Multi-party democracy and the political party system in Africa: cases from East and Southern Africa

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The trend since the late 1980s towards economic lib eralization and democratization process including the introduction of multi-party systems in most countries in Africa, has taken place with a scope unparalleled in the history of the continent. There have been different interpretations

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and conceptualizations within and outside Africa about these developments. There are those scholars who argue that there is enough evidence to suggest that this development will be more than a passing phenomenon (Tisch, 1992), whereas others have the pessimistic opinion that not too much should be expected from these sudden conversions since these developments were not a result of a process of internal evolution but an imposition by the logic and thrust of developments worldwide (Petersen, 1991). It is further argued that looking at the poor economic the situation in Africa, it is an open question as to whether democratization can proceed in a context of poverty and lack of economic growth. This is due to the fact that economic conditions to a large extent determine the nature of political systems, especially the willingness and ability of African governments to support the establishment of a democratic environment including multi-party systems of governance (Theobald, 1995).

There are also those scholars from within and outside Africa who attribute the movement towards multi-party democracy in Africa to the failure of the one-party system of governance which is part of the crisis of African democracy. The latter was the dominant ideology and system of governance since the 1960s. The African masses are now demanding genuine representative democracy and improvement of their living conditions (Kasungu, 1991).

However, Mpangala (1991) poses a central question as to why this movement towards economic liberalization and introduction of multi-party democracy is taking place at this material time in the history of the continent? This paper investigates this question in a historical and political economic perspective beginning with an examination the background to the ideology of African democracy. The latter includes the one-party system of government which has been dominant in most African countries since the 1960s.

African Democracy as a Component of African Nationalism

The concept of African democracy was a component of the ideology of African nationalism, which was developed in the African colonies after the Second World War as one of the aspect that guided the anti-colonial struggles both at continental level through the Pan Africanist Movement, and at territorial level through the nationalist movements. However, during the struggle for independence, African nationalism embraced multi-partism so as to join forces against the colonial system. After the attainment of political independence African nationalism changed its role from that of the dismantling of the colonial state to that of building new African nations. In its post-colonial role of building new nations the ideology of African-nationalism including African democracy was guided by two components: African unity and African socialism.

At continental level African nationalism was a product of the Pan-Africanist Movement which led to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, with the aspiration of establishing a United States of Africa. At national level each independent African country struggled to achieve national unity through the eradication of colonial legacies such as "tribalism" and religionism. In different countries slogans were developed to propagate and internalise the ideology of national unity. For instance, in Tanzania the common slogan was "freedom and unity", in Zambia it was "one Zambia one nation", and in Kenya it was "Harambee".

The second component of African nationalism is the ideology of African socialism which was developed in a number of East and Central African countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. In Tanzania the ideology was developed in the form of "Ujamaa Socialism", i.e. African familyhood, as propounded in Nyerere's document (1962) "Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism" and put into practice through the

Arusha Declaration in 1967 (Nyerere, 1967). In Kenya, African socialism was expounded through "Sessional Paper No. 10" whereas in Uganda it took the form of the "Common Man's Charter". In Zambia the ideology of African socialism was developed in the philosophy of "Humanism".

The ideology of African socialism had three important roles to play. One role was anti-colonial, intended to eradicate colonial relations of oppression and exploitation. It was on the basis of the anti-colonial role that the ideology appealed to the traditional African way of life which was believed to be free of exploitation and oppression due to traditional relations of familyhood and brotherhood. In Kenya, for instance, the appeal to the traditional African past was quite similar to "Ujamaa" in Tanzania as the following statement from "Sessional Paper NO.10" indicates:

In the phrase of 'African socialism' the word 'African' is not introduced to describe a continent to which a foreign ideology is to be transplanted. It meant to convey the African roots of a system that is itself African in its characteristics. 'African socialism' is a term describing an African political and economic system that is positively African and not being imported from any country or being a blueprint of any foreign ideology...

The second role of African socialism was expected to be a tool for fighting foreign ideologies, both bourgeois and communist. In essence African socialism was a rejection of both European capitalism and European socialism.

For instance, on the principles of Nyerere's "Ujamaa Socialism" it was clearly stated that Ujamaa Socialism was opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; and it was equally opposed to "doctrinaire" marxist-leninist socialism which seeks to build a happy society on the philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man" (Nyerere 1962).

In Kenya, the "Session Paper No. 10" clearly stated that African socialism differs politically from communism because it ensured every mature citizen has equal political rights, and differed from capitalism because it prevented the exercise of disproportionate political influence by economic power groups.

