosure provisions need to govern the granting of political donations. The perpetuation of dominant party regimes in Africa has been partly facilitated by unlimited and undisclosed funding for political parties.
- Enhance pluralism through the allocation of specific competencies and powers to sub-national units, such as states or provinces and local authorities. The key to reducing the excessive centralization of power is to ensure its

Presidential power remains a key impediment to democratic deepening.

Greater economic freedom is central to the success of a democratic Africa.

devolution and dispersal. New attention needs to be given to federal arrangements.

7. In Africa it is not uncommon for the opposition to be dismissed as unpatriotic. Incumbents often assert that opposition efforts or opposition itself is inimical to the development needs of the country as a whole. None of the AU founding documents or those of NEPAD acknowledge the role of political opposition. It is imperative that African countries and international diplomatic efforts should seek to legitimate peaceful opposition. True, the party political terrain is controversial. But, the rapid expansion of non-governmental organizations on the continent, fueled by such technologies as mobile phones and the internet, provides a rich scene for increasing levels of democracy and accountability.
8. Also, as Calderisi notes, far too many African institutions are “stuffed with eminent personalities and friends of current and former regimes.” This both reinforces elite rent-seeking and perpetuates an uncritical culture that diminishes true accountability. The net needs to be spread far wider in appointing nonpartisans and qualified citizens from, for example, the ranks of the NGO communities, religious bodies, human rights networks, and so on.¹⁵⁸
9. Media freedom and the probing power of investigative journalists reduce bad government and expose corrupt officials. Africa provides some of the world’s most extreme examples of media curbs and restrictions, which is at odds with the public’s right to receive information that is set out in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. African governments should eliminate current restrictions on mass media, stop hindering investment in diverse broadcasting infrastructure, and develop transparent

- and flexible regulatory environments.
10. Capitalism and democracy are not simply compatible, but mutually reinforcing. In fact, there are no democratic societies in the world today that do not have relatively free market economies. Economic freedom empowers people to pursue their goals and earn a living free of government. It allows for the creation of multiple centers of power that make the emergence of authoritarianism less likely. It is difficult to imagine democracy flourishing in Africa without further economic liberalization. Indeed, greater economic freedom is central to the success of a democratic Africa, or at least as important as all of the above recommended measures.

Notes

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