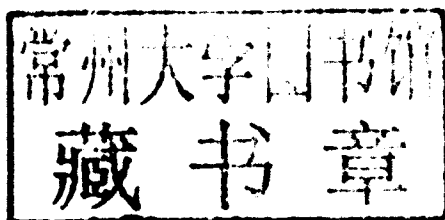# Democratization in Africa: Challenges and Prospects

Edited by
Gordon Crawford and Gabrielle Lynch

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Publisher's Note

The publisher would like to make readers aware that the chapters in this book may be referred to as articles as they are identical to the articles published in the special issue. The publisher accepts responsibility for any inconsistencies that may have arisen in the course of preparing this volume for print.

Contents

Democratization in Africa 1990–2010: an assessment

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Over two decades have passed since the 'third wave' of democratization began to roll across sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s. The introduction to this collection provides an overall assessment of the (lack of) progress made in democratization processes in Africa from 1990 to 2010. It highlights seven areas of progress and setbacks: increasingly illegitimate, but ongoing military intervention; regular elections and occasional transfers of power, but realities of democratic rollback and hybrid regimes; democratic institutionalization, but ongoing presidentialism and endemic corruption; the institutionalization of political parties, but widespread ethnic voting and the rise of an exclusionary (and often violent) politics of belonging; increasingly dense civil societies, but local realities of incivility, violence and insecurity; new political freedoms and economic growth, but extensive political controls and uneven development; and the donor community's mixed commitment to, and at times perverse impact on, democracy promotion. We conclude that steps forward remain greater than reversals and that typically, though not universally, sub-Saharan African countries are more democratic today than in the late 1980s. Simultaneously, we call for more meaningful processes of democratization that aim not only at securing civil and political rights, but also socio-economic rights and the physical security of African citizens.

Over two decades have passed since the 'third wave' of democratization began to roll across sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s, resulting in transitions from one-party or military regimes to multi-party systems. After one decade of political liberalization, early (if cautious) optimism regarding this 'second independence' or 'virtual miracle'[1] had waned. The common conclusion was that, while African regimes are 'obviously more liberal than their authoritarian predecessors', they have 'profound flaws',[2] with most discussions falling into the category of 'democracy with adjectives'.[3] Alongside such mixed assessments, the 1990s

1

also saw the growth of African exceptionalism as some analysts argued, for example, that social democracy, rather than liberal democracy, is the 'most relevant to the social realities of contemporary Africa...[as it would allow for] an activist role for the state and strong commitment to social welfare',[4] or that 'civic institution-building' should precede democratization if countries want to avoid the rise of 'warlike nationalism and violent ethnic conflict'.[5]

The following papers in this collection – with the exception of Nic Cheeseman's paper on power-sharing[6] – were originally presented at a conference on 'Democratization in Africa: Retrospective and Future Prospects' which we convened in Leeds in December 2009. In line with the basic rationale for the conference, this introductory paper assesses the (lack of) progress made in democratization processes from 1990 to 2010, inclusive of advances, shortcomings and reversals, and offers some ideas about ways forward. It does this by exploring and linking positive developments with reasons for caution, and by calling for a more meaningful process of democratization that would provide greater policy choice and place more emphasis on socio-economic rights *and* the physical security of ordinary citizens. The paper highlights seven areas of complexity and contestation, of progress and setbacks, as follows: increasingly illegitimate, but ongoing military intervention; regular elections and occasional transfers of power, but realities of 'democratic rollback'[7] and 'hybrid regimes';[8] democratic institutionalization, but ongoing presidentialism and endemic corruption; the institutionalization of political parties and the significance of issue based politics in some contexts, but the widespread logic of 'reactive ethnic voting'[9] and rise of an exclusionary (and often violent) 'politics of belonging';[10] increasingly dense civil societies, but high levels of 'incivility', violence and insecurity; new political freedoms and economic growth, but extensive political controls and uneven development characterized by poverty amidst plenty;[11] and the donor community's mixed commitment to, and perverse impact on, 'democracy promotion'.

