Chapter 10
Appreciating the complexity of Anglophone African democracies

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Since their independence from Britain, the ten countries studied in this book have spent a great deal of political capital trying to develop a level of peace, prosperity and trust within their borders. Their efforts have had mixed outcomes with states trending between two political extremes — democracy or, where essential civic foundations are more brittle, a form of autocracy. In an attempt to illustrate their uneven results, the authors in this book have compared key political elements that underpin most stable democratic systems. These elements, however, do not exist in isolation and their interaction continues to complicate these countries' political development.

Key Intersecting Issues:

In their various chapters, the authors in this book identify several persistent issues that still shape each county's political stability. These intersecting issues at times bisect each nation's politics but, if leaders act proactively to mitigate their effects, they can also bond these societies in ways that will promote general prosperity and much-needed trust.

a. Political Institutions and the effect of their Colonial legacy

Many scholars have studied the effects colonialism has had on the politics of former colonies. Young (1994, 2004, 2012), for instance, blamed a colonial legacy for undermining the power structures of the newly independent states which Frimpong-Ansah (1992) suggested impeded the growth of more liberal opposition movements. Other assessments, however, show that some democracies have benefitted from their colonial heritage. Dias, as an example, used a historical comparison together with a quantitative analysis of statistics from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset to measure the influence of this legacy. His findings suggest that the basic administrative structures,

such as local parliamentary elections with universal suffrage, created stronger civil societies and more inclusive democratic regimes although, it must be mentioned, he only studied four case studies, two of which – Ghana and Kenya – are covered in this book.

Collier (1982) has similarly researched the British effort to introduce political institutions to facilitate debate and participation from across racial lines. Her study revealed that democratic development had been hamstrung in cases where white populations were allowed to dominate the political sphere – South Africa and Zimbabwe are prime examples. When full multi-racial participation was allowed black elites not only dominated but did so through a singular and dominant party that relied on repressive and coercive tactics to stay in control.

Yolanda Sadie's depiction of the role elections play in guarding democratic consolidation concurs and methodically illustrates these findings within each of the ten case studies. Influenced by colonial preferences, many of the sample countries have adopted simple-majoritarian election systems with the exception, Sadie notes, of South Africa with its proportional representation system and Zimbabwe's move towards a mixed system. Regardless, it seems as though the manner in which seats are calculated ultimately favours larger parties –– essentially reinforcing their dominance and limiting the number of women who are elected as representatives. Sadie discusses the attempts

various countries and their political parties have used to mitigate this inequity while underlining the fact that women's representation is more than symbolic, their presence helps change (or perhaps threaten) an essentially paternalistic political culture.

Another by-product of the various electoral systems Sadie recognises, which is similar to trends tracked in the US electoral process (McKee 2008), is the disproportionate influence rural constituencies have on the overall outcome. This trend also seems to further illustrate Collier's (1982) finding that single party dominance, especially that which is prone to using electoral malpractice to ensure its political position, is likely to persist. Sadie suggests that allegations of malfeasance seem to accompany nearly every election cycle despite tightened electoral laws, constitutions and the presence of electoral management bodies to oversee the registration, voting and tabulation processes.

b. Securing peace

The terms 'peace' and 'development' are dynamic and relative concepts that have not quite taken root across all the case studies. A relatively peaceful form of development, where that exists, can be interpreted as democracy developing some foundation in the society's political culture. Granted

there have been no formal military interventions in recent years — Zimbabwe's 2017 military's pseudo-role being a glaring outlier — which seems to show some progress from earlier years where long-standing military juntas managed countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. But persistent inequality and under-development have spurred violent tensions between ethnic groupings in Kenya (particularly around elections periods such as 2017) and between locals and immigrants (South Africa's xenophobic attacks in 2008 and 2019) and with extremist organisations such as al-Qaeda affiliates Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al Shabab in Kenya and Tanzania.

In addition, various policing forces have displayed their baser tendencies when coping with protesters and their demands for improved service delivery and freer expression. These are demands that have come from a burgeoning middle class and a younger demographic whose voice is beginning to dissolve some of the sugary spin that is characteristic of ruling administrations. Raising issues such as the right to land and other social-economic benefits have become a rallying cry for many, far more assertive citizens, who feel ignored and are unemployed.

