

## The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa

Bernadeta Killian\*

### Abstract

*This article sets out to provide a general assessment of the extent to which democracy promotion programmes of the Western donor countries to the East African countries facilitate the attainment of meaningful democratic institutions and processes. Based on the trends and content of democracy promotion programmes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda since the adoption of the multi-party politics in the 1990s, the article attempts to show that rather than enhancing popular participation, democracy promotion programmes by Western donor countries and multilateral aid organizations are largely intended to achieve political order and macroeconomic stability rather than democracy per se. Technical and procedural support to democracy promotion tends to underplay the influence of the underlying structural and political factors inherently entrenched into the political system. As a result, the bulk of democracy promotion fund is mainly directed at reforming the state without necessarily democratizing it.*

### 1.0 Introduction

Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have all undertaken political reforms by adopting multi-party competitive political systems, with Uganda being the late comer in joining the multi-party bandwagon. As the world-wide wave of democratization was gaining momentum in the 1990s, Tanzania's incumbent government strategically embraced the multi-party system while Uganda and Kenya stubbornly resisted the demands for change until a great deal of pressure was exerted upon them from both within and outside. Just like in other new democracies, elections have been central in assessing the state of democracy in the three countries. All countries have held repeated rounds of multi-party competitive elections with Kenya ahead of the others for having conducted four rounds of elections. In Tanzania, the incumbent party has been able to maintain a firm grip of power even within the framework of competitive political contestation. In Kenya however, the incumbent party had a rough road through skilful maneuverability that enabled it to cling to power for two terms and succumbed to a coalition of the opposition parties in the third elections. The fourth elections brought to power a grand coalition government following the December 2007 troubled elections. Whereas in Tanzania

---

\* Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Dar es Salaam

elections have resulted to one-party dominance with weak opposition force, in Kenya, the competitive nature of electoral politics has created a vibrant but unstable multi-party system formed around a delicate coalition of political parties. In Uganda, the 2006 multi-party elections enabled President Yoweri Museveni, who had already been in power for 20 years, to contest and win the 2006 elections amidst wide-spread condemnation of the controversial constitutional amendments eliminating term limits on the presidency.

Hand in hand with political reforms, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have all been rated as 'good performers' in the economic reforms scoring above the threshold in policy and institutional indicators, which assess economic management, structural policies and public sector management (World Bank, 2006:102). Indeed, Uganda and Tanzania are among the fourteen African countries categorized by the World Bank as 'high performers' for maintaining average growth rate of above 5% since the late 1990s. This impressive macroeconomic record has attracted Western admiration and subsequent massive aid flow to promote not only economic reforms but also democracy.

While there has been an increased attention amongst the Western donor countries and multilateral aid organizations towards democracy promotion, a great deal of confusion remains on what it means and on how democracy is to be promoted. Democracy promotion is indeed a widely inclusive term which refers "to an array of measures aimed at establishing, strengthening, or defending democracy in a given country" (Azpuru *et al.*, 2008:150). According to Apzuru *et al.*, the package of democracy promotion entails a wide range of measures including diplomatic pressure, aid conditionality, economic sanctions, direct funds to government institutions, civil society and other actors involved in the democratization process. At times, even military intervention is justified in the name of democracy promotion. Since the adoption of a multi-party democracy, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have been recipients of a varied range of donor support geared at promoting democracy. The content of democracy promotion package to these East African countries have largely been directed at supporting multi-party elections, civil society development and governance related programmes.

This article seeks to provide a general assessment of the extent to which the content of democracy promotion programmes facilitate the attainment of meaningful democratic institutions and processes aimed at enhancing popular participation in policy process and in holding governments accountable. The thrust of the analysis is based on the argument that rather than enhancing popular power, democracy promotion programmes are mainly intended to achieve political order and macroeconomic stability. Donors' actions and inactions sometimes take place at the expense of promoting deeper democratic processes and democratic legitimacy.

