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Taking Stock: Ongoing Obstacles to the Consolidation of Multi-Party Democracy in Africa

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Introduction

In terms of governance in Africa, the last fifteen years have been dominated by experimentation with multi-party democracy. Since 1990, numerous polls have been held on the continent to determine who will rule. And with this flurry of multi-party elections it is fair to conclude that the earlier post-colonial period of government, characterised by the African one-party state, has definitely come to pass. As a consequence, we can now move on from the old heated debates about whether or not multi-party elections will ever take root on African soil. It is obvious that these types of plebiscite are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. A question that Africanists cannot move on from, however, is when or whether multi-party democracy will ever be *consolidated* within the African political environment.

This article will argue that several fundamental changes first have to take place before existing, isolated, functional aspects of pluralist democracies evolve to become holistic multi-party systems, engrained in a state's political culture. Only when political systems always, rather than occasionally, refer to pluralism to determine the actions of government can multi-party democracy truly be said to be consolidated. Looking at African states today, it is only the temporary use of multi-party democracy that seems to prevail in the majority of cases. Examples of African states where political pluralism is a permanent feature of the political system are rare. Authoritarian reflexes from the past are all too often revived in periods between elections, even in states where polls have been declared 'free and fair'.

Certainly, the continent's conversion to holding multi-party elections has been impressive. Pressures emanating from civil society, the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s, and a new international political order all contributed to dramatic changes in governance.

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As late as 1988, one-party states and military governments were still the norm on the continent. It remained the era of "one leader, one ideology, and one political party" (Hyden & Bratton, 1992: ix) Reasonably free and fair elections did occasionally occur in these countries (when the military returned to barracks, for example - Nigeria and Ghana being good cases in point), but these elections never amounted to an on-going commitment to democracy. Follow-up elections were rarely held. Yet, by 1999, the number of multi-party constitutions on the continent had risen from nine to 46 (Nohlen et al., 1999) Granted, several of these 'multi-party democracies' amounted to paper exercises only, but many more proved fruitful. Momentous occasions such as Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia for 27 years, respectfully bowing to the will of the people in 1991, or Nelson Mandela's 1994 victory in South Africa's first non-racial elections, demonstrated that multi-party democracy had gained a foothold on the African continent.

By 1999, most African states had constitutions in place that encouraged politi-cal pluralism. Reflecting this, more than 140 multi-party elections were held in the last decade of the twentieth century (compared to less than 70 competitive polls held in the three decades prior to this) (ibid.). Some of these elections were flawed, but others represented a reasonable reflection of voters' wishes. Given these facts, there can be little doubt that post-colonial African politics has reached a critical juncture. Multi-party elections have now become the norm for deciding who rules.

The holding of elections, however, is not the sole prerequisite for democracy. A mature democratic order requires that the new rules of the political game endure between elections, and, indeed, compel incumbent governments to hold further polls within a constitutionally defined period of time. Similarly, continued accountability and representation are far more important than the simple mechanics of holding elections. In this sense, the danger is that the wave of pluralism is simply a one-off response to a particular set of political circumstances. It may be that, just like the multi-party polls at independence, or those following the military's return to barracks, current multi-party campaigns are isolated elections, merely serving (temporarily) to 're-legitimise' the state. It could be, to use Christopher Clapham's words, a case of 'one man, one vote, once' (Clapham, 1993: 245). Richard Sandbrook highlights exactly

this point when he states: 'Africa's hostile conditions encumber not so much *transitions* to democracy as the *consolidation* of enduring democracies' (Sandbrook, 1993: 91).

The argument of this article is that if the new era of multi-party elections is to amount to a genuine and permanent change to African governance then democracy has to be experienced deeper in the political process. Pluralism has to become ingrained within a political system for the multi-party model to work efficiently, bringing with it accountability and representation. In this respect, the article will focus on seven specific issues that need to be addressed if a democratic consolidation is to occur. These issues are: the need for a credible opposition; the need for a strong civil society; the need for stronger economies; the need to separate the state from the ruling party; the need to manage ethnic political mobilisation; the need to forestall military intervention; and the need to transform political culture. At present, many African states fail to meet these criteria.

