Democratization and its Balance Sheet in Francophone and Anglophone Africa; the Zambian and Beninese Experience

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Abstract

While no two democratization processes unraveled along the same lines, broad patterns of social mobilization and democratic transition are easily discernable across sub Saharan Africa in the wake of the pro-democracy movements of the 1990's. Even though scholarship on this process has received its fair share of investigative enquiry from multi-dimensional perspectives, the direction adopted here intends to present a comparative analysis of democratization dynamics in Benin and Zambia-the pioneers of democratization in Francophone and Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa respectively. Constitutional engineering, Sovereign National Councils (SNC), and other mechanisms of citizen participation characterized the transition process in these two case studies with the implication that a split had been orchestrated with the old order. The new regimes whose ideologies appealed to the masses in the newly revitalized political space assumed political power on the premise that a new social contract anchored along certain socio-economic and political prerequisites would be fulfilled to the satisfaction of the latter. Cognizance of the progress recorded in both Zambia and Benin in the post 1990 democratization era, it becomes imperative to highlight the progress and hiccups that this movement has encountered in its drive to democratic consolidation.

Keywords: Democratization; Democracy; Benin; Zambia; Constitutionalism.

1. Introduction

The anti-colonial struggle was meant to offset the status quo which had been dominated by the colonizers (Britain, France, Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Germany) and secure Africa's future in the hands of Africans [1].

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However, what resulted when African elites had assumed the baton of control of their respective countries was far from what had been promised by the liberation movements and freedom fighter. As lamented by Claude Ake

"After political independence, the African nationalist leaders continued this legacy by turning against democracy. Having decided to inherit the colonial system, instead of transforming it in accordance with popular nationalist aspirations, most African leaders found themselves on a collision course with their people. […] when voluntary conformity did not come they resorted to repression and criminalized political opposition" [2].

authoritarian regimes characterized by dictators (Mobutu, Gnassimbe, Bokassa, Nguema, Biya) who ruled for their own personal aggrandizement, repressed the rights of citizens, embarked on widespread graft, stifled political participation and monopolized the political space with the operationalization of soviet style dominant one party apparatuses [4]. This situation led sub Saharan Africa to be viewed as the fief of dictators, violent politics, intra-ethnic violence and tribal wars, coups and counter coup d'états among other undemocratic manifestations. Post-colonial influences still held sway especially in former French territories where bonds forged under the rubric of the Loi Cadre proved unbreakable with independence. Instances of direct French intervention in post-colonial Africa include but are not limited to Togo, Gabon, Burkina Faso and Central African Republic (CAR) where direct orders from Paris executed by French commanders and African lackeys led to the emergence of authoritarian leaders and volatile domestic environments [5, 6]. The 1990's democratization wave which gathered steam from the former USSR'S collapse in 1989 coincided with a melting pot of domestic disenchantment with incumbent regimes' track records characterized by political authoritarianism, economic under(non)performance, infrastructural decay, institutional corruption, patrimonial and clientelist networks, unprecedented poverty levels and skyrocketing unemployment. This nimbus cloud of disenchantment therefore emboldened internal groups and forces to take the bull by the horn eventually resulting to what has been termed Africa's second independence. Eastern Europe's impetus to democratization in the wake of political Glasnot and Economic Perestrioka [7] had coalesced into changes of regime and personalities in some African countries such as Mathieu Kerekou of Benin and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and threatened authoritarian leaders with extinction in many other countries. "The rejection of single party in its intellectual heartland ensured that African leaders could no longer justify the continuation of this model on the African continent" [8]. This new era of pro-democracy agitation as noted by Binsbergen [9] provoked by the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and emphasized by the breaching of the Berlin Wall in 1989 sent shock waves throughout the continent with the implication that single-party systems were no longer a la mode [9].

But if we are to critically interrogate the democratization processes in French and English speaking African countries will the resulting constat be one of gains, improvement and development with a spreadsheet characterized by the absence or reduction of neo-colonial influences, free fair and transparent elections, greater freedoms, absence of or reducing corruption, reduced poverty levels, strong institutions in the place of dominant parties/strong leaders, empowered civil societies and well organized opposition political parties or is it going to be an opposite of the latter. Or better still, will it reveal a situation whereby democratization has not culminated to the expected levels of socio-economic development but to one in which African countries are keeping their heads above water? Or yet again will it demonstrate disparities between the democratic experiences in former

French and British territories in Africa with one group of countries living the democratic dream while the other is still caught up in the throes of misgovernance? In another dimension will it demonstrate case specific democratic progress irrespective of colonial DNA? While taking cognizance of these variables and their consequent influence on the final conclusions of this endeavor, it is imperative to state that in terms of methodology, this work relies on secondary data.