Our conclusion is *neither* that we should be 'lamenting the demise of democracy' *nor* that we should be 'celebrating its universal triumph',[12] as cogently pointed out by Claude Ake, but that we should recognize differences between *and* within countries, and consider a reality of contradictory trends. For example, even in a 'success story' like Ghana, which has passed Samuel Huntington's 'two-turnover test' of democratic consolidation,[13] various shortcomings remain evident, inclusive of excessive executive and presidential powers over oversight institutions; pervasive corruption among bureaucrats and politicians; the marginalization and under-representation of women in political society; and rising inequalities amidst economic growth and poverty reduction.[14] Similar contradictory trends are apparent in Kenya, even if the balance of the positive and negative aspects is reversed. Since, despite the ongoing legacies of the post-election violence in 2007–2008 and the uncertainties of trials at the International Criminal Court, as well as stark inequalities of wealth and power, Kenyan citizens clearly enjoy greater political freedoms than they did in the 1980s and recently saw the inauguration of a new constitution (see Cheeseman this collection).[15]

Given such mixed achievements, this introductory contribution reminds us of how genuine grounds for optimism and hope are simultaneously (and continuously) undermined and endangered by troubling institutional and structural continuities as well as by new political developments, all of which urges us to give greater attention to how a 'right to vote' for a choice of political parties can be translated into the realization of less centralized power, greater material inequality and less human insecurity across the sub-continent. We proceed by exploring these contradictory trends under seven thematic headings.

Increasingly illegitimate but ongoing military intervention

The first three decades of post-independence Africa were notable for the high incidence of military coups and military regimes, and even larger number of unsuccessful military plots and coup attempts.[16] This is significant given that, 'Military rule is by definition authoritarian and is very often corrupt...[while] the historical record shows that military rulers "govern" no better than elected civilians, and often much worse'.[17]

Unfortunately, the 'third wave' of democratization has not witnessed the complete withdrawal of the military from African politics. Indeed, between 1990 and 2001, there were 50 attempted coups in sub-Saharan Africa, of which 13 were successful, which represents 'a much lower rate of success in comparison to earlier years, but no significant reduction in the African military's propensity to launch coup attempts'.[18] In the subsequent 10 years, although more infrequent, military intervention has remained a common option, as the following examples indicate. In Guinea Bissau, the introduction of multi-party elections in 1994 was followed by successful coups in 1999 and 2003, while President Vieira was killed by soldiers in 2009. The elected president of the Central African Republic was ousted by a rebel leader in 2003, and in Togo the military installed the late President Gnassingbé Eyadéma's son in power in 2005. Mauritania has also continued to be afflicted by authoritarian rule and military intervention. In 2005, the long-standing autocratic ruler President Ould Taya (in power since a military intervention in 1984) was ousted in a military coup after having won multi-party elections in 1992, 1997 and 2003 (albeit condemned by the opposition as fraudulent), while the country's return to multi-party elections in March 2007 ended with a further coup in August 2008. Guinea also experienced a military takeover in 2008, when Captain Moussa Dadis Camara seized power in a bloodless coup following the death of President Lansana Conte. The political upheavals in Madagascar in 2009 also entailed military involvement, with opposition leader Andry Rajoelina seizing power in March 2009 with military support, deposing President Marc Ravalomanana after a political crisis characterized by anti-government protests. (But see Hinthorne this collection for an alternative interpretation of the political crisis in Madagascar, based on local perceptions of politics and democracy[19]). The prolonged political crisis in Niger, following President Tandja's dissolution of the National Assembly in May 2009 and attempts to extend his mandate

3

through constitutional change, also led to his removal through military intervention in February 2010. Military coups thus remain widespread, especially in West Africa. Moreover, once a military coup has occurred, it can re-establish a pattern of military influence in politics either through subsequent electoral victory of the military leader or installed leader (as in Mauritania, the Central African Republic and Togo) or successive military interventions against elected governments (as in Guinea Bissau).