By championing their right to land, the youth have resurrected a simmering injustice. In many ways, land is the so called 'third rail' of African politics and redressing the policy effects of the last century is something post-colonial governments have been slow to address. As Afolabi and Gilles de Pelichy acknowledge, it is the single issue that has sparked conflict across the sample and provokes governments to use more highhanded measures, often at the risk of ruining their fragile economies — Zimbabwe is the perfect case in point — or widening inequity as is seemingly the case in South Africa. But as the Botswana case shows it can also be the issue that develops a sense of inclusion for both customary and individual claims. Land is certainly an emotive issue and people's attachment to it is something democracies need to address.

The growing economic and political needs of the youth is another major undercurrent these African countries will have to address. But while many countries have developed a type of Youth Council to manage ever rising expectations, such initiatives lack the capacity and purpose to properly engage their constituencies. For Victoria Graham much of this can be blamed on the fact that an older leadership governs party and political structures who are unable to fully appreciate their younger base's demanding approach to politics. And the youth, as Graham points out, are far from politically disengaged. Thanks to their savvy use of technology they are able to broadcast their agitation in ways not seen in earlier political periods. Their challenge of democracy's non-delivery could incite a push for an alternative form of government, perhaps one that is aligned to a more autocratic model.

To address some of these concerns and restore faith in democratic systems requires adopting and enforcing a constitution that enshrines values such as accountability and transparency. In tracking the three ways accountability can manifest – vertical, horizontal and personal – Reinders describes both the positive and negative consequences for each of the case studies. One of his specific concerns is identifying how presidential term limits have been circumvented essentially undermining the credibility and viability of a country's democracy. This is a factor that is also raised in Afolabi and Reinders' study of leadership which traces a disturbing move towards personalised and corrupt leaders in countries such as Ghana (1960-1966), Malawi (1964-1994), Zambia (1964-1991), and, until recently, Zimbabwe (1980-2017). Unfortunately, at some point these leaders' natural charisma gives way to authoritarian tendencies ushering in more autocratic measures as Lührmann and Lindberg describe in their 2019 article. This autocratic turn, as Reinders and Afolabi also suggest, has been coupled with a murky attempt at transparency that has used political manipulation to circumvent legal prescripts and, for the most part, obscure growing corruption.

c. Financing credibility

Corruption is a defining theme that is explored throughout this book. Sadie, for instance, suggests that much of the fiscal proceeds from corrupt deals finance political parties, particularly those in power. Such deals have become the hallmarks of patronage politics which have, in turn, swelled the number of civil servants to unhealthy levels and skewed government expenditure to favour unviable state-owned business entities from which key supporters, and parties, benefit. Zambia's decision to become the majority shareholder in the country's copper mines between 1969 and 1970, Nigeria's move to nationalise British Petroleum's (BP) holdings in 1979, Zimbabwe's forays into land redistribution, and the South African government's dogged investment in its failing airline South African Airways are a few examples. And astute leaders such as Hastings Banda, Julius Nyerere, Daniel arap Moi, Robert Mugabe, and Jacob Zuma were all able to milk these politics and stay in office amidst growing public dissent. To some degree public rancour towards these leaders helped opposition groups win control; Zambia, for instance, has seen a rotation of power amongst different opposition parties since President Kaunda lost the 1991 election.

Since the 1990s, international lending bodies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, who are among the first ports of call for African leaders looking for economic assistance, have written into their loan agreements key Structural Adjustment Programmes and revised legal standards that entrench good governance. They hoped that these stipulations would help liberalise

economic policies and force a privatisation of state-owned entities effectively undermining patronage politics and shoring up these countries' economies and democratic systems. This move has had mixed success. Politically these conditions have simply produced more uncertainty – the effects of Nigeria's revised constitution and Uganda's new standard are two examples explored in this text. On the other hand, South Africa's new constitution engendered far more encouraging signs and the provisions inspired successful multi-party elections in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi buoyed by greater civic freedoms and voter participation.

In some cases the measures achieved their purpose and prepared these economies to leverage their natural resources such as oil, cocoa, copper, diamonds, cobalt, cadmium (Rotberg 2013). It is an initiative African leaders and political parties should consider continuing given their growing fiscal demands and rates of unemployment.

After independence many states looked to expand their trading networks and source development aid from nations other than Britain. They forged links with countries such as Canada and Sweden but with minimal success because they were inexperienced negotiators with weak economies – a position that will likely be further hamstrung by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. In addition, regional trade blocks such as ECOWAS and SADC will play will likely play a minimal role.

