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Authoritarian Rule and Democracy in Africa: A Theoretical Discourse

Discussion Paper No. 18, March 1991
Yusuf Bangura

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Preface

Economic reform and liberal democracy have emerged as the dominant ideas shaping the political and economic structures of countries in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Starting haltingly in the mid-1970s, democracy had triumphed by the end of the 1980s in practically all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. There has also been a swift movement toward democratic régimes in Asia though several countries, especially in South-East Asia, have continued to resist the democratizing trend. The closing years of the 1980s witnessed a dramatic fall of communist régimes in most countries of East and Central Europe and their replacement by fledgling democracies. It is in Africa and the Middle East that the democratic movement has made the slowest progress.

The last few years have, however, been marked by intense struggles for democratic reform in several African countries and the 1990s are likely to be the decade for transition to democracy in a growing number of African countries. In this highly topical study, Yusuf Bangura tackles the profoundly important and complex questions of the foundations and determinants of authoritarianism and democracy in Africa. The paper addresses itself to such questions as: How does one explain the persistence of authoritarian and military rules in a large number of African countries? What are the key processes involved in the transition from authoritarian and military régimes to civilian and democratic ones? What are the structural pre-conditions for sustenance of democratic systems in African countries? What are the implications of economic crisis and structural adjustment for the prospects of democracy in the continent?

A good deal of the mushrooming literature on this subject tends to focus on the political dimensions of democracy – the multi-party system, free elections and civil rights. And few analysts are able to resist the tendency to transplant in its entirety to Africa the democratic model as it has emerged in the West over decades. One of the strengths of Bangura's approach is that democratic struggles are placed within the wider social and economic context and the analysis is rooted in the institutional and historical reality of the region. The paper argues that it is the forms of accumulation interacting with a number of socio-economic variables which mainly determine the nature of the dominant political system.

The author identifies three dominant patterns of accumulation as transnational capitalist production, rent-seeking capitalism and petty commodity production. It is the strength or weakness of these patterns interacting with variables such as rural-urban integration, welfare services, social system and state-civil society relations which ultimately determine the shape of the political régime. In the last part of the paper, Bangura applies the above model to the Nigerian experience with focus on structural adjustment and democratization, demilitarization and civil governmental authority, civil society and the state and the democratization of the rules of competition.

This paper forms part of the ongoing work in the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the social and political dynamics of economic crisis and structural adjustment and more generally of its work on participation, democracy and development. Yusuf Bangura is a Research Fellow at the Institute with responsibility for the UNRISD project on Crisis, Adjustment and Social Change in Africa. Previously, he taught Political Economy at the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria and was a Research Associate at the AKUT programme at Uppsala University in Sweden.

March 1991

Dharam Ghai
Director

1. Conceptualizing the Basis of Authoritarian Rule and Democracy

1.1 *The democratic question*

There is an awakening of interest in democratic theory and politics in Africa. Military and one-party régimes are faced with serious problems of legitimation, stemming from the crisis of the social contract that underpinned their post-colonial models of development. A variety of social groups are seeking protection against state repression and calling for alternatives to the structural adjustment programmes launched in the 1980s. Yet, until very recently, following the democratic uprisings in Eastern Europe, very few countries had followed the Latin American and Asian examples of establishing frameworks for transitions to democratic rule. What accounts for the dominance of authoritarian rule in Africa? Under what conditions is democracy likely to emerge and remain stable? I question received theories that ruled out democratic possibilities in Africa because of the logic of modernization or dependence, and those that currently try to establish a positive relationship between structural adjustment and democracy.

I begin by constructing a framework for theorizing the problems of authoritarianism and democracy. I situate the argument at the level of the organization of economic enterprises, with particular focus on forms of accumulation. I relate these to socio-political processes that influence the development of state-civil society relations and social contracts, giving rise to either authoritarian or democratic rule. I argue that although underdevelopment per se should not constitute a fundamental obstacle to democratization, the establishment of stable and sustainable democracy requires substantial changes in the forms of accumulation, the promotion of an acceptable level of welfare that will allow the majority of the people to have confidence in the capacity of democratic institutions to manage economic, social, and political conflicts; and the resolution of the contradictions between authoritarian relations that are dominant at the political sphere and nascent liberal pressures that are to be found in civil society.

In the second part, I examine the stages in the development of authoritarianism and democratization, emphasizing the changing strengths of the national coalitions for democracy. In the third and final part, I focus on the problems of democratization in crisis economies, with a Nigerian case study. I conclude by examining the case for linking struggles waged around questions of formal democracy with those that focus on aspirations for broader and more substantive forms of popular rule.

1.2 *Accumulation, authoritarianism and democracy*

Wealth creation is an integral part of class formation. It embodies relations of domination and subordination. Social and political life largely depends on how material production is organized and the methods used in reproducing/defending advantages and minimizing/overtaking disadvantages. The relevant question becomes whether dominant groups use authoritarian or democratic methods in regulating their business practices, and whether disadvantaged groups can freely pursue their interests and improve upon their life chances through open and non-repressive forms of transactions. The way production and business activities are organized have implications for the organization of civil society and state power.

Authoritarianism and democracy represent opposing modes of regulating conflicts thrown up by the dynamics of accumulation and development. These dynamics are strongly instrumentalist. Social groups and political authorities opt for democratic strategies if the latter can protect their advantages or minimize their losses in the economy and society

(Beckman, 1989). Struggles are waged over questions of representation and accountability, and the right to free expression and organization. Although democracy is primarily concerned with the rules and institutions that allow for open competition and participation in government, it also embodies social and economic characteristics that are crucial in determining its capacity to survive.

Three major processes appear to be central to democratic transitions from authoritarian military and one-party régimes: the demilitarization of social and political life; the liberalization of civil society; and the democratization of the rules governing political and economic competition. The first concerns the supremacy and regulation of civilian governmental authority; the second with the democratization of the state apparatus and the relative freedom of civil organizations; and the third with the capacity to democratically manage conflicts in civil and political society and economic practices. I argue, at this stage, the need to approach the question of democracy from its antithesis. Why has authoritarian rule persisted in Africa?

1.3 The structural roots of authoritarianism

I focus the discussion on the structural foundations of authoritarianism and situate the analysis within what I consider to be the three principal forms of accumulation in Africa. I identify these forms of accumulation as wage-exploitative monopolistic practices, incorporating both national and transnational enterprises; rent-seeking state capitalism; and the regulation of petty commodity production. The three encourage the growth of authoritarian values. Authoritarianism is inherent in the first two, whereas it expresses itself in petty production primarily in the way such petty production is linked with the reproduction of ruling classes that are organized around the state, local communities and markets.

Transnational firms embody the problems of economic concentration which Marxist and corporate theories of the firm have highlighted. Dahl has argued that “with very few exceptions, the internal governments of economic enterprises are flatly undemocratic both *de jure* and *de facto*” (Dahl, 1985: 55). The ownership and management structures of transnationals deepen inequalities and undermine effective participation in the governance of the enterprises.

The rise of the transnational firm led to profound changes in Western social structures and the relationship between markets and states. Habermas, for instance, contends that the quest for stable accumulation and political order required the state to supplant the market as the principal steering mechanism for the social and economic system and to effect “a partial class compromise” through welfare programmes and high wage levels that are set “quasi politically” (Habermas, 1973).

Habermas foresees a legitimation crisis arising from the state’s support for accumulation while simultaneously attempting to legitimate itself to the populace. Such a crisis threatens the democratic order of Western societies. There is little doubt, however, that the structural incorporation of the working class in the management of modern economies has helped to check the anti-democratic tendencies of transnational firms in Western societies.

The problems of transnational monopolies are, however, accentuated in developing countries by the firms’ supranational authority which compromises national sovereignty and allows managers to impose authoritarian régimes of industrial relations at the work place. The limited transformations of African economies by transnational capital produced a small labour force, unable to influence the state to regulate the anti-worker practices of multinational companies. Most decisions are taken by employers with little or no input from the work force. The principles of collective bargaining are poorly developed as many unions still grapple with the problems of recognition and organization and the right to participate in the determination

of working conditions. Industrial disputes are more often resolved by methods of co-optation and repression than by democratic persuasion and bargaining.¹

The second mode of accumulation highlights the way dominant groups in the economy and society appropriate rent through the state. Transnational and local firms may combine the formal modes of surplus appropriation with the siphoning of public resources. Neo-classical political economists associate economic distortions in developing economies with the emergence of powerful urban coalitions who use their privileged access to state resources to exploit rural communities (Bates, 1981; Lofchie, 1989). Rent-seeking activities, it is argued, cause developing economies to operate at sub-optimal levels (Bhagwati, 1982; Buchanan, 1980).

Tornquist has analyzed, at the wider political context, the different types of rent-seeking activities employed by various socio-political groups in India and Indonesia and their implications for authoritarian and democratic forms of rule (Tornquist, 1988). Toyo and Iyayi, examining the phenomenon in Nigeria, demonstrate that rent capitalism, which they call primitive accumulation, takes the form of contract inflation, the appropriation and valorization of land, and the use of bureaucratic positions for corrupt enrichment (Toyo, 1985; Iyayi, 1986). Patron-client relations, sometimes ethnic based, but often cross-national, are built into the alliances for the control and administration of state power. Ibrahim has shown how the methods described by Toyo and Iyayi were used by the leading groups in the ruling National Party of Nigeria to consolidate their grip on the political system of Nigeria's Second Republic (Ibrahim, 1988). The state became a central organ in private accumulation and class formation. It is in this sense that Ake talks about the over-politicization of African economies (Ake, 1987). The state is subjected to non-Weberian values of irrationality, inefficiency and disorder. Constitutionalism and the rule of law, central to democratic politics, fails to take root in the body politic.

The petty commodity sector presents a contradictory picture. Its authoritarian character is discussed mainly in the context of its incorporation into the modern economy. I use the concept of petty commodity production in a broad sense to cover activities in which producers are basically self-employed, rely on family or non-waged labour, and use rudimentary tools and skills to sustain their livelihood. These activities embody several complex social relations and straddle both urban and rural areas. They include peasant production and informal sector activities. Colonial historiography traces the constraints on African development to the traditional values embedded in the social practices of the actors in these enterprises.