## **2.0 Promotion of Democracy: How, When and Why?**

Promotion of democracy has become one of the key goals of donor countries' foreign policy particularly during the current wave of democratization. Oftenly, donor funding has been tied up with a series of requirements urging African countries to embrace political liberalization and accompanied institutional reforms. Overall, donors' annual funding set aside for democracy promotion has increased over years from about USD 120 million in 1990 to over USD 2 billion in 2007, of which roughly a fifth is allocated to Africa (Siegle, 2007:2). In its overall budget, the share of funds allocated to democracy and governance sector by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) increased from 7.7% of the total budget in 1990 to 12.3% by 2005 (Azpuru *et al.*, 2008:152). Also, Africa is by far the major recipient of European democracy funding (Youngs, 2008:162). Although democracy promotion has gained international recognition, a great deal of confusion prevails on how democracy should be promoted. As McFaul (2005:11) points out, "no blueprint to promote democracy exists".

In Africa, supporting institutions of competitive elections is widely seen as key in promoting democracy in a given country. Regular competitive elections have been regarded as a central instrument in bringing about domestic accountability, predictability, peaceful change of leadership, and rule of law. Supporting infrastructure of elections such as electoral bodies, political parties, civil society, judiciary, has been quite important in improving the quality of elections. It is expected that the more African countries hold repetitive series of multi-party elections, the more likely they would embrace a democratic culture of competition, accountability and rule of law. Yet, it is evident that at times whether elections have been declared free and fair or otherwise, they have not provided assurance for improved public accountability and transparency of the government in the post-election period. Whereas second elections were accorded such an important value to many African countries, yet the disappointing outcome on the quality of elections have made others argue that "the really crucial elections in new democracies are the elections that mark the transfer from one democratic administration to another; these are often third elections" (Lewis, 2006:4). Kenyan experience attest to the fact that sometimes even change of leadership through third elections does not guarantee the improved quality of democracy.

Despite the recurrence of elections, the state performance in terms of adhering to democratic principles, transparency, protection and promotion of civil and political liberties remains problematic. Yet, elections remain an important defining feature of democratic functioning in many of the new African democracies. Comparing the donors' contrasting responses towards government performance, Diamond points out that unlike in Latin America and the Caribbean where strict rules are often applied for recognition and economic rewards, "for Africa, a lower

*Bernadeta Killian*

standard is set by the major Western powers; there all that is required is the presence of opposition parties that can contest for office, even if they were manipulated, hounded, and robbed of victory at election time" (Diamond, 1996:30)

Moreover, having been under decades of economic malaise, economic recovery has been one of the donors' preoccupations in many of the African countries. As a result, balancing democracy promotion with economic imperatives and other competing security and strategic interests has been quite tricky (Carothers, 2003; Brown, 2005). Referring to the role of the United States, Carothers underscores the complexity the country faces in attempting to deal with the trade-off between security and democracy. In certain instances, democracy is promoted when it coincides with US security and economic interests, but then it is downplayed when it collides with those interests (Carothers, 2003). Indeed, while it is crystal-clear that democracy means "popular power" (Ake, 2002), in most cases the type of democracy that is being promoted is more directed at achieving such goals as economic recovery, political order, and global security at the expense of enhancing popular sovereignty.

### **3.0 Multi-Party Elections and Promotion of Democracy**

Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda share some common socio-political factors but with contrasting responses to the new democratic wave of the 1990s. All three countries were under the British colonial rule and shared more or less similar political institutions though with different colonial economic settings. They all attained their independence from the British during the early 1960s and all had brief periods of political pluralism though with different level of political competition. The shift to authoritarian political systems took place beginning mid 1960s. Tanzania legalized a one-party system, adopted a socialist ideology and built a stable, unified nation with little or no ethnic animosity. Kenya adopted a *de jure* one-party system much later in 1982, took a capitalist path but overshadowed with ethnic conflicts. Uganda underwent through a mix of one party system with military dictatorships, coupled with civil wars resulting into economic and political instability. These differences were so glaring that they resulted to the breaking of the one-decade East African Community, in 1977.