However, there are also two positive developments – one demonstrated by academic research and the other by African responses. First, Staffan Lindberg and John Clark[20] have indicated that the greater the degree of democratization, the less likely military intervention becomes. They identified 34 military interventions between 1990 and 2004 in the 43 sub-Saharan African countries that have introduced some form of political liberalization and democratic procedures.[21] After categorizing these countries into electoral democracies, liberalizing regimes and electoral authoritarian regimes, they found that 'democratic regimes are about 7.5 times less likely to be subjected to attempted military interventions than electoral authoritarian regimes and almost 18 times less likely to be victims of actual regime breakdown'.[22] Further, as successive elections were held, the incidence of successful interventions dropped significantly, from 83% shortly after the founding election to 11% and 6% after the second and third elections respectively.[23] Their argument is that the enhanced regime legitimacy accrued through political liberalization has simultaneously de-legitimized military intervention and strengthened electoral regimes against coups[24] – findings that still hold given that more recent military coups have occurred in authoritarian contexts, such as existed in Mauritania in 2005,[25] Guinea in 2008[26] and Niger in 2010.[27]

Secondly, military intervention and rule are increasingly regarded as illegitimate among African citizens[28] and, perhaps more significantly, among Africa's elite. This change has been reflected in the workings of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU). In 1999, 'the OAU took a modest step away from the general norm of recognising whichever regime was in power by banning leaders installed by coups from attending its meetings [although] it refrained from applying this norm retroactively',[29] and in July 2000, the 'OAU Assembly institutionalized [this] rejection of unconstitutional changes of government'.[30] More importantly, the AU's response to recent coups, with the temporary suspension of Mauritania's and Niger's membership in 2008 and 2010 respectively, suggests that this new norm has been 'internalized – as well as institutionalized',[31] although unfortunately, this new norm has not defined 'fraudulent elections as an unconstitutional change of government'.[32]

Regular multi-party elections but 'democratic rollback' and 'hybrid regimes'

Before 1989, only Botswana and Mauritius held regular multi-party elections, but by mid-2003, 44 of the sub-continent's 48 states had held 'founding elections',

while 33 had undertaken a second set of elections, 20 had completed three sets of elections, and seven had held four or more uninterrupted electoral cycles.[33] By 2007, 21 countries had convened a fourth set of legislative elections – with 137 legislative elections in 41 sub-Saharan African countries (excluding Botswana and Mauritius) between 1989 and the end of 2007, and over 120 competitive pre-sidential elections in 39 countries.[34] Moreover, in some instances these elections led to a peaceful transfer of power, as occurred, for example, in Zambia and Cape Verde in 1991, Benin in 1991 and 2006, South Africa in 1994, Senegal in 2000, Kenya in 2002, and Ghana in 2000 and 2008. Although it is worth noting that only five of these elections witnessed the unsuccessful candidature of an incumbent president, namely, Zambia, Cape Verde and Benin in 1991, South Africa in 1994, and Senegal in 2000 – meaning that, to our knowledge, after two decades of democratization, only one incumbent president has been ousted through the ballot box since the early founding elections, although incumbents have increasingly stepped down on reaching the end of constitutional term limits (see discussion below). Although, as we write in late 2010, it is yet to be seen whether calls for President Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire to stand down will ultimately lead to the removal of one more African president through the ballot box – albeit only after pressure from other African leaders and the international community.

Either way, this 'routinisation of elections'[35] represents a significantly different situation to that in previous post-independence decades where elected governments would often not survive to the end of their term due to military intervention, as witnessed in Ghana from the 1960s to the 1980s, or where one-party states saw the long incumbency of presidents and ruling parties as in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi from the 1960s to early 1990s. Indeed, while acknowledging that democratization consists of far more than elections,[36] it should also be recognized that 'elections remain fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments, but as a necessary requisite for broader demo-cratic consolidation'.[37] More controversially, Staffan Lindberg[38] has argued that there is an inherent value in holding elections even if they are not free or fair. Based on an analysis of 232 elections in Africa between 1990 and mid-2003, Lindberg notes that repeated elections 'appear to have a positive impact on human freedom and democratic values',[39] as measured by improvements in Freedom House's civil liberties scores. He indicates that as sub-Saharan African countries have undergone consecutive election cycles, the 'majority have become increasingly democratic'[40] and concludes that, 'The more succes-sive elections, the more democratic a nation becomes.'[41] In attempting to explain why this is so, Lindberg draws attention to the 'causal mechanisms that link elections and civil-liberties improvements',[42] emphasizing the 'opportunities for political challenges and change' that elections entail, inclusive of 'competition over who can most improve civil liberties and other democratic freedoms'.[43] Lindberg's optimistic conclusion is that 'many of Africa's hybrid regimes may in fact be on a slow but steady track to democracy', and that 'Even longstanding ethnic rivalries that constituted major divides in countries like Ghana, Kenya, and

Senegal seem to have over a few electoral cycles lost their potential for generating violent conflict.'[44]

Unfortunately, more recent developments in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Cameroon (discussed by Wale Adebanwi and Ebenezer Obadare, Cyril Obi, and Ericka Albaugh in this collection[45]) suggest that Lindberg underestimated the 'overall costs of poorly governed elections'.[46] Instead, these cases provide clear examples of how even relatively 'successful' elections – such as the contest that lead to a peaceful transfer of power in Kenya in 2002 – can be followed by 'democratic rollback' or 'democratic recession',[47] and how electoral manipulation can require, or prompt, significant levels of violence.