A more sophisticated version of the thesis combines fragments of historical materialism with modernization theory to highlight the resilience of the "peasant mode of production", and the need for a proper capitalist revolution to overcome the problems of underdevelopment, corruption and authoritarianism (Hyden, 1983). "Tribalism", an impediment to democracy and accumulation, is understood to be a direct attribute of the "relations of affection", rooted in "pre-capitalist" values and practices. The contemporary African state is projected as a pathetically poor modernizer as it has failed to "capture" the small-scale producers buried in these "relations of affection".

Other scholars and peasant-oriented activists contend that some of the essential values of small-scale farming societies are conducive to the growth of a democratic culture and practice (Berg-Schlosser, 1985). Nyerere based his strategy of Ujamaa, for instance, on the "democratic" and growth potentials of peasant social relations (Nyerere, 1967). Informal

¹ I make no distinction between local and foreign capital in terms of the organizational practices of their enterprises and their policies toward labour. In fact, several studies have shown that indigenous firms tend to be more contemptuous of the rights of workers to form labour unions. See, for instance, Olukoshi, 1986.

democratic processes are, undoubtedly, present in many peasant societies, expressed specifically in the way collective decisions are taken in the governance of common resources and the resolution of conflicts. Others with a neo-liberal outlook argue that the proliferation of non-governmental organizations and independent small-scale producers, following the crisis and market reforms, will eventually provide the foundations for the establishment of democracy (Bratton, 1989a,b).

Both perspectives ignore the way petty commodity activities have been structured historically, being subjected to various layers of authority as capitalism and the state penetrate the countryside. The limitations of Hyden's central concepts and thesis have already been exposed by a host of authors (Williams, 1987; Kasfir, 1986; Mamdani, 1985; Cliffe, 1987; Beckman, 1988; Himmelstrand, 1989). The optimism of the neo-liberals in seeing the informal sector as the vanguard for democracy and for surviving the African crisis is also being seriously challenged (Meager, 1990; Mustapha, 1990).

Mamdani has shown, with particular reference to Uganda, the rigidities in agrarian social relations brought about by the undemocratic character of the rural power structures (Mamdani, 1986 and 1987). Similar studies for other countries show the authoritarian content of the structures that pull the peasantry into the national economies and the world market. The interests of the groups that dominate transnational monopolies and state projects hold sway in the petty commodity sector. Such interests block the development of the democratic potential of independent small-scale production. The values of communal life are manipulated by the dominant groups to sustain support for their struggles over political offices and economic resources. Hyden's "tribalists", far from being the product of "pre-capitalist relations of affection", are rather the creation of modern conditions and activities (Mamdani, 1985; Eke, 1975). Patron-client relations regulate peasant production and incomes and facilitate the administration of state power. Clientelism prevents self-development and social independence, critical for the construction of democracy.

1.4 The basis for democratic struggles

The authoritarian thrust of the three forms of accumulation is, however, not incontestable. Disadvantaged social groups challenge authoritarian rule and advance alternative, sometimes democratic, forms of politics. I try to capture the structural basis of such struggles in the contradictions that are inherent in three forms of accumulation. Pressures for democratization are not exclusively confined to the politics of subordinate groups. Business groups may also play active roles in democratization, depending on the changing nature of the forms of accumulation and the capacity of the political system to manage conflicts between the dominant groups.

Tornquist has argued that in discussions on classes and democracy, it is more important to highlight "how capitalists...try to gain and protect their economic strength" than to emphasize, as Martinussen does in his study on India and Pakistan (Martinussen, 1980), the strength of the national bourgeoisie and its political forms of organization (Tornquist, 1985). The dependence of Indonesian capitalists, and by extension their Pakistani counterparts, on rent-seeking activities is interpreted as the basis for the failure of democracy in both societies. But in countries such as South Korea and Taiwan, province of China, where wage labour has been sufficiently generalized and where vital sectors of industry are manned by skilled employees, entrepreneurs may be forced to accommodate the popular pressures for democracy as a trade-off for industrial stability (Lindstrom, 1989; Cheng, 1989). Most countries of Africa share the Pakistani and Indonesian characteristics. The popular classes may become the primary force for democratization in such societies.

But how does one conceptualize the basis for democratization in order not to arrive at deterministic formulations? How do pressures for authoritarianism and democracy translate

themselves at the level of civil society and the state? Barrington Moore has demonstrated that a single mode of accumulation, situated within specific historical contexts, can give rise to complex patterns of societal development, and that it is the latter that is the primary determinant of the political forms of organization (Moore, 1966). Moore's work shares some affinity with Gramsci's, whose major contribution to democratic theory is his retrieval of the concept of civil society, which Marx had, following its dominant usage at the time, equated with material relations. Gramsci situates civil society outside the realm of both material relations and state power. Yet in contradistinction to liberal thought, he sees civil society as the "soft underbelly of the capitalist system" (Pelczynski, 1988). Civil society offers the popular classes an opportunity to deny the ruling class hegemony in the realm of ideas, values and culture, as a basis for the ultimate seizure of power and the transformation of capitalist property relations and the state. The emphasis Gramsci places on civil society has led many critics to counterpoise his theory of politics to that of Marx (Bobbio, 1988).

I argue that the basis for authoritarian rule should be located primarily at the level of material relations, which in the framework I have sketched, represents the contradictions in the forms of accumulation. But the dynamics of authoritarian rule and struggles for democratization develop at the level of civil society. Workers organize themselves into unions and contest the power of transnational capital at the work place and in the wider society. The defence of seemingly economic interests – wages and welfare – draws workers and their unions into the arena of democratic politics. They demand for accountability, independent union organization and the right to free expression and collective bargaining, critical for the resolution of wage and welfare disputes.

Similarly, rent-seeking activities generate their own intractable problems. Firstly, the expansion of state expenditure creates a public-sector labour force which shares similar concerns with workers in transnational firms for the establishment of institutionalized frameworks to promote reasonable working conditions. Secondly, state capitalism creates a large middle class of teachers, journalists, lawyers, doctors and students, who yearn for professional competence and autonomy. Thirdly, the state itself may be caught up in a "fiscal crisis" that is structural, having to defend both the demands of accumulation and the need for public revenue (O'Connor, 1973).

Rent-seeking activities may compound the fiscal crisis of the state, and may threaten the jobs, incomes and working conditions of the groups that owe their livelihood to the public sector. Such groups are likely to be critical, in the long run, of corruption, inefficiency and mismanagement. Rent-seeking methods become illegitimate as the perpetrators of corruption, usually discredited ruling groups and private entrepreneurs, come under public censure. Probes on corruption are, in fact, very common in contemporary African politics. They open up possibilities for the democratic allocation of resources.

Finally, the politics of patronage at the sphere of petty commodity production can be undermined by the very logic of transnational and state capitalist penetration of that sector. Two tendencies may be at work here. The authoritarian structures that incorporate peasant and small-scale producers into the modern economy may be in conflict with the demands for autonomy, free transactions and secure welfare that modes of self-employment usually generate. African history is replete with peasant revolts against unfair prices, arbitrary land acquisitions and authoritarian rule. Similarly, the resultant social differentiation and sharp inequalities in resource use may produce an agricultural labour class and new rural alliances, possibly linked to mass urban social movements, and pressures for democratization.

1.5 The dynamics of authoritarianism and democracy

The tensions of authoritarian rule and democratization enter the arena of civil society in a complex, rather than in a deterministic manner. The dominance of the ruling class in production and state activities does not easily translate itself into hegemony in the sphere of civil society. I use the term hegemony to mean the capacity of rulers to secure compliance from the populace through methods that are not explicitly coercive. Disadvantaged groups can, and do, contest attempts to establish ruling class hegemony at the civil terrain. Their capacity to press for democratization does not lie at the productive base, but in the wider civil arena where **national strategies** can be formulated and **broad coalitions** built. Workers' agitations for industrial democracy become effective only when they are linked to broader concerns for national democracy. For instance, workers' strikes in factories become a central force in democratization only when such strikes have meaning for broad sections of society. Specific agitations against retrenchment and declines in real wages may be linked with popular dissatisfaction with deteriorating living conditions on a national scale to generate broad public support. Problems of factory victimization may in turn be linked to wider issues of organizational autonomy and the rule of law.

Similarly, the complaints of teachers, students and doctors for better salaries, higher grants, improved working conditions and professional autonomy enter the democratic arena only when such issues are linked to national concerns for falling educational standards and health facilities, and the general problems of state repression. Such linkages bring unionist and professional agitations into the wider civil sphere, and may give rise to issue-oriented pressure groups and national alliances for democratization. Such alliances may encompass a variety of social groups such as fractions of the dominant power blocs, and ethnic, gender, environmental and religious social movements that feel aggrieved by the existing distribution of power and resources. Issue-oriented pressure groups may, in fact, play key roles in initiating and sustaining the demands for democracy.

The capacity of state authorities and ruling classes to establish hegemony in civil society depends on their record of political legitimation and their ability to improve the quality of life of major sections of the population. Failures exacerbate the crisis of legitimation, erode social hegemony and strengthen the forces pressing for democratization. Once democratization is widely perceived as a viable mode for regulating social and political conflicts, it ceases to be an exclusive project of any one class or social group. Ruling classes can incorporate, for instance, the demands of subordinate groups and influence the democratization process. This may be a strategy to resolve differences among the dominant power blocs and to blunt the militant demands of the popular groups.

Conversely, leaders of dominated groups may employ authoritarian practices in conducting the affairs of their organizations and in resisting the policies of business managers and the power élite. Such strategies may weaken the democratic project even though they may also force policy makers and managers to opt for democratic concessions. We end up with an articulation of a multiplicity of values and strategies, traversing the authoritarian-democratic divide, but with the dominant political values determined by the balance of social and political forces.