With the beginning of the third wave, the three countries took contrasting paths in responding to pressure for political liberalization. Institutional and socio-political factors were at play leading to different transition modalities. For the case of Tanzania, whereas political transitions in a majority of African countries were usually driven from below by mass protest, political transition to multi-party democracy was skillfully manipulated by the incumbent elite in pre-empting the pressure from below. Thus, the incumbent leadership decided that the cost of resisting the world-wide trend toward liberal democracy far outweighed the

### *The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa*

benefit of maintaining the one-party system. The presence of inactive civil society as well as a weak opposition made the Tanzania's incumbent elites to realize that they could win national elections no matter what the type of party system.

As Tanzania was adopting the multi-party politics in 1992, it was the concern for economic recovery that was the driving goal of the West. Indeed, since the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in 1986 up to early 1990s, the Tanzania-donor relationship had been relatively good. During this period, the donors regarded Tanzania as the most promising African country in terms of its macro-economic recovery. According to a World Bank study, by the end of 1992, Tanzania was performing better than any other African country in terms of change in its macro-economic policies and improvement in GDP per capita growth (World Bank Report, 1995). It is no wonder that donor pressure for multi-partism was less vivid. Thus, as Tanzania returned to a multi-party system in 1992, its relations with the international development community was rather at ease. Yet, it is important to recall that back in the 1980s both bilateral and multilateral donors suspended aid to Tanzania for six consecutive years (1980-1986) subject to liberalization of the economy. It was after the adoption of a liberal-market economy in 1986 that donors resumed their assistance. During the period between 1986 and 1992, there had been an average increase of 8.5% of external assistance per annum (Killian, 1994).

The multi-party elections in Tanzania have largely been 'maintaining elections', that is, although are open to all, for a variety of reasons only one party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), has had any real chance to attain power. Since the founding elections of 1995, CCM's presidential votes increased from 61.8% in 1995 to 72% in 2000, and rose up to 80.2% in the 2005 elections. In the Union parliamentary elections, CCM significantly increased its national share of parliamentary votes from 59.2% in 1995 to 69.9% in 2005 elections, thereby securing about 89% of all constituency seats in the house. With significant popular support towards the regime accompanied with incumbent's access to state resources and organizational visibility, it has proved to be very difficult for opposition political parties to break through the fences of the ruling party's territory. In addition, opposition parties have had their share of internal conflicts, disorganization, and policy incoherence that have added to their vulnerability.

While the Union general elections have largely been certified as being free and fair, the situation has been significantly different in Zanzibar where elections have been dominated by fraud, voter intimidation, disenfranchisement and violation of human rights (TEMCO reports, ZEMOG reports, 1995). Despite all these, the Government of Tanzania encountered no sanctions by the international community for the massive irregularities that had surrounded Zanzibar flawed

elections. Instead, following the 1995 flawed elections, donors decided to suspend aid not to Tanzania but to the semi-autonomous state of Zanzibar while it is clear that the Union state machinery is part and parcel of the electoral process in Zanzibar. Thus, Tanzania's impressive records on the macro-economic performance as well as on the overall political stability have made the international community compromise the democracy promotion agenda.

In Kenya, pressure for the adoption for multi-party politics was very intense and characterized by mass demonstration and ethnic clashes. In his attempts to consolidate power, President Moi, just like his predecessor, "politicized the allocation of public and private investments by concentrating them around his own ethnic group, the Kalenjin" (Ajulu, 2002: 263). Having been under the politics of ethnic-based patronage, the political leadership in Kenya feared the costs of political liberalization that could have unleashed public scrutiny leading to its downfall. Thus in order to defend their proximity to the state, Moi and his supporters resisted any move to liberalize the politics. Though divided, active opposition forces and vibrant civil society gave enough signals to Moi that he was bound to lose under competitive politics. Even after the adoption of a multi-party system, the subsequent elections did not mark any significant departure from the old politics. Both the 1992 and 1997 multi-party elections were marred by riggings, use of coercive apparatuses, intimidation, civil unrest, ethnic conflicts and divided opposition forces. The resurgence of ethnic clashes near or at election times created a turmoil situation which threatened peace and stability in the country. The 1992 and 1997 ethnic cleansing in the Rift Valley province was largely explained by the KANU's attempt to get rid of the 'non-Kalenjin' groups and assuring themselves of victory amidst competitive elections (Ajulu, 2002:264) As a result, President Moi was able to remain in office based on plurality of votes of about 40%. Amidst all this, Kenya experienced unprecedented economic deterioration. Between 1997-2002 the Kenyan economy grew by an annual average of only 1.5% (USAID report, [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget)). It is under this context that political liberalization was regarded as the main solution not only to stabilize the polity but also to rescue the falling economy.