In Zambia where African socialism was based on the philosophy of humanism, the concept of African socialism was characterised by three principles of traditional African societies: firstly, in African societies each group was self-contained and organised itself to meet the basic needs of all its members; secondly, in traditional African societies each group assumed the responsibilities of providing all members of the society with the necessities of life, including the disabled, slow and inept members; and thirdly, traditional African societies were inclusive in the sense that they involved a web of mutual relationships and responsibility which spread over all members of the society. Kenneth Kaunda (1966) described these principles as an aspect of respect for human dignity which is a legacy of our tradition which should not be lost in the new Africa.

The third role of African socialism was that of being used as an instrument in the struggle to control the national economies of the independent African countries as well as being an instrument developing these economies. In Tanzania, for instance, African nationalism was implemented through the Arusha Declaration, which carried out the process of nationalising the commanding heights of the economy in 1967. In Kenya the mode of nationalisation was through the process of Africanisation of the economy, whereby settler property, particularly white settler farms in the Kenya Highlands, were sold to able Africans. In his introductory statement in "Sessional Paper No.10" President Jomo Kenyatta declared that *"Our entire approach has been dominated by a desire to ensure Africanisation of the economy and the public service"* (The Republic of Kenya, 1965).

Interestingly, the concepts of African Socialism was not as strongly articulated in Southern Africa as in Central and East Africa. Mozambique proclaimed itself much more openly marxist-leninist and pursued policies of agricultural collectivization and central planning during the first five years after independence. This posed a major threat to both Rhodesia and to Apartheid South Africa, both of which responded with a brutal campaign of destabilization against Mozambique.

In Zimbabwe, ZANU PF declared itself marxist-leninist, however, the Lancaster House Agreement, representing a historic compromise between the warring parties in Rhodesia, prevented ZANU from making any significant changes to the Lancaster Constitution during the first ten years in power. The ZANU PF dominated government and produced a fairly radical Three Year Transitional Development Plan (in 1983) which was immediately opposed by the interests of big capital. This opposition took the form of an "investment strike" which forced the government into negotiations with capital at Victoria Falls which saw the adoption of the much more conservative Five Year Development Plan, and eventually a structural adjustment program dictated by the IMF and the World Bank (Seidman, 1986).

However, vague notions of African Socialism could be detected in concepts such as Mushandire Pamwe ("Let's Work Together") and the peasant religious ideology (Mbuye and Nehanda Cult) used by ZANU to mobilize peasants during the armed struggle (Ranger, 1984).

Another important component of African nationalism was the ideology of African democracy. Like African socialism, the basis of African democracy was the traditional African way of life. Thus it was taken to be different from western democracy based on a multi-party system. The link between African unity, African democracy and one-party system of government, was the belief that one-party democracy is an essential element of national unity. The link between African socialism and African

democracy was the conviction on the part of the post-independence African leadership that there is no democracy without socialism and no socialism without democracy. Thus the ideology of African democracy has been functioning as an important link between the ideology of African socialism and that of African unity. Therefore, together with the other ideological components of African nationalism, African democracy played a vital role in the consolidation of state power and the political position of the post-independence African leadership.

The role of African democracy in consolidating state power among independent African countries can be observed through different aspects. One of them is the establishment of the one-party system of government. Most African countries struggled for political independence under a multi-party system. Some of the political parties joined hands to ensure the collapse and disintegration of the colonial state system. After the attainment of political independence, however, a rapid transformation towards the single-party system began to take place. Some of the political parties that came to power made use of the ideology of African democracy to establish the need for a one-party system. Thus constitutions were changed and one-party states were declared. Through the one-party system it became possible for members of the ruling petty-bourgeois class to forge considerable state power at the expense of developing democratic institutions.

Another aspect in the consolidation of state power was through subordination of organs of representation and organs of defending human rights such as parliament and the judiciary. Parliament, for example, came to be subordinated in two ways. One way is through structural subordination, whereby parliament is subordinated to the executive, thus losing its independence and supremacy (Mmuya, 1991). The second way is through establishing election systems which ensure the reproduction of the one-party political system. Thus the members of

parliament are not only a direct production of the ruling party but are also characterized by a considerable degree of loyalty to the state system.

The third aspect constitutes subordination of mass organizations to the single ruling party. This means that in most African countries trade union organizations, peasant co-operatives as well as youth and women's organizations came to be subordinated to the single ruling party to the extent of even turning them into departments of the party. In Tanzania, for instance, trade unions were subordinated to the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM). For example, during the period of struggle for independence the Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL) was an independent and autonomous labour union in mainland Tanzania, and co-operated with the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in the struggle for political independence. In 1964, four years after independence, it began to lose its autonomy by transforming TFL into NUTA, and then greater subordination followed in 1977 when NUTA was transformed into JUWATA, a mass organization affiliated to CCM.