The need for a credible opposition

To state the obvious, multi-party democracies need multiple parties. If the electorate is unhappy with its government's policies or conduct, it needs an alternative political force which it can vote into power. Credible opposition choices, however, are not always guaranteed. The 1995 General Election in Zimbabwe, for example, was remarkably free from instances of intimidation and malpractice. Yet, as Liisa Laakso writes: 'Unfortunately, the progress in the practical arrangements of the polling [were] accompanied by a lack of any alternatives or even counterforces to the ruling party' (Laakso, 1996: 218). Robert Mugabe's regime was unpopular, procedural democracy was in place, yet ZANU-PF faced no serious opposition. This had also been the case in the General Elections of 1985 and 1990. It was easy for Mugabe to claim to be at the head of a multi-party democracy when there was little by the way of an organised opposition. Yet when such an opposition did emerge at the end of the 1990s, spearheaded by Zimbabwe's labour movement, Mugabe ditched his democratic credentials. Political violence was used to ensure a ZANU-PF victory at subsequent polls. Now that Zimbabwe's ruling party fears losing power, it has less respect for open competition between political parties.

Elsewhere in Africa the converse has been the problem: too many parties. Political reforms have led to hundreds, maybe thousands, of parties mobilising across the continent. When Chad moved to pluralist competition, for example, over 60 movements registered with the state authorities (Buijtenhuijs, 1998: 36). Democracy, however, cannot be measured by the quantity of competitors alone. The quality of these parties is also important. Above all, they should be able to offer alternative policy choices and leadership options to the electorate.

John Wiseman describes many of the recently emerged organisations as merely 'vanity parties' (Wiseman, 1996: 107). They serve more as a vehicle for party bosses than as an aggregation of ideological or policy demands. Often these movements consist of just one charismatic leader, with only a handful of acolytes. Even the larger parties, with wider support, often revolve around a 'big man'. Election campaigns therefore tend to be competitions between personalities rather than ideas. Wiseman, pointing to this absence of issue-driven politics, notes that opposition platforms are usually based on 'support for multi-party democracy, a defence of human rights, criticisms of government corruption, and an attack on statist approaches to economic policy. None of these elements are negligible or unworthy but they hardly add up to an ideological masterplan for reconstructing society' (ibid: p. 111).

The concentration on the politics of personality has led to factionalism within Africa's opposition movements. This partly explains why such a remarkable number of incumbent 'big men' from the previous order and their parties survived the transition to multi-party politics. Where pro-democracy forces remained coherent, successful campaigns against the presidential-monarchs were mounted. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in Zambia, for example, defeated Kaunda; the Alliance pour la Democratic au Mali helped oust Traoré; and the Alliance for Democracy in Malawi saw off Banda.

Divided opposition, however, fared less well. Often, various factions ended up competing more with each other than they did against the incumbent. Côte d'Ivoire is a case in point in 1990. Here, 26 parties registered after the constitution was amended. Of these, 17 fielded candidates in the 1990 elections. Only the *Front Populaire*

Ivoirien (FPI) could make any impression on Houphouët-Boigny's status and his incumbent party's well-oiled electoral machine. Even the FPI, however, led by history professor Laurent Gbagbo, had little appeal beyond the educated urban classes (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997: 200). Consequently, Houphouët-Boigny won by a landslide, and, ultimately, was only removed from office by death.

Kenyan politics also suffered from a divided opposition. Moi, detested in many areas of the country, still won two presidential polls of 1992 and 1997. On both occasions he emerged victorious, despite winning 36, 40.5 per cent of the vote respectively. More coherence and co-operation among the opposition parties would almost certainly have defeated this autocratic president and brought a new lease of life to Kenyan politics. Yet, this was not to happen until 2002, after Moi had retired and a united opposition coalition finally managed to break KANU's 40 year monopoly of power.

With respect to a credible opposition, consolidation of multi-party democracy is still a long way off in many African states. Until the electorate can be offered a genuine choice between competing policy programmes, rather than only between ambitious political cliques, then 'true' representation remains a distant goal.

The need for a strong civil society

A second prerequisite for democratic consolidation is a strong civil society. Healthy associational activity can act as a powerful independent counter-force to prevent the state monopolising the political process. In a multi-party democracy it is essential that civil society is present both to co-operate with, and to challenge, the government. This helps to ensure that the public interest is always paramount, and that governments continue to respect the rules of the democratic process.