The international community response towards Moi's government was also full of drama involving repeated suspension and resumption of aid. As a result of gross mismanagement of public resources and pressure for political change, many of the bilateral and multilateral donors suspended aid to President Moi's government in 1991. The IMF and the World Bank continued with their programmes to support government efforts in economic reforms. The government undertook some of the economic reforms by privatizing some of the public enterprises and got rid of administrative controls on producer prices, imports, foreign exchange and grain marketing.

## *The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa*

However, the IMF and the World Bank suspended their loan agreements in 1997 due to the inability of Moi's government to fight corruption (Human Rights Watch, 1998). Yet, minimal benchmarks were used by some of the donors to resume their programmes even amidst gross violation of human rights. Setting up an anti-corruption authority and trimming the civil service were criteria good enough for the IMF and World Bank to resume aid to Moi's government in 2000, only to be suspended again in 2001 when the anti-corruption authority was declared unconstitutional as well as due to the slow pace of other governance reforms. Some of the civil society activists raised their voices against aid resumption in 2000 citing inability of the government to efficiently spend the public resources. The activists preferred the resumption of aid to be tied to the constitutional reform process aimed at, among other things, reducing presidential powers (Achieng, 2000).

The 2002 elections were marked as the "most important African elections of the year (2002)" when a coalition of opposition parties, the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) successfully ousted KANU, the ruling party for about 40 years (Ndegwa, 2003:145). Unlike in Tanzania where the incumbent party still enjoys its hegemony even after three rounds of competitive elections, in Kenya, following the 2002 elections, the opposition parties secured a significant number of parliamentary seats (40%). Yet, despite its strong opposition coupled with active civil society, Kenya's party system remained highly unstable due to a delicate coalition, unfulfilled promises on the enacting of the new constitution, and pushy civil society that pushed not merely for a "change of administration but a change in the nature of the regime.....by taming the state" (Ndegwa, 2003:156).

Donors resumed their programmes with the Kibaki's government with great hopes and enthusiasm. However, it did not take long for both domestic and international community to express their disappointment about the slow pace of reforms coupled with alarming incidents of high level corruption. A 'no' vote on the government in November 2005 referendum put the NARC government in a serious legitimacy crisis. Many of the pledged grants and loans were on hold due to the increased reports on high level corruption. In early 2005 the US government decided to suspend a total of \$ 2.5m geared at enhancing Kenya's anti-corruption efforts ([www.bbc.co.uk/africa](http://www.bbc.co.uk/africa)). Just like previous governments, the Kibaki's government was again accused of massive looting of public resources. Nevertheless, the mere enactment of the anti-corruption legislation in November 2003 was another criterion 'good enough' to provide the international community assurance for resumed funding for various reform programmes in Kenya.

The 2007 troubled elections threatened the democratic process due to alleged fraud and associated violence. About 1000 people were killed and an estimated 300,000 misplaced as a result of post-election ethnic based violence (Congressional

Research Report, 2008). After a one-month negotiation between the Kibaki's government and the opposition, an agreement on a power-sharing government was reached and subsequent constitutional amendments. The donors' response to the 2007 fraudulent elections was carefully framed and indeed confusing. Amidst serious allegations of fraud in vote counting and vote tallying, the US government was quick to congratulate President Kibaki for his victory. As tension persisted and deaths increased, the donor community seemed to be keenly interested in bringing about political order and stability rather than supporting the opposition's initial demand for a re-run of elections. In so doing, rather than promoting democracy, the West preferred to promote political order and stability.