There is nothing in the modes of accumulation of African societies that prevents social groups from struggling for democracy. What we have instead are obstacles to the realization of stable democratic rule. But these obstacles themselves are not fixed and incontestable since they engender antithetical forms of political behaviour in the contestants for public resources and state power.

1.6 Structural pre-conditions for stable and sustainable democracy

I make a distinction between conditions for sustainable democracy and the struggles for democracy. The latter, as we have seen, can be located at the level of the contradictions of authoritarianism, rooted in the dynamics of accumulation and civil society. Democratic struggles do not necessarily lead to stable democratic rule. The triumph of democracy, and its consolidation, not its fleeting appearances, may require some changes in the organization of the patterns of accumulation themselves.

I focus the discussion on the structural conditions, leaving out standard explanations based on individualism, market industrialization, political culture and multi-ethnic pluralism that litter the literature on pre-conditions for democracy in developing countries. These provide at best partial explanations to the problem. The bulk of liberal democratic theory surely establishes a close relationship between the economy – referred to as levels of development – and stable democratic rule (Lipset, 1983; Dahl, 1971; Huntington, 1984; Vanhanen, 1989). Levels of development are, however, located outside the context of forms of appropriation and methods of production, restricted primarily to questions of incomes, resource distribution and welfare. When such scholars attempt to integrate forms of accumulation and social classes into their analysis, as Diamond does in his study of the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic, ruling classes are reduced to élites and politicians, and the process of surplus appropriation is restricted to the rent-seeking state capitalist type (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1988). There is an additional normative dimension to liberal theory which renders it less useful to the analysis of Third World experiences. Theorists tend to work their way backwards by identifying the end values of democracy in Western societies – tolerance, moderation, loyal opposition, etc. (Powell, 1982; Pye and Verba, 1965). How such values can be developed in societies marked by intolerance, violence and polarization is left largely unexplained.

I am primarily concerned with the material, structural conditions that are favourable for stable democratic rule. I break down the framework of modes of accumulation into six models, reflecting the way changes in the forms and modes of accumulation condition the development of democratic and authoritarian practices. By changes in forms of accumulation I mean either the intensification of a particular mode or its weakening. Thus we can have as an example an intensification of transnational capitalist production (TCP) and rent-seeking state capitalism (RSC), and a weakening of petty commodity production (PCP). Based on this example, we end up with six models of forms accumulation: these are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1	
Illustrative models of forms of accumulation	
Model	Forms of accumulation
A	The intensification of TCP; and the weakening of RSC and PCP
B	The intensification of TCP and PCP; and the weakening of RSC
C	The intensification of TCP and RSC; and the weakening of PCP
D	The intensification of RSC and PCP; and the weakening of TCP
E	The intensification of RSC; and the weakening of TCP and PCP
F	The intensification of PCP; and the weakening of TCP and RSC

Note: Two other permutations have been ruled out in this schema, viz. the simultaneous intensification or weakening of all three forms of accumulation. It is assumed that if TCP is being intensified it may lead either to the weakening of PCP and RSC, or to an intensification of PCP and a weakening of RSC, or to an intensification of RSC and a weakening of PCP. Similarly, it is assumed that if PCP is weakening, TCP and RSC may either be intensifying, or TCP alone is intensifying, or RSC is intensifying and TCP is weakening.

I group A, B and C as models of economic expansion; and D, E and F as models of economic crisis. Models of expansion do not rule out possibilities of crisis. In fact, crisis is embedded in all the models, given the problems usually associated with markets, state interventions and mixed systems of accumulation. I do not discuss specific cyclical crisis situations. A model of expansion in this context represents positive structural transformations, and a model of crisis is associated with negative structural changes. The two deal with development processes that lead to qualitative changes in forms of accumulation. In this context negative structural changes can experience periods of positive growth. These models are illustrated in the following scale:

+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
A	B	C		D	E	F

The focus on forms of accumulation in constructing the models obviously downplays other crucial variables like resource endowment and class structure – some would say it leaves them out completely. The theoretical focus is, of course, to establish a linkage between forms of accumulation and political systems that can be classified as either democratic or authoritarian. In any case, some of the other variables, though not explicitly treated, could be deduced from the six models which, in a way, give us some idea of different patterns and levels of development. I relate changes in forms of accumulation to questions of rural-urban integration, the nature of system-maintenance social contracts, the provision of public welfare, and the dynamics of state-civil society relations. These represent the crucial factors in establishing whether African countries can experience authoritarian or democratic rule. I make no attempt, however, to develop quantifiable variables around these issues. I highlight the qualitative links between these issues and authoritarianism/democracy in Table 2.

Table 2					
Forms of accumulation and socio-political systems					
Forms of accumulation	Rural-urban integration	Welfare	Social system	State/civil society	Potential political system
A	very high	very high	social contract (corporate)	autonomous civil society	liberal democracy
B	moderate	moderate/high	patron-client	regulated civil society	clientelist democracy
C	moderate	high	social contract (controlled)/ patron-client	state/part control of civil society	authoritarian
D	low	low	collapsing social contract/ resurgence of kinship ties and self-interest	intense pressures for autonomy of civil society	authoritarian
E	low/extreme dualism	very low	collapsed social contract	intense pressures for autonomy of civil society	authoritarian
F	collapsed modern economy	collective kinship family welfare	fragmented kinship ties	fusion of state and civil society	authoritarian/ informal democracy

The peasant question, which is at the heart of rural-urban integration, is central to any discussion of democracy in Africa since most people live in rural areas and depend on

agriculture for their main source of livelihood. Rural populations are the major source of national food supplies, export revenues and industrial development (Barraclough, 1990; Mamdani, 1986 and 1987). By rural-urban integration, I understand the process of sustaining the economic, social and political life of rural communities, leading to a transformation of the structures of dualism that have underpinned all facets of rural-urban relations. Low levels of national integration restrict democratization to an urban phenomenon, relegate peasants to the fringes of civil society, and undermines their ability to develop **national strategies** and enter into broad **democratic coalitions**.

The alienation of rural societies from the mainstream of national life exposes the peasantry to continued manipulation from state authorities and rural/urban patrons, anxious to maintain authoritarian forms of rule. Solving the rural-urban dilemma may, in fact, provide the basis for coming to terms with the problems of unbalanced ethnic and regional development. The resolution of this dilemma should obviously give prominence to the transformation of the regulatory mechanisms that have undermined the independence of petty producers, and provide support for the dynamics of petty accumulation. This boils down to a question of making economic development and democracy national projects, as opposed to the current practice where they are mainly an urban phenomenon dominated by the power élites. Table 2 shows how this issue is related to the six different models of accumulation.

A stable and sustainable democracy must also be able to create a social system that will accommodate the conflicting claims of diverse groups in society. The social groups remain committed to the fundamentals of the existing order while competing, sometimes militantly, for overall dominance. Classical liberalism relies on the depoliticizing functions of the market as the bedrock for the construction of such a stable social order. The hegemony of the capitalist class is presented as anonymous and the losses inflicted by the market on disadvantaged groups is interpreted as a natural fate which can befall all individuals (Lawrence, 1989). In this context, liberals see democracy as the natural political shell of capitalism.

There is, however, no natural correspondence between capitalism and democracy (Therbon, 1977). All capitalist economies, however advanced, must devise social systems that will sustain democratic rule. Such systems must provide welfare/economic support, however contestable, for the deprived majority to exercise their formal democratic rights, which in turn should allow them to sustain and develop their livelihood aspirations. Western democracies were consolidated in the post-1945 period with the construction of welfare states. Social democratic parties provided political leadership to restless workers and deprived groups to usher in the so-called “historic class compromise”. Social democracy has strong built-in elements of corporatism as governments try to balance the conflicting demands of unions and the organized private sector. The leading actors and their organizations bargain with the state as independent entities but their co-optation into the policy apparatus entails major compromises, including the regulation of the behaviour of their members (Cawson, 1989; Carter, 1989).

The corporate type of social control is contrasted with social contracts in which the ruling authorities define the rules and regulate the participation of the other contestants. Invariably the contending social actors are denied autonomous political space to canvass for the views and interests of their members. The social contract is top-down and authoritarian. Despite its authoritarian character, its legitimacy may rest on relatively high levels of welfare. The level of this type of welfare may be lower than the corporate type because of the low level of development and the political constraints imposed on the bargaining positions of social actors. Another type of social control is patron-client arrangements which can operate in both formal democracies and authoritarian systems. Where patron-client relations sustain democratic rule, the contending groups and their organizations may enjoy formal autonomy, but the political

authorities may co-opt the leadership or introduce policies that compromise the political effectiveness of the groups. Public welfare supports the patronage system even though such welfare does not need to be as high as in the other systems of social control. The relative freedom of the groups frees the ruling authorities from defending a costly social contract. The state then relies on the fragmented rural communities, through patron-client networks, to counter the political weight of the urban groups. Where patron-client relations are used to buttress authoritarianism, the social groups lose their formal independence, but they may be compensated with relatively higher expenditure on welfare to sustain compliance.

1.7 Models of accumulation and political systems

Model A creates conditions for the emergence of sustainable liberal democracy. Rent-seeking activities become less central to the business practices of the private monopolies and the local entrepreneurs. The private capitalist sector expands and transforms the petty commodity enterprises. Some of the groups in this sector are transformed into wage workers, others join the ranks of the power élite or remain as peasants, but with sustainable agricultural systems. The disparities between town and country are reduced. Economic expansion encourages the establishment of integrated rural enterprises. Corruption is minimized, resources are “rationally” allocated, classes mature, and patron-clientelism is checked. The authoritarianism associated with monopolies is restrained by broadening the social base of the firms and by making extensive economic and political concessions to the dominated groups at the work place and civil society and in the administration of state power. This may necessitate the establishment of a corporate social contract. The nature of the concessions and the character of the democracy may vary according to the specific demands of the social forces.