In terms of scope, the study is limited from the late 1980 to 2014. Its geographical scope has been streamlined to encompass Benin and Zambia. The reason for this choice is that, Benin was the first country to democratize in Francophone Africa while Zambia led the path towards democratization in Anglophone Africa. Analysis will use a descriptive comparative historical approach while making slight references to analytical techniques when situations in need of such analysis crop up. It is important to note that though no two democratization processes followed the same process, broad patterns/themes can be identified between the democratic transitions of Francophone and Anglophone countries "allowing for valid if tentative generalizations" [3]. The themes identified include the causes/actors and the process of constitution making (consensus rather than imposition)

Divided into three parts, part one gives a bird's eye portrayal of the causes and actors responsible for the advent of democratization in the selected case studies (Benin and Zambia). The second part analyzes the constitutional gear shifting which ensued in the wake of democratization while making a point to highlight the aspects of digression with the old order [un]constitutionalism while part three discusses the extent to which democratic consolidation if any has been achieved in the case studies.

1.1. Sociological Considerations: Pro-Democracy Protagonists and Causes)

Political participation through civil society mobilization in sub-Saharan Africa experienced a boost in the anti-colonial era where decolonization movements and groups fought tooth and nail to liberate their respective territories from the clutches of imperialism and colonialism. As emphasized by Van Binsbergen;

"In the struggle for decolonization and independence a crucial role was played by varieties of self-organizations (trade unions, political parties, welfare societies, burial societies, and women's movements […]); The African independence movement of the 1950's was not only about a vocal and educated African elite wrenching constitutional power from the hands of the colonialists but also about a broad social transformation which through communication, mobilization and mass organization made the tenets of constitutional democracy come to life for large numbers of Africans irrespective of their mode of livelihood, urban or rural residence, level of education or religious creed" [9].

With independence African civil society which had played a pivotal role in the liberalization movements were brutally suppressed and stifled under the dictatorial and authoritarian regimes that emerged in the wake of post-independence rule [8, 10] This was the case in Zambia where with independence in 1964 Keneth kaunda's rule assumed colorations of authoritarianism which curtailed all dissenting voices to his authority. In 1972 he abolished multipartism and established a one-party state in 1973 [11]. Can it be taken for coincidence or concerted coordination that the same scenario also obtained in Benin where Mathieu Kerekou established a

Marxist-Leninist state in 1972-74 after Benin had experienced eleven presidents (five civilians and six military men), six different constitutions and twelve coup d'états of which five were successful [12] in five years?. Following this era of single party fetishism that most sub-Saharan countries such as Cameroon, Togo, Mali, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) and a rash of others experienced, a number of internal and external factors such as rising poverty, balance of payment deficit, corruption, inability to provide basic social services, rising unemployment, human rights abuses not leaving out the democratization tsunami blowing from Eastern Europe and internationally linked aid conditionality to political liberalization through the Bretton Woods institutions, African states such as Benin and Zambia experienced unprecedented democratization. In Benin, the movement towards political and economic liberalization was championed by principally four groups. These groups as highlighted by John Mukum Mbaku involved "labor unions, radical intellectuals-Syndicat Nationale des L'Enseignement Supérieur (SNES)-who had been educated in France and had become influenced by the socialist movement; young student radicals-Union Générale des Etudiants et Élèves du Dahomey (UGEED)-influenced by the student riots in France in 1968 […]"[1]. Added to this were other social formations such as the Catholic Church (Monseigneur Isidore de Souza), and disgruntled civil servants-Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleur du Benin (UNSTB)-whose salaries had not been paid for eight months. "[T]he democratic movement was primarily supported by a state-based elite" [12].

