

AFRICAN POLITICAL STUDIES TO DATE
LAWRENCE U.B. EFANA

Department of Political Service and International Relations,
Tampere University

ABSTRACT:

African political studies are changing somewhat in method, context and style. In addition to the ingenuity behind these, perhaps, the single most outstanding characteristic of today's studies, especially by the new-breed scholars in this particular field is that of openness. The approaches are not anymore solely traditional. Economic liberalism and democracy address African geo-political realities and history more than when modernisation theories and abstract comparative systems analysis provided the start. In short, the changes mean more country-studies and critical analysis of multivariate African political and development datas. It would be otios not to believe that they have innovative influence on the knowledge of African politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

A growing number of political science writers are [recently] emphasising that African politics needs to be explained. Concretely, the arguments raised convey a feeling that the writers question the way that political studies have so far interpreted the politics in Africa, see: Chabal (1992:3), and Chazan et al (1988).

In short, the contemporary post-independent Africa is in crisis. But it seems not to suffice the reason or excuse for knowledge of the political history of Africa and explanation of its political events to be half-hearted. The emphasis on the "need to explain" is partly attributed to it. Another argument is no one denies that men, women and children are not suffering in the continent, or that its politics and the civil society are not torn apart as a result of poor democratic records, perenial problems of integration and economic development. These also, Chabal argues the disturbing consequences for how their politics are understood and explained.

This paper concentrates on examining selected sources of political science knowledge, directly and indirectly based on the study of politics in Africa to collate various contributions made in that area to simplify the task of explaining and advancing understanding. It is worth stating that the paper is a product of library research for an inaugural lecture [course] on "African Political Studies". Its approach is eclectic and descriptive, with attempts to

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integrate arguments and explanations, and enhance more understanding. It is bound to be highly refreshing.

1.1. THE CHARACTER OF LATEST QUESTIONS

The emphasis on explanation and understanding in African political studies raises a key question about what makes the political (science) studies of Africa different from similar studies elsewhere? Examination of the question shows that the crave to explain contemporary African politics that it be understood is not without problems and further questions. It also shows that attempts to amplify how best to do it only leads to a series of other more or less difficult questions: What does it really mean to demand an explanation and understanding from contemporary studies of politics in Africa? Is it really appropriate to put forward this kind of demand?

Chabal (1992:3) contends the rationality behind the questions. But, because they are intricate he succinctly reformulates newer interrelated questions in the hope that they would be made clearer: Are there grounds for thinking that understanding politics in Africa is any more onerous or any more urgent a task than understanding politics anywhere else? What do we mean by understanding? Is it plausible to assume that African countries can profitably be compared simply because they are Africans. Is not the whole notion of African politics parochially tautological? Do we not, perhaps, ask questions differently when we try to explain the politics of Africa? And if we do, do we understand the implications of doing so?

These questions have implications for political studies of Africa. They mitigate the studies and message that they deserve to be made a serious affair founded on the contemporary knowledge of African history from its pre-colonial to post-independence periods. The idea is that this condition and knowledge cannot be compromised for something less. There is an old Efik adage used commonly by people in the South-Eastern parts of Nigeria, which says "*ama efre ntak, ntak ötöhö.*" Literarily, the adage advises not to forget telling properly the reasons for things that happen if we want to avoid quarrels and misunderstanding.

The adage contextually fits the understanding we have for African history and political events which also colour the way we explain them. Rightly or wrongly, contemporary political development realities in Africa show that sympathy is growing in favour of these arguments. Tordoff (1990:2-7) criticises earlier comparative approaches to the explanation of political and socio-economic modernisation in post-colonial Africa for distortive interpretations of its realities, by cautiously evincing:

That in the West, industrialization took place before full democratic practices were introduced into the political process;

That because of the history of industrialisation in the West, resources were available to meet the pressing demands of the enfranchised groups;

That in Africa and Asia and the Caribbean, there was no such time-lag to enable industrialization create the resource base necessary for supporting a similar process and groups;

That in Africa, universal franchise was granted just before, at, or immediately after independence, before economic policies could be formulated, hence, at independence expectations of the electorates heightened, since it did not come without the struggles of nationalists cajoled into making promises exceeding the capacity of the new states most of them later came to head;

That because of the way colonial officials used the "indirect rule", the new independent states were socialized into illstructured political cultures;

That, this and other causes account for why the political leadership, on attainment of political independence, had not the experience of operating governmental system on a national scale, plus the fact that institutions like the political parties, parliaments and civil services through which they had to work with were also relatively new and weak;

That the institutional weakness inherited had repercussions which relatively accounted for why the private sectors are underdeveloped and the state itself had to assume a major entrepreneurial role in the national economy;

That, this accounts for the increase in the number of public enterprises, and bureaucratic power, which in turn widen the gap between the élites and masses, creating therefore, a situation in which most of the educated élites find it easier to survive in urban environments side by side with the traditional and conservative, but often illiterate chiefs and villagers;

That, since the new states gained integration into the international system at a time they were no match either diplomatically or militarily for the developed states, their independence was probational in the world community, and most of them survived by means of the shelters given by their respective mother countries.

That, the general situation was as stated, until the recent decade of oil weapon and mineral exploitations came to guarantee a few of the states significant economic and therefore, diplomatic leverage.

2. OLD AND NEW SCOPES OF INTEREST

Political science studies have multiplied over the years on Africa. This is witnessed by the proliferation of interests, and books and articles currently on

sale from various publishers and printing houses. Firstly, it shows that the scopes of interest for what is in contemporary light "political" has widened considerably. Secondly, it shows also that the boundary between what is traditionally "political" and what is not so, in most of the studies is becoming more and more porous. In short as Alan R. Ball (1988: 8-9) has pointed out, this generally means that political science is not anymore only concerned with the study of philosophy, rule of law and history.