In **model B** the excesses of rent-seeking activities have either been checked or minimized. The state tends to act more rationally, in a developmental way, but largely in defence of private capital. Industrial monopolies and capitalist agriculture are, however, not strong enough to transform the petty commodity sector. Although the state is still open to manipulation from privileged groups, the political élites insist on some rational legal order in regulating conflicts of interests in the economy. The limited nature of transnational capital and the checks imposed on rent-seeking activities forces social groups in the modern sector to maintain an active presence in the petty commodity sector. Patron-client relations thrive. The model allows for some kind of clientelist democracy, such as those operating in Botswana, Senegal and the Gambia. The patronage social order acts as a constraint on the relatively free social and political organizations to effectively challenge governmental authority. Such constraints limit the development of civil society.

In Botswana, for instance, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party makes use of traditional political systems such as the *kgotla* to legitimize its rule and blunt the effectiveness of opposition parties (Molokomme, 1989; Holm, 1988). High levels of sustained growth have allowed the régime to raise incomes, provide public welfare and support rural schemes that benefit peasant farmers – the backbone of its patronage network. Weak working class and professional groups make less critical demands on the political system.

The ruling Union Progressiste Sénégalaise transformed itself from an authoritarian into a “social democratic” party between 1978 and 1983. It attempted to infuse greater rationality in the administration of the state and economy by insisting on public accountability and cleansing the party and state apparatus of corruption. But in order to administer its highly contested democracy it has had to depend on the old patronage system that co-opts the *marabouts*, the main social and political force in the countryside, into the policy-making apparatus (Coulon, 1988). But, whereas Botswana has been able to sustain its clientelist democracy without much opposition, that of Senegal is undergoing serious stress. In recent times, opposition political parties and urban-based groups have challenged the dominance of the ruling party. It would seem Senegal’s economic crisis is eroding the ruling party’s ability

to oil its patronage machine and govern without much coercion. Botswana on the other hand has one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Its growth rests, however, on potentially shaky mineral revenues, whose collapse may strain the patronage system that underpins its fledgling democracy.

Model C represents an economy in rapid transition to capitalism, where rent-seeking activities play crucial roles in supporting private capital. Most African economies were launched on this path of development at independence. Authoritarian rule accompanied such expansion. We analyze the details of this development and that of model D in the next section dealing with “stages in the struggles for democracy”. Here it is significant to point out that various authoritarian ideologies – negritude, authenticity, African socialism – and political régimes such as military and one-party dictatorships were devised to push the frontiers of accumulation and maintain a firm grip on the political process.

Model D represents an economy in crisis. There is de-industrialization, excessive pilfering of public resources and dependence on the petty commodity sector for social reproduction. The fiscal crisis and adjustment measures introduced to cope with the recession lead to further repression as disaffected groups try to resist them. The social contract comes under considerable stress. Pressures for democratization intensify. This may even lead to the establishment of democratic governments as in many Latin American countries that are in transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. But stable and sustainable democracy cannot be guaranteed without substantial changes in the forms of accumulation and socio-economic development.

Model E represents an economy in deep crisis. De-industrialization is buttressed by the failure of the petty commodity sector to absorb the displaced groups in the modern sector. Rural-urban relations are marked by extreme dualism. Competition for state power intensifies. Authoritarianism is rife. Individualist solutions flourish, further weakening the collective struggles for democracy. State terror intensifies with the collapse of the social contract and the failure of patron-client relations to check the instability generated by the depression.

Model F represents the collapse of the modern economy and a return to petty commodity production. Economic activity is marked by subsistence production, low levels of exchange and barter. Fragmented kinship ties tend to regulate social relations. Collective family and kinship support systems take the place of public welfare. Civil society disappears as the public and private roles of individuals and enterprises become fused. This can lead to mixtures of authoritarian and informal, village level democracy. Recent scenarios of the withering away of the African state and general theories of state decay, in a way, fit this model of accumulation (Chazan, 1983; Sandbrook, 1985). This perspective does not ignore the progressive role that has been played by the petty commodity sector in most African societies in building modern states and supporting the activities of large-scale capital. It is also the case that in the current crisis, informal sector and peasant activities provide useful fall back positions for many individuals and households that have been displaced by modern enterprises and the state. Some sectors also show some promise in providing a basis for sustained economic development. Petty commodity production cannot, however, be viable in the absence of a properly functioning modern sector.

Most African countries are currently operating either model D or E. IMF and World Bank programmes seek to check the expansion of the state, which they believe is responsible for rent-seeking activities and the economic crisis, and move the economies to model B and eventually to A. But there is the danger that the adjustment programmes will lead to stagnation at D or a movement to E. The scenario of decaying states (F) should also not be ruled out. Popular forces may be interested in a strategy that pushes the economies to model B or A in order to strengthen their bargaining positions in the new democratic polity. Peasants

and artisans may not be opposed to model B in order for them to continue to function as petty commodity producers; whereas workers and urban professionals may prefer model A, which is likely to give them better leverage in improving their living conditions and political rights. The construction of specific types of democratic systems is, at bottom, an empirical issue which depends on the projects social movements and ruling classes have set for themselves and the obstacles they are likely to face in implementing them.

The basis for democratization exists in all the models but democratic rule cannot be sustained in models C, D, E and F. Stable and sustainable democracy requires some level of economic development, a viable social contract, and the capacity of both dominant and subordinate groups to weaken the monopolistic forms of transnational capital, minimize the role of rent capitalism and transform patron-client relations in the petty commodity sector into relations of self-reliance and social independence.

2. Stages in the Struggles for Democracy

In this section I examine more concretely the interplay of authoritarian and democratic rule. Of the six models outlined only B, C, D and perhaps E approximate to concrete African experiences. This excludes the South African case, whose forms of accumulation are similar to those of model A, but whose apartheid system has prevented the development of a national democratic system. In discussing the stages in the struggles for democracy, I focus mainly on C and D. Only a few countries have practiced model B, the clientelist type of democracy. I am, at this stage, mainly concerned with general historical patterns. No attempt is made to focus on any particular country. Needless to add that such broad historical surveys tend to simplify and, in some cases, gloss over unique characteristics.

The struggle for democracy in Africa has a complex and tortuous history. Democratization triumphed at certain historical conjunctures, but it was blocked and suppressed in other phases. I identify three stages in the contemporary struggles for democracy: the decolonization period of guided democratization; the post-colonial period of state capitalist expansion and authoritarian rule; and the period of economic crisis which is currently generating pressures for re-democratization. The character of the democratic project differs in each period, being structurally related to the underlying forms of accumulation, the level of development of the corresponding civil societies, and the nature of the social contracts and public welfare.

2.1 Decolonization and guided democratization

Decolonization in much of Africa occurred within the context of guided democratization. After much prevarication, the colonial authorities were forced to embrace democracy as a strategy for maintaining core residual interests. It was envisaged that plural forms of politics would sharpen local differences and dilute the militancy of the anti-colonial opposition. Furthermore, the values of individual self-interest were expected to permeate the social milieu of the leading nationalists. The emerging élites, on the other hand, saw democracy as a strategy to end their subordinate positions in the colonial economy. Educated professionals wanted greater access to state resources and an improved standard of living that would reflect their training and perceived social status. Those in the commercial sector were anxious to break the monopolistic power of the colonial banks and trading companies.

Subordinate groups also pushed through their own demands. Workers wanted to have independent unions to negotiate freely with employers realistic wages and benefits that would reflect the post-war cost of living. Peasants and artisans were concerned about improved prices for their products; and students wanted to expand the frontiers of African education and political power. Democratization provided an institutional framework for reconciling the conflicting interests thrown up by the authoritarian colonial economy. It checked the

absolutism of colonial rule by opening up space for popular participation in government and the rise of independent organizations.

But the authoritarian character of the colonial economy prevented the growth of liberal democracy. The colonial state forcibly restructured pre-existing economies and subsequently regulated peasant production through monopolistic trading companies and marketing boards. The trading monopolies and the state failed to transform the petty commodity sector and rural society in general. There was also hardly any major form of urban industrialization. Underdevelopment and dependency theory has adequately described the enclave dynamics and rural-urban socio-economic disarticulation that informed this type of development. What is more, public welfare occupied very low priority in the governance of those societies as very conservative fiscal and monetary policies were pursued. Public welfare did not become a major issue in state policy until the structures of decolonization were put in place in the 1940s.² Colonial rule was maintained through the use of force and the clientelist structures of indirect rule.

Democratization and decolonization took place against the background of a poorly developed civil society. Intense struggles had to be waged over the question of making the modern élites and their political parties the vanguard and pathways to self-government, rather than the traditional structures of authority which were dominated by the state (Nordman, 1979).

The original colonial agenda was subsequently defeated. The struggle for democracy and self-rule was conducted mainly through the medium of urban-based political parties, communal associations and workers unions. Although a class structure was already discernible, those who participated in the nationalist struggles did so mainly as individuals rather than as representatives of corporate organizations. This was the case whether the actors were journalists, academics, doctors, students, farmers, artisans or market women. Their respective organizations, where they existed, were poorly developed to advance any viable corporate strategy. Individuals tended to act almost unilaterally on behalf of their social groups. The underdevelopment of civil organizations allowed the educated élites to determine the direction of decolonization. The élites were the only group with the capacity to pull the disparate social forces together and articulate national development strategies.

But democratization also strengthened the alliance between the emerging élites and the colonial authorities. This facilitated the growth of a nascent local bourgeoisie. It gave the anti-colonial alliance a decidedly class character and blunted the popular orientation of the democratic project. Rather than democratize the colonial economy, the nationalist élites ruled through the state monopolies and the colonial patronage networks to consolidate and expand their economic and political power. In Nigeria, for instance, the regionalization of the marketing boards in the run up to independence led to the transfer of accumulated peasant surpluses into the hands of competing politicians and business groups. Public probes showed how these resources were plundered by the emerging dominant power élite (Osoba, 1978). Decolonization did not fully establish democratic rule, even though the period stands out as a major landmark in democratic experiments in Africa. Representative governments were introduced in controlled stages (Collier, 1982); the right to free expression and association was coloured with proscriptions, the banning of radical literature and the arrest of activists considered to be too militant for the transition process.