The fourth aspect in the consolidation of state power is the growth and consolidation of the supremacy of the ruling party. This growth and consolidation reached a state whereby most parties were characterized as state parties. Thus through these developments most African states grew into authoritarian states, the extreme cases of which were the establishment of military dictatorships arising out of a number of military coups. As a result of these developments, the one-party democracy grew as an obstacle or a means of destroying rather than of enhancing democracy. Thus African democracy entered an era of crisis. However, before discussing the crisis of the African democracy let us look at in detail the one-party system as an integral part of African democracy and statism in Africa.

Statism and The One-Party Democracy in Africa

Schneider (1996) states that the term one-party system may be applied to a country if it has only one political party in law or in fact. This is the narrow usage of the term one-party system. We may also call a country a one-party system if the government in power does no permit the existence of political parties, as in the case of Uganda under Yoweri Museveni or if one party is so dominant that there is scarcely any chance of another competitor winning control of the government. In this sense, Botswana is a one-party system even though it has many political parties. Ethiopia under Haile Selassie was a one-party system even though it had no political parties. All military regimes are basically one-party states because there is only one focal point of political power. This is the broader usage of the term. The paper uses the term in this broad sense.

Several Africa countries came to independence with one fairly strong nationalist movement. It might be said with some truth that the explanation of the single-party system in the case of these countries become very easy in that it reduces to an explanation of how a nationalist movement emerged and remained fairly strong and cohesive. It is also hardly problematic to explain why a nationalist movement would arise in a colonial situation. What is rather more problematic is how the movement remained strong and cohesive in the face of the forces threatening it with disintegration.

A case might be made to the effect that this approach to the explanation of the single-party system applies to Africa generally and not simply to a few countries. The basis for this case is that in most African countries, one party was sufficiently dominant at the time of independence so it was relatively easy to move rapidly towards a one-party system. Unfortunately, the phrase "sufficiently dominant" is too ambiguous. However, it would appear that the nationalist movements were less fragmented than

they appeared to be because some of the new parties and splinter parties which challenged the leading nationalist movement were really demonstrating the nuisance potential of some factions of the African petty bourgeoisie rather than seeking to supplant the dominant movement. Most of these small nationalist movements could not possibly have hoped to form the government because their base was narrow and their appeal limited to very specific interests. In many cases the leading nationalist movement was challenged because factions of the bourgeoisie wanted to improve their bargaining power with the hegemonic faction.

In some cases, the splinter parties were formed to draw attention to the necessity of making concessions to certain interests. In other cases, the decision to challenge the leading nationalist party was motivated by the desire to influence the making of the constitution that the newly independent country could work with. Some of these splinter nationalist movements gained their limited objective, then made a show of solidarity and joined the leading movement or formed a coalition with it. In a few cases they joined the leading movement even though their objectives were not attained. In such cases they must have reckoned that it was more prudent to join the winners rather than openly inviting their hostility. Hence the tendency of small movements to join the leading movement or to form a coalition government with it contributed to the genesis of the one-party system.

However, none of this explains the dominance one-party system in the post-independence African countries. Even if we grant the point and it is reasonable enough that most African countries had a fairly dominant nationalist movement at independence, it is still problematic that these countries should have moved from this situation to single party systems. Why did they not move from this situation to the multi-party system given the enormous contradiction within these countries? And how about

countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, etc. which became single-party systems after independence even though they came to independence with competitive party systems?

If we want to explain the single-party system, we must begin by appreciating the significant of political competition in the statism of African countries and the contradictions in the material base of these societies. The newly independent African states are all highly statist. The state dominates the economy and society much more than in the western industrialized countries.

Ishongi adds that statist economies invariably produce one-party systems. In statist economies, political competition ends to be a fight until death. Why? Because statism increases the premium on the control of state and the more statism, the higher the premium on the control of state power. In Africa where statism existed in an extreme form, control of state power has become extremely important as the key to everything. As a result of its extraordinary importance, the struggle to control it becomes very intense one might say, hobbesian, since the stakes are so high, hence the competitors do everything to win.

There is clear hobbism in political competition all over Africa. Little attention is paid to constitutional behaviour, constitutions and the law are amended and reinterpreted or blatantly violated from day to day to suit the purposes of the hegemonic faction of the petty bourgeoisie. The general tendency is to annihilate political opponents instead of merely defeating them. When it is at all possible, opponents are herded into prison, assaulted physically, or murdered, sometimes by the hundreds. It is a good indication of the premium on the control of state power Africa that no African government has changed hands by peaceful means.

This is largely the legacy of colonialism. The colonial regime rested on force. The type of abuse and exploitation which it perpetrated on its victims could not occur if they had any choice. The determined and brutal use of force ensured that the only

effective choice was submission, because the colonial system rested on force, state power was highly developed, usually far ahead of the development of production forces.