Uganda is an interesting case of donors' preoccupation with economic and political stability at the expense of democracy. Having been devastated by economic chaos, ethnic and regional conflicts, President Museveni's move to economic recovery, political stability and limited pluralism were of overriding importance than the push for multi-party democracy. A 'no-party' system was credited for moving Uganda from a 'collapsed state' to a stable state with a flourishing market economy (Ottaway, 1999). The remarkable period was between 1990 and 2001 in which the economy grew very well, achieving an impressive 7.2% annual growth (USAID Uganda Country Report, [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006)). Following this, regardless of limited political freedom and restricted civil liberties, the Government of Uganda received enormous amounts of aid from the international community. Donors provided assistance even on the elections held under the no-party political setting in terms of provision of voter education and the management of elections. By doing so, Barya *et al.* argue: "Donors funded only the procedural features of democracy without promoting or insisting on the rights of civil and political association, assembly and dissent" (Barya *et al.*, 2004: xviii)

The 2006 multi-party elections were marred by opposition leader's arrest, intimidation and restricted freedom of press. The European Union gave a cautious statement on the elections, which said, "...we regret the lack of a level playing field which marked the electoral process".<sup>1</sup> It was at this period that the British government, which did not find the suspension necessary during the 'no-party system', expressed their disappointment in action by withholding aid worth US\$ 26 million due to what was termed as the sliding back to authoritarian rule (People's Daily, December 25, 2005). The 2006 elections maintained the dominance of the NRM with 67% of parliamentary seats. Constitutional manipulations to lift the ban for presidential terms marked the underlying absence of respect and adherence to democratic principles.

Economic considerations have also shaped the nature and form of democracy promotion in the three countries. Overall, the three East African countries are rated favourably for economic management, structural policies, social inclusion policies,



## *The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa*

public sector management and institutions (World Bank Report, 2006). The macroeconomic indicators are impressive. In Kenya, starting when President Kibaki came to power in 2002, the growth rate rose from 2.8% in 2003, to 4.3% in 2004, to 5.8% in 2005, and up to 6% in 2006. Tanzania and Uganda are even further ahead for maintaining above 5% growth rate in the 1990s. In so doing, the types of donors' programmes designed to promote democracy are largely directed at stimulating and sustaining macro-economic growth than deepening democratic processes. What is seriously being undermined in this case is the enhanced participation of citizens in the policy process and in holding their governments accountable.

### **4.0 Democracy Promotion and Governance Programmes**

It is important to point out that a significant share of funds targeting democracy promotion belongs to the programme titled 'democracy and governance' with variation in focus amongst the three East African countries. For instance, the bulk of USAID's democracy funds after 2003 have been allocated to the governance sub-sector (Azpuru *et al*, 2008). Based on USAID's support programmes, democracy promotion is included in the area of support termed as 'democracy, conflicts and humanitarian assistance'. In all three countries, the USAID's democracy promotion funds are largely directed at improving state institutions of governance such as supporting anti-corruption programmes, executive branch capacity-building, strengthening legislative capacities, local government and decentralization (USAID, 2005). Overall however, the amount of funds allocated to democracy promotion is significantly lower compared to allocations to other sectors such as global health and economic growth, agriculture and trade. As Table 1 shows, for 2006, the 'democracy, conflicts and humanitarian assistance' sector had been allocated only about 21%, 7% and 6% of total USAID funds for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda respectively.

In Tanzania, it is interesting to note that for the year 2005 for example, 60% of the USAID's democracy and governance funds were used to support primary and secondary education in Zanzibar. The same went for 2006, whereby 51.3% was allocated to support the same initiatives (USAID Tanzania; [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget)). In Uganda, about half of the USAID's fund (51%) in 2005 supported activities aimed at improving Public Financial Management (PFM) at the local government level. In addition, given the ongoing conflicts in the north, much of the democracy funds are allocated to support the peace processes and reconciliatory mechanisms. Unlike in Tanzania and Uganda, Kenya receives more in the democracy allocations with a focus on promoting anti-corruption reforms, free and fair elections and strengthening civil society. Promotion of civil society in Kenya is more significantly supported than in Tanzania and Uganda. This is partly due to the existence of a vibrant civil society in Kenya than in Tanzania and Uganda.

Table 1: USAID Sector Programmes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (2006)

Sector	Kenya	Tanzania	Uganda
Global health	34 %	57%	34%
Economic growth, agriculture and trade	45%	36%	60%
Democracy, conflicts and humanitarian assistance	21%	7%	6%

Source: [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/2006](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/2006).