² Riots in the West Indies, Mauritius and the Gold Coast culminated in the decision by the British government to review the Colonial Development Act of 1929. The Watson Report on the riots set the stage for the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945. See Parliamentary Command Papers 6174 and 6175 (UK) 1940.

2.2 State capitalist expansion and authoritarian rule

The first decade and a half of independence was remarkable for the emergence of a model of accumulation that questioned the limited advances in democratization. Elaborate strategies were formulated by the new rulers, donor agencies and the World Bank to accelerate the pace of development. The basic model was influenced by the dominant Keynesian-oriented paradigm in development economics, which stressed the need for state intervention to correct market failures and stimulate the process of industrialization (Taylor and Shapiro, 1990). The state would use the proceeds of peasant surplus and rents from extractive industries to finance régimes of import-substitution industrialization. Where such surpluses were not enough, donor agencies and private foreign capital would provide the extra finance. The state was to offer a package of incentives to foreign enterprises, subsidize the growth of local capital and transform the petty commodity sector. Social expenditure projects were to be launched to provide basic infrastructure for development, and to sustain the loyalty of the subordinate groups of the anti-colonial alliance. The fledgling business groups would ultimately appropriate a large chunk of the resources of such projects for their own development.

The model registered some interesting rates of growth in a number of African countries, particularly Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, and Nigeria, prompting many Marxists and liberal development economists to question the static assumptions and predictions of underdevelopment theory. As Mkandawire notes, "...Between 1960 and 1975...Africa's industry (which) grew at the annual rate of 7.5 per cent...compared favourably with the 7.8 per cent for Latin America (and the) 7.5 per cent for South-East Asia" (Mkandawire, 1988a: 31). The GDP growth rates for the period 1965-1973 was 6.1 per cent (World Bank, 1989). In most countries, the state became the major source of investment and national employment. State expenditure in schools, health, public services and food supplies grew exponentially. In 1972, just a year before the first world oil price shocks, central government expenditure for 21 sub-Saharan African countries for which data are available was 21.1 per cent of the gross national products³ (World Bank, 1989). Although there were attempts in a number of countries to promote integrated rural development, the overall development strategy worsened the rural-urban terms of trade and led to flights of rural populations into urban centres. Economic growth intensified class differentiation and encouraged the growth of institutional forms of social organization with mandates from members to bargain for the expanding public resources. The era of rent-seeking forms of state capitalism had arrived.

What was the social and political basis of this model of accumulation? In his seminal work of 1973, O'Donnell challenged one of the central hypotheses of liberal democratic theory that associates rapid economic development with political democracy. In the Latin American context of the 1960s and 1970s, high rates of growth and modernization produced, instead, what O'Donnell called "bureaucratic-authoritarianism" (O'Donnell, 1973). Indeed, Brazil's military rulers relied on their country's record of high growth rates to legitimize their authoritarian rule for much of that period (Martins, 1986).

Taking into account Africa's lower levels of industrialization and bureaucratic development, it seems to me that O'Donnell's proposition captures some aspects of the African experience of the same period. Democracy was seen by the new African rulers and emerging local entrepreneurs as obstructive of both corporate and private accumulation. It encouraged demands for redistribution as opposed to production, and forced rulers and entrepreneurs to be accountable to the wider populace for the way they handled public resources; it was also felt that democracy would facilitate ethnic polarization at the expense of national unity. Military and one-party dictatorships were defended as necessary political arrangements for nation

³ Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia.

building and economic development. In the context of Africa's changing societies, democracy was seen as a source of political instability (Huntington, 1968; Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1988; Anyang' Nyong'o, 1988b).

Several ideologies, ranging from African socialism and humanism to negritude and authenticity, were propagated by the new rulers to control dissent and project African societies as homogeneous. The democratic impulse of the decolonization period had taught the emergent social groups the power of collective action in the politics of resource allocation. The logical growth of civil society that the expansion of unions, professional associations and interest group organizations created was seen by the dominant groups and state authorities as a threat to economic development and private accumulation.

Various strategies were employed to regulate the activities of the social groups. One-party régimes with "socialist orientations" simply co-opted some of the popular organizations into the party structures and floated alternative organizations at various levels of society to check the development of new autonomous organizations. Such practices were common in Benin, the Congo, Ghana under Nkrumah, Guinea under Sekou Toure, and Tanzania. Other less ideological one-party states imposed restrictions on the activities of unions and associations, co-opted the leadership of popular organizations into policy-making institutions, and strengthened patron-client relations with traditional authority. Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal (before the democratic reforms) and Sierra Leone fall under this category. Military régimes such as those of Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo and Zaire tended to follow the practices of the latter, although some, like Nigeria, were relatively less successful in controlling dissent and co-opting popular organizations. The relative openness of political life that flourished under decolonization was severely curtailed in most countries.

Authoritarianism did not however destroy the social contract that underpinned the nationalist struggles. Indeed, the legitimacy of authoritarian rule rested on the ability and willingness of the political authorities to promote public welfare. Such an ability depended on the sustainability of economic growth. The social contract that provided such legitimacy was unabashedly top-down. Popular struggles against these repressive arrangements were initiated and sustained in a number of countries (Anyang' Nyong'o, 1988a), but the balance was unmistakably in favour of generalized authoritarian rule.

2.3 Economic crisis and pressures for re-democratization

The authoritarian model based its legitimacy on continued accumulation, positive rates of growth and the provision of public welfare. But African societies entered a stage of profound crisis in the late 1970s/early 1980s as a result of the recession in the world market and the structural problems of the state capitalist model of development. Where as only 10 out of 34 sub-Saharan African countries experienced negative per capita GDP growth rates between 1965 and 1980, only nine registered any per capita GDP growth rate between 1980 and 1987 (Helleiner, 1990; World Bank, 1989). Average GDP growth rates for all SSA countries fell from 6.1 per cent in 1965-73 to -1.3 per cent in 1987. Agriculture, industry and services registered marked declines in rates of growth, with industry falling from 13.5 per cent in 1965-73 to -1.2 per cent in 1980-87. The same poor record is demonstrated in export volume and terms of trade. The total debt of SSA countries jumped from US \$21.1 billion in 1976 to US \$137.8 billion in 1987. The ratio of external debt to GDP increased from 45.2 per cent in 1981 to 66.1 per cent in 1986 (IMF, 1988; Taylor, 1989). Table 3 highlights some of the negative trends in economic performance.

Table 3					
GDP growth rates, sector growth rates, growth of export volume and terms of trade (1965-1987)					
	1965-1973	1973-1980	1980-1985	1986	1987
GDP growth rates	6.1	3.2	-0.5	3.2	-1.3
Sector growth rates					
Agriculture	2.4	0.3	1.2 (1980-1987)		
Industry	13.5	4.7	-1.2 (1980-1987)		
Services	4.1	3.6	1.5 (1980-1987)		
Growth of export volume	15.1	0.2	-3.3	1.1	-3.3
Manufactures	7.6	5.6	4.4	1.3	4.8
Primary goods	15.4	-0.0	-3.7	1.1	-3.5
Terms of trade	-8.5	5.0	-2.3	-23.2	3.3

The figures for export volumes in 1987 are estimates. **Source:** World Bank, **World Development Report**, 1989.

The crisis narrowed urban-rural terms of trade and differentials in social livelihood (Jamal and Weeks, 1988). This did not, however, strengthen rural welfare and urban-rural integration as most economies experienced sharp declines in their major macro-economic and social indicators. It was mainly a question of lowering urban living standards without necessarily raising those of the rural communities. Available data for 11 African countries in Table 4 show the effects of the crisis on public expenditure on education and health. The percentage of total expenditure on education declined in seven countries, and on health it declined in nine, even though only four countries cut their overall budget deficits as a percentage of their gross national product. Stewart reckoned that real government expenditure per head fell in 55 per cent of African countries between 1980 and 1984 (Stewart, 1987). The situation would have deteriorated in most countries in the mid-to-late 1980s.

Table 4								
Central government expenditure in selected countries								
	Percentage of total expenditure Education		Health		Total expenditure (% of GNP)		Overall surplus/ deficit (% of GNP)	
	1972	1987	1972	1987	1972	1987	1972	1987
Botswana	10.0	18.4	6.0	5.9	33.7	47.5	-23.8	28.2
Burkina Faso	20.6	19.0	8.2	5.8	11.1	16.3	0.3	1.6
Ghana	20.1	23.9	6.3	8.3	19.5	14.1	-5.8	0.6
Kenya	21.9	23.1	7.9	6.6	21.0	25.0	-3.9	-4.6
Liberia	15.2	16.2	9.8	7.1	16.7	24.8	1.1	-7.9
Lesotho	22.4	15.5	7.4	6.9	14.5	24.3	3.5	-2.6
Malawi	15.8	10.8	5.5	7.1	22.1	35.1	-6.2	-10.3
Nigeria	4.5	2.8	3.6	0.8	8.3	27.7	-0.7	-10.3
Tanzania	17.3	8.3	7.2	5.7	19.7	20.9	-5.0	-4.9
Uganda	15.3	15.0	5.3	2.4	21.8	15.0	-8.1	-4.4
Zambia	19.0	8.3	7.4	4.7	34.0	40.3	-13.8	-15.8

Source: World Bank, **World Development Report**, 1989.

Radical reform programmes, influenced or initiated by the IMF and the World Bank, have been introduced to check the unprecedented economic decline. The reforms aim to restructure economic relations in the production and consumption of commodities. The restructuring primarily affects incomes, public welfare and prices, which in turn affect the configurations of power. The aim is to eliminate distortions associated with the expansion of the post-colonial state by giving the market a relatively freer hand in the allocation of resources. These distortions are to be found in the exchange rates, tariff régimes, the organization of parastatals, interest rates and public expenditure. It is a major challenge to the state capitalist model of macro-economic management and the values and group interests that have been nurtured around it.