In living memory, African civil societies have underwritten multi-party democracy twice on the continent. First, it was associational activity, in terms of the nationalist movements that defeated colonialism. The colonial state was dismantled and, in most cases, multi-party elections held to select who would form the first government's after liberation. Then it was civil society activity that helped bring about Africa's 'second liberation' some thirty years

later, with one-party states making way for multi-party democracy at the end of the twentieth century. The question now, however, is whether contemporary associational life is strong enough on the continent to help preserve this newly won multi-party democracy.

This preservation will require the growth of Africa's middle classes. After all, you cannot have liberal, or bourgeois, democracy without a bourgeoisie (Beckman, 1989: 84). It is the middle classes that have the wealth, the time and the education to organise groups that can monitor and influence the state. Professionals can provide an intellectual challenge to the ruling party; church, mosque and human rights groups can provide a moral challenge; women's associations can keep issues of gender to the fore; and an independent media can challenge the government's dissemination of information, should this be needed. Without this independent associational activity there is a grave danger that the state will become too dominant and abuse its power.

Yet, few African countries have a powerful and independent middle class. All too often it is the state itself that has been the focus of class formation. In this respect, it could be that multi-party elections, rather than opening up the political process to all Africans, have instead just initiated new personnel into the state elite. Indeed, there is no guarantee that these civil society leaders who defeat the 'old guard' and set up a new government will act in the wider interests of the population. It may be that, just like their predecessors, once in power, they will be more content to pursue just their own, or their narrow constituency's, interests. Frederick Chiluba, the hero of Zambia's transition to multi-party democracy in 1991, will surely not be the only president of the new political age to face corruption charges on leaving office.

The key issue is whether this 'new' political elite is more committed to the ideal of democracy and representation than the old guard. The sincerity of many who campaigned for pluralism cannot be doubted. It is possible, however, that the commitment of others to multi-party democracy was only instrumental. Now that they are in power, their belief in pluralism may diminish. Only a civil society continuing its independence from the state will be able to check these new ruling elites. In essence, consolidated multi-party democracies require a politically active class that seeks to influence

government policy, but does not wish to obtain political office for itself. Such individuals are content to participate from the sidelines. Only when a society has this independent civil society, with no state ambitions, will there truly be a healthy and permanent counter-balance to state power.

Malawi's recent 'third term' debate illustrates the role of an independent civil society well. Having successfully challenged the *ancient regime* of Hastings Banda's one-party state, civil society groups supported the candidacy of Bakili Muluzi in the 1994 multi-party elections. President Muluzi's administration, once in power, however, latterly began to display some authoritarian reflexes familiar in the Banda era. Several key personnel from civil society were either co-opted or oppressed. Muluzi then indicated his wish to amend the new constitution to allow himself the opportunity to stand for a third term as president. It was this blatant attempt to subvert the hard-won 1994 constitution that finally rejuvenated Malawi's civil society groups, groups that had become relatively dormant during the Muluzi years. Distancing themselves from the regime they originally created, these organisations asserted their independence and mobilised to defeat the President's proposed constitutional changes. Associational networks, led by the Public Action Committee, emerged from the shadow of the state to, once again, take up the 'watch dog' role of civil society. The fact that the same civil society that had created the Muluzi government only belatedly challenged the authoritarian behaviour of this regime serves as a warning that the survival of an effective independent civil society should not be taken or granted after a democratic transition.

The need for stronger economies

The maintenance of multi-party democracy also relies on governments looking after the economic and social welfare of their citizens. Should a ruling party fail to provide what the electorate expects, then they will soon be voted out of office. Accountable governments have therefore to meet many demands. As well as a sound economic environment in which one can prosper, health care, education, social provision and transport infrastructure are just a few of the basic services that are expected by citizens. This is why, in western Europe, multi-party democracy developed alongside the construction of the welfare state.

Resources in Africa, however, remain scarce. It may be that newly elected governments will have trouble meeting the demands of their citizens. However representative these regimes may be, many simply do not have the means to service the politics of the 'pork barrel' that democratic systems often demand. Consequently, severe economic problems could lead to a loss of legitimacy, and even to the collapse of pluralism itself. In Nazi Germany, for example, citizens were willing to give up liberal democracy altogether in favour of national socialism. Nationalist socialism, it was considered, would be a more efficient form of rule, given that Germany's existing political and economic institutions were perceived to be failing the people. In light of this example from history, political leaders should always heed Afrifa Gitonga's advice: 'democracy is founded on full bellies and peaceful minds' (Gitonga, 1988: 19). In Africa, only an improved economic performance can guarantee this.