The statism was political as well as economic. The colonial regime has to avoid giving the indigenous peoples access to wealth beyond a certain minimum. This was not due simply to the capitalist drive for profit maximization. An equally important reason is that it was politically inexpedient to give the colonized access to economic power because concentration of economic power could soon become concentrations of political power. In order to carry on its exploitation and restrict the flow of wealth to the colonized, the colonial regime subjected the colonial economy to very strict control. This policy had several consequences. It is partly responsible for the rather precarious material base of the African petty bourgeoisie. The economic exclusion of the indigenous peoples partly accounts for the failure of the African bourgeoisie to play its historical role, namely the development of the forces. Finally, the policy is one of the factors that made the African petty bourgeoisie very dependent on the metropolitan bourgeoisie.

There is need to add that just as the legacy of statism goes back to the colonial period, so does the hobbism of political competition. The fundamental contradiction of colonizer and colonised was such that competition among them had to be hobbesian. Colonialism was a repudiation of the right of self-determination of the colonized and the resistance to colonialism was the assertion of the right of self-determination of the colonized. The colonizers excluded the nationalists from power in order to maintain the colonial system and the nationalists wanted to throw the colonizers out of their country. So in the colonial situation, one exclusive claim was poised against another. There was no room for compromise or mannered politics. A new equilibrium could only be formed with the complete defeat of one of the two sides.

The pattern of hobbesian competition which we find in Africa is also associated with the contradictions within the bourgeoisie class in Africa which we have indicated. To the extent that there are deep contradictions within a bourgeoisie class, competition among the factions of the bourgeoisie will tend to be hobbesian. The contradictions increase the premium on the control of state power. Each faction would naturally want to become the hegemonic faction. But the desire is likely to be weaker if the faction can be reasonably certain that its interests will not be too seriously jeopardized in the event that it is not successful in becoming the hegemonic faction. If the differences between the faction and its competitors are such that the success of its competitors can be expected to jeopardize its interests, it will fight harder to become hegemonic.

Depending on the premium on becoming hegemonic, the struggle between the factions will be more or less intense. The greater the premium, the more will competition be oriented to efficiency norms rather than legitimate norms and the stronger is the tendency towards a one-party system. We can see that the brutality of African politics and the tendency towards a single-party system are related to the contradictions in the material base of African countries. Their material base can be characterized as follows: firstly, the productive forces in terms of modern western production techniques, skills and knowledge, are underdeveloped and hence the social surplus produced is very small; secondly, they are highly dependent, especially on the former colonial powers. Practically all the technology needed for socio-economic development is imported, and a considerable proportion of capital requirements for this development comes from loans, grants and foreign investments; and thirdly, the economies are "disarticulated", i.e. the economic exchanges between the various sectors of the economy are externally oriented. There also is an over dependence on the export earnings from a few agricultural or mineral products.

The above situation makes them vulnerable to the manipulations of international capitalism. The machinations of international capitalism reinforce the tendency towards statism. The control and the use of governmental power is highly consequential for the economic interests of international capitalism. International capitalism takes a keen interest in the struggle between the African petty bourgeoisie and the African masses and in the factional struggle within the petty bourgeoisie class itself. Thus, international capitalism actively intervenes to moderate the class struggle in African countries, to help the friendly factions of the petty bourgeoisie class and to destroy the hostile ones.

Because it is playing for high stakes too, it tends to do whatever is effective for its interests. And what is effective is often immoral, unconstitutional and cruel. It does not hesitate to arrange assassinations, to corrupt government officials, subvert the economy, blackmail or liquidate progressive forces, overthrow governments, or incite civil wars. Its vigilant and determined defence of its interests does not contribute to making political competition in Africa more moderate, rather it makes political competition more extreme and more brutal. In this sense, it has contributed to the emergence of the single- party systems in Africa.

However, a complete explanation of the single party system must take account of the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the African masses as well as the contradictions within the African petty bourgeoisie. Before independence, the overriding goal of the African petty bourgeoisie was to win popular support because in their situation, popular support was the road to political power. The nationalist movement became a massive crusade for the politicization and the mobilization of the African masses. The mobilisation of the masses was facilitated by the fact that the differences between the petty bourgeoisie and the masses were somewhat submerged by the preoccupation

with their common enemy, i.e. colonialism and the apartheid system in the case of South Africa. The effect of the nationalist movement on the development of the contradictions between the petty bourgeoisie and the masses was rather paradoxical. On the one hand, the nationalist movement created a veneer of unity by focusing attention on the common enemy. But behind this veneer of unity the conditions for the deepening of the contradictions between the two classes were being created. The petty bourgeoisie could only create solidarity between them and the masses by politicizing them.

However, in the context of the colonial struggle they could not politicize the masses without also radicalizing them. For instance, to politicize the masses, they had to teach them to be resentful of exploitation; they had to draw the attention of the masses to the severe deprivations which they had to endure under colonialism and apartheid. To mobilize the masses, they had to take an egalitarian stance. They asserted the principle of self-determination, government by consent, accountability of the leadership, the virtues of democracy and equality. In effect, the African masses were mobilized into politics with expectations quite antagonistic to the objective interests of the petty bourgeoisie.

As soon as the indigenous government came to power, the class contradictions became manifest. The new government was now faced with a political population whom it has taught to resent exploitation, to demand democracy and equality, and liberation from material want. These expectations diametrically contradicted the interests of the post-independence African leadership. It could not satisfy these expectations in a manner compatible with the maintenance of the existing relations of production. The new African leadership has to find some ways of maintaining its rule in the face of these contradictions. It could not maintain its interests in the face of these contradictions without depoliticing the society. The one-party sys-

tem is part of this process of depoliticization of the African masses.

Initially the masses are sold the ideological illusion that they must be patient, "Rome was not built in a day" and their needs and expectations will be addressed in the medium and long term. The conspicuous consumption of the political elite, on the other hand, is justified as the just reward for the sacrifices made during the liberation and independence struggle. Gradually those who insist to emphasize the egalitarian message through which the masses were mobilized into the struggle are labelled "ultra-leftist" and are marginalized. It should be emphasized that, this situation is not particular to Africa. Reference could be made to the 1848 revolution in France, and the Germany in the 19th Century. In France the national bourgeoisie mobilized the masses of peasants and workers in a struggle against the common enemy of absolutism:

Lamartine, the poet who joined the revolutionaries at the first outburst, id so, as he himself put it bluntly, to harness the storm…." The newly-created bourgeois government now turned against the economic demands of their proletarian allies (Dunyevskaya, 1987).

Germany was the precursor to statism. The 19th Century German social democrat Lassalle considered the masses a mob:

Under the sway of " unthinking agitators…..thrown up by the storm."….The workers were a suffering mass and weak, whereas the state was strong and could achieve " for each one of us what none of us could achieve for himself."

He therefore felt called upon to rule "for" the masses he would lead. They would continue to work, and, meanwhile, be so good as to send him to parliament (Dunayevskaya, 1982).

Much could also be said of the "Rissorgimento" in Italy. Interestingly where "historic compromises" have occurred in Europe such as the "Kulturkampf" in Germany and the Risorgimento in Italy. These gave rise eventually to militarist and fascist regimes in which, not only democracy but also the working classes suffered massive defeats.

Depoliticization in Africa also involved reducing the effective political participation of the masses, intimidating them with state power into docility and concentrating all power in the hegemonic faction of the petty bourgeoisie. Let us take a brief look at the different aspects of depoliticization. First, the new rulers accumulated and displayed force and demonstrated their determination to use it against all opposition. The coercive resources of the state were rapidly increased. More and more occasions were found for parading the armed forces and their fearsome machines. This state power was used ruthlessly against anyone who was suspected of being an opponent of the government. The effect of this intimidation was to narrow down the scope of political expression very severely. In the final analysis, it came down to the effect that the only form of political expression available for the masses was that of supporting the government in power.

The enforced conformism was justified by asserting the absolute necessity for unity in the interests of public good. It was argued that unity is necessary because there are strong sinister forces, particularly neo-colonialism anxious to deprive the people of their hard won freedom. If there is unity, these forces might be neutralized. Unity is necessary because the predicament of the newly independent country warrants it. The enormous task of defeating ignorance, poverty and disease cannot be tackled without unity. Unity is not only necessary, but natural. It is natural because both the problems of the society and what has to be done about them are evident. Finally, unity is natural in an African society which has no social classes, but

rather a strong communal tradition (Nyerere, 1967). Unfortunately, the reality belied the argument because the massive repression underlined the contradictions between the rulers and their subjects.

Second, depoliticization also meant limiting the political participation of the masses to trivial and irrelevant choices. For instance, their electoral participation was rendered largely meaningless because they were asked to choose between candidates which the government had hand-picked. More often than not, they were simply asked to confirm choices already made by the leadership, especially the dominant faction of the petty bourgeoisie. On balance, it would seem that the African masses were able to to influence government much more during the last phase of colonization and apartheid than they do now. Fanon (1963) was quite right in describing the single party system in post-colonial Africa as "the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical".