Rolling back the state does not only affect popular classes and groups, it also affects ruling class forces. Large-scale public expenditure, as we have seen, was not just a strategy for protecting the poor, it was also an avenue for dominant groups to siphon off public resources. The same applies to over-valued exchange rates, discriminatory tariffs, the establishment of parastatals and low interest rates, all of which played crucial roles in the accumulation of capital, class formation and the subsidy of the consumption habits of the rich and powerful. Structural adjustment poses, therefore, problems for all classes and groups. In fact, the economic reforms seek to purify the business groups, provide a new type of legitimacy for their class rule and consolidate their positions in the wider political economy. Such a project is to be achieved at the expense of the nationalist coalition and social contract that underpinned the state capitalist model of development.

Market reformers seek to reconstitute the relationship between foreign and local capital (liberalization strengthens the hands of the former), restructure agrarian relations to support export agriculture and hold back the urban classes of workers, sections of middle class professionals and the urban poor. It is not surprising that the strongest opponents of the reforms are a new coalition of middle class professionals, industrial unions, student organizations and the urban dispossessed. Pressures from such coalitions have led to a number of riots in Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tunisia and Zambia. Given the benefits that are likely to accrue to rural communities because of the price

reforms and devaluation, some governments have tried to mobilize the rural groups to counter the political weight of the organized urban sector (Gyimah-Boadi, 1989), but the response so far has been lukewarm. Peasants remain sceptical of crucial aspects of the reforms such as fluctuations in prices, the withdrawal of subsidies from farm inputs, escalating costs of production, and general levels of inflation that affect their consumption of traded goods.

Struggles to protect living standards in the context of crisis and adjustment tend to take on a democratic character. Organized groups demand the institutionalization of collective bargaining, the independence of unions and associations and respect for the rule of law and civil liberties. These are considered to be critical for holding employers and state authorities accountable for their economic policies. Social movements are emboldened by the collapse of the post-colonial social contract and growth rates to press for the reconstitution of the relationship between the state and civil society. Repressive policies to support the implementation of adjustment programmes have not been effective in controlling dissent. Military and one-party forms of rule have come under increasing opposition from organized groups and individuals. Co-opted unions and associations agitate for organizational autonomy from established parties and governments to defend the declining welfare of their members (the Congo, Zambia). Current developments seem to contradict the predictions of neo-liberal theory which expects the business class to play a leading role in democratization (Diamond, 1988). The market reforms, it is argued, will liberate the enterprising potentials of the business groups and encourage them to opt for more democratic modes of government.

Although some business groups and organizations have sided with the popular groups in demanding the reintroduction of multi-party rule in such countries as Benin, Kenya, and Zambia, most of the demonstrations for democracy have been organized by opposition groups and parties with traditional sympathies for the aspirations of the poor. Even those who have joined the pro-democracy movement from the top have done so in the context of advancing the general interests of the populace and advocating for development programmes that would protect the poor and vulnerable sections of society. Contrary to neo-liberal formulations, democratization is seen by the majority of dissident groups as an instrument for obstructing structural adjustment and protecting some of the gains in public welfare and living standards threatened by the reforms. A number of military and one-party régimes have come under considerable pressure to initiate programmes for transitions to multi-party rule. Indeed, partly encouraged by the experiences in Eastern Europe, there has been an intense debate for multi-party democracy in most African countries. The link between alternative strategies of development and democracy has featured in most of these debates. Some governments, such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Mozambique, Zaire and Zambia, have even been forced to initiate plans for transitions to multi-party rule. Other régimes like those of Kenya and Sierra Leone have not conceded much ground to the opposition groups. Similarly, struggles in the existing democracies of the Gambia, Senegal and Zimbabwe have focused on the question of curtailing the post-colonial dominance of the ruling parties and extending the social content of democracy (Bathily, 1989; Moyo, 1989).

The next section examines the politics of transition from authoritarian military rule to democracy. Issues relating to democratization are different from those of sustainable democracy. Sustainability, as we have seen, deals with a complex of economic, social and political factors which may profoundly influence the orientation and character of democratization. Democratization is, however, explicitly political. It concerns the processes of liberalization in the key areas of political life, viz. the demilitarization of the state apparatus; the strengthening of civil society and its institutions; and the democratization of the rules of economic and political competition. The nature of the links between civil and political society occupies a central position in the dynamics and regulation of democratization. I discuss these issues against the background of the Nigerian experience.

3. Authoritarian Democratization: The Nigerian Experience

3.1 Adjustment and democracy

Nigeria is one of the few African countries whose leaders have tried to link democratization with structural adjustment. Democratization in the late 1970s produced a civilian régime that lasted only four years. But the two transitions and the circumstances that produced them are different. The democratic experiment of 1979-83 coincided with extensive state interventions in the economy. Democratization was carried out in the context of massive oil revenues and booming economic activities. The current experiment is taking place in an environment of industrial crisis (MAN, 1987 and 1989), negative rates of GDP growth, a sharp drop in formal employment and real incomes, an expansion of low value added informal sector activities, and huge cuts in public spending on social development, particularly health and education. Table 5 highlights some of these negative trends.

Table 5				
Performance of GDP, education and health sectors (1980/81-1987)				
A	1981	1985	1986	1987
GDP at 1984 values (millions)	80,354	77,092	78,905	78,799
B	1980/81	1985/86		1987
Number of primary schools	35,625	35,433		31,454
Number of primary school teachers	393,144	292,821		280,344
Number of primary school students (thousands)	13,760	12,915		10,817
Recurrent expenditure on education (millions)	712.8	697.2		483.8
Capital expenditure on education (millions)	217.2	126.2		391.4
C	1980	1985	1986	1987
Number of hospitals	694	764	765	763
Number of beds	44,208	48,994	48,136	50,126
Recurrent expenditure on health (millions)	172.5	164.3	247.0	65.0*
Capital expenditure on health (millions)	188.1	59.1	65.2	59.2*

* Provisional figure. **Source:** Federal Office of Statistics (Nigeria), Lagos.

The structural adjustment programme launched in 1986 emphasized the principal role of the market in correcting structural distortions and getting the economy out of the crisis. A competitive foreign exchange market is expected to eliminate import licences and the corruption associated with them; privatization and balanced budgets are to end subventions and inflated contracts; and trade liberalization is to allow the principles of comparative advantage to determine production activities and check state support for inefficient firms. Pro-reform theorists contend, therefore, that the state's liberalization programme is in agreement with liberal democratic theory which identifies the market and an enterprising bourgeoisie as conditions for democratic rule (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1988; Diamond, 1988).

But is liberal democracy the political shell of structural adjustment? Will market reforms liberate the “political class” and business groups from rent-seeking activities and transform the petty commodity sector into supportive avenues for democratization? If, on the other hand, democracy and structural adjustment are a bad mix, as radical critics argue, what accounts for the military’s keen interest in democratization? Why doesn’t the military simply implement its economic programme without recourse to democratization? Can the military usher in a successful and stable democratic order? How strong are the popular groups in influencing the direction of the democratization process?

3.2 Demilitarization and civilian governmental authority

Central to democratic theory and politics is the question of the supremacy of civil governmental authority over the armed forces. The military is expected to be insulated from politics and civil society in general. But the Nigerian military has been in power for 20 of the country’s 30 years of independence. Civil authority collapsed in January 1966 after about five years of self-rule. Military rule lasted until 1979 when civil rule was reconstituted within the framework of a Second Republic. It survived four years before the military again seized power in December 1983. Factional differences led to a coup in 1985 and the launching of both a structural adjustment programme and an elaborate programme of re-democratization, to be completed in 1992. A political bureau was established to monitor a nationwide debate on an appropriate political system. A new constitution was drafted by a Constituent Assembly in which a fifth of the members were appointed by the government. Local government elections were held on non-party basis, followed by the formation of two government-imposed political parties and the promise of elections at state and federal levels. What prospects does the transition programme hold for the demilitarization of the state apparatus? Can the military preside over a democratic transition that will subordinate its role to that of civil political authority?

The military has been a central institution in the development of the state capitalist model of development (Othman, 1989; Turner, 1982; Ekuahare, 1984; Fadahunsi, 1984). It has extended its grip on the national economy through its conquest of state institutions and the award of contracts and company directorships to retired and serving officers. Despite the massive cuts in budget deficits (from 10.3 per cent as a percentage of GDP in 1986 to 2.9 per cent in 1989), the military continues to enjoy a disproportionate share of the federal budget and an array of privileges. The ratio of military expenditure to health and education expenditure was reckoned to be 56 per cent in 1986; and military expenditure as a percentage of GNP rose from 0.2 in 1960 to 1.0 in 1986 (UNDP, 1990). The military’s share of the state’s capital expenditure jumped from 0.8 per cent in 1986 to 4.6 per cent in 1988. That of internal security jumped from a mere 0.1 per cent to 3.9 per cent. These figures contrast sharply with education’s share which fell from 4.3 per cent to 3.9 per cent and the health sector’s share which increased from 0.7 per cent to 1.9 per cent for the same period (CBN, 1988).

A similar picture emerges at the recurrent expenditure sector where the military’s share jumped from 9.5 per cent in 1986 to 12.6 per cent in 1987; whereas that of education and health dropped from 6.3 per cent and 3.2 per cent to 2.3 per cent and 0.4 per cent respectively. Defence took a relatively hard knock in the reflationary budget of 1988, following widespread protests, enjoying 6.9 per cent of the total compared to 7.5 per cent and 2.2 per cent for education and health respectively (CBN, 1988).

Many of the corporate strategies of consolidating the military’s dominance in the society and polity gained momentum after the transition programme was launched. These strategies include the establishment of the defence, air force and naval academies, the procurement of an armoured carrier assembly plant, the formation of a research development cell within the defence ministry, the proposal to have an army bank, and the expansion of the output capacity of the defence industry corporation (Othman, 1987). Military officers are also being posted to

the diplomatic service and appointed to head parastatal organizations. They also sit on the councils and boards of educational establishments and social service institutions.

It is not surprising that several Nigerian scholars and politicians see the military as a brute fact of life – an alternative political party to the civilians.⁴ Ideas of a civil-military diarchy have even been advocated by prominent politicians and business groups as a framework for political stability (Ibrahim, 1986; Bangura, 1986). Popular consciousness questions, however, the expansive presence of the military in civic life. Conflicts have erupted between civilians and military personnel, resulting, in several cases, in considerable loss of life and the violation of legal procedures and civil liberties. (Newswatch, 1989a).