The outcome for Africa is the proliferation of interests and newer dimensions of studies. Together, both kinds of outcome appear to rationalise an increasing need for subsuming the values and broadening their base across the sub-fields of several disciplines in more or less dramatic ways. These studies support the assertion: Bates (1990 and 1991); Chege (1988); Claude Ake (1990); Lofchie (1971); Morrison (1989); Nyong'o (1990); Nzouankeu (1991); Vengroff (1990); Coleman and Carl (1964); Collier (1978 and 1982); Shaw (1882); Kilson (1963); Mazrui and Michael (1984); Welch (1987); Rodney (1972); Nyang'oro (1990); Onimode, et al (1989); Wiseman (1990 and 1991); Sklar (1983 and 1992). We shall return to some of them in oncoming sections.

The interest of scholars to study and write about politics in developing countries is a sign that the emphases are also shifting in favour of diversifying political studies aimed at explaining the cases in Africa. The indirect implication of this departure presently shows, for example, that African political studies do not anymore have to depend too much on using the old traditional comparative approaches for interpreting the social systems or realities of African politics, or seek too hard to adapt their explanation to historical experiences and parochial values of European or Anglo-American political and institutional developments. Before and immediately after colonial rule "modernisation theories" used them, See: Apter (1956 and 1961); Lipset (1963); Lerner (1958); Pye (1966), Almond and Coleman (1960); Almond and Powell, Jr. (1966).

These earlier studies saw the developing areas, including Africa and its political development and institutions through the mirror of modernisation and social anthropology (Chabal, 1992:6-7). At a time that the knowledge of socio-economic and political history in Africa only began gathering momentum the frames represented an understandable alternative. The credible excuse (Almond, Flanagan and Mundt (1973:1) was, to start with a bad tool is better than not starting at all. They, however, have reflected afterwards thus:

"If those of us who began to write about political development some fifteen years ago had been fully aware of what was at the end of the tail we held in our hands, we might have let it go. We knew that the existing body of political theory - our concepts of political structure

and process and classification schemes - was inadequate to cope with the problems of discriminating and explaining the varieties of political phenomena that began to dominate our attention in the 1950s. Our theoretical efforts took the form of improvisations. We "theorized" because in some sense we had to. In exploiting new terrain we felt that a poor map was better than no map at all"

2.1. THE CANON ARGUMENTS

Malinowski (1954) and Radcliffe-Brown (1957) paved the way for structural functionalism to enter into political science through efforts of the sociologists: Parsons, Merton, Marion Levy and Weber.¹ Their framework gave General Systems Theory (David Easton, 1953 and 1965) the impulse to abstract a base and launch an approach to the study of Comparative Politics. Although, interest for the latter rapidly spread considering the momentum of contributions made, especially those that followed the theoretical efforts of, among others Fred Riggs, Africa does not seem to be comfortable with a general approach that depends nearly totally on the social and institutional values extraneous to its cultures, values and political history. This view is widely shared now.

These earlier interests, give the impression that interpretation of politics in Africa was influenced by the value that political systems which provide for effective representation of the major social and economic strata under the systems of separation of powers were more likely to be stable and libertarian (Almond and Powell, 1966: 10). This "preceptive statement" clearly has the traditional political building blocks: philosophy, rule of law and history. It centers more on philosophy and ties it to the "history of political thoughts" which have dominated the schools in the West for many centuries.

In spite of the broad applicability of this philosophy its ethnocentrism subsums culture even though it was the first object captured by antropologists to give political systems their environmental interpretations. The significance of culture as a component of political studies was somewhat overshadowed in the African case. Perhaps this accounts for why the new breed scholars interested in African political studies search for the political philosophies having African roots: Senghor's *Negritude*, Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, and Kaunda's *Humanism* (Ogundowole in Abiola Irele (eds), 1985:251). Ogundowole explains the supports for these with the works: Nkrumah (1974), Rodney (1972), and Franz Fanon (1966 and 1968). But, without directly rejecting the contributions of non-African schools of thought, he argues (page 257):

¹ The recognition for their contributions is not only limited to the area of Political Science, as shown by Almond and Powell Jr. (1966:27; 28; and 49). The studies are highly cited in very many other areas of studies especially, in the Social Sciences.

"The realities of Africa and of all other oppressed peoples in the world demand a transformation in the Europhilosophical tradition, and in the Eurocultural-based societies rather than that Africa should be transformed in line with the central themes of the Europhilosophical tradition. This is the crux of the matter. It is the foundation of the new orientation in contemporary African political philosophy as initiated by Fanon."

The rationality of this argument is becoming increasingly strong as shown among others by: Chabal (1992); Tordoff (1990); Chazan, et al (1988); Diamond, et al (1988, and 1990), Hyden and Bratton et al (1993), Shaw (1993), and so on.² The survey of African political studies shows that these are among the pillars of the new-breed scholars. With the "modern political history of Africa", "democratisation", "governance", and "political economy" representing a cross-section of the fields they traverse and blend to produce the new knowledge in the political study of contemporary Africa, a more objective epistemological base for approaching the explanation and interpretation of the politics in Africa is slowly but surely emerging.

As far as politics and its studies of Africa are concerned, one cannot but remain convinced that the objective of explanation adopted by the new breeds is gradually introducing better understanding. Somehow these more carefully structured analyses reveal that to study and explain the politics in Africa, it first of all has to be accepted from the onset that the contemporary world faces new and acute problems both at the national and international levels. Secondly, that one cannot afford to be rigid and dogmatic as to suggest that all the problems of political knowledge about the human society had long been solved by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Marx, Lenin or Plato and Aristotle.

On the contrary, Ogundowole suggests (Irele, eds., 1985:258): that one needs to have a really open mind, to explore what is happening, to be receptive to all new phenomena and search for new and more effective ways of understanding what is involved; and concludes that this is the lesson learned from the new orientations in African political philosophy, and it is its fundamental guiding principle. Arguments in favour of explanation and understanding are serious from the perspectives.