Civil Society and Demand for Democracy

Barak (1998) states that after forty years of political independence in Africa the question and demand for democracy in all aspects of life has come to the centre of political stage. He notes that since the late 1980s the demand for democracy or the democratization movement has been characterized by struggles for multi-party political systems. The struggle for the process of change from one-party into multi-party political systems took different forms in individuals African countries. For example, in the Eastern and Southern African Regions a variety of events took place. In Kenya demands and mass demonstrations for multi-party democracy took place despite President Moi's rigid resistance. In March 1991, the government of Tanzania established a presidential commission to study the possibilities of

introducing a multi-party system. The commission came out with a recommendation that Tanzania should establish a multi-party political system. In October 1995 Tanzania held her first multi-party elections. On 31 October 1991, Zambia held her first election based on multi-partism, and the result was that the incumbent United Independence Party (UNIP) lost to MMD, anew opposition political party led by Fredrick Chiluba. Namibia established a multi-party system with attainment of independence in 1990.

Various explanations have been propagated for these developments. These could be categorized into two main arguments, i.e. the external-centred and the internal-centred explanations. The external-centred could further be divided into two parts. One part tends to emphasize the influence of liberal democratic changes in Eastern Europe as the main cause for the new wave of multi-party democratic demands in Africa, whereas the other part tends to emphasize imperialist pressure for multi-partism as a conditionality for getting development aid. Both parts of the external-centred explanation are upheld by some members of the political leadership in Africa. They use them as a defensive mechanism that the demand for multi-party democracy did not originate from the people in Africa, but rather it is an imposed phenomenon from outside, and therefore multi-party democracy is alien to African conditions and environment (Court, 1999).

The internal-centred explanation can be divided into three parts. One part is based on the Western theory of political modernization. This dichotomizes the issue of democracy between one-party and multi-party systems. It argues that a one-party system as a common feature in most post- independence African countries, is basically dictatorial, whereas the multi-party system as western feature, is fundamentally democratic. It is therefore the responsibility of the western countries to spread what is regarded as "genuine pluralist parliamentary

democracy" to the developing countries including Africa (Malongi, 1995).

The second part of the internal-centred explanation may be regard as a "conspiracy" viewpoint. It argues that the African masses have decided to demand democracy because the democratization process in Africa was arrested after political independence by the petty-bourgeoisie who consolidated political power through the one-party state. The attempt to arrest the democratization process was due to competition between the different sections of the African petty bourgeoisie for the monopoly of political power in order to enjoy the fruits of independence at the expense of the African masses (Ishongi, 1992).

The explanation is regarded as a "conspiracy" view point because it gives the impression that the petty-bourgeoisie who led the nationalist struggles in Africa conspired to arrest the democratization process for their own interests. The third part of the internal explanation for the trend to multi-party movement in Africa is based on the crisis of African democracy which includes the one-party system. This is discussed in detail in the following section.

Multi- Party Movement and The Crisis of One-Party Democracy

The crisis of African democracy and the one-party system of government in Africa is reflected through two important aspects: the growth of economic crisis and the rise of class contradictions. It is common knowledge that most African countries have been experiencing serious economic problem from the late 1970s and through the whole period of the 1980s. It is due to this situation that the 1980s have been described as the lost decade for Africa. Various internal and external economic factors have been cited by both academics and politicians

for the economic crisis. One of the internal factors stated is the monopolistic economic policies of the one-party system. Thus, in most of the African countries people have been identifying their economic problems with the one-party political systems. They are of the opinion that a democratisation process in terms of adopting a multi-party system is likely to effect economic development and solve the serious economic problems.

Mpangala (1991) states that the growth of class contradictions in Africa has been basically a result of the process of consolidating state power by the petty bourgeoisie under the one-party system. It is also a product of changes in class relations and the process of class formation since independence. At independence most African societies were characterized by a class pattern that was inherited from colonialism. The major classes constituted the peasantry, the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie. During the struggle for independence these classes forged considerable unity, thus camouflaging contradictions between them.

After independence changes began to take place. In the case of East Africa, the size of the working class, which was relatively small at independence, began to grow, particularly with the establishment of import-substitution industries in the late 1960s and 1970s. In addition to the growth in size, the working class began to grow more and more conscious of themselves as a class, as it became marginalized both politically and economically by the petty bourgeoisie in leadership. Another class which grew and became greatly marginalised is the peasantry, particularly the small peasants whose economic conditions worsened with the growth of relations of exploitation and the economic crisis (Kaya, 2000).

Another important change in terms of class formation has been the transformation of the petty-bourgeois class. First, having provided leadership to the nationalist struggle for independence, it was the petty-bourgeoisie who occupied the position

of political power. Through processes of nationalization, the petty-bourgeoisie assumed greater control of the national economy. These developments facilitated the transformation of the ruling factions of the petty-bourgeoisie into the "state-bourgeoisie" (Shivji,1985). The commercial faction of the petty-bourgeoisie transformed into the commercial bourgeoisie, particularly as a result of liberalization policies which enabled this class to control the commercial sector and assume a position of considerable economic power. In the process some factions of the petty-bourgeoisie grew more and more marginalized, especially those outside the system of state power and control of the commercial sector.