In Zambia resistance to Kaunda's rule could be identified as far back as the 1970's basically from Political parties (Movement for Multi-Party Democracy-MMD), intellectual groups, businessmen, sections of mineworkers and trade unionists-Zambia's Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). This defiant attitude developed by the so-called civil society had its justifications on the fact that the one party state was ill equipped to combat the declining economic fortunes of Zambia; ballooning domestic debt, widespread corruption, instability and inflation that were ravaging the Zambian economy. Given that the socio-political environments had been hostile to the emergence and consolidation of a vibrant civil society and contrary to popular and most often misleading postulations an organized civil society did not pre-exist as a coherent, formidable and noticeable organ of Africa's socio-political topography. The organizations that played an important role in the success of this democratic mobilization were the product of the disintegration of the various African regimes rather than the existence of a strong organized civil society [12]. From the preceding argument it becomes clear that the forces which propelled democratic transition in sub-Saharan Africa stemmed both in terms of the causes (deepening economic crisis, growing inability to provide social goods, corruption, fall of the Berlin Wall, aid conditionality on politico-economic liberalization, etc.) as well as the actors from internal (student organizations, religious groups, trade unions and opposition political parties) as well as external (Bretton Woods Institutions, USA, France, etc.). However, closer and more critical analysis will most likely give birth to the conclusion that the internal considerations weighed more in terms of influence and as a mobilizing factor than did the foreign influences.

2. The Benefits of Democratic Transition; Constitutional Reforms and New Institutional Arrangements

Democratization was not supposed to happen in sub-Saharan Africa in the late 1980's and early 1990's because as popular consensus had it, Africa was tagged as unfertile terrain for liberal constitutional democracy [13]. It had all the tell-tale signs and symptoms of an environment hostile to the consolidation of democratic

governance. Evidence of poverty, illiteracy, tribalism, low economic performance and the weakness or near absence of any strong consolidated constitutional-institutional structures and arrangements were widespread throughout the continent. As noted by Richard Joseph "Democratization was not supposed to happen in Africa. It had too little of what seemed necessary for constitutional democratic polities. African countries were too poor, too culturally fragmented and insufficiently capitalist" [14]. This quote echoes the preceding position as it emphasizes the view that the prerequisite conditions for the emergence of democracy were lacking or insufficient in Africa. Other political pundits such as Samuel P. Huntington adheres to this view when he asserted in 1984 that with a few exceptions of which Africa was not amongst, the last frontiers of democracy had been reached [14].

The transition to democratic governance was manifested through the liberalization of the political and economic spheres. In this regard, constitutional provisions and guarantees were reiterated through the amendments of constitutions to (a) legally permit opposition political parties to exist; (b) establish independent national electoral commissions to organize free, fair and impartial elections both at the national and local levels; and set clear terms of presidential mandate and (c) guarantee freedom of the press. It was hoped that these measures will not only contribute towards the creation of institutional arrangements favorable to the practice of liberal democracy, but would eventually ensure its consolidation.

2.1. Constitutional Amendments and the Return to Multipartism in Zambia and Benin.

The Zambian constitution of 1973 outlawed multipartism thereby making the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Kaunda to exist for seventeen (17) years as the only legal political party [11]. In 1990 following the wake of disenchantment from the latent pro-democracy movements and increasing international pressure with UNIP's monopoly of legal political activity, Kaunda signed into law a Bill legalizing opposition political parties in December 1990. In the new constitution adopted in August 1991, candidates were no longer required to originate exclusively from UNIP thereby indicating that multiparty politics had been decriminalized. In the case of Benin, Mathieu Kerekou seized power via coup d'état in 1972 and instituted Marxist-Leninism in 1975, with the implication that multiparty politics was abolished. The only legal political party in Benin from 1975 was the Parti de la Revolution Populaire du Benin (PRPB). Eighteen years (1972-1990) after abolishing multipartism, political pluralism was once more introduced in Benin. Article five of Benin's 1990 constitution which saw the light of day as a result of the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) convened from February 19 to 28 of that year and mainly through the efforts of the High Council of the Republic states that: "Political parties shall cooperate in the expression of suffrage. They shall be formed and shall freely exercise their activities under conditions determined by the Charter of Political Parties. They must respect the principles of national sovereignty, of democracy, of territorial integrity and of the secularity of the State"[15]. Constitutional guarantees of multipartism were one of the first and most important demands made by the pro-democracy movements vying for democratic universal suffrage. In some cases, opposition political parties were legalized after they had already been launched in contravention of constitutional provisions. The case of Cameroon throws more light on this phenomenon whereby the legalization of multi-party politics took place within a context of forced acquiescence by the ruling regime whereby the leading opposition declared its existence before political pluralism was legalized.