3. AFRICA AT A GLANCE

Africa is a vast continent. Chazan et al (1988:4) summarise the vastness thus: Africa is a continent. It encompasses a rich mosaic of peoples, culture,

² For the latest comments on these, see further: the review of literature in this field made by A. H. M. Kirk Green, *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* (1993:126-7). Volume XXXI. No.3. London.

ecological settings, and historical experiences. Its land mass stretches from the Mediterranean in the north to the meeting point of the Atlantic and Indian oceans in the south. With the population of about 450 million people, i.e., 10 percent of the world population) the peoples are as diverse as the terrain they inhabit.

The population consists mainly of blacks and Arabs, together with a small concentration of Asian and white settlers. The people belong to hundreds of ethnic groups and over eight hundred languages are spoken. Many of them embrace the animist belief systems in addition to the great religions: notably Christianity and Islam.

About 70 percent of the population live in the rural areas as subsistence farmers and nomads. There are rapidly growing ancient and new cities on the continent. High-technology industries co-exist alongside great mineral reserves, even in the poverty stricken regions. Paradoxically also, schools and universities are many even though illiteracy appears to prevail among a majority of the population.

3.1. ERAS OF POLITICAL HISTORY

The study of Africa's political history is commonly organised, among other things, to explain political developments during the eras: pre-colonial, colonial, independent and post-independent. Marnharm (Chabal, 1992:1) says that very little is known about the first era, except that there is an evidence to suggest that it was most of the time characterised by ignorance, slavery and ritual murder.

The second era was marked by mechanised warfare, forced labour and brutal exploitation. Chazan et al (1988:4) evince them in the terms: conquest, separation, amalgamation and continuity. The third and last eras, on the one hand are partly a history, and on the other hand, still continue partly to the present time. They are taken relatively both to be politically and economically worse (Shaw 1993).

In economic and social terms alone the performance of many African countries has fallen tremendously short of the vision of progress and well-being anticipated by nationalists and anticolonial movements at independence. For example, already between the 1970s and 1980s, many of the independent states were facing growing constraints to feed their populations. Agricultural outputs had declined, and the per-capita economic growth stagnated with few exceptions. The Foreign debt burdens quadruple to become a force against economic growth as export earnings are instead diverted for servicing the debts. Although, the export of cash crops for foreign exchange and natural disasters too play their parts, Chazan et al emphasise

that there are also glaring signs of inequalities. There are a few very rich people and largely still poor population though basic service and infra-structures are more generously provided now than during the colonial era. Urbanization, life-expectancy, health-care, illiteracy, and infant mortality still signal social dislocations against any gains. Their contradictions invoke many kinds of arguments about Africa's political and economic development failures (Cohen and Goulbourne 1991).

The concern raised by the worsening political and economic situations is what has probably produced the class that I attempt to present as the "new-breed" scholars of African politics. It has also induced more serious analysis of the frameworks: *modernisation*, *dependency*, *statism* and *bureaucratic bourgeoisie* by tempering their values with the *political choice* framework. The "political" and "economic" survival of Africa is on the top of some study agendas, and some scholars do not hesitate to scrutinise the role of *political democracy* and *economic liberalization* as a way out while simultaneously emphasising the significance of the *political choice* in the process.

In the past the short-lived experience of social gains in native contacts with colonial officials in Africa lured historians to assume that colonial rule and African political independence were to lead to greater progress for the continent. Unfortunately the long list of post-colonial and independence problems in the continent defy this assumption. African political history is full of many variants of what has actually resulted instead. Nonetheless, at independence, a majority of the new African states had several things in common. As ex-colonial countries, and perhaps with exception of the three: Egypt, Ethiopia and Liberia (Chazan, et al (1988:4) and Tordoff (1990), the others were subjected during one or another period in their history to one kind or another of the colonial powers: Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

In their pre-colonial contexts, the new states were still old societies even though not much is known about all of them. There are scholars who show that many of them had own pre-colonial history; e.g., Ghana and Nigeria, see: Busia (1951); Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1950); Keuning (1963); Llyod (1954); Smith (1959); Uchendu (1965). These cases: Egypt, Kano, Songai, Timbuktu, Zimbabwe and so on in Africa also suggest the significance of its pre-colonial history and existence of great civilizations.

The latest facts about the history of colonial rule in Africa are on the whole somewhat conflicting. Chazan, et al (1988: 5) writes about how the Portuguese speaking colonies: Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Angola finally overcame 400 years of colonial domination. Tordoff (1990) writes on the other hand that colonial rule was brief, and less than a hundred

years. Whatever the interpretations, colonialism bequeathed the new states with the identities of new nation-states. Independence however, came to be seen as a result of the nationalists struggles and the basis upon which they led their countries into statehood.

The entry into statehood and "system maintenance", that is to say roughly "political continuity", gives rise to the belief that independence marked a fundamental break in the "continuities" of power. Since colonial rule often sought collaborations with the traditional rulers; i.e., the political élites of that time, nationalism made it possible for newer kinds of élites to rise to the top in the new states. The struggles which led to extinction of the tradition make the political independence of African states nearly taken to represent a triumph for African nationalists, e.g., see: Rotberg (1965); Chabal (1992: 251); and Nyang'oro, (1992:88-90).

Altogether, a few writers believe that the role of nationalism in African political independence was a political revolution totally committed to subverting the established colonial order. Even though that weakness is present, nationalists believed that they won over the traditional chiefs who collaborated with colonial administrators through "indirect rule". In a few of the new states: Ghana and Guinea in West Africa; Tordoff, explains that political independence was interpreted to represent the break of direct contacts with the chiefs, and instead more accountability to the people.