The need to separate the state and ruling party

Multi-party democracy also needs a neutral state whose institutions provide the 'level playing-field' on which political parties can compete. By winning an election, a party has the right to rule through these institutions, in the national interest. Political leaders should not use the power and resources of the state to specifically bolster the position of their own party. This would give it an unfair advantage at the next election. Democratic consolidation thus needs a new political environment in Africa in which there is a clear distinction between state institutions and those of the ruling party.

This clear distinction is yet to emerge in many African countries. Although multiple parties are now allowed to compete, opposition groups often do so at a clear disadvantage. In the more serious cases, for example, electoral registers may 'inadvertently' be incomplete in opposition areas of the country; constituency boundaries will be gerrymandered; ballot boxes will be 'lost', while others will be stuffed with pre-prepared voting slips; and, if all these methods fail, then the state's electoral commission could always simply declare a fictitiou-s result.

Electoral rules can also be manipulated in a more subtle manner. If we turn to Zambia again, Chiluba's MMD many have defeated Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) in 1991, yet UNIP was not completely defeated as a political force. It took its

place as the loyal opposition in parliament, and successfully rebuilt support among the electorate. Fearing UNIP's revival as the 1996 elections approached, Chiluba moved to neutralise Kaunda's presidential campaign by using the power of the state (rather than through winning more votes in an open election). The MMD majority in parliament was used to amend the constitution to prevent 'first generation' Zambians from running for president. All concerned knew that Kaunda's parents were born in present-day Malawi, and with Kaunda out of the race, Chiluba successfully secured his second term of office.

Ruling parties will not just use the state's power to improve their chances of re-election, they will also appropriate public resources. With access to the national treasury, for example, incumbent parties can mount extensive and elaborate election campaigns. Opposition groups, starved of funds, cannot compete with this 'public' spending. Kenya's president, Daniel arap Moi, for example, took full advantage of his position in the 1997 campaign. Government spending was increased by US$100 million prior to the elections, increasing the country's money circulation by 35 per cent (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997: 204). Moi effectively bought the votes he needed to win the election.

Other resources that incumbents readily utilise are the state-owned media and the security forces. Almost all state newspapers, radio and television on the continent provide a pro-government outlook in their reporting. By contrast, opposition groups find it hard to get their views and policies expressed through these media. One study of the 1996 election in the Gambia, for example, found that President Yaya Jammeh commanded 83 percent of radio and television airtime dedicated to the campaigns, leaving the opposition parties at a distinct disadvantage (Adejumobi, 2000: 68). Elsewhere, President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe at first tolerated an independent press, including international journalists. He then moved to intimidation and harassment when the news agencies threatened his rule; and simply banned these journalists from practising their trade when his regime was on the verge of collapse. It should come as no surprise that both Jammeh and Mugabe, just as Chiluba and Moi had, succeeded in winning the subsequent multi-party elections held immediately after these events.

Agencies of coercion are also at the ruling party's disposal. The police and the army can be used to disrupt anti-government rallies and harass opposition leaders. This may be of particular advantage during election campaigns. Few are surprised in Africa, for example, when they hear that the police have decided to ban an opposition election rally for 'health and safety' reasons, or an opposition leader's entourage are held up at a 'routine' police roadblock immediately prior to a meeting. Indeed, such intimidation is often less subtle. Voters at one polling station in Equatorial Guinea, for instance, were apparently told that any person wanting to vote for an opposition candidate could do so in a separate ballot box to be found behind the building. A soldier would show them the way (McGreal, 1999: 4).

All the above cases are examples of the way governments use state institutions to manipulate elections. Most of the multi-party polls held in the 1990s and beyond, however, were declared *reasonably* free and fair. Yet the fact remains that incumbent parties have a major advantage over their rivals. Until there is a clear separation between state and ruling party institutions, there will not be a 'level playing-field', and democracy will not be consolidated. A shadow is cast over the whole multi-party experiment when many incumbent leaders still share the views of President Pascal Lissouba of Congo-Brazzaville. He reasoned: 'You don't arrange elections if you are going to lose them' (ibid.).

The unleashing of ethnic mobilisation?