Democratization has been coloured with strong authoritarian practices. Elected local council chairmen have either been dismissed,⁵ or not sworn in by military governors even when the councillors get favourable verdicts from the courts.⁶ Other acts of indiscretion include the arbitrary dissolution of all the local government councils before their full tenure and the appointment of sole administrators to run the councils; the creation of a military consultative council to co-exist with the evolving representative civil institutions; and the anomalous situation where the federal military government would have to supervise elected state and local governments between 1990 and 1992.

Why is the military interested in democratization if it cannot tolerate liberal democratic practices and the rule of law? And what are the implications of the authoritarian conduct of the military for the democratization project? Finer has developed a model that seeks to explain why the military institutionalizes or abdicates power. He constructs a matrix of several variables which are related to two summary variables, viz. “dispositions” and “societal conditions”, which in turn are related to “motivations” and “necessary conditions”. The variables on dispositions include belief in civilian supremacy, threat to the cohesiveness of the military, lack of self-confidence, internal consensus to withdraw from power, and adequate protection of corporate interests. The last two are seen as necessary conditions, while the others are strictly motivational. The societal conditions include internal challenges, external factors, and the availability of a civilian organization to hand over power to. The first two are motivational and the last is a necessary condition (Finer, 1985).

Despite the insights it offers, the model does not fit the Nigerian case. Even though the military is highly visible in most public institutions, the leadership has not abandoned its “stratocratic” character⁷ to rule through a civilian cabinet, a party and a legislature. Nor is the programmed retreat to the barracks a result of the military’s belief in civilian supremacy, the threat to the internal coherence of the military,⁸ or its lack of self-confidence. The military’s contempt of “bloody civilians” is deep-rooted. Its belief in its capacity to rule has not been

⁴ The former president of the Second Republic, Shehu Shagari, was among the first group of politicians to argue that the only two political parties in Nigeria are the military and the civilians. Some Left intellectuals see sections of the military as capable of providing a vanguard for revolutionary change. For a review see Beckman (1986).

⁵ The chairman of the Enugu local government council was removed from office in September 1988 for his “actions, utterances and activities”.

⁶ The Nigerian Bar Association ordered its members to boycott all courts in the country for a few days to protest the refusal of the Gongola state governor to respect the ruling that had upheld the petition of two candidates for the posts of two local government areas in the state.

⁷ Some of the features of institutionalization can, however, be recognized. Babangida is the first military leader to declare himself president; the first to dismiss his second in command; and the first to dissolve the entire Armed Forces Ruling Council; he also makes use of civil patronage to co-opt and neutralize opponents. The press calls him the “Maradona” of Nigerian politics.

⁸ The decision to democratize came before the abortive military putsch of April 1990. The putsch certainly reinforced calls for the speedy implementation of the transition programme.

seriously dented, as it was in 1974-75. Explanations for the military's interest in democratization should be sought elsewhere.

It seems to me that the political traditions that govern civil-military relations, the irrepressible nature of civil society (Ibrahim, 1989), the circumstances that gave birth to the current régime and the political imperatives of the adjustment programme are crucial factors in explaining the régime's commitment to some form of democratization. Despite the military's profound distrust of civilian rule, a tradition has developed that sees the military as an aberration. Gowon's (1966-75) attempt to postpone indefinitely the return to civil rule precipitated his overthrow in 1975. Buhari's régime (1984-85) also became unpopular when the leadership refused to discuss the question of civil rule as part of the stabilization programme. Babangida's régime (1985-) was forced by the circumstances of its birth and its determination to win popular support to make the issue of civil rule central to its economic programme. The most important factor, I believe, is the political imperative of the structural adjustment programme. It made strategic sense to take the initiative at the political arena in order to prevent the civil groups from emerging as a hegemonic force at the political level. This allowed the régime to co-opt sections of the "political class" to its controversial programme, and confront the more unyielding groups at the terrain of the economy and civil society.

Democratization appears, therefore, to be a strategy to regulate the anticipated popular opposition to the economic reform programme. In this regard, the military wields considerable authority in determining the evolution of the transition plan. The contending political forces that are to form the bedrock of civil governmental authority remain extremely weak. Of the 13 political parties that applied for registration to contest for the slots of the decreed two parties, none attempted to challenge the authority of the military in any significant way. The four dominant parties – the People's Solidarity Party, the Nigerian National Congress, the People's Front of Nigeria and the Liberal Convention – were either reincarnations of old political formations or new outfits for launching new millionaires into politics. The four parties were outspoken, in varying degrees, in their support of the military's economic programme even though it was widely believed they did this for clearly opportunistic reasons. While the Nigeria Labour Party, which was expected to be the mouthpiece of workers and other deprived social groups, remained ambivalent on the question of structural adjustment – the leadership being careful not to antagonize the government and ruin its chances of becoming one of the registered parties (Olukoshi, forthcoming). A major contradiction, therefore, exists between the liberal pressures in civil society and the authoritarian practices at the level of political society. Democratic institutions and values are not likely to grow in such an environment.

3.3 Civil society and the state

The military, acting through the state, has found it much more difficult to impose its hegemony in civil society. There is generalized dissatisfaction with the economic reforms. Pressures for democratization and the protection of civil liberties are much more potent in the realm of civil society. It will be wrong to counterpoise the state and civil society in absolute terms. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to separate the two spheres, given their interpenetrability. The state plays a key role in managing all modern economies and in regulating social organizations and the lives of ordinary citizens. But the complex inter-connections between the two spheres does not reduce the state to all facets of civil society. There are several social organizations, covering occupational, household, community, voluntary, gender, media, religious, and ethnic activities that do not fall under the direct control of the state in many societies. Although the class hierarchies in civil society are conditioned by the inequalities in property relations we should also refrain from collapsing civil society with the economy. The state-civil society relationship presents contrasting pictures across socio-economic systems. The state, civil society and the economy should be treated as problematic

concepts in order to be able to ask interesting questions about how social groups perceive of the relationships and what their programmes are in restructuring the three spheres.

Neo-liberals talk of civil society in terms of privatization and a market-based economy. But there is no reason why such a limited view of the concept should hold for all theorists and social actors. We have seen in a previous section that for Gramsci, civil society is distinct from the economy and constitutes “the soft underbelly” of bourgeois rule and an arena for people’s power. The concept as Keane has recently demonstrated, never in fact had a single unproblematic meaning in classical political thought (Keane, 1988a,b).

There is a wide spectrum of positions in contemporary discourses on the relationship between the state and civil society. In Taiwan, democratization led to a slackening of the state’s grip on the economy and the strengthening of private civil institutions (Cheng, 1989). Most of the authors of the four volume study on Latin America’s transition from authoritarian rule believe the social hegemony of capitalism and the retreat of the socialist revolutionary alternative is what will ultimately consolidate the continent’s democratic experiments (O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, 1986). Yet a pre-1989 reform programme of the Solidarity movement in Poland emphasized the need for the transfer of the control and management of factories from the state to democratically elected workers councils, and the introduction of a system of self-management for educational, cultural and media organizations (Pelczynski, 1988).

The Nigerian situation is rather complex. Both the Left and the Right hold statist positions, even though they also advocate for the autonomy of sections of civil society. Nigerian entrepreneurs have combined their statist outlooks with passionate calls for the privatization of public enterprises. Major sections of this group still insist on state protection and adjudication on how the enterprises should be distributed. The Left, of course, sees the state as the custodian of common resources with a mandate to protect popular welfare. The convergence of Left and Right positions on the state should not be surprising. The state is the largest employer of labour, controls substantial resources and an array of social services. Schools, universities, hospitals and vital sections of public transportation would collapse without state support. Industries, commercial enterprises and modern agriculture would not function without the state’s funding of the foreign exchange market.

Most urban social groups, such as trade unions, student organizations and academic unions, advocate for the reform of the state apparatus. But they remain extremely critical of the power of the market in effecting the required changes. In fact, their alternative programmes to the current structural adjustment programme insist on an extension of the state sector, under popular control, and the introduction of a planning system (ASUU, 1984; NLC, 1985; NANS, 1984). Such a statist outlook does not prevent them from agitating for the autonomy of their organizations and the defence of the rule of law and civil liberties. Academics, for instance, operate largely within state structures, but agitate for union independence, academic freedom and university autonomy. Workers accept the union structures imposed on them by the state in 1978, but advocate for union autonomy, free collective bargaining and accountability. The same can be said of the judiciary, large sections of the press and religious/ethnic organizations which are heavily dependent on the state for funds and infrastructure support, yet struggle for autonomous civil space to conduct their respective activities. This contradiction between the acceptance of state intervention and the campaign by the disparate social forces for liberal civil relations is underpinned by a complex system of checks and balances which, Ibrahim has argued, “has prevented the rise of tyrannic or even oligarchic régimes at the national level” (Ibrahim, 1990).

How has the military related to the problematic of the state and civil society in the context of its reform programme? The neo-liberal prediction that the market reforms will promote

liberalization at the social and political levels has not been borne out by the evidence. Conditionality has certainly increased the tempo of the pressures calling for democratization, but state authorities see such pressures as obstructive of the reforms. The state has intervened in civil society in many instances to control dissent and block the popular will for alternatives (Bangura and Beckman, 1989). Many unions and professional associations have been banned; the state security and transition to civil rule decrees (Nos. 2 and 25) have been used extensively to silence critics; academics and journalists have been dismissed from their jobs on political grounds; students, labour activists, journalists and academics have been consistently arrested and detained; organizations have been formed to undermine industrial strikes and intimidate student activists; and the formation of a special anti-strike squad is being contemplated to control national demonstrations against the adjustment measures (Mustapha, 1988; Ibrahim, 1990).