2.2. Constitutionalism and National Election Organs (NEO)-Presidential Limits.

A vital ingredient for the existence and sustenance of democratic politics is the conduct of elections. Even though the conduct of elections at regular intervals is not the sole indicator of the existence of democratic practice, it nonetheless sets the pace for other indicators of democracy to thrive such as the rule of law, protection and promotion of human rights, free press, accountability, transparency, etc [11]. In a sense the conduct of regular, free, transparent and impartial elections can be seen as the superstructure upon which other democratic ideals are erected and consolidated. To therefore ensure that all political aspirants from the ruling as well as opposition parties have a level playing field, constitutional provisions were made during the transition to democratic governance in the 1990's to ensure that the rules of political engagement at the ballot will ensure fairness and transparency in the organization, compilation and proclamation of election results at the national and local levels. National Elections Organs (NEOs) therefore emerged as the vanguards of free, fair, transparent and impartial elections. The Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) was established in August 1996 after the constitutional amendment of Act 18. Prior to the establishment of the commission, presidential, parliamentary and local elections were organized by ad-hoc electoral commissions and local governments respectively. The same also holds true for Benin and many other African countries whereby explicit arrangements have been made to guarantee the sanctity of elections. French speaking countries to a very wide extent still maintain and even sometimes dominate the constitution of these electoral organs by appointing members of the incumbent regimes to constitute it's a membership meanwhile relegating the presence and role of opposition political parties and civil society to a marginalized position. The case of Cameroon falls in line with the preceding view. Comparatively, and perhaps due to the vocal and very activists nature of the political landscape in countries of English expression such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa among others, these bodies have a tendency of being more objectively constituted with sate presence and influence not as domineering as is the case with African countries of French expression. However, there are some exceptions to these broad patterns in the sense that the Electoral organs of Senegal and Benin enjoy a relatively high degree of independence from state control and influence even though in the case of Benin, the 2001 elections were criticized for not being free and fair causing contender to power Nicephore Soglo to withdraw his candidacy during the second round runoff [12]. While on the other hand, there have been claims by Nigerian opposition political parties that Federal, state and local government officials loyal to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) indulge in ballot stuffing and other election malpractices before, during and after the conduct of elections.

Furthermore, another distinct constitutional point of digression with the old order (constitutions without constitutionalism) that held sway in the pre-1990's democratic era was especially but not exclusively the constitutional limitation of presidential mandates. In the cases of Benin and Zambia and most if not all African countries that adopted new constitutional and institutional arrangements in the wake of the pro-democracy movements, presidents could not serve more than two mandates of five years each. It is important to highlight the disparities between the old constitutions and the new constitutional arrangements which emerged as a bi product of the new social process of consensus building founded on the basis of legitimacy than on authoritarianism. Julius Inhonvbere notes that a topical instance of distinction between these two constitutional

eras (the pre and post democratic transition eras) is while the old order constitutions did not worth more than the paper on which they were written and though they could claim to be legal they were not legitimate. The post-democratic transition constitutional by-products have become the tabular rasa on which new patterns of power, alternative political arrangements, the division and defining of power, rights and obligations are being written by the ruled and the rulers [16]. These new constitutional arrangements borne from a bottom-up approach reflects intrinsic characteristics of legitimacy and consensus building. Article forty two of the Beninese constitution of 1990 is very clear on the issue of power alternance-succession as it states that "The President of the Republic shall be elected by direct universal suffrage for a mandate of five years renewable only one time." It goes further to emphasize that "In any case no one shall be able to exercise more than two presidential mandates. Act 18 amendments of the Zambian constitution of 1991 under which Patrick Cheluba had been elected into office states under part five article 35(1) that […] every president shall hold office for a period of five years. 35(2) reiterate ex-caldera that "[…] no person who has twice been elected as president shall be eligible for re-election to that office" [17]. These two constitutions just like those of many sub-Saharan countries made express provisions to discourage and prohibit the personalization of political power. As a theme, the delimitation of presidential tenures resonates across most if not all new constitutional arrangements in the post 1990 era.