In Kenya, the transfer of power from Daniel arap Moi and the Kenya African National Union (KANU) to Mwai Kibaki and the National Rainbow Coalition (NaRC) in December 2002 was widely (and understandably) regarded as a significant step forward.[48] However, optimism quickly dissipated,[49] and the closely contested and hotly disputed election of 2007 prompted a post-election crisis that led to the deaths of over 1000 people and displacement of almost 700,000 in just two months.[50] Unfortunately, current signs (as outlined in Nic Cheeseman's contribution to this collection[51]) suggest that democratic roll-back remains a local reality. Unfortunately, the optimism that surrounded 'successful' elections in other contexts also often quickly dissipated as, for example, Frederick Chiluba (who ousted Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda in 1991) gained a reputation for corruption,[52] and Abdoulaye Wade (who ousted Senegal's Abdou Diouf in 2000) became 'a veritable caricature of Senghorism'.[53]

Similarly, in Nigeria, the optimism that surrounded the Senate's defeat of President Obasanjo's attempt to stand for a third-term in 2006,[54] was followed by the 2007 elections that 'were marred by extraordinary displays of rigging and the intimidation of voters in many areas',[55] and which compared 'unfavourably to [the 2003 elections] in many respects' with more deaths, fewer people able to vote, and higher levels of intimidation.[56] Indeed, since the return to multi-party elections in 1999, national elections in 1999, 2003, and 2007 have arguably become 'successively less fair, less efficient and less credible'[57] and a 'do or die affair' that is divorced from the will of the people (see Adebanwi and Obadare, and Obi this collection[58]).

In addition to these particular examples, Freedom House ratings – which provided the basis for Lindberg's optimistic conclusions – have subsequently suggested that there has been a move towards democratic reversal. Thus, whereas the trend in Freedom House's ratings of political rights and civil liberties had been a positive one for most of the period from 1990, it reversed in 2006, when it was reported that, 'After several years of steady and, in a few cases, impressive gains for democracy, sub-Saharan Africa suffered more setbacks than gains during the year.'[59] This decline has continued in subsequent annual reports for 2007 to 2009, with more countries receiving lower ratings in political rights and civil liberties in each successive year, inclusive of some of sub-Saharan Africa's largest and most influential countries which had previously been perceived as making significant democratic progress, for instance Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Senegal.[60]

On the one hand, the fact that some countries continue to undergo further democratization, while others have witnessed democratic reversals, reminds us of the importance of not simply lumping African regimes together as 'imperfect democracies'.[61] On the other hand, the reality across the sub-continent is clearly one of 'hybrid regimes', which are neither fully democratic nor classically authoritarian.[62] Moreover, while some are best described as forms of 'defective democracy',[63] the majority are more cogently categorized as relatively new forms of 'electoral' or 'competitive authoritarianism', since they fail to meet the 'conventional minimum standards for democracy'.[64] This reality has serious implications. Since, even if one takes the relatively optimistic view that 'electoral democracies' can 'escape their in-between status and make the shift to real liberal democracy'[65] – as has occurred for example in Ghana[66] – one is still left with the larger number of hybrids that are classified as authoritarian sub-types where 'the collapse of one kind of authoritarianism yielded not democracy but a new form of nondemocratic rule',[67] which are 'not themselves democratic, or any longer "in transition" to democracy'.[68] The fact that this condition 'could well prevail for decades'[69] signifies in turn the 'end of the transition paradigm'.[70]