The state has not been able, however, to impose its hegemony in civil society. State repression is being resisted by several interest groups and voluntary organizations. Internal differences within the military, which at times mirror the geopolitical divisions in the country, help to strengthen the resistance of the civil forces. New organizations have emerged specifically focusing on human rights abuses and civil liberties.⁹ Traditionally conservative organizations, such as the Nigerian Bar Association, are being pulled into the arena of democratic politics (Jega, 1989). There is a radical impulse for democratization struggling for expression and dominance in an atmosphere of controlled political competition.

3.4 The democratization of the rules of political competition

A central theme in democratization is the extent to which political actors can develop democratic rules to regulate conflicts emanating from the spheres of production and political society. Existing democracies in Africa and elsewhere are still bedevilled with the problems of managing competition between legitimate political parties (the Gambia, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe). A culture of “winner takes all” encourages political leaders to be distrustful of each other. The strongest dictates the rules.

Nigeria’s current transition programme has not broken with this tradition. Political competition has been restricted to just two parties, appointed by the military. This is in marked contrast to the five parties registered in the Second Republic and the open-party system of the First. Even the rules governing the transition programme remain fluid. Instead of choosing the two parties (itself a restriction in liberalization) from the National Electoral Commission’s list of 13 applicants, the state decided to establish two parties whose constitutions, programmes and ideologies were developed by the government and the national electoral commission (Babangida, 1989). Several individuals have been banned from participating in the established parties, and current participants are wary about the frequent changes in the rules of political contestation (**The Guardian**, 1990). A “cat and mouse” game is being played between banned politicians who remain powerful brokers in their constituencies (and, therefore, command the loyalties of government-approved politicians) and the military, which is determined to block the ambitions of the “old politicians” and let the “new breed” run the show.

The policy of excluding old politicians from politics stems from the general belief that it was the traditional political class that is responsible for wrecking the economy. Most of the prominent politicians of the Second Republic and some business persons were detained during the brief rule of Buhari and Idiagbon, following the overthrow of the Shagari

⁹ The most prominent of the new human rights organizations is the Civil Liberties Organization. Its courageous intervention in the struggles for democratic rights earned it a cover story in one of the leading national weeklies, the **Newswatch** (1989b). Other organizations include the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers.

government. Although they subsequently gained their freedom under Babangida, the feeling persisted that old politicians would fundamentally review the adjustment programme and continue with the reckless spending programmes of the past, if they were allowed to get back into power. The manner in which the conflict between the military and the old politicians is being conducted makes it difficult for open democratic rules of bargaining to emerge and get consolidated. The military uses its executive authority to impose new rules; and the politicians use their informal networks and concealed political power to undermine the objectives of the rules.

The problems of establishing democratic frameworks to regulate social conflicts are brought out in bold relief in the area of industrial relations. To be sure, there are several institutions that have been created to regulate industrial disputes. These include the Industrial Arbitration Panel, ad hoc worker-management committees and consultative meetings, and the courts (Yesufu, 1982). But such institutions have either been manipulated by the state and employers or have failed to take into account the current problems of the recession for workers' welfare. Collective bargaining has been suspended; employers arbitrarily dismiss workers, slash take-home pay, and impose levies on dwindling wages (Bangura, 1989). The state has also intervened in industrial relations to weaken workers' organizations and in some cases to arrest unionists.

Some unions have opted for militant methods of protest because of the intransigence of employers and the limitations of the existing institutions for managing disputes. The state has tried to exploit the internal divisions among unionists as a basis to either tilt the internal balance of power in favour of its preferred candidates or to suspend the organization and blunt what it perceives to be a radical union orientation toward the reforms. The rules governing the election of officials to the executive of the Nigeria Labour Congress were set aside in February 1988, in an attempt by the government to impose its will on the leadership of the organization. The transition programme has failed to provide a democratic framework for handling industrial, political and systemic disputes.

Conclusion

What are the general conclusions to be drawn from the Nigerian experience? The first is the tension between economic liberalization and political authoritarianism. Economic liberalization imposes tremendous hardships on disadvantaged groups and undermines the social contract of the post-colonial development model.¹⁰ Experiences elsewhere, such as in Latin America and Eastern Europe, show that democratic régimes come under considerable pressure as they try to manage complex transition programmes in the context of economic crisis and restructuring. Attempts to impose a sense of realism on the population, i.e. getting people to accept the macro-economic policies of stabilization, is often accompanied by calls for welfare support, which would entail some relaxation of budgetary discipline. The need to make concessions to vulnerable groups has been recognized by most governments. The international financial institutions have also been trying to link adjustment policies with poverty alleviation programmes in many African countries.

It is apparent that economic reforms of the type formulated in most African countries in the 1980s will be difficult to implement in a liberal democratic framework. And yet the reforms themselves require a new political legitimacy for their success. Democratization is supposed to provide the basis for a new social contract predicated on new social and political alliances. But the forces in support of the reforms (or those likely to benefit from them) remain fragmented and politically weak. Given the state's continued control of huge oil revenues,

¹⁰ The civil war of 1966-1970 seriously weakened the social contract of the early post-colonial model of development. The social contract was re-launched in Gowon's Dawn of National Reconstruction speech of January 1970 (**New Nigerian**, 1970).

most of the dominant social groups still perceive of politics as the struggle for the control and appropriation of public resources. Difficulties in forging a sustainable social alliance¹¹ have contributed to the intensification of authoritarian practices. The adverse conditions created by both economic liberalization and authoritarian rule provide an “enabling environment” for civil groups to press for democratization. Democratization in this context is an antidote to structural adjustment. This distinguishes the democracy movement in Africa from that of Eastern Europe and explains the ambivalence of Western powers and international financial institutions toward the struggles for democracy in Africa.¹² While in support of democracy, they remain opposed to any attempts to change the direction of the economic reforms.

The second conclusion is the contradiction between the dynamic pressures for democratization at the civil arena and the conformist thrust of the political actors at the state level. Democratization requires the liberalization of both civil and political society. Most of the active groups in civil society have not been able to make much impact at the wider political arena. The military and the principal political parties continue to dominate this sphere. The decision by the civil political class to accept the military-decreed parties is an indication of its reluctance to open up the political system to democratic challenges and establish effective links between the pressures in civil society and the democratization of state practices. On the other hand, the strength of the civil groups is compromised by the virtual lack of participation of the peasant communities in the pro-democracy movement. Both the military and the politicians rely on the disarticulations in rural-urban relations, and the patronage networks that arise therefrom, to maintain the status quo at the political level.

Underlying the authoritarian character of democratization is the crisis of state power and capitalist hegemony in civil society. The debate on capitalism in Africa has been concerned primarily with the dominance of capitalist property relations rather than with the social context in which they operate.¹³ Radical political economists tend to assume that the hegemony of the business class and the power élite will naturally follow from the development of capitalism. But the recession and the market reforms seem to have generated an intense ideological and cultural opposition to capitalist rule. The rate of popular rebellions and withdrawals from formal state and transnational projects is a function of weak ruling class hegemony (Rudebeck, 1989 and 1990). This weakness has undermined the capacity of the ruling authorities (both civil and military) and business groups to opt for democratic forms of government. Beckman’s advocacy for a “bourgeois democracy” in Africa, with strong pressures from popular forces, is difficult to sustain in this context (Beckman, 1990). As Gutto puts it, African ruling classes “fear free and fair elections” (Gutto, 1988). Elections, conducted fairly, will impose some accountability on state practices and check the excesses of rent-seeking activities. The dilemmas of the ruling groups have meant that in most countries in the continent, popular social movements have come to play a major role in the struggles for democracy. This has not excluded sections of the dominant power groups from joining these forces in the pro-democracy movement.

The central role of the poor and disadvantaged in the democracy project underlines the need to link formal democracy with more substantive forms of popular rule. I highlight two arguments for this linkage. The first, primarily theoretical, is derived from my original

¹¹ Programmes such as MAMSER (mass mobilization for self-reliance) and DFRRI (directorate for food, roads and rural infrastructure) have not achieved their objects of creating a new social order despite the huge resources they command and their co-optation of many professionals.

¹² French troops were sent to oil-rich Gabon in 1990 to defend Omar Bongo’s régime against the mass demonstrations for democratization.

¹³ The debates on capitalism in Kenya in the **Review of African Political Economy** (Nos. 8, 17, 19) and on classes and imperialism in Africa, in Dar es Salaam (Y. Tandon (ed.), **State, class and imperialism**, Tanzania Publishing House) did not address the social dimensions of capitalism.

formulation of the problem, in which authoritarianism is linked with particular forms of accumulation and social structures. Stable democratization logically assumes significant changes in the structure and forms of accumulation, than an exclusive focus on rules and institution building. Such changes, as we have argued, involve the integration of rural-urban relations, and an improvement in the democratic participation of popular groups in the governance of economic enterprises. This calls for the empowerment of the majority, but socially deprived groups, the provision of popular welfare and the reduction of inequalities.

The second argument is political or normative. Social movements have themselves linked the struggles for democracy with questions of alternative development strategies (Anyang' Nyong'o, 1987; Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1988). Indeed, it is primarily the debate on how to overcome the economic and political problems of the crisis and economic reforms that has brought to the fore questions of political rights and accountable government. For instance, the original decision of the Nigeria Labour Congress to launch a Labour Party was to provide a platform to strengthen workers' struggles against repression and the economic hardship of structural adjustment (Olukoshi, forthcoming). A Labour Party in government was expected to implement the union's alternative programme to the economic reforms (NLC, 1985).

This linkage between democracy and alternative development questions an aspect of the current African debate that emphasizes the struggle for "democracy in its own right" (Anyang' Nyong'o, 1988b,c; Mkandawire, 1988b; Gutto, 1988; Shivji, 1990; Ibrahim, 1990). Pressures for democratization do not present themselves in such idealist and abstract terms. While it is an ideal to be cherished, democracy must make sense to the interests of the contending social groups. These interests do not have to be narrowly defined as economic; they can also be social and political. Linking democracy to the restructuring of the economy allows individuals and organizations to pose the question of democratic governance of public resources much more sharply. It is a more realistic way of surmounting the colossal tasks of launching underdeveloped crisis economies along the paths of stable and sustainable democratization.

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