This history is valid for a broad spectrum of African countries under colonial rule. But generally, their status as nation-states and process of acquiring statehood are a product of different historical periods and circumstances (Chazan, et al 1988:5). The post-independent era shows that many of them as shall be seen later face the tasks of weilding into a nation, a variety of peoples, with different languages, who are at different stages of socio-political development. The tasks give rise to various kinds of views about the structure of pre-colonial African societies and the boundaries they came to assume as nation-states at the advent of colonial rule.

Basically, the writers and analysts of African political and development history agree that even after independence, the new nation-states of Africa were: (i) mostly poor, (ii) predominantly rural, (iii) overdependent on the vagaries of world market through the base provided by the economy of colonial administration; and (iv) in situations where they benefited from external economic aids, the benefits dissipated quickly due to adverse terms of international trade and predominantly agricultural nature of their products.

Post-independent Africa faces therefore, political and economic problems, stretching from instabilities of governments and institutions to industrialization hinders, excessive costs of imported machines and manufactured goods, marketing constrains arising from the structure of world trade and big

debt burdens (Shaw, 1993). These events in the political history of Africa, make it easy to appreciate the reason why some writers are more cautious when comparing Africa in global political studies.

3.2. THE POLITICAL MAP

Contemporary studies define political map of Africa against the background of its political history. Shaw (1993:15) writes that its ecological and economic regions are diverse and also that in post-independence context, its political regimes have distinct appearances and aromas. Contemporary Africa has almost fifty-one independent states including the latest: Eritrea. The Saharan Arab Democratic Republic in the process of political independence from Morocco, and the change that has now given South Africa a majority rule leadership are likely to increase the number and authenticity of politically independent African states.

The geo-political and religious features of African countries account for why those writing about its political history and developments are prone to organise their studies to explain the Sub-Saharan characteristics distinctly from the characteristics of predominantly Islamic states in the North of the continent. Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco are in the latter. Books in political science more often than not portray Africa in terms of the "Northern" and "Sub-Saharan" dichotomies.

In the Sub-Saharan countries: those countries lying approximately south of the Sahara, majority of the inhabitants are "black skinned" Africans. Still, to the Southern parts of the continent, European (white) "settlers" also form a bulk of the population. The politically defined Sub-Saharan space stretches across the countries of West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa, including also many of the surrounding islands.

In the Northern part of the continent, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco seem to have a smaller population of Christians co-existing with the predominantly large population of Muslims. Libya and Algeria appear to be predominantly made up of Muslim populations only. Sudan in the North shares much of the characteristics found in Sub-Saharan part of the continent. Her nationhood problems are seen in long-standing civil wars between the predominantly Islamic north of the country and the Christians and animists in the south.

Sub-Saharan countries in most cases have more than half the population belong to Islamic religious faith. Although, there have been occasional eruptions of religious conflicts, for example, Nigeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and so on, there is on the average a greater sense of religious tolerance; i.e., in most Sub-Saharan countries, Islam co-exists relatively peacefully with Christianity and local beliefs in animism.

Politically this has been significant for the attainment of nationhood since during the earlier years of political struggles against colonial rule, national independence manifestly implied a sense of belonging (Nkrumah, 1963). Then, the word "politics" rang a different bell of unification in the ears of nationalists across the continent. Against such a background, the post-independent experience is instead that of nostalgia despite the existence of an organ like the OAU. Unity is little. The problems of nationhood (sub-nationalism) instead are on the increase.

Although, the wave of political independence touched the countries at different times, colonial history and experiences apply in various degrees to them. Excepting the older political entities among them: Egypt, Ethiopia and Liberia, the rest passed directly through one form of colonial administration or the other into statehood. The first wave of political independence commenced in the middle and late 1950s with emergence of Sudan (1955) in North Africa and later Ghana (1957), and Guinea (1958) respectively in West Africa (Chazan, et. al 1988:5).

Altogether, the 1960s is declared the *annus mirabilis* of independence for many African countries (Tordoff, 1984:1). Post-war policy-realities, however, hastened the situation (Chabal 1992). These were important for the political history of the continent. The political map became dramatically different with more of the countries becoming independent (Table 1).

Table I. Independent African Countries during the 1960s

Country	Date of Political Independence
Republic of Benin	1960
Republic of Botswana	1966
Burkina Faso	1960
Republic of Burundi	1962
Republic of Cameroon	1960
Central African Republic	1960
Republic of Chad	1960
Republic of Congo	1960
Republic of Gabon	1960
Republic of Gambia	1965
Republic of Equatorial Guinea	1968
Republic of Ivory Coast	1960
Republic of Kenya	1963
Kingdom of Lesotho	1966
Democratic Republic of Madagascar	1960
Republic of Malawi	1964
Republic of Mali	1960
Islamic Republic of Mauritania	1960
Mauritius	1965
Republic of Niger	1960
Republic of Nigeria	1960
Republic of Uganda	1962
Republic of Ruanda	1962
Republic of Senegal	1960
Democratic Republic of Somalia	1960
Republic of Sierra Leone	1961
Kingdom of Swaziland	1968
United Republic of Tanzania	1961
Republic of Togo	1960
Republic of Zaire	1965
Republic of Zambia	1964

Unlike the colonial era when the affairs of government were run by colonial officials and traditional rulers, "political independence" means that, a new breed of African leaders somewhat accountable to the population at large assumed the mantle of leadership and authority. Political independence thus, began to give the political map of Africa its first structure as all the countries were not yet independent.

Map I. Political systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960



(Adapted from Shaw (1993:263) as c/f Almond and Coleman (1960:263)

The political map led therefore, to discern three main kinds of political orientations across the Sub-Saharan states at the time: the systems of government controlled by Africans; the transitional systems; and the European controlled systems. The first refer to a combination of: the countries whose

systems were emerging from statehood, i.e.: mostly the earliest countries to gain political independence, the new states that were entering into the process of statehood; and the "historic" states.

The second consist of the states on political transition: Kenya, Belgian Congo, Ruanda-Urundi and Tanganyika) controlled relatively also by Africans leaders pending the granting of political independence officially. The rest were lumped into "settler" countries with mainly Europeans controlling the political system. They included: Angola, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, Mozambique, South West Africa, Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Union of South Africa and Basutoland.

4. THE MAP AND REGIME TYPOLOGIES

Differences apparent after structuring the political map of Africa raise newer arguments against lumping its countries together anyhow for the purpose of comparison. Chazan, et al (1988:5) e.g., evince: Nigeria is big and contrasts sharply with the tiny Comoros and the Republic of Gambia. Zaire is big and shares borders with the small republics: Ruanda and Burundi. Swaziland is an ethnically homogeneous nation-state surrounded by many heterogenous, multi-ethnic countries. Africa has monarchies, dictatorships, military regimes, civilian governments, revolutionary systems and democracies, populist administrations and authoritarian modes of rule.

Their diversities render the results of comparison misleading. Besides the political factors, there are other important differences in the cultures and economic potentialities of each of the states. Politically, unlike Ghana or Nigeria and a few other countries whose political independence were among the earliest and peaceful, in many of them, e.g., Algeria, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde) political independence did not come on a "platter of gold". Until recently, writers still continue to speculate about whether it was "right" and or "wrong" for the process of political independence for some of them to be delayed and bloody.

The contemporary realities in Africa show that its "politics" is rarely drap and dull. It is remarkably correct. The latest political map of Africa is by far more different from what it was after the boom of national independence in the 1960s. Many things have happened and more are still to happen. For the first: nearly all African countries are now politically independent; changes in government leaderships have taken place either by the processes of democratic elections, military coups, or by fiat; and a few of the leaders have constituted themselves into dictators through force, single or multi-party systems of government. For the second, there are unpredictable difficulties ahead for sub-nationalism and the survival of democracy.

At present in Sub-Saharan Africa, with South Africa now having an acceptable non-racial democratic system of governance, most of the political institutions in the continent are controlled by Africans. Their political systems vary from democratic to authoritarian, and from directed democracy to contested sovereignty (Shaw, 1993:105). The political map of Africa is once more revised and redrawn. Many of them have also adopted new names.³

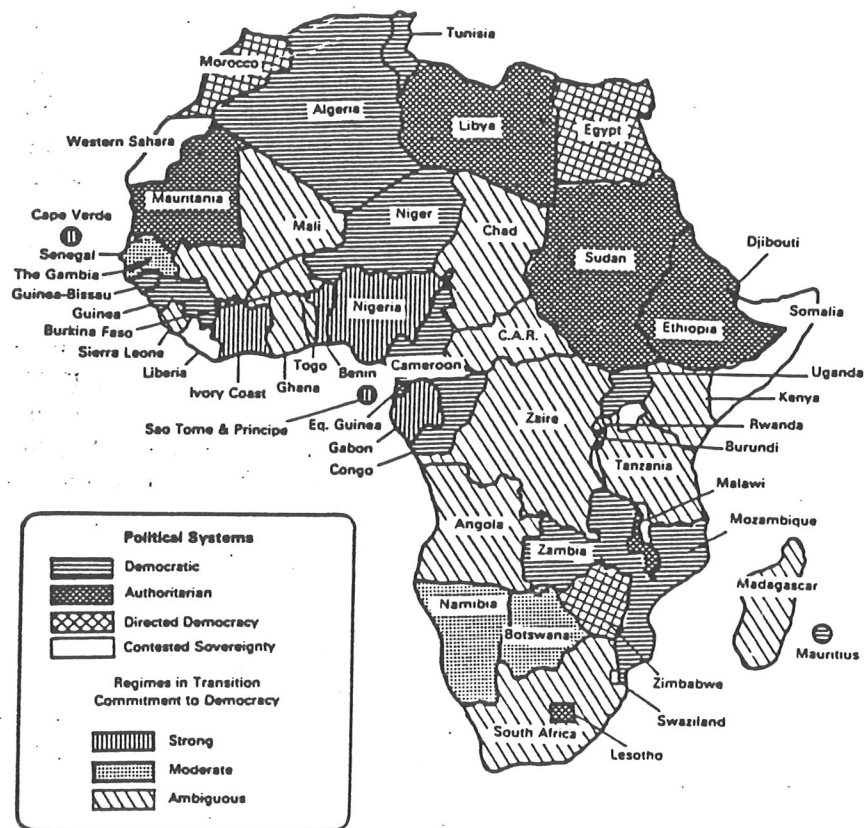
³ See and compare them below:

<u>Present</u>	<u>Previous</u>
Benin	Dahomey
Botswana	Bechuanaland
Burkina Faso	Upper Volta
Burundi ¹	Ruanda-Urundi
Cameroon	French Cameroons and British Cameroons ²
Cape Verde	Cape Verde Islands
Central African Republic	Oubangui Chari
Congo	French Congo; sometimes referred to as Congo-Grazzaville
Côte d'Ivoire	Ivory Coast
Djibouti	French Territory of the Afars and Issas
Equatorial Guinea	Spanish Guinea
Ghana	Gold Coast and British Togoland
Guinea-Bissau	Portuguese Guinea
Lesotho	Basutoland
Malagasy Republic (still often referred to as Madagascar)	Madagascar
Malawi	Nyasaland
Mali	French Soudan
Namibia	South West Africa
Rwanda ¹	Ruanda-Urundi
Saharan Arab Democratic Republic ³	Spanish Sahara; sometimes referred to as Western Sahara
Somali Democratic Republic (Somalja)	British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland
Tanzania ⁴	Tanganyika and Zanzibar
Togo	French Togoland
Zaire	Belgian Congo; subsequently Congo; sometimes referred to as Congo-Leopoldville or Congo-Kinshasa
Zambia	Northern Rhodesia
Zimbabwe	Southern Rhodesia; Rhodesia

¹ Ruanda-Urundi was a administered trust territory that became independent in 1960 as two separate states.
² The Southern Cameroons, a British-administered UN trust territory, joined the Republic of Cameroon following a plebiscite in 1961; the people of the Northern Cameroons opted for integration with Nigeria.
³ Morocco has claimed this territory, a claim contested by the Polisario Front (the national liberation movement). Polisario refers to the territory as the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).
⁴ The United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar came into being on 26 April 1964, as a consequence of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar; the name "United Republic of Tanzania" was officially adopted a year later.

Source: Adapted from William Tordoff, *Government and Politics in Africa* (Indiana University Press 1984).

Map II. Political systems in Africa in 1991



(Adapted from Shaw (1993:105) as c/f Carter Center of Emory university).

The four political typologies are significant for understanding the contemporary political systems and arts of governance in Africa. The dimension embracing regimes under transition and their relation to the degree of commitment to democracy shows whether the commitment is strong, moderate or ambiguous; e.g., as political events recently tell in Nigeria because the country is sinking back into military stronghold.

Two typologies are particularly important here: "regimes under transition" and "contested sovereignty". "Transition" suggests a different thing now compared to that which was commonplace in the studies of political science in Africa during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. This usage is akin to several of the post-independence problems besetting the

politics and economic progress in Africa: (i) *Military interventions in politics*, e.g., Nigeria, Benin, Gabon, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe and Ivory Coast; (ii) *The manipulation of democracy by single and, or multi-party systems*, e.g., Senegal, Botswana, and Namibia; and (iii) *Dictatorial syndromes*, e.g., Zaire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Togo, Chad, Kenya, Ruanda, Tanzania, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Madagascar. Nonetheless some of these were of old. The conditions are radically different in many of them now.

"Contested sovereignty" on the other hand is a new conceptual "device". It reflects all the latter characteristics but mainly seeks to shed more light on crisis of nationhood in the post-independent countries: Liberia, Somalia, Ruanda and Western Sahara, where either inter-tribal wars or other forms of political struggles are currently in progress. Liberia is unique in it. Her political independence was attained in 1847. Much earlier because she entered into statehood through the history of freed slaves.

4.1. DEMOCRATISATION AND ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION ARGUMENTS

Politics in Africa is not drap and dull. That is, things are happening there always like elsewhere in the world. For Africa this lively, but to a certain extent problematic political characteristic has seriously attracted the interest of its political scholars. Democratization and economic liberalisation increasingly assume an important focus. In contemporary arguments, the interest particularly intensifies because "Political Democracy" is gaining greater momentum everywhere. This thesis is strongly argued by Larry Diamond in the latest book: *Global Transformation and the Third World*⁴. There are two primary indicators to inform the knowledge of the new situation which Diamond calls "global democratic revolution": The Freedom Status; and The Changes in Democratic Status (Slater, et al 1993:32; 40; and 41).

The first explains the general tendency towards increased "freedom" in the world; i.e., that the number of democracies or (free states) in the world has grown over the past 20 years by say 10 states from 1972-1980, and 23 states from 1980-1991. This computation reflects a conglomeration of factors

⁴ See Slater, Schutz and Dorr (ed), 1993. *Global Transformation and the Third World*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder Adamantine Press. London. Although the title of Larry Dianond's: *The Globalization of Democracy* is mentioned, the implications of the editors introduction: *Towards a Better Understanding of Global Transformation and the Third World*, and Kenneth Jowitz's: *A World Without Leninism*, are held to produce the kind of arguments which make the book to be cited.

for the periods: decolonisation, comparison of independence, and raw ratings of operationally defined state of global "liberty", see (Table 2). These add more to interpretation the of world-wide situation. The second elaborates it and explains fluctuations in the fate of democracy in-between the periods. It selectively classifies some countries in the world and shows the changes in their democratic status according to: the states that suffered democratic breakdowns or its erosion; the states that moved towards democratic transitions; and the states that became democratic within the span of time specified, see (Table 3 also).

Table II. Freedom Status^a of Independent States

	1972		1980		1991	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Free	42	29.0 (32.0) ^b	52	31.9 (35.9)	75	43.8 (25.3)
Partly Free	36	24.8 (21.0)	52	31.9 (21.6)	55	32.2 (43.0)
Not Free	67	46.2 (47.0)	59	36.2 (42.5)	41	24.0 (31.8)
Total	145 ^c	100	163 ^d	100	171 ^e	100

Source: This table is adapted from Slater, Schutz and Dorr (ed.) 1993. *Freedom in the World 1990-91* (New York: Freedom House, 1991), and *Freedom Review* 23, no. 1 (1992).

- a States designated as "free" are rated at least 2 on political rights and at least 3 on civil liberties; "partly free" states are rated from 3 to 6 on political rights and on civil liberties, but with a combined freedom score not exceeding 11; and "not free" states are rated 5 to 7 on both political rights and civil liberties, with a combined score of at least 11. (Countries scoring a total of 11 are rated "partly free" or "not free" by the judgement of Freedom House.)
- b Figures in parentheses represent percentages of world population living in countries in each category.
- c Vietnam is listed as two states. I have counted South Africa as one (not free) state, though the Freedom House survey presented separate ratings that year for White and Black South Africa
- d Divided Cyprus was counted as a single country.
- e Includes a number of newly independent states and lists Cyprus as two states, but lists the newly reunited Germany and Yemen each as single states.

Table III. Changes in Democratic Status 1974-1991

States which suffered democratic breakdowns or erosion between 1974 and 1991 ^a	States which experienced democratic transitions between 1974 and 1990 ^b	States which became democratic during 1991
Antigua & Bermuda ^c (1991)	Argentina (1984)	Bangladesh
Burkina Faso (1980)	Bolivia (1982)	Benin
Colombia ^c (1989)	Brazil (1985)	Bulgaria
Cyprus ^c (1974)	Burkina Faso (1977-1980)	Cape Verde
Djibouti (1979)	Chile (1990)	Estonia
Dominican Republic ^c (1974)	Cyprus (1987)	Latvia
Fiji ^c (1987)	Czechoslovakia (1990)	Lithuania
Ghana (1981)	Dominican Republic (1978)	Mongolia
Grenada (1980)	Ecuador (1979)	Nepal
Haiti (1991)	Ghana (1978-1981)	Sao Tome & Principe
India ^c (1975, 1991)	Greece (1974)	Zambia
Lebanon ^c (1974)	Grenada (1985)	
Nigeria (1983)	Honduras (1984)	
Pakistan ^c (1990)	Hungary (1980)	
Peru ^c (1989)	Namibia (1990)	
Philippines ^c (1990)	Nicaragua ^d (1990)	
Seychelles (1977)	Nigeria (1979-1983)	
Sri Lanka ^c (1983)	Pakistan ^d (1988-1990)	
Sudan (1989)	Panama ^d (1990)	
Suriname (1980)	Peru (1980-1989)	
Thailand (1991)	Philippines (1987-1990)	
Turkey (1980)	Poland (1990)	
	Portugal (1974)	
	South Korea (1987)	
	Spain (1977)	
	Sudan (1986-1989)	
	Thailand (1989-1991)	
	Turkey ^d (1983)	
	Uruguay (1985)	

Source: This table is adapted from Slater, Schutz and Dorr (ed.) 1993. *Freedom in the World 1990-91* (New York: Freedom House, 1991), and *Freedom Review* 23, no 1 (1992).

- a Excludes El Salvador, Guatemala, and Vanuatu, which qualify technically but where the changes have been slight and subtle.
- b Excludes Gambia, Malta, and Mauritius, which declined to "partly free" status only temporarily and by a small degree, and Guatemala and El Salvador, because of continuing military dominance of those polities. The first date in parentheses marks the first year a country was rated democratic, or "free"; a second date indicates the year of a breakdown or erosion of democracy.
- c Indicates movement from free to partly free (semidemocratic).
- d Included even though it is (or was) classified as "partly free" by Freedom House.
- e Counted as a democratic erosion with the downfall of the Benazir Bhutto government in 1990, even though it had never been rated as "free" by Freedom House.

As a political entity itself, Africa was already being made an unusual focus for democratisation studies. In the books: *Democracy in Developing Countries - Africa*; and *Politics in Developing Countries - Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, issued respectively in 1988 and 1990, Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset explain the continent in that light. The "Carter Center of Emory University" also explains contextually the situations in 1991 and classifies African countries according to the regime types: *democratic systems* - Tunisia, Algeria, Guinea, Niger, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Cameroon, Congo, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique and Mauritius; *authoritarian systems* - Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Malawi, Burundi, and Lesotho; *directed democratic systems* - Egypt, Morocco and Zimbabwe; and *constitutional monarchies* - Lesotho and Swaziland. A detailed classification of them further shows the general nature of the political situations, and somewhat explains why the studies of democracy captivate.

To the surprise of political observers the signs of political democracy and successful market economy in Africa are far from convincing. Excluding South Africa, Shaw (1993:6-13) shows that in 1991 there was a total of 46 independent countries in the continent. Out of that total, 20 countries had one or the other form of multi-party regimes; 16 single-party, 8 military; and 2 constitutional monarchies. These suggest that African politics is dynamic but at the same time that, the dynamism is not a clear signal for democracy. For example, many of the regimes described as "multi-party" are either new evolving because of international pressure (Angola); and, or characterised by personal rule (Kenya, Ivory Coast) and single-party election victory (Senegal).

Although some changes are occurring, the prospects of economic and political transition by liberal democratic means remain still, especially in the Sub-Saharan African countries a matter of concern. It unravels the various interpretations prominently featuring the approaches of political economists and historians. Chabal (1992:7), e.g., argues that the trend is new and partly introduced by the changing perceptions in the West about the continent. The two factors responsible for this are: the incessant activities of external technical experts; and the modified World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) strategies of development.

He believes that these open up Africa, encourage more penetrative knowledge of its rural life, poverty structure, peasant production and help to redefine the possibilities still present. Economic liberalism and political democracy is to fill the gap, it is argued. Its revision *vis-a-vis* urban and rural socio-politico-economic realities, it is said, would stimulate and inform of the political settings best suited for managing the multiple problems facing post-independent Africa. Country political analyses raise the hope that Africa will

successfully achieve political democracy and economic liberalism, and also build stable pluralist states (Kelley, 1992; Nyang'oro, 1992). Kelley says the regimes are economically and politically to re-order their priority in order to succeed like the "Young Dragons" of Asia.⁵

Post-colonial regimes in Africa share blames for not trying harder to materially raise the quality of life and advance the freedom of its people due to wrong priorities. Kelley discusses market mechanisms, promotion of well being and evolution of democracy, and emphasises that the links between them are irrevocable. He argues that the weakness of African regimes to successfully detect the links is causing a paradigm shift in development policy. The classificatory scheme supporting these arguments puts many African regimes into the categories: *Pluralist*; *Administrative-Hegemonical*; *Party Mobilising*, and *Party Centralising*. They are correlated with the factors: economic performance, economic system, and the incidence of political instability. Arguments are that the African regimes operating Market System Economy perform relatively well. It is valid whether or not the regimes are in the first, second or third categories. The second on the other hand, points out that most of the pluralist regimes operating the Market Economy System have relatively been more stable politically over the years. Non-Market Economy Systems: Participation, Mixed, State Control and or Planned economic systems, on the average appear to exhibit more symptoms of political instability and military coup d'états.⁶

⁵ The countries covered by this expression include: (Hong Kong), Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. Political economists want to influence the trust of African countries for "market economy" or capitalism. They turn attention to why Africa fails to made progress even when the so-called "young dragons: Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea have not been as blessed with minerals resources as most of them are or have been. The study done to compare Cross National Products and Per-Capita resources at: Global level; African level; and the Young Dragons' level for the period 1978-1988 show that both grew fastest in the latter. For example, African GNP began in 1978 with 1.74 percent and "young dragons" 2.41 percent. In 1988 the latter stood at 7.77 percent while the former (Africa) performed under stagnation with 1.64 percent. The PC showed similar tendencies during the period. This is the rationality for comparison explaining the concern of some political analysts.

⁶ Adopted from Kelley (1992) and re-arranged for use here. Original source shows that a part of the information used to compile the table derived from: Vanhanen, T. (1990:252-274). *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-1988*. New York Crane Russak; and was supplemented with information from: Wiseman, J. A. (1990). Note also that: *Market* as used in the table indicates more entrepreneurial/privat enterprises; *Participation* indicates welcomed foreign investment with sensitivity to markets and also government participation in foreign firms. *Mixed* indicates some government enterprises, foreign investment and some private enterprise. *State* control indicates dominance of public sector enterprises, limited and controlled foreign investment. *Planned* controlled socialist economy with nationalization of foreign enterprises. For the case of Mozambique in the latter category only 1980 instead of 1978 data have been used.

4.2. CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT ARGUMENTS

In Africa, political instabilities are commonly caused by military coup d'états. Nyang'oro says that it is the principal mechanism of regime change in the continent. He argues that even though Africa is not different in this respect from other Third World countries, e.g., those in Latin America and Asia, the prospects of military disengagement from politics in the former are small. Similarly the single-party system phenomenon threatens also what remains of the will to practice political democracy.

The commonest belief among scholars of African politics irrespective of their creed and colour, is that military coup d'états and single-party systems negatively inform about the regimes in the continent. Africa's politics suffers from this weakness. Political instability, civil unrest and retardation of political and economic liberalism - hence the slackening national well being also, are attributed to this weakness. The consequences are better outlined in Larry Diamond's *"Global Democratic Revolution"*, (Slater, et al 1993: 33-34) where he writes:

"The stunning changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union reverberated visibly throughout the Third World, particularly dramatically in Africa....Inspired by the changes in both Eastern Europe and South Africa, and disgusted with the oppression, corruption, and economic and moral bankruptcy of one-party rule, the rest of the continent was swept by a wave of regime openings and popular demands for multi-party democracy....."

The concrete effects of this on the regimes in Africa are assessed in relation to: Felix Houphoet-Boigny of Ivory Coast; Omar Bongo of Gabon; and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, who respectively, ruled their countries without challenge for 20 to 30 years. The next: Mathieu Kerekou of Benin Republic who has held political power since 1972; Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya; Paul Biya of Cameroon; Hastings Banda of Malawi; Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; and Abdou Diouf of Senegal.

Larry Diamond attempts to show that "globalisation of democracy" has ushered into the regimes controlled by these leaders the impulse: to accept multi-party systems; to end their corrupt autocracies; and to refurbish the democratic image of their countries. On the one hand, the popular outcries for democracy in their countries have forced a few of them out of power, e.g., (Kaunda). On the other hand, it has led too to a situation where those of them still serving appear to be completing their last terms of office, e.g., (Arap Moi; Paul Biya; Diouf; and Mugabe).

He brings to notice too that in the authoritarian countries: Congo, Togo, Niger and Madagascar, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and the Principe, the same

global pressure is forcing their Heads of State to actively review the formula for multi-party democratic rule. Similarly, the realities of market economy benefits are redirecting attention to the dismantlement of Marxist regimes in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola to make way for the end of hostilities and agreement on the formula for majority rule by democracy.

5. CONCLUSION

I have tried to explain and improve understanding by showing that African political studies are changing somewhat in method, context and style. Some of the analyses underlying the change are highly challenging. The new culture of analysis is also to call African "political heads" by their names more than hitherto was the case. These somewhat critical innovations may simply be interpreted as the attempt of scholars to pressure their regimes more to seriously commit themselves to: the goals of socio-political-economic development; the well-being of their people; and the principles of democratic rule and market economy. The weight of problems at present shows that this is how African political studies can pass from the basic goal of advancing knowledge into pressing for practical results in Africa by Africans themselves. It does not seem right then to argue that *politics* and *morality* should be treated apart? John Viscount Marley points out clearly that those who treat them apart never can understand the one or the other. African political studies confront its scholars with challenges of this kind.

Innovations in this field up to date are a sign of progress for the future of *explanation* and *understanding* of African politics. But as Chabal pointed out in the arguments cited at the beginning of the paper, something remains for contemporary African political studies to do. I shall explain that part of what remains in relation to the reluctant attitudes of people who feel that Africa has nothing to offer anymore. Some even say that it is a "dead" continent. One is stunned about such an attitude among academics. It is essential to address individuals thinking thus and remind them that continuous encouragement to more critical studies of this category of nations has a great deal to offer political science in particular and the social sciences in general. Apter (1965) once articulated the arguments for encouragement by saying:

"So exciting are they and so genuine are our enthusiasm for them, that to hide our research efforts in a closet would deprive others of highly interesting materials. In earlier days, a scholar feared to put his thoughts on the paper until he perfected them. But our situation is different. The academic community is world-wide. It is largely through our writing that we communicate and exchange our views with our colleagues elsewhere. The dialogue is important, if only to curtail ill-form and meretricious scholarship. To sustain communication between scholars before ideas have been hardened and become fixed, is after all, one of the advantages of the modern world".

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