The prevalence of electoral authoritarianism stems, in large part, from the fact that political elites feel 'that they cannot avoid going through at least the motions of competitive elections if they want to retain a semblance of legitimacy',[71] and face 'unprecedented pressure (international and domestic) to adopt – or at least to mimic – the democratic form'.[72] These pressures have created 'virtual democracies', which possess 'many of the institutional features of liberal democracy (such as regularly scheduled elections) while their governments systematically stifle opposition behind a mask of legitimacy',[73] with 'incumbents conced[ing] only those "manageable" reforms which they calculate are necessary to maintain themselves in power'.[74] More disillusioning still is the scenario where 'political leaders and groups...win elections, take power, and then manipulate the mechanisms of democracy...[leading to democratic] erosion: the intermittent or gradual weakening of democracy by those elected to lead it'.[75]

Regime hybridity is rendered possible in three principal ways. First, by the extensive 'menu of manipulation' or range of tactics from which 'rulers may choose...to help them carve the democratic heart out of electoral contests'.[76] Secondly, by the 'fallacy of electoralism'[77] and the fact that elections may confer little real institutional or structural change, and can actually be associated with the thinning out of more substantive forms of democracy (see Keating this collection[78]). And thirdly, by an international community that purports to promote democracy, but actually seems more interested in political stability and economic growth than democracy (see the final section of this introduction).

With regards to the first of these three ways, Larry Diamond reminds us that elections are fair when: there is a neutral, competent, and resourceful electoral authority; security forces and the judiciary are impartial in their treatment of candidates and parties; 'contenders have access to the public media'; 'electoral districts and rules do not systematically disadvantage the opposition'; there is a

secret ballot and transparent rules for vote counting; and there are 'clear and impartial procedures for resolving complaints and disputes'.[79] This list hints at the myriad of ways in which leaders can (and often do) manipulate and subvert the electoral process. Two particularly worrying developments are the readiness (and ease) with which political elites revert to strategies of political violence,[80] including the sponsorship of 'informal repression' or 'covert violations by third parties',[81] and the widespread use of 'informal disenfranchisement'.[82] As Andreas Schedler notes, while *formal disenfranchisement* is a very tough "sell"' in the contemporary world, 'The real growth end of the business...lies in the realm of *informal disenfranchisement*', ranging from 'ethnic cleansing' to the introduction of universal, but discriminatory 'registration methods, identification requirements, and voting procedures',[83] which disenfranchises actual (or likely) opposition candidates and supporters. In this vein, citizenship laws have been used to exclude high profile opposition candidates from electoral contests, most notably, Zambia's former president Kenneth Kaunda in 1996 and Côte d'Ivoire's former Prime Minister Alassane Outtara in 1995.[84] While in Kenya, state-sponsored 'ethnic clashes' in the early 1990s displaced and effectively disenfranchised potential opposition voters across much of the Rift Valley,[85] revealing how 'informal repression' can serve as a form of 'informal disenfranchisement' as well as of political mobilization and intimidation. In turn, Ericka Albaugh's contribution on Cameroon in this collection[86] reveals how President Paul Biya's tactics have gone 'beyond the regrettably banal fraud in electoral counting' to the manipulation of electoral boundaries, interference in voter registration, *and* 'recognition' of ethnic 'minorities in compliance with international and domestic pressures', which has alienated and largely disenfranchised many 'Anglo-Bamis' and enabled Biya to strengthen his control over the political apparatus and further 'entrench autocracy'.

Thus, while elections are important as 'the opening moves in a long-drawn-out drama in which different social forces seek to control the state'[87] – it is a drama that is not necessarily linear or progressive. Elections can enhance competition, open political spaces and enable struggle, but they can also legitimize authoritarian regimes, create new regime types and prompt new political crises and human rights abuses. Such partial progress is due to the fact that ruling elites often embrace multi-party elections as a 'survival strategy' and regularly win them by using the advantages of incumbency with little international outrage.[88] But also because, as Lindsay Whitfield and Raufu Mustapha have argued, elections – although they may provide a means to get rid of discredited leaders – are far less likely to lead to an overall restructuring of political institutions or culture.[89] In such scenarios, political change consequently becomes a classic case of *'plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (the more things change, the more they stay the same)'.[90]

The institutionalization of separate powers but ongoing presidentialism and endemic corruption