As they scan for potential trading partners, these countries should not overlook the possible benefits of a relationship with their former colonial administrator. The UK's decision to leave the European Union and renegotiate its trade partnerships could, as Suzanne Graham demonstrates, present a real possibility for these colonies to strengthen their economies and mitigate their spiralling youth unemployment numbers. By increasing their ties with their former colonial power it is distinctly possible that these countries can use their affiliation to Britain and its Commonwealth members to fund a green economy that could employ and engage their younger populations. Stabilising these key economic factors could be the salve that these leaders need to grow genuine trust and develop thriving democratic systems.

d. Affecting Political Participation and Competition

These scholars do indeed outline several factors that those interested in democracy and its stability should watch and understand. But these factors alone do not explain the strength and possible resilience of some of the studied democratic systems. This is why Sadie and Victoria Graham, like Bratton and Van de Walle (1997), highlight the crucial role political participation and competition

play in a system's survival. While most regimes aspire towards a multi-party system many have simply endorsed intra-party rather than inter-party competition.

This tendency seems to justify the scholarly preoccupation with mapping the strategic moves of political elites. O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whithead (1986) looked at how elites steer political and institutional contexts mainly because economic development across the continent is relatively low (Lindberg, 2006, 2009). While Bratton (1998) and van de Walle's (2003) work went further and traced the tactics incumbent elites used to retain office with Lindberg (2009) describing how elites controlled the outcome of multi-party elections in previously authoritarian countries.

Afolabi and Reinders allude to more recent attempts to understand how leaders in liberation movements have shaped their country's democratic stability. Garcia-Ponce and Wantchekon (2011) found that movements that used urban protests, mass mobilisation and essentially non-violent actions developed stronger civil societies and embedded a more resilient political culture. Conversely those that waged a rural insurgency tended to use more violent approaches. Garcia-Ponce and Wantchekon seem to assume that political culture depends solely on the nature of the independence movement and ignore other factors such as path dependency and the staging of regular, even though not regarded as fully democratic, elections (Miller 2015). Their study also does not account for institutional variation amongst the different colonies which Sadie and du Toit show can be an influential factor.

du Toit acknowledges that civil society's link with key democratic processes is a crucial factor for promoting essential freedoms of speech and upholding a degree of transparency during electoral cycles. This sector is also part of each country's colonial legacy and stirs debate about the need for essential service delivery often having to provide these services themselves. Zimbabwe's civil society, as an example, has worked hard under extraordinarily repressive conditions to promote the plight of its people and will, hopefully, continue to act as a watchdog and encourage a deeper respect for democracy in the years to come.

e. Strategically Harnessing Communications

Media coverage and its effects are also mentioned in several of the book's chapters. Authors point to the many uses of communication technology and illustrate Freyburgi and Garbe (2018) findings that authorities use networks to spread disinformation and block access on election days. Post-colonial states have also used various platforms to track their people (Breckenridge 2005) and bring their constituencies to heel (Falola and Heaton 2005).

Africa's leaders have indeed worked hard to control the airwaves to curb violence and win the support and adoration of their constituents (Clapham 1996; Herbst 2014; Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Radio stations were particularly vulnerable to state control as Sadie and others studying its role in the Kenyan 2007 election suggests (also see Diepeveen 2019; Somerville 2011). Newspapers, as Njube (2001) found, have helped leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) defend their credentials. While South Africa's exiled ANC and the SACP leaders used radio to build opposition networks inside the country (Davis 2009).

Strategic use of communications mediums is clearly not a new phenomenon but with mobile technology rapidly expanding across the continent, the role digital platforms play is a rising factor for democracy's success. Cost-effective digital infrastructure has encouraged new ideas, finance and entrepreneurial activities and is pushing centralised authorities to re-imagine their roles while new internal and international partnerships are being formed. Platforms such as Twitter have allowed political parties to grow their funding and support base with campaigns such as #ThisFlag and #ThisGown in Zimbabwe sparking viral messaging that has (re)configured content and a largely youthful voice (Gukurume 2017; Tully and Ekdale 2014). While others, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, have provided a medium for extremist and populist organisations such as Boko Haram to recruit a base of acolytes and wage an insurgency in Nigeria (Banyongen 2020). Some governments have even repurposed geospatial technologies brought in to shorten response times for humanitarian initiatives to increase their ability to monitor societies and ostensibly provide greater security (Duffield 2015).

Ultimately, as the authors in this book depict, these Anglophone African states have the foundations, however brittle they might be, to develop their democracies. But they need to address these intersecting issues to foster lasting peace, prosperity and a firm level of trust.

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