These changes in terms of class formation and polarization, have had considerable implications in terms of the growth of class contradictions. Two main types of contradictions can be observed. One major contradiction has greatly developed between the working people, i.e. peasants and workers, on the one hand, and the petty bourgeoisie on the other. This contradiction has become more obvious with the growing economic crisis since the late 1970s and 1980s. The economic crisis has given rise to a crisis of capital accumulation on the part of the state-bourgeoisie and the commercial-bourgeoisie. In order to resolve this crisis of accumulation, the tendency has been to put greater pressure on the working people to produce more surplus, and then find all means possible, including illegal means such as corruption and theft, to appropriate the surplus produced (Schneider, 1996).

The second major contradiction is between the marginalised petty-bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the state and commercial bourgeoisie on the other. The marginalised petty-bourgeoisie include among others professionals, civil servants, retail traders and rich farmers. At a certain level there are also contradictions between the commercial and state bourgeoisie, in terms of struggles to control different sectors of the economy.

However, the general tendency has been for the two factions of the bourgeoisie to get into alliance and forge some forms of solidarity in order to defend their common interests of controlling the economy and maintaining political hegemony.

These contradictions have been leading to two main consequences. One obvious consequences is that as the contradictions continue to sharpen, the levels of class as well as group consciousness and interests continue to grow and diverge. Thus it becomes difficult for a single party based on the ideology of African democracy or one-party democracy to contain these contradictions. The other consequences is the tendency of the different marginalised classes and other social groups to get into different forms of struggle. In many countries of Africa the struggle has taken the form of demand for democracy and multi-party system. This is due to the fact that the one-party system is no longer viewed as an instrument of development, but as an instrument of oppression and exploitation by the dominant classes. Thus a situation of transition is inevitable under such circumstances.

Towards Sustainable Democratic Institutions in Southern Africa

As already stipulated the 1990s have witnessed a massive effort by individual countries in Africa to transform the single party governments to multi-party governments including democratic administrations accountable to the people, through regular elections and through an array of representative institutions. Southern Africa has perhaps, more than any other region in Africa, experienced the most dramatic transformation in this regard. The end of the one party rule in Zambia, Lesotho, and Malawi, attainment of independence by Namibia, cessation of conflict followed by successful multi-party elections in

Mozambique and above all, the end to apartheid rule and a peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa, were both dramatic.

These developments in a region long torn by racial and civil wars and general misrule, have however, created new challenges for democracy. Kalusha (1998) argues that democratic institutions, ranging from legislatures, local governments, electoral bodies, political parties, women's groups, judiciaries, courts, academia, the media and civil society organizations are, in some cases weak or not fully prepared for democratic consolidation.

Stube (1999) states that elections are not synonymous with democracy but are an important ingredient of a functioning democratic system. This is particularly true if they are transparent, efficient and acceptable to all the contesting political parties as well as the voters who have a guarantee that voting is meaningful. In Southern Africa elections are frequently characterised by disputes and inefficient administration. Moreover, as an effort to legitimize elections many governments in the region have established independent electoral commissions (IECs). However, difficulties associated with recent elections in the region such as in Lesotho, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana, Zimbabwe, etc. have revealed problems regarding the capacity of some of IECs.

Furthermore, Kalusha (1999) shows that many newly established democracies in Africa including Southern Africa suffer from weak political parties, to a point where pluralism has not been established and there has been a return to de facto one party system. For instance, in Southern Africa, the SADC Report on Governance and Human Development (1998) showed that ruling parties in region controlling between 59% and 100% of seats in parliaments. The 1999 elections in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa saw the ruling parties increase their parliamentary majorities.

In Zimbabwe, parliament has been dominated by one party

since 1990. It was only during the recent elections in June 2000 that the new parliament is composed of a strong opposition (MDC). In Tanzania and Zambia by-elections have seen seats originally held by opposition parties pass to the ruling party. Evidently this crisis, which is damaging to opposition parties, is growing in a number of countries in the SADC region. The increasing nature of the problem points to a weakness with the political party as an institution.

The political participation of women is a crucial factor in the history, growth and realization of pluralist, vibrant and sustainable democracy. Katolo (1995) adds that the success of democracy in any part of the world depends very much on its representing and accommodating across-section of the population's interests. Africa's accommodation of gender, ethnic, youth and minority group interests is critical for a sustainable political system. Indeed the difference between democracy and other political systems is the ability of the former to deliberately accommodate different viewpoints, interests and broad categories of the citizens in the political process, institutions and leadership.