One key feature of post-independence authoritarian rule in Africa was the personalized rule of 'big men'[91] who sought to cultivate authority through a logic of

loyalty and deference in exchange for unity, order and development (for example Kenya's Daniel arap Moi[92]). In the process, Africa's presidents and monarchs cast themselves as loving, but stern, father-figures,[93] but in fact oversaw economic decline and state repression and became a 'major manufacturer of inequality' of both wealth and power.[94] Consequently, the extent to which the rule of 'big men' and associated 'politics of the belly'[95] has been tempered by democratization – where formal rules within democratic institutions begin to matter more than informal rules and institutions, and where there is a greater degree of separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary – is of central importance to any assessment of democratization's success, and is a key concern of van Cranenburgh's contribution in this collection.[96] Similarly important are the levels and roles of patronage and clientelism, and the extent to which such informal institutions are regarded by citizens as a source of political legitimacy and authority, or as evidence of limited assistance, bias and corruption.[97]

Recent scholarly literature is divided on the extent to which political liberalization has prompted the strengthening of formal institutions other than the presidency. Daniel Posner and Tom Young have a relatively optimistic view and argue that, 'Across sub-Saharan Africa, formal institutional rules are coming to matter much more than they used to, and have displaced violence as the primary source of constraints on the executive behaviour'.[98] Their evidence focuses on elections, especially those where there has been a turnover of power, and on an increasing acceptance of presidential term limits and the defeat of attempts by some presidential incumbents to change their constitutions to remove two-term limits. Much weight is placed on the Nigerian Senate's rejection in May 2006 of a bill that would have enabled President Obasanjo to stand for a third-term. Similarly, they highlight how the Malawian parliament did not support President Muluzi's attempt to abolish term limits (although the two-thirds majority required was almost obtained) and how President Chiluba of Zambia retracted attempts at constitutional change in the face of substantial opposition within parliament and his own party.[99] Consequently, while they recognize that six other presidents did manage to achieve constitutional change to enable their continued rule, most notably presidents Nujoma and Museveni of Namibia and Uganda respectively, the increasing acceptance of presidential term limits and the role of legislatures in resisting constitutional change is posited as evidence of a trend towards 'the increasing institutionalization of political power in Africa' whereby power 'changes hands principally in accord with institutional rules'.[100]

Focusing on legislative development, Joel Barkan also puts forward a relatively optimistic, if more tempered, assessment. Based on a six-country study, he reveals how 'the legislature is emerging as a "player" in some countries' and has 'begun to initiate and modify laws to a degree never seen during the era of neopatrimomial rule...[and] sometimes exerts meaningful oversight of the executive'[101] – two important functions of legislatures. He concludes by arguing that, although progress remains uneven, 'legislatures in Africa are beginning to matter'.[102] However, this conclusion is countered by Michael Keating's discussion of the

decline of the Ugandan legislature following a move to multi-party politics in 2005 in this collection.[103]

In a slightly less optimistic account, Peter VonDoepp's analysis of judiciaries in Malawi and Zambia highlights the contradictory tendencies of 'third-wave' democracies that 'render both their current status and future prospects open to question',[104] as elements of greater independence combine with an overall trend that remains ambiguous. Thus, he notes how, 'In both countries, judiciaries have displayed a striking tendency to render decisions that have challenged the interests of elected power-holders', and that while 'the courts have also rendered a number of decisions that have supported the aims of governments...the overall pattern of judicial behavior suggests that judiciaries in these countries have neither behaved as government lapdogs nor served as very reliable allies'.[105] This is a conclusion that is supported by the work of others, including Omotola's similar discussion of the role of the judiciary in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.[106]

However, while there is an emerging consensus that formal institutions or 'institutional rules are beginning to matter more in Africa', as van Cranenburgh states in her contribution here,[107] Posner and Young's more overtly optimistic assessment has been challenged both directly and indirectly. For example, Richard Joseph argues that Posner and Young have overstated the progress made towards law-based governance and institutions and that 'the struggle to cross the frontier from personal rule to rule-based governance is still far from over in much of Africa'.[108] He cites, unsurprisingly, the counter example of Museveni's successful attempt to extend his presidential term in Uganda, and the violence that followed the 2007 Kenyan election, as 'demonstrat[ing] the continuing significance of personal rule, weak institutions, and electoral systems subject to partisan manipulation'.[109] In turn, van Cranenburgh in a study of 30 sub-Saharan African countries posits that 'big men' continue to rule.[110] She highlights the 'high levels of institutional power of presidents', arguing that there is 'very little difference...between democracies and non-democracies', and that 'minimal' electoral democracies actually experience greater presidential power 'on average than non-democracies'.[111] In her contribution here, van Cranenburgh[112] re-emphasizes the power of the executive president and its negative impact on the 'extent and quality of democracy in African countries'. However, this power is perceived as now stemming less from informal institutions and more from the systemic concentration and fusion of power inherent in the 'hybrid' nature of many formal political systems in Africa, referring here to the combination of presidential and parliamentary features which produces extremely powerful presidencies. Her argument is that systemic institutional reforms are needed to achieve greater accountability of the executive presidency. Equally, Whitfield and Mustapha's overall findings from their eleven-country study confirm the 'persistence of presidentialism' and fact that 'the executive branch of government continues to dominate the political system,[113] although with the qualification that 'presidentialism is being slowly restrained in many countries'.[114]

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Afrobarometer data, which suggests that, 'People are most likely to judge the extent of democracy in terms of their trust in the incumbent president',[115] as well as from the imbalance of power across the sub-continent between the president's office and a number of other institutions, notably: the judiciary,[116] the election administration,[117] anti-corruption tsars and commissions,[118] and the security services.[119] Finally, our own research and the contributions to this collection (in particular those of Adebanwi and Obadare, Albaugh, Keating, and Obi[120]) also point to the tenacity of presidential power, inclusive of a weak parliament and 'excessive presidential powers' in the relative success story of Ghana.[121]

Yet, more worrying than the concentration of power *per se* is: (a) the clear perversity of some state institutions, which are not 'weak' as such, but have been subverted for corrupt and Machiavellian ends – as exemplified by Kenya's police force, which (among other things) collects bribes, is under presidential control, and has responded to political challenges with excessive force;[122] and (b) by the illegitimacy, but tenacity, of corruption and state bias.

To understand the persistency and pervasiveness of corruption, it is insightful to regard neopatrimonialism (in line with its Weberian roots) as a 'type of authority, not a type of regime'[123] in which legitimacy and accountability are directly linked to 'reciprocities between rulers and their subjects' or patron-client relations.[124] Although Botswana is one example where the legitimacy of its democratically elected government is 'created and reinforced through *both* the rule of law and personal bonds',[125] Pitcher et al. recognize that the country is unusual in this regard. In contrast, across much of the rest of the sub-continent – where personalized power and clientelism remain key to the distribution of material benefits and electoral competition has often exacerbated the misappropriation of funds[126] – such characteristics are a source of criticism and frustration as citizens tend to see, not patronage, but corruption and 'an informal institution that is clearly corrosive to democracy'.[127] Anger rises still further when material benefits are believed to be largely limited to a small political and economic elite, and as religiously and/or ethnically biased as in Nigeria[128] and Kenya[129] – a fact that can have unfortunate consequences for the nature of political mobilization and support, as discussed in the next section.

The institutionalization of political parties and significance of issue-based politics, but widespread ethnic voting and rise of a violent politics of belonging

There is general agreement in the literature that, while functioning political parties are 'indispensable' to democratization,[130] political parties (and especially opposition parties) are often a 'weak link',[131] and perhaps even the 'weakest link'[132] in new democracies. This would seem to be the case in many African democracies where political parties were recently described as 'often unstable, with parties

appearing and disappearing from one election to another' and as weakly organized 'top-heavy institutions with a weak internal democracy'.[133] Opposition parties are identified as particularly problematic, due to their 'numerically weak and fragmented' nature, and the fact that they are incapable of carrying 'out their role of providing a political counterweight to the victorious party and president'.[134] The answer to such weaknesses is often regarded as the institutionalization of individual parties and party systems.[135] Given this context, in this section we touch on five commonly-cited problems with Africa's multi-party systems: their fluidity or lack of institutionalization, the dominance of ruling parties, the unrepresentative nature of political parties, the absence of issue-based politics, and patterns of ethnic voting. In turn, this leads us to highlight a not infrequent link between democratization and the manipulation of ethnic identities and the rise of a violent and unstable 'politics of belonging'.

