

Regular Elections and multi-party democracy: *Looking for correlation between democracy and economic growth*

By

Elly Twineyo Kamugisha

(Author: Why Africa Fails: *The Case for Growth before Democracy, 2012*);
Founder: African Centre for Trade and Development (ACTADE) – a think-tank;

Consultant at Uganda Management Institute (UMI))

For Comments: ellytk@gmail.com / info@twineyo.com

It's not the people who vote that count; it's the people who count the votes

–Attributed to Joseph Stalin¹

According to Golder and Wantchekon (2004), authoritarianism rather than democracy has dominated the post-war history of independent Africa. They state that there have only been 189 country-years of democracy in Africa compared to 1823 country-years of dictatorship between 1946 and 2000. These researchers continue to state that elections have been held and played an important role in Africa during the authoritarian and democratic periods. They find that dictatorships still outstrips the number of democracies by a considerable margin despite the transitions to democracy that happened in the early 1990s. So therefore elections cannot be viewed as an indicator for democracy in Africa.

It is not easy to provide a definition of which election should be classified as democratic. It is also problematic to develop testable and generalizable conclusions with regard to African democratic elections. Again, Golder and Wantchekon (2004) state that much of the recent research on African elections fails to provide a consistent definition of which elections should be considered democratic. That the elections that are treated as democratic often vary from author to author. They assert that it is problematic if one wants to develop testable and generalizable conclusions regarding African democratic elections. Citing Przeworski and Vreeland (2000)², they classify *a regime as a dictatorship if the chief executive is not elected, the legislature is not elected, there is no more than one party, or there has been no alternation in power. In other words, a regime is democratic if those who govern are selected through contested elections*³. Their analysis

¹http://pluslucis.univie.ac.at/FBW0/FBW2013/Material/Rf_Klimek_Elections.pdf (accessed on 10/27/13)

²Przeworski, A., and Vreeland, J.R., (2000), "The Effects of IMF Programs on Economic Growth", Journal of Development Economics 62(2):385-421

³ Golder, M., and Wantchekon, L, (2004:2): "Africa; Dictatorial and Democratic Electoral Systems since 1946", Forthcoming in: Colomer, Josep. ed. 2004: Handbook of Electoral System Design. London: Palgrave.

and conclusions are based on the argument that "If there is no alternation in power, regimes are treated as dictatorships". This classification of African regimes is used because it is consistent, stated clearly and based on observable judgments rather than subjective ones. It is noted that this classification omits elections such those that take place in Botswana. Botswana has been ruled by one party Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) since independence. The argument is that there is some uncertainty as to whether elections are held in Botswana only because the ruling party is certain to win them and whether the ruling party would handover office if it ever lost⁴.

African dictators often held elections, had legislatures and organized political parties. It remains an open research question as to why these seemingly democratic electoral institutions were chosen given that 'parties do not compete, elections do not select, and legislatures do not decide' in dictatorships (Gandhi 2004 cited by Golder and Wantchekon, 2004:3).

There is growing widespread sense that in many African countries, elections have not been centred on key policy accountability. This has had marked consequences for economic growth and development for such countries.

As an aspect of democracy, periodic elections do not result in tangible political change in most African states⁵. This is because the elections are seldom free and fair⁶. Free and fair elections are important for the vote to count. There is election rigging, voter bribery, ballot stuffing and the sort. The majority will not vote for the leader with the agenda that will propel economic and social development. The leader will not be a people's choice. Where the vote does not reflect the will of the people then it results in riots, and social unrest. There is political dissent. There is a tendency to clamp down on the opposition. The chief vote thief is the national elections body of the country. Instead of being neutral

⁴ Golder, M., and Wantchekon, L., (2004:2): "Africa; Dictatorial and Democratic Electoral Systems since 1946", Forthcoming in: Colomer, Josep. ed. 2004: Handbook of Electoral System Design. London: Palgrave.

⁵ See Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:47)

⁶ Ugandan General, Gen. David Sejusa (formerly Gen. David Tinnyefuza) a former Chief Coordinator of all Intelligence Services until 2013 has claimed that elections have always been rigged or 'stolen' in Uganda – saying that the lead opposition had won it. He personally claims that security created its own 'electoral commission', changed results and gave them to the official electoral commission.(see <http://www.mondaytimes.co.ug/details.php?option=acat&a=1943#.UsAiPfvobNE> (accessed on 12/29/13) and <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Besigye-won-2006-polls---Sejusa-/688334/2114376/-/2qex1g/-/index.html> (accessed on 12/29/13). An analyst (Andrew Mwenda) who has access to key sources of information told one of the Ugandan widely watched TV station, NTV, that in one of the elections, when the percentages of the candidates became close, the security and indeed Gen. Sejusa came and started his process.

and independent they take sides with incumbent and the regime. They do everything in the book to ensure that the incumbents and/or regime come back via a flawed election.

It matters who heads electoral body and therefore counts the vote. There are hardly independent electoral commissions – with independent officials. This claim has been made of Zimbabwe when Morgan Tsvangirai was allegedly rigged – and later made prime minister as a reconciliation. Similar allegations have been said of recent elections in of Zimbabwe. It is alleged to have happened in Kenya 2007 and people died. It is claimed that Raila Odinga had won and was cheated by President Kibaki. It is alleged in recent elections in of Kenya. In Uganda, opposition has been in and out of court over election malpractices.

Voters are not agenda-or issue-driven when voting, and they may not even know why they are voting. Evidence has shown that they can be induced to cast their ballots⁷. It has been claimed that a vote can cost as little as a quarter of one dollar in local currencies in Africa.

Before we continue, let us make it clear that sharing power after a contestable election smirks of greed or selfishness. It does not portend well. