

**Africa And The Democratic Option:
A Quest For Effectiveness and Legitimacy in Governance**

by

Austin Ogunsuyi

ISBN: 1-58112-225-X

DISSERTATION.COM



USA • 2004

Africa And The Democratic Option: A Quest For Effectiveness and Legitimacy in Governance

Copyright © 1992 Austin Ogunsuyi
All rights reserved.

Dissertation.com
Boca Raton, Florida
USA • 2004

ISBN: 1-58112-225-X

AFRICAN AN THE DEMOCRATIC OPTION:
A QUEST FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND
LEGITIMACY IN GOVERNANCE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

AUSTIN OGBE OGUNSUYI

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JULY 1992

ABSTRACT

AFRICA AND THE DEMOCRATIC OPTION: A QUEST FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND LEGIMACY IN GOVERNANCE.

The prospect for democracy in Africa is the central concern of this study. The factors that contribute to the existence of undemocratic or autocratic governments in most of Africa, therefore, become our major focus for evaluation.

An analysis of the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial political history of Africa attribute autocracy in Africa to irreconcilable differences between the African traditional institutions and the imposed colonial political and economic systems. This socioeconomic and political disharmony, orchestrated by the colonial economics of exploitation, set the tone for neocolonial African states fraught with economic and political instability.

Our research strategy involved a qualitative technique of collecting and analyzing a significant body of data relating to the political history of African states. Through an Afrocentric prism, the flaws of the African political and economic systems are traced to underlying deficiencies in the nature of its states. For a second and perhaps authentic emancipation of Africa, the components of the state

structure must be realigned giving priority to the values, customs, and traditions of African people. This should form the base for a democratic environment that will usher in effectiveness and legitimacy in governance in those states.

A democratization front, comprising of Africans in Africa and the Diaspora, is advocated to design and monitor the democratization movement in the continent. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) should serve as the supervisory body to the democratization front. The philosophy of the democratization front would include a pan-African mobilization against the forces of political, economic, and social exploitation of the continent.

DEDICATION

In Memory of my father
Dominique Ogunsuyi Aimievbiyevbomon
and my mother
Comfort Emuakhuemehi Akhilele
May their souls rest in peace.

© 1992

Austin Ogbe Ogunsuyi
All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgment

As my first major scholarly work, I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to all those who helped me flesh out these knotty issues that have bemused my mind since my adolescence years in Africa.

Among those I owe special gratitude are my thesis advisor, Dr. Hashim Gibrill and the Political Science Department Chairman, Dr. William Boone. I am also grateful to Dr. Kwaku Danso, Dr. Wilson, and Dr. Fred Noble who, as my faculty adviser, helped to map out the most efficient and expeditious manner I could complete my graduate studies at Clark Atlanta University.

To my colleagues and comrades in Ujamma, our Political Science Association, I say thank you for your support of my leadership this past year. I also extend special thanks to Ms. Edith Gray, our department secretary, Richard Quarles, and his fine colleagues at the Woodruff Library who always went a step beyond the call of duty.

Finally, my gratitude goes to my brothers, sisters, and other family members who have waited patiently and resisted the temptation to impose undue pressure on me while I strive to complete my studies.

Abstract.....	2
Copyright page.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	5
Table of Contents.....	6
Chapter	
Introduction.....	8
Hypothesis.....	11
Statement of the Problem.....	14
Conceptual Framework	
Introduction.....	17
The State in Africa.....	18
Neocolonialism.....	21
Euro-American Rhetoric.....	25
Political and Economic liberation.....	29
Afrocentric Prism.....	34
Part 1 Overview.....	36
Methodology, Research Techniques, Analytical Framework and Literature Review.	
Introduction.....	38
Methodology.....	39
Research Technique.....	39
Analytical Framework.....	44
Literature Review	
Major Trends.....	47
Popular Participation and Economic Development.....	51
A Flaw in Theory.....	55
The United Nations: Friend or Foe?.....	60
Western Perspective.....	67
Part 2 Overview.....	73
Political, Economic and Psycho-Social Dimensions of Autocracy In Africa.	
Introduction.....	83
Political Dimension	
The Value Factor.....	83
Autocracy Installed.....	83
A Ruling Elite.....	87
Religion, A Factor.....	89
Communality, A Factor.....	91
External Factors: Euro-American Complex...	92
Framework for Action.....	96

Economic Dimension	
Introduction.....	98
Global inequalities.....	99
Colonial Economics.....	103
Obstacles To Reform.....	106
Two Worlds In One.....	111
Psycho-Social Dimension	
Introduction.....	117
Functional Domination.....	119
Afrocentric Framework.....	122
Part 3 Overview.....	123
Conclusion	
Introduction.....	126
Findings.....	127
Recommendations.....	142
Philosophy For Democratization Front.....	144
Bibliography.....	145

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since their independence, African nations have witnessed various forms of repressive governments.¹ With few exceptions, the entire continent could easily be described as an authoritarian theater that has eluded democracy or popular participation² in any meaningful sense. Several reasons have been advanced for this situation. Some include the fact that the colonial history of African states set in motion a tradition of repressive mechanisms in the name of governance.³ Others suggest that the repressive outlook is a reflection of the backwardness of the people and their inability to govern themselves democratically.⁴ However, the consensus of concerned opinions points to an urgent need to garner legitimacy for more effective forms of government to evolve on the African continent.⁵

¹ Walter Bgoya and G. Hyden, "The African State in Crisis: In Search of a Second Liberation," Development Dialogue, 1987:2, 7.

² Democracy and popular participation are used synonymously in this study.

³ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of The Earth, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 35.

⁴ David Apter, The Politics of Modernization, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 81.

⁵ International Conference On Popular Participation In The Recovery And Development Process In Africa, African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation,

Historically, most African states inherited their form of government from the colonial authorities. The states were exposed to two contemporary models—the Westminster parliamentary democracy and the Stalinist one-party absolutism. Through the years, the one-party system has ironically gained prominence over the move toward democracy. A tradition of authoritarianism was, in many instances, installed and later overtaken by more repressive regimes of military dictatorships.⁶

Three decades after independence, mainly under authoritarian regimes, African states still grapple with the most basic questions of effectiveness and legitimacy in governance. For most areas, repressive measures have escalated, economic situations have worsened, and starvation has pervaded; the international community has appalled at the deterioration of the African societies.⁷

Democracy as an option,⁸ for the second and hopefully

(United Republic of Tanzania, Arusha: February 12-16, 1990), 11.

⁶ Walter Bgoya and G. Hyden, "The African State in Crisis: In Search of a Second Liberation", Development Dialogue 1987):2, 15.

⁷ This must not be confused with the notion that all members of the international community actually worry over the predicaments of African societies. The business community, which continues to gain from the poor economic conditions, seems not to care.

⁸ "Option," in the title of this study, highlights the competing political structures in the continent. They include

authentic emancipation of Africa, has become a serious consideration by various concerned interests. The deliberations at the Lagos Plan of Action, the African Priority Program for Economic Recovery, and the Dag Hammarskjold seminar at Uppsala set the tone for later discussions. While some of these discussions have tended to attribute every predicament facing Africa to the lack of democracy, others have assigned only partial blame. The strategies for solution, therefore, have been influenced by assumptions of the situation.⁹

With the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic,¹⁰ opinions seemed converged toward the necessity and timely adoption of popular participation in African states. Meanwhile, there remains a cloud of uncertainty regarding the undefined nature and processes democracy should assume. Of particular concern to political scientists is the need to analyze the nature of the states' crises in order to determine the prospects of democracy in Africa. Equally serious concerns must be given to the need to guard against creating an environment that disorients the members of society intended to benefit from the very ideals of

communist/socialist, Islamic regimes, military/dictatorial, and democratic/popular participation.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ A. Glass and J. Albright, "The Last Soviet: Gorbachev Quits As Communist Flag Comes Down," Atlanta Constitution, 26 December 1991. This marked the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, the base of communism.

political, social, and economic transformations. The reins of Western models of democracy must be handled in a way as to benefit African societies through processes that conform to the rationality of African peoples. For calculating long-term progressive efforts, hindsight should advise that the abysmal failure of both the parliamentary and Stalinist socialist structures serve as sad reminders of the results of wholesale delivery of "alien structures" without due considerations of political, economic, and social history.

Hypothesis

Popular participation in Africa is the panacea to political instability and economic retardation of its countries.

By democracy or popular participation, it is meant the institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.¹¹

This hypothesis propels three basic tenets. The first is the Utopian concept that sees democratic principles as the inalienable rights of citizens to be part of the decision making process of their society. The second rests on the utilitarian concept, which believes that with

¹¹ Carl Cohen, ed., Communism, Fascism and Democracy, (New York: Random House, 1972), Democracy as Competition for Political Leadership, by Joseph Schumpeter, 550.

democracy, a polity could be galvanized toward economic goals and would, in the long run, bring about the development of their society. The third tenet, in a world environment that has witnessed the demise of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republican, reaffirms if not imposes the model of Western liberal democracy consumed in a Judeo-Christian history as the most viable system of political transformation.

Individually and collectively, these various viewpoints could argue that political stability is a precursor to economic growth. However, the thrust of their argument differs in the most desirable process for the attainment of democratic ideals or on the time limit for attaining such goals.

The Utopian concept is obviously strong on its argument that democratic principles of equality, fraternity, and freedom promote a polity of self-conscious and public-motivated individuals. In theory, these individuals should be committed to the protection and stability of their political environment to guarantee those rights. However, an overemphasis of the Utopian qualities of unbridled freedom for citizens often translates into anarchy. This was demonstrated in the political upheavals that arose soon after the French Revolution in 1789.

The utilitarian concept tends to be more realistic

because its argument weighs more on the processes of democratic attainment rather than the ideals by themselves. Incidentally, the practical models of democracy in the world today—liberal Western societies—promote representative democracy. By implication, the Athenian models of direct democracy, which according to many scholars are the ideal type, have often been compromised or obliterated. Proponents of the representative models in the United States and other countries insist it was the most practicable manner of democratic practice in a highly populated and diverse society.

The final concept emanating from the hypothesis rests on the notion of the African environment in a fast changing world. This brings to this study specificity, while trying to adapt the essence of the earlier discussed concepts to the African reality. However, it raises some questions. (1) Must the seeming collapse of communism or socialism alone determine whether African states adopt democracy? (2) To what extent must the Utopian ideal be mixed with the utilitarian notions to produce the most desirable model of democracy that would foster economic development? (3) To what extent do both the internal and external forces that impact the African environment support the authentic development of democratic ideals?

These and related issues will form the thrust and focus

of this study. Details for testing these questions will be elaborated under Methodology and Analytical Framework (Chapter 2).

A Statement of the Problem:

A PEOPLE MARGINALIZED

Tyranny has deprived most African states of political legitimacy. The subjects or victims see the state as a hostile force to be evaded, cheated, or defeated as circumstances permit. Consequently, loyalties are focused on local communities and primary groups, which are often very caring and never threatening. In effect, what is happening in Africa is the dissolution of society rather than its development.¹²

With these words, Claude Ake articulates the bane of most African societies caught in the web of authoritarian governance. The irony is that, three decades after the hard won independence, the majority of the people who fought to overthrow colonialism do not have any say in their government.

With high hopes for popular participation, many Africans welcomed the independence of their countries and geared up for politics. But fate soon revealed that such an ideal was illusory in a complex of historical realities of superpower exploitation and local bourgeois connivance.

A scholastic review of the problem must seek to

¹² Claude Ake, "Development and Democracy: Working Democracy," The Carter Center Emory University, Working Papers on African Governance in the 1990s.

highlight the various facets that perpetuate authoritarian regimes in Africa. It must also seek to answer several questions. (1) What has led to the authoritarian proclivity of African nations? (2) What were the effects of these authoritarian regimes on development prospects of those countries? (3) What are the political options available to those societies?

The first question received some support from our opening quotes from Ake. In an overview of the African political theater, Ake believes that no democratic government persists because Africa has turned away from its democratic tradition. The second question evokes a quick reminder of the present political and hence developmental impact of authoritarianism in Africa, which requires no special skills to identify and enumerate. Tyranny has deprived the people of participation in their government, development has stagnated, and citizens have been alienated. Meanwhile, the decimation of the society through the exploitative mechanisms of former colonial authorities continues, a result of the porous nature of the artificial state structures imposed by the colonial authorities.¹³

The final question tries to explore solutions to the problem, weighing the few possible alternatives. On this question rests the essence of our thesis topic: Africa and

¹³ Ibid.

the Democratic Option¹⁴: A Quest for Effectiveness and Legitimacy in Governance. By implication, the assumption that democracy is an option is implied. Explicating this problem would necessitate resolving some key questions. (1) Why democracy? (2) How conducive is Africa's internal and external political and economic environments to promote a democratic option? (3) How will Africa attain popular participation?

Opinions on each of these questions remain as diverse as the numerous views expressed on the issue. However, the first question obviously confronts the thesis topic's tacit assumption on the notion that democracy was a viable option. It reaffirms the idea that democracy is not the only possible option but one among several considerations.¹⁵ Invariably, it requires an investigation to probe any validity while weighing all counter viewpoints and alternatives to those suggested earlier. Such a strategy for research eliminates rigidity on the part of the researcher and frees the subject

¹⁴ The question of option reaffirms the cautious note in the analysis of existing systems and careful consideration of any viable alternative. It is instructive to remember that since Africa currently suffers from the imposition of unbridled alien political structures (the thesis of this concern), a choice of desirable political transformation must seek to reconcile the intended system with the socio-cultural and political realities of the people to be legitimate and effective.

¹⁵ Several Africa nations have severally experimented with the parliamentary, socialist, presidential, authoritarian and/or military regimes at various levels of their political, socio-cultural history (Development Dialogue).

from any hasty conclusions that were likely to be drawn from rigid, narrow and simplistic premises.

The question regarding the conduciveness of Africa's internal and external political and economic environment to promote the democratic option draws attention to the internal political arrangement of most African nations and the overwhelming influence on these nations by external forces (the Euro-American complex). This should seek to elucidate the structural imperatives of the African political realities in the climate of a global systemic order orchestrated by superpower muscle flexing. By implication, it lays the groundwork that envisages strategies for solutions that would demand deliberate efforts to apply problem-solving devices, at both the internal and external levels, and for any desirable solution to be reached.

Finally, the question on how Africa will attain democracy reinforces the need for a thorough evaluation of Africa's romance with democracy in its peculiar neocolonial environment. A deep sense of Africa's pre-colonial and postcolonial historical realities should be instructive to fashion a democratic atmosphere peculiar to Africa's needs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

A conscious effort must be made to attempt an overarching definition of democracy. Both its internal dynamics and its interrelationship with social and economic systems must be examined. Africa's disposition or adaptability under existing circumstances must also be determined.

Given the plethora of definitions of democracy, prudence would advise a definition most compatible to our present concern. Seymour Lipset's Some Social Prerequisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy provides a cross between Joseph Schumpeter and Max Weber, which should be adequate for our present engagement.¹⁶ According to Lipset, democracy in a complex society is defined as a political system that supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials. It is the social mechanism for the resolution of the problem, in society's decision-making among conflicting interest groups, which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence its decisions through their ability to choose among alternative contenders.¹⁷

This definition exposes the deficiency of most African nations, which lack either partial or total apparatus for collective decision making. The existence of antagonizing interests groups, which many analysts relate to ethnic diversity, religious, and traditional groups in most African states, further reaffirms the bases for internal social

¹⁶ Seymour Lipset, Some Social Requisites For Democracy, (Missouri: The Bobb Merrill Reprint Series in Social Sciences, 1959), 70.

¹⁷ Ibid., 71

instability. The instability perpetuates undemocratic propensities in the polity. The key points to note in this definition includes:

- (a) a political formula that provides a system of beliefs, legitimizing the democratic system and specifying the institutions/political parties, a free press, and so forth;
- (b) one set of political leaders in office; and
- (c) one or more sets of leaders, out of office, who act as a legitimate opposition attempting to gain office.¹⁸

In seeking to develop a conceptual framework of Africa and the democratic option, the following three basic conditions need evaluation: Africa's largely undemocratic proclivity, which is the nature of the state in Africa; the rhetoric of the Euro-American complex states on the democratization of Africa, which is neocolonialism; and Africa's prerogative to adopt and integrate democracy to its political reality, which is political and economic liberation.

THE STATE IN AFRICA

To design a political formula based on a system of beliefs, legitimizing the democratic system and specifying institutions, we must seek to understand the structural nature of African states and their multifaceted layers of political institutions consumed in a colonial history. The

¹⁸ Ibid., 71.

structural imperatives propelling the countervailing dynamics or complementary factors within these political institutions must be resolved before a design could be effective and legitimate. The point of departure is to acknowledge the existence of an imposed, structurally deficient state structure by former colonialists. These state structures obfuscated a wide variety of indigenous social and political activities. This produced an irreconcilable mix between the traditional institutions and the colonial political systems. Any progressive political transformation in Africa must acknowledge the tacit powers of the traditional institutions, religious groups, and other nongovernmental institutions as preponderance in the political drama orchestrated by the Euro-American complex. In "Community Governance and High Politics," Goran Hyden supports this viewpoint when he states that:

A holistic approach for assessing the crisis of governance in African states should include the following levels:

- 1) an actor in an international arena—the sovereign dimensions;
- 2) a determinant of power relations in society—the accountability dimensions; and
- 3) an executor of policy—the delivery dimensions. The problematic condition affecting the African state is that as actor in the international arena it is besieged, in its relations to society it is set apart, and as executor of policy it is overloaded.¹⁹

¹⁹ Goran Hyden, "Community Governance and "High Politics," Working Papers from the Inaugural Seminar of the Governance in Africa Program. The Carter Center of Emory University Atlanta Georgia. February 12-18 1989.

NEOCOLONIALISM

A conceptual framework of this sociopolitical complex must acknowledge and include the notion of an imposition of the recent alien political system over a traditional model, which had been ingrained into the political, social, and economic fabric of the dominated people over several centuries. Some elaboration would illuminate this point. A number of contemporary scholars on Africa's political situation would argue, and rightly so, that the intent of the colonies in Africa was for economic exploitation and nothing more.²⁰ By implication, the political systems installed in arbitrarily carved out parts of Africa were political machines to facilitate the exploitation of those colonies. As it was, the colonized natives were forcibly coerced into cooperating with the colonists. After the botched political independence, they were manipulated into assisting the former colonists to defraud their own economy. The neocolonial era demonstrates the inherent intentions of political dominance resulting in conflicts. This reaffirmed the futility of political independence by African nations. The colonial imperative of imperialism imposed a deficient system on African nations, which cast a dark cloud over

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (New York: Grove Press 1963), and Harry Magdoff, Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978) are among the scholars who hold the viewpoint that colonialism was purely for exploitative purposes.

their true independence. In the process, they lost the ability to evolve effective and legitimate systems of governance capable of enhancing economic development and political stability.

The sustenance of colonialism, propelled by imperialism, aimed at the exploitation of the colonized people. It failed to reconcile the divergent traditional, religious, and other nongovernmental institutions in its imposed political structures. Consequently, the people were alienated from those foreign political structures, a phenomenon that transcended to their postcolonial state government. Allegiance and support have thus oscillated within or between the other preexisting systems (traditional, religious, and ethnic affinity). Preexisting traditional systems centered around chiefs, kings, or obas. Heads of shrines or local courts continue to flourish as sanctuary for those seeking safeguards from the alien structure (the modern-day government). In consonance with their exploitative intentions, many of the colonists adopted and perfected the divide-and-rule tactic by capitalizing on the existing cleavages in these societies for their ultimate advantage.²¹ When these "artificial creations," or present-day African states, were eventually handed over to the

²¹ Walter Bgoya and Goran Hyden, "The State and the Crisis in Africa: In Search of a Second Liberation", Development Dialogue, 1987:2, 5.

Africans, a complex machinery of double-level exploitation (of African people at the local level and the overall economy through capital flight) of their resources had been artistically contrived and perfected.

These structures were infested with a tradition of clientele-ship, through which the colonists installed their agents who, for purely personal gains, remained loyal to their former masters. In the process, this guaranteed continued subservience of their domain. This tribute-paying mentality gave rise to widespread corruption and the sacrifice of merit for mediocrity. As the imperatives of the artificial structures did not change, the natives were further alienated. By consequence, government positions were seen as instruments to benefit the individual and his first base of allegiance—his ethnic group or religious association.²² In the book Community and High Politics, Goran Hayden attributes the fundamental source of the state crisis in Africa to the neglect of existing traditional institutions by the former colonialists in the formation of the colonial administration:

Most African communities are rich in organized activities. Most of these are single-function groups, established, for example, to overcome the production of bottlenecks on the land, savings and credits, or assisting with funerals. A typical characteristic of this African situation is that these efforts have always been unofficial. When the colonial powers established a system

²² Ibid., 12.