But first, to what extent is party institutionalization and party system institutionalization occurring in sub-Saharan Africa? The example of Ghana provides some positive evidence. Thus, Abdulai and Crawford note how, since 1992, 'a stable period of political party development'[136] has been aided by inter-party alliances such as the Inter-Party Advisory Committee, formed in 1994, which brings together representatives of all registered political parties in meetings with the Electoral Commission, and in 2004, devised a Code of Conduct to regulate the behaviour of all political parties during and between elections. Similarly, Whitfield notes that Ghana 'survived the closeness and intensity'[137] of the December 2008 elections partly due to the institutionalization of a *de facto* 'two-party system where voters and political elites are mobilized around two political traditions'.[138] These two political traditions, the liberal Danquah/Busia tradition and the radical nationalist Nkrumahist tradition, are significant in two ways. First, the two traditions are long-standing and can be traced back to decolonization in the 1950s, yet remain pertinent today as the main ideological basis around which the current two main parties organize.[139] Secondly, these traditions cut across other social cleavages, notably ethnicity and region, and thus diminish their significance.[140] It is possible, however, that the particular role of these two long-standing political traditions in political party institutionalization renders Ghana an exceptional rather than typical case.

Following Sartori,[141] the institutionalization of party systems in Africa has been discussed in the literature in terms of the relative stability and fluidity of party compositions in legislatures, where stabilization is akin to institutionalization. The idea is that, 'parties can only satisfactorily fulfil many of their presumed democratic functions – such as recruitment of future leaders, aggregation of interests and accountability – if the configuration of parties remains relatively stable'.[142] Unfortunately however, Africa has typically been perceived as having a high number of 'fluid' party systems characterized by 'a remarkable number of party changes from one election to the next'[143] and widespread practice of 'carpet crossing'.[144] A particularly illustrative example is Kenya, where the party line-up has radically changed between every election[145] and where the

now prime minister Raila Odinga has moved from FORD-Kenya, to NDP, KANU, NaRC, and finally ODM between elections in 1992 and 2007.

Yet, the Kenyan case notwithstanding, Staffan Lindberg argues for 'measured optimism' regarding the number of 'party systems in Africa that either are, or are becoming, institutionalized'.[146] On the one hand, he suggests that in Africa's 21 electoral democracies, the majority (11) have stable party systems, compared with eight that have fluid systems and two that are categorized as 'de-stabilized' (having moved away from relatively stable situations).[147] On the other hand, his optimism is tempered by two other findings. One is that 8 out of the 11 stable systems are 'one-party dominant with well-known problems for democratic accountability and representation'[148] – such that ruling parties in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania are yet to lose an election. The other is that the theoretical expectation of increased institutionalization of party systems occurring over time, through greater experience of democratic elections, is confounded: a large proportion of stable party systems having in fact exhibited stability since multi-party politics was first introduced, while all countries with fluid systems have conducted three, four or five sets of elections.[149]

Earlier, Nicholas van de Walle came to similar findings, but without Lindberg's optimism, in his discussion of a 'typical emerging party system' characterized by 'a dominant party system surrounded by a large number of small, unstable parties',[150] a form of party system institutionalization that complemented a centralization of power around the president and pervasive clientelism. Such a party system also raises the problem of representation in two respects. One is the observation that many opposition parties constitute 'little more than small and transient coteries behind aspiring individual politicians' and that 'even where they have a wider basis of support, this is likely to be confined to the urban areas'.[151] The other aspect is that 'even in the case of dominant parties, with a stronger organizational presence in the countryside, it is widely argued that the kind of representation that does occur must be understood above all in the context of clientelistic politics'.[152]

The introduction here of clientelism raises the second major set of issues to be examined in the section: whether multi-partyism has led to competing ideologies and issue-based politics or to ethno-regional identity politics? There is a common view that clientelism and a spoils-based politics continues to dominate African politics, with the attendant criticism that there is an absence of issue-based politics and often little to differentiate African political parties in ideological terms.[153] While there is undoubtedly some truth in this perspective, two instances where issues and ideologies are more central to electoral outcomes are found in Ghana and Zambia. In Ghana, the institutionalization of a *de facto* two-party system around the two political traditions has provided the basis for competitive ideologies, expressed as social democratic versus liberal democratic or left of centre versus right of centre[154] and for rational evaluative judgements by the electorate of past and anticipated performances of the two main political parties. As noted above, such competitive ideologies and issue-based politics in Ghana have cut across other social cleavages and diminished their significance. This supports