Donors' support in promoting PFM is largely aimed at improving performance of state institutions in such areas as developing an integrated financial management information system, activity-based budgeting, performance management, re-organizing government units etc. It is in this context that government departments are preoccupied with timeline reporting to the donors. All this has resulted into improved transparency and communication between these targeted state institutions and the donors. Moreover, donors tend to rely on the mere establishment of an organization/unit or enactment of legislation as a criterion for government commitment to reforms followed by subsequent funding. For instance, the delay to table an anti-corruption bill to the Parliament in early 2007 made the Danish government suspend a certain portion of aid to the Government of Tanzania. After all, there is no shortage of institutions in dealing with governance-related issues. In Kenya for instance, there are several bodies dealing with anti-corruption including Public Officers Ethics Act (2003); Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission; task forces on several matters including a task force on Harambee, the Anti-corruption, Serious Frauds and Asset Forfeiture Unit; Judiciary/special Anti-corruption Courts, etc. In Tanzania, commissions on human rights, good governance, leadership ethics and other reformed institutions as the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) are significantly supported by donors in order to curb corruption and enhance accountability. Clearly, in the name of democracy promotion, donors have been highly preoccupied with technical and institutional reorganization, placing a great deal of emphasis on vertical accountability at the expense of enhancing horizontal accountability. As Renzio points out "...many of the donor-supported PFM reform programmes tend to give too much attention to complex technical solutions and too little to existing constraints in terms of capacity, incentives and political economy factors" (Renzio, 2006:633). Thus, rather than targeting structural and political factors inherent in the political system, the donors tend to pay a great deal of attention on technical and procedural considerations geared largely at promoting economic efficiency and political order. Similarly, the European Commission's democracy promotion package is more tuned to support 'good governance' than 'democracy', aimed at achieving sound management of public affairs. It is in this context that the largest amount of EC's governance aid goes to the African Peer Review Mechanism secretariat (Youngs, 2008: 166).

## *The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa*

Notwithstanding notable improvement in the public finance systems, structural and political settings make it difficult for the promotion of vertical accountability in the government structure. That is to say, despite increased focus on reforming state institutions such as the audit departments, anti-corruption units, government commissions on human rights and good governance, these organizations are still relatively weak in exerting checks over other government institutions. In Tanzania for instance, very few officials actually face prosecution despite periodic annual reports by the Controller and Auditor General (CAG), which expose gross mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds by the central and local government. In the 2005/6 CAG report, it was indicated that 27 government ministries and agencies, which is 39% of the entire government structure, showed huge misappropriation of public funds, costing the government about TShs. 1.2 trillion (*This Day*, April 18, 2007). The Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) is given powers of investigation but restricted in prosecuting corruption cases pending the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), and as a result only a few cases are eventually prosecuted (Haki Elimu, 2007).

Despite the enactment of the new anti-corruption law, the PCCB seems to be trapped by vested interests making it incapable of combating corruption. In a series of dubious deals in the energy sector, the PCCB failed to detect serious violations of established procurement rules and alleged corruption in securing an emergency power plant from an external investor. It was the parliamentary committee that was able to uncover various misdeeds that had led to the resignation of three cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister, in December 2007. Surprisingly, it was amidst the discovery of gross mismanagement and embezzlement of government funds accompanied with public outcry for actions when, on his visit in February 2008, President George Bush praised the Government of Tanzania for its economic progress and democracy. Upon this positive assessment of Tanzania's economy and democracy, President Bush and President Kikwete signed a contract granting the government a total of US\$ 700 million, for the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), aimed at stimulating sustainable economic growth.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the democracy and governance funds are also aimed at strengthening democratic national governance institutions such as parliaments, especially in enabling them to effectively perform financial and policy oversight functions. A large part of the funding covers training of Members of Parliament (MPs) and staff and strengthening of key committees that deal with budgetary issues. Likewise, the focus is on the MPs and parliamentary staff and their interaction with state budget units and selective civil society organizations. The effectiveness of the parliament in playing its oversight role largely depends on other factors such as the informed public, parliamentary rules, and the role of the