A fifth potential problem that democratic consolidation will have to overcome is the perennial issue of ethnicity. The fact remains that imposed colonial borders have caged some ethnic groups within a single state. Competition between these groups was previously restricted by the one-party state and centralised structures. Multi-party democracy, however, opens up the possibility of full-scale ethnic mobilisation. After all, as Claude Ake points out, 'Liberal democracy assumes individualism, but there is little individualism in Africa' (Ake, 1993: 243). In this respect, there is a possibility that African political parties will come to mirror the ethno-regional divisions within their societies. The recent revival of ethnic tensions in Congo-Brazzaville, Kenya and Zambia, among other countries, certainly suggests this.

The danger with competition based on ethno-regional identities is that a victory for one group may be seen as a total defeat for another. Under these circumstances, it may be difficult for the losing ethnic group to accept the election results. Indeed, if an ethnic group feels that its interests will not be served within a nation ruled by its rival, then outright secession may be sought. And the consequence of this could be dismemberment of the state, just as occurred in the fledgling democracies of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and within the former Soviet Union.

Yet, so far, secession has not been a popular demand on the continent. Most Africans are still committed to the project of nation-building and accommodation within inherited nation-state structures. Indeed, ethnicity may be a positive contribution to democratic behaviour, offering an aggregation of demands. Pluralism, after all, revolves around the competition of interests. It is a way of resolving such conflicts peacefully. As long as all respect the rules of the game, then democracy will survive. Harvey Glickman's conclusion seems to be sound: 'while democratization trends provide opportunities for expansion of ethnic conflict, they also allow opportunities for controlling such conflict through institutional mechanisms' (Glickman, 1995: 4).

The threat of the military

Along with the need for a strong opposition, civil society and economy, the requirement that state institutions and the ruling party be separated, and that ethnic conflict be successfully managed, the behaviour of the military is also critical in this period of democratic consolidation. The coercive agencies of the state have frequently intervened in post-colonial African politics. Time after time, the military usurped political power. However, for democracy to survive, the men in uniform will now have to take an apolitical role, leaving issues of regime change to the electorate.

A universal end to military intervention in African politics will not materialise immediately. The 1990s saw several instances in which security forces vetoed election results, installing their own governments instead (Algeria, Nigeria, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic). Even when some of these countries subsequently returned to multi-party competition, there was often a tacit understanding that candidates must first have the approval

of the army. In Nigeria's case, the 1999 return to pluralist competition saw Olusegun Obasanjo who had presided over Nigeria's 1976–79 military government elected president. Did this hand-back to civilian rule represent the army endorsing the electorate's choice, or was it the people endorsing the military's nominee? The military in Algeria would also seem to have a veto over the results of multi-party elections. Having intervened to annul the January 1992 election that would have most likely produced the world's first democratically elected Islamist government, subsequent polls have always been won by military-approved presidential candidates.

It is a sobering thought that even the Gambia suffered a military coup in the last decade of the twentieth century. This brought to an end 29 consecutive years of multi-party democracy. Similarly, the stability and relative prosperity of Côte d'Ivoire was terminated abruptly by a military mutiny in 1999. If a pre-requisite of democracy is that the army serves its political masters, and not *vice versa*, then it is likely that consolidation of multi-party competition is going to take several generations to complete in Africa.

Political culture

All the above considerations can be drawn into the idea of political culture. Naturally enough, all individuals have their own views and interests, but more stable societies usually have some general political principles held in common. Ideas of liberal democracy, for example, permeate the whole of society in Britain and the United States. Most individuals, whether they are politicians or lay persons, respect and defend the rules of the political game. Consequently, democracy as a method of conflict resolution is valued in institutions throughout both the state (parliaments, cabinets) and civil society (board rooms, trade union conferences, club meetings). African states have to replicate this political culture if (liberal) multi-party democracy is to survive.

Normally, one would look to political leaders to be at the forefront of defending their society's political culture. It could be argued, however, that many of the political elites in Africa, both incumbents and opposition, are only using multi-party democracy instrumentally. They support pluralism as long as it is a method of retaining or gaining power, not because they inherently believe in its moral value. (Zaire's politicians Etienne Tshisekedi and Nguza

Karl-i-Bond,). For example, formed political parties attempting to benefit from the new era of multi, party competition. They also made late bids to join Laurent Kabila's rebellion against Mobutu Sese Seko. Earlier, however, they had both been quite happy to serve Mobutu. Such political chameleons cannot be trusted as the guardians of democracy. As Robert Fatton observes: 'When the old guard, the "dinosaurs", abruptly discover that they are after all good democrats, a country's release from authoritarianism may be facilitated, but its future as a democratic society can only be endangered' (Fatton, 1992: 110). A drift back into personal rule and neo-patrimonialism is highly likely unless other political forces can check the elite's authoritarian tendencies.