2.3. Constitutional Guarantees: Freedom of the Press

Without an independent and functioning media, there can be no real talk of democracy [18]. The African media landscape enjoyed greater levels of press freedom and could boast to be the voice of the voiceless in the immediate post-independence era. Their role as the mouthpiece of the anti-colonial movements had attributed to them some degree of insularity from the oppressive sate machinery that they were confronted with once independence had been attained. However, following the monopolization of political space by authoritarian regimes across the continent, the privileges and relative immunity enjoyed by the vibrant and critical post-independence mass media especially newspapers came under increasing censorship and restriction. It was common place to find journalists whose articles and columns were perceived as inimical by the state apparatus to be harassed, tortured and summarily executed. It was rationalized by authoritarian leaders such as Ahidjo of Cameroon that the mass media's role could frustrate plans of national solidarity and cohesion due to its inherently critical nature. With this hostility towards the independent media, state organs of communication were established with the intention of serving as the mouth pieces of authoritarian regimes. As the only legal media outlets permitted to exist, these state-sponsored media instruments of indoctrination and ideological brainwashing such as Cameroon Tribune churned out media information that was uncritical and only served to provide justification to the governments many blunders. However, with the latent pro-democracy movements clamoring for a return to multiparty politics in the late 80's and early 90's the private media once more re-emerged in its role as the voice of the voiceless and vanguards of effective and unbiased dissemination of any and all information deemed healthy for public consumption. It was no surprise that the regulation of the mass media was one of the first issues that the reform process tried to address in the 1990, after governments reluctantly bowed to popular pressure for political pluralism. A series of laws styled "Liberty Laws" were ostensibly designed and adopted with the intention of abolishing the hitherto harsh restrictions on the media [18]. On this note the Beninese constitution of 1990 dedicates Title eight (VIII) to the High Authority on Audio-Visuals and Communication. Made up of two articles (142-43) the mission of this commission is to "guarantee

and assure the freedom and the protection of the press, as well as of the means of mass communication with respect to the law" [15]. Article Twenty (20-2) of the Zambian constitution of 1996 states inter-alia that "[…] no law shall make any provisions that derogates from freedom of the press" [17]. It was as a result of this new resurgence that the mass media emerged reborn to once more occupy its watchdog status in post 1990 African political society. These liberty laws can be identified in a majority of African countries that experienced democratization in Africa.

3. A Balance Sheet of Benin's and Zambia's Liberal Democratic Transition

There are more political parties legalized in Africa than ever before, no military regimes than in the last twenty years, greater freedom of the press, accountability, and more open debate about corruption and mismanagement than was possible fifty years ago [19]. Stock taking of Africa's democratic transition will reveal a balance sheet fraught with both credits and debits with the credits outweighing the debits by a very thin margin. Broad patterns of democratic gains can be identified across the continent on a general note with some individual cases having recorded more gains than others, while others are still lagging behind. The consolidation of democratic transition will be analyzed within the ambits of the above selected three variables which include constitutionalism and: (a) multiparty politics; (b) presidential mandates; and (c) press freedom

3.1. Opposition Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation

Even though opposition political parties in both Benin and Zambia overthrew the incumbent regimes and captured political power, their performance has not lived up to expectation. In Benin, where Nicephore Soglo defeated Kerekou in the 1991 elections, his failure to deliver on the promises he had made to the Beninese electorate coupled with rising unemployment, corruption, nepotism and his autocratic leadership style led to his eventual defeat in the polls by his former rival Kerekou in the 1996 presidential elections [3]. In Zambia, Chiluba's MMD broke UNIP's monopoly of power in Zambia since 1964 in 1991. However, his government has been criticized for being manipulative. Reference is usually made to his constitutional engineering in order to eliminate political rivals such as Kenneth Kaunda through the famous Act 18 [11, 20]. Ironically, democratization in Africa has created a single dominant party and a fractured opposition which plays more of a legitimizing role to the presence rather than the practice of multi-party politics. One of the reasons for the poor performance of opposition parties is that they lack well-articulated manifestos which can be easily attained. Almost the initial and only objective of these newly mushroomed parties was to capture political power and maintain it. Their over emphasis on this particular function of political parties made them under perform in other areas such as holding incumbent regimes accountable. Also, the abysmal performance of African opposition parties is due to the fact that the politicians who head them are not professional politicians making them unequal rivals when pitted against the entrenched and veteran politicians in ruling parties. The fact that there exist at least one hundred opposition parties on average in most African countries implies that the opposite is not only weak at building alliances but also vulnerable to infiltration and manipulation by the ruling regimes. There has therefore emerged a pattern whereby opposition parties such as those in Cameroon and Benin, aim not to capture power but to have just the right amount of popularity in order to benefit from campaign bonuses and political appointments from the ruling parties [20]. The preceding point is buttressed by this remark from a

notorious Beninese politician "Opposition does not feed a man" [9]. Coupled with the fact that the few opposition parties which possess the minimum requirements of Opposition Parties often derive their support base from a particular, ethno-regional platform rendering them limited in terms of representation and national presence. With most African ruling parties well established in their positions they can therefore exploit the numerous chinks that are easily noticeable on the amour of African opposition parties. The divided, opportunistic, and incoherent nature of African opposition parties is well exemplified by the Togolese case in the immediate post democratization era. Uganda's president still maintains a very tight leash on the activities of opposition parties. These weaknesses not-withstanding, opposition parties are making headway in some countries such as Senegal, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, just to name a few with the implication that though they have not performed at the rate expected of them, they are at least animating the African political landscape in different dimensions.