executive branch. In Kenya and Uganda, the presence of significant opposition has contributed to the invigorating role of parliament in the policy process. In Tanzania, with the ruling party having 89% of seats in parliament, the parliament largely operates in a one party-dominant political setting. Also, the role of parliamentary committees is limited by strict parliamentary rules. For instance, committees do not have powers to amend bills but they can only advise the minister responsible to make some amendments. Persistent efforts by the MPs to review the mining contracts have been rejected by the government on the grounds that such acts will contravene the principle of the separation of powers (*The Guardian*, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2007). Thus, targeting the national institutions of governance does not by itself promote democracy especially as it relates to people's participation in the policy process and in holding the public officials accountable. Public link is largely missing in these kinds of interventions.

Besides, despite the remarkable rating in the economic management sphere, the three countries are ranked poorly on the governance and anti-corruption aspects as well as on the rule of law. According to the World Bank ratings (2005), Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are all rated poorly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile of the rating scale for voice and accountability.<sup>3</sup> On the rule of law, Kenya is at the very bottom quintile with Tanzania and Uganda at the 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile. Similarly, the three countries are not doing a good job in curbing corruption whereby Kenya is at the bottom and Tanzania and Uganda at the 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile. In Tanzania, it is estimated that approximately 20% of its entire budget is lost to corruption every year, equivalent to the total funding allocated by the government to the education sector in 2006 (Haki Elimu, 2007). In Kenya, where reports of massive looting keep on resurfacing, it is estimated that the Government of Kenya has lost about 1bn pounds since 2002, which is equivalent to a fifth of the country's official spending for 2004/05 ([www.news.bbc.co.uk/africa](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/africa)). Similarly, according to the estimates of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority of Uganda, a minimum of US\$ 64-85 million is lost each year to corruption in procurement alone (Uganda Country Profile, [www.business-anti-corruption.com](http://www.business-anti-corruption.com)).

Moreover, donors' support to civil society is expected to enhance the link between the government and the public at large, by advocating and lobbying for the interests of the larger public. In Kenya for instance, the civil society has done a remarkable job in this regard especially in pushing for multi-party democracy and for constitutional review. In Tanzania and Uganda, civil society's engagement in the area of advocacy and lobbying is still weak and constrained by the state. In Tanzania, civil society organizations are required by law to be neutral and daring to 'cross the boundaries'; this has led to severe consequences to some of them. The de-registration of a nationwide women's organization (BAWATA) is one case in point. In Uganda, although there has been tremendous vitality of civil society, the

## *The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa*

political space for civil society tends to be politically determined whereby certain areas become difficult or even dangerous for the civil society organizations to raise their voices (Lister and Nyamugasira, 2003).

In addition, the policy process of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in all the three countries has elevated the role of CSOs in the preparation, formulation and monitoring of the implementation and impact of PRSs. Yet, the influence of CSOs participation in the policy content has been problematic. Indeed, the selective nature of the CSOs participation in this process has tended to include certain CSOs and exclude others. Also, some CSOs especially those which are urban-based with a good track record to donors, have been invited to be members of sector working groups and monitoring committees which also include donors and government officials. Through the so called 'Partnership Framework', some of these CSOs have become part and parcel of the donors-government circles. This is taking place at the expense of the autonomy of CSOs to define and pursue their own agenda and actively play their watchdog role. More problematic is the fact that the capacity of CSOs at the grassroots level remains weak and less active in engaging in the policy process.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

While democracy promotion has become one of the main agenda of external donor assistance to the newly emerging democracies, the nature and form of democracy that is being promoted falls short of leading to broader and meaningful democratic changes, in this case, enhanced popular participation. The bulk of democracy promotion funds are largely directed at reforming the state without necessarily democratizing it. Technical and procedural support to democracy promotion tends to underplay the influence of the underlying structural and political factors inherently entrenched into the political system. By over-emphasizing vertical accountability, the donors' democracy promotion programmes tend to neglect and undermine the horizontal accountability exercised by the public over government officials. In this case, donors' support in promoting democracy ends up in undermining democracy that is based on expanded people's participation in determining their own affairs and in holding the leaders accountable.

### **Notes**

1. EU statement on Uganda Elections of 2006, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2006 ([www.bbc.co.uk/africa/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/africa/))
2. The signing ceremony was held in Dar es Salaam on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008 ([www.mcc.gov/countries/Tanzania/index](http://www.mcc.gov/countries/Tanzania/index)).
3. There are five ratings: bottom quintile (less than -1.09), 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile (-1.04 to -0.34), 3<sup>rd</sup> quintile (0.14 to 0.39), 4<sup>th</sup> quintile (0.47 to 0.39) and the top quintile. Others in this category include, for example, Zambia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Egypt.

References

- Achieng, J. 2000. New Pressure Group Opposes IMF Plan to Resume Aid. *IPS*, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2000.
- Ajulu, R. 2002. Politicised Ethnicity, Competitive Politics and Conflict in Kenya: A Historical Perspective. *African Studies*, Vol.61, No.2
- Ake, C. 2000. *Feasibility of Democracy in Africa. Casestudy, Senegal.*
- Azpuru, D. et al. 2008. Trends in Democracy Assistance: What has the United States been Doing? *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.19, No.2
- Barya, J. et al. 2004. The Limits of 'No-Party' Politics: The Role of International Assistance in Uganda's Democratization Process. *Working Papers*, No.28.
- Brown, S. 2005. Foreign Aid and Democracy Promotion: Lessons from Africa. *The European Journal of Development Research*, Vol.17, No.2
- Carothers, T. 2003. Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror. *Foreign Affairs*, January/February issue.
- Congressional Research Report. 2008. Kenya: The December 2007 Elections and the Challenges Ahead, February, 15.
- Diamond, L. 1996. Is the Third Wave Over? *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.7, No.3.
- Haki Elimu. 2007. The Prevention of Corruption Bill 2007: Will it Do the Job? Policy Forum Report, 30 March 2007.
- Human Rights Watch. 1998. Kenya Human Rights Development, World Report.
- Killian, B. 1994. Tanzania's Foreign Policy: 1980s-1992. M.A. Dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam.
- Lewis, P. 2006. The Comparative Importance of Third Elections in Developing New Democracies. Unpublished paper.
- Lister, S. and Nyamugasira, W. 2003. Design Contradictions in the 'New Architecture of Aid'? Reflections from Uganda on the Roles of Civil Society Organizations. *Development Policy Review*, Vol.21, No.1.
- McFaul, M. 2005. Democracy Promotion as a World Value. *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter Issue.
- Ndegwa, S. 2003. Kenya: Third Time Lucky? *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.14, No.3.
- Ottaway, M. 1999. *Africa's New Leaders: Democracy or State Construction?* Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Renzio, P. 2006. Aid, Budgets and Accountability: A Survey Article. *Development Policy Review*, Vol.24, No.6.

## *The Role of the West in Promoting Democracy in East Africa*

Siegle, J. 2007. Effective Aid Strategies to Support Democracy in Africa. A paper for the 'Africa beyond Aid' conference, June 24-26, Brussels, Belgium.

Tanzania Election Monitoring Committee (TEMCO). 1995. *A Report of the 1995 General Elections in Tanzania*, Dar es Salaam, REDET: DUP.

USAID. 2005. *Democracy and Governance Strategic Framework*.

–. 2006. *Kenya Country Report*, [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006).

–. 2006. *Tanzania Country Report*, [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006).

–. 2006. *Uganda Country Report*, [www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006).

WorldBank. 2006. *Africa Development Indicators*, World Bank publication, Washington DC.

Youngs, R. 2008. Trends in Democracy Assistance: What has Europe Been Doing? *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.19, No.2.

Zanzibar Election Monitoring Group (ZEMOG). 1995. *A Report of the 1995 Zanzibar Elections for Presidency, House of Representatives and Councillors*, Dar es Salaam, REDET: DUP.

### **Newspapers**

*People's Daily*, Ugandan Newspaper, December 25, 2005

*This Day*, Tanzania's Newspaper, April 18, 2007

*The Guardian*, Tanzania's Newspaper, April 20, 2007