The 'masses' could be one obvious source to keep notions of representation and accountability foremost in politicians' minds. Yet there is no real evidence to suggest that multi-party political culture is ingrained in the African 'people' either. Botswana, for example, has enjoyed pluralist competition since independence in 1966. Yespite this, an opinion poll conducted in the 1980s found that only 47 per cent of a representative sample considered multi-party democracy essential. The study concluded that, 'among those with less than a secondary school education there is not yet a significant majority in favour of the idea that the public should have a voice in who should rule and for what purpose' (Molutsi, 1990: 330). The majority of Batswana were content for the political elite to rule on their behalf, and expected only minimally to participate in the political process. If this is the case in Botswana, then it would not be unreasonable to expect there to be even more deference to politicians in other African countrie-s, and deference is not an effective check against potential authoritarianis-m.

Pluralism also requires a political culture where democrats wear victory or defeat gracefully. An indication of Africa's weak democratic culture, however, is the fact that fewer parties have accepted the results of multi-party elections than have been willing to participate in them. Certainly, there *have* been numerous cases of grace in defeat, but there have also been a worrying number of ignored results. In Angola, for example, multi-party elections were held in 1992 after 17 years of civil war. The MPLA government defeated UNITA in free and fair elections, yet UNITA's response was not to form a loyal opposition, but to return to the bush and carry on its

insurgency campaign. Elsewhere there have also been many cases of defeated parties refusing to take up their seats in parliament. When the losing party's first reaction to genuine defeat is to boycott or take up arms, then democratic consolidation is still a long way off.

Conclusion

To end this survey of factors promoting democratic consolidation on a more empirical note, Samuel Huntington considers that free and fair elections have to result in two turnovers of government before a state can be classified as a democracy. This, he argues, is the only proof that pluralism is truly working (Huntington, 1991: 267). It shows that both the incumbent and opposition are committed to the rules of the political game, and, above all, that they are willing to concede defeat if that is the people's wish. In Africa, only Mauritius, Benin and Madagascar meet Huntington's double turnover criterion. This lack of double turnovers is a remarkable fact given the number of multi-party elections held in the last fifteen years, and in the number of occasions that peaceful regime changes came as a result (146 national multi-party elections during the decade, resulting in 13 turnovers of government). (*African Confidential*, 1999; Nohlen, et. al., 1999).

Now, it may be that Huntington's criteria is less relevant to the African continent. Africans could be building their own genus of democracy, where consensus is more important than competition between political parties. It remains a fact that most of the continent's recent elections have been reasonably free and fair. Even where incumbents have remained in power, this has been usually more to do with genuine popular support than simple electoral manipulation. Despite their short-comings, for example, one cannot accuse the African National Congress in South Africa or the Botswana Democratic Party of being anti-democratic simply because they repeatedly out-campaign their rivals, and retain power. These are legitimate and representative governments.

Continent-wide, however, there is yet to be a stabilisation of multi-party democracy in Africa. Often incumbent politicians and parties remain in office not because of genuine popularity, but because even multi-party elections can be manipulated, as it has been shown above. Huntington's double turnover is all too often interrupted,

not by successful democratic campaigning, but by more authoritarian practices or civil strife.

This has left African countries at various stages of democratic transition. A few countries never started the reform process (where incumbents were able to resist the pressures for liberalisation); others have stumbled along the way (with authoritarian practices resuming, military intervention occurring, or a descent into state collapse); more have made hesitant progress (involving a limited liberalisation of the political arena, but the incumbent elite remaining very much in control); while a good number have displayed more positive signs of a democratic culture. It should be recognised, however, that none of this last category is free from the danger of retrogression. Newly won democratic concessions are easily reversed, and several more countries are bound to fall back into old habits. Conversely, no state on the continent is incapable of making further progress. Even those that have collapsed completely may wish to start the re-building process with multi-party elections. Consequently, after an amazing period of change in Africa, the continent's political future is still very uncertain.

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Statistics compiled from *Africa Confidential; Africa south of the Sahara*, and Nohlen, *et.al. Elections in Africa.*