3.2. Presidential Alternance-Succession

Following the abolition of single party rule in Africa, elections were organized in which political alternance took place in countries such as Benin, Zambia, while political succession took place in Togo, Cameroon, Senegal, Tanzania, while succession occurred in Kenya, just to name a few. While constitutional guarantees were enshrined to short circuit the emergence of life presidents, there has emerged a pattern in which presidents who have a firm grip on power in their respective countries have manipulatively abrogated these constitutional limits on their mandates. Presidents such as Paul Biya, Idriss Derby among others have amended their constitutions to allow for unlimited mandates. The efforts of the civil society in countries such as Senegal and Nigeria were able to frustrate similar efforts by Wade and Obasanjo in these countries respectively. However, where the opposition has won elections, like was the case in Senegal, political alternance has taken place therefore indicating that there is a commendable level of leadership alternance. Benin's case is highly commendable where there have been three power alterations since 1990 indicating that this country has fulfilled the minimum requirement for democratic consolidation.

3.3.   Freedom of the Press

The liberty laws of the 1990's did not only embolden media professionals in Africa giving them the impetus to critically and professionally follow up on and inform political groups on sensitive political debates; it also provided the ordinary African with a variety of information sources and eventually broke the monopoly wielded by government gazettes and tribunes. The concurrent implication of this new dispensation was that the information starved African was suddenly overwhelmed and almost suffocated with newspapers and political tabloids which appeared on the media scene and vied for an audience. It has contributed to a more vibrant and interactive political space in which the political destinies of recalcitrant and unethical politicians are sanctioned in the court of public opinion. Many a politician has been assassinated by the guillotine of the private press especially in cases where feedback from public opinion on elected/appointed officials serves as a yard stick for evaluation .However, the independent media in Africa is fraught with a number of inbuilt weaknesses. First is the fact that most African journalists do not possess the requisite professional skills to serves as the mouthpiece of the public without letting their personal views and other subjective forces influence the manner in which they

present information for public consumption. Also, there is a high concentration of media outlets in urban centers but as one retreats from urban centers, there is a corresponding decrease in both the quantity and quality of the media. This therefore limits those Africans who do not reside in urban centers to be excluded from political debates generated through the efforts of the private media. Another problematic aspect of the African media landscape is that, by the nature of their endemic poverty, African media practitioners have sacrificed professional ethics for the highest bidder. It is no wonder therefore that, it is most often than not very easy to encounter a media scene in which the volume of print material generated on political scandals aimed at smearing the credentials of political rivals far outweighs the amount of column space dedicated to informing citizens on more relevant information. These shortcomings have weakened the role of the African media and reduced it to pawns left at the discretion of politicians with fat wallets. However, the African media's role in terms of rendering public officials accountable and informing a populace cannot be underestimated.

4. Conclusion; Cultural versus Institutional Democracy

The content and context of politics have changed in Africa significantly since the late 1980's. Most of the one-party dictatorships are a thing of the past and opposition politics are here to stay. Institutional guarantees have been made to ensure that African states will not rescind to military dictatorships and single party rule. The de-peripherization of the African masses and de-monopolization of the political landscape have become contemporary realities in our time demonstrating that the seeds have been sown for the emergence of a vibrant and critical political culture. When one critically analyzes the democratic transitions that occurred in Africa in the late 1980 throughout the early to mid-1990's and equally inputs the variables that have emerged as bi-product of these transition, in terms of being critical the obvious conclusion drawn will have to contend with the fact that there is more of institutional democracy than cultural democracy in Africa. This is a huge margin of optimism when one compares what obtained in Africa prior to this broad based transition. African politics has a tendency of suddenly defying the rule of democracy as was the case in the 1990's. It is hoped that the long but steady march towards more participatory, transparent and accountable forms of democratic governance will continue to unravel in the continent with its eventual consolidation being the objective of the entire continent. It is only when governance structures, processes, and stakeholders will be people centered that the forecasted levels of democratic consolidation will come to pass in Africa. The institutions are easily discernable meanwhile they do not correlate with everyday practice and consolidation hence the conclusion that broad patterns show institutional rather than cultural democratization.

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