The Future of the Multi-Party System in Africa

The explanation of the single-party system offered here indicates the conditions under which a multi-party system will be successful in Africa. There are two such conditions. First, the mediation of the contradictions within the petty bourgeois class. All other things being equal, as the contradictions within the bourgeois class are mediated or disappear, a genuine multi-party system becomes more probable in Africa. This may seem inconsistent since a multi-party system must also presuppose contradictions. However, the inconsistency disappears when we remember that it is not the absence or the presence of contra-

dictions that is really the issue here. Multi-party systems tend to be associated with trivial contradictions while single-party systems are associated with graver contradictions. For example, in the liberal democracies of the West, political competition seems to be more moderate, the incidence of extra-constitutional behaviour is relatively low. We take it for granted that the ruling party of Canada will call an election when the Canadian constitution demands it, and that it will resign if defeated in the election. Similarly we take it for granted that the Labour Party of the United Kingdom will yield the government to the Conservative Government if the Conservative Party defeats the Labour Party at the next election.

What makes this type of politics possible is that the bourgeois class in these countries is relatively homogenous, particularly in the sense that the economic interests of its members tend to coincide. As a result of this relative homogeneity the bourgeois parties do not risk very much if they lose to their competitors. Everyone can assume that whoever wins will not change things radically. The contradictions within the petty bourgeois class in Africa are so severe that such assumptions are less warranted. Consequently, the competition is less moderate and the single-party system tends to be predominant. Therefore, when the African petty bourgeois class becomes more homogenous its politics will in all probability become more "liberal". As is the case in the West, multi-party systems and free elections will thrive only when they have little or no effect on the power structure.

The second condition for a multi-party system is the mitigation of the revolutionary pressures of the working class. In Africa, these pressures remain particularly intense because of the small size of the social surplus and the extreme deprivations of the masses. In the presence of such extreme deprivations the petty bourgeois class cannot maintain its class position with liberal politics. This implies that liberal politics in Africa will

not emerge until production develops sufficiently to mitigate the extremities of want. There is no desperately poor capitalist society where there is liberal politics.

Conclusion

Given the petty bourgeoisie consolidation of state power with the effect of subordinating and dominating democratic institutions, and taking into consideration the growing class contradictions, the crisis of the one-party system in Africa has led to a situation whereby the so-called African democracy has proved to be a mere myth of democracy. The events that are currently taking place across the African continent, including the multi-party movement, are clear indications that Africa is experiencing a period of a transition from African democracy to a new form of democracy. Mpangala (1991) poses a pertinent question: "What type of democracy is taking place in Africa?

The mere fact that there is a growing demand for a shift from the one-party to a multi-party system is not an automatic guarantee that Africa is experiencing a change towards a democratic system. The number of political parties is merely a form and not a substance of democracy. African people need the attainment of both a new form and a new substance of democracy. The transition towards multi-party democracy calls for the necessity of solving two related problem: firstly, is the problem of conceptualisation of the new form of democracy that is relevant to the conditions in Africa, while at the same time embracing the universal principles of democracy; secondly, is a strategy for establishment of this new form of democracy in Africa. Concerning the problem of conceptualising the new type of democracy relevant to the African conditions, three schools of thought have emerged:

One school which is basically externally orientated is the "Strasbourg Consensus" school. This constitutes a definition of democracy emanating from the First Strasbourg Conference on Parliamentary Democracy organized by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 1918. The "Strasbourg Consensus" outlined what are regarded as essential elements of a pluralist parliamentary democracy. This includes basic human freedoms, basic human rights, the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, equality before the law and the right to participate and education.

According to this school of thought these are the basic elements of democracy which have to be spread to Africa and other parts of the developing world. The second school of thought emanates from within Africa. It puts emphasis on the need to take into consideration traditional African structures. This school views the Strasbourg Consensus school as too eurocentric because the basic elements of democracy outlined as universal are mainly based on the conditions of western societies.

The third school of thought advocates the development of a new type of social democracy in Africa, i.e. a popular democratic system which is in interests of the African masses and which might be against the interests of both the African petty bourgeoisie and international capitalism. This type of democracy implies the following :

• While democracy is an integral part of any socio-economic development process, the African masses need a social democracy that places emphasis on concrete political, social, and economic rights, as opposed to a liberal democracy that emphasizes abstract political rights; a democracy that puts as much emphasis on collective rights as it does on individual rights; a democracy which entails decentralization of power to local democratic formations and empowerment of these local governance institutions; a democracy which is as

inclusive as possible. The legislative bodies should in addition to national groups, have special representation of mass organisations.

- The development strategy derived from such a people-driven democratization process should be based on the following values and principles: a popular development strategy in which the people have to be the agents, the means and the end of the developmental process. This implies self-reliance and this has to be practised at all levels, i.e. household, community, regional and national.

- Self-reliance requires much confidence. Lack of confidence is a serious problem. It may well be the greatest obstacle to the development of Africa. The humiliations of colonization and slavery before it, virtually destroyed the confidence of Africans including the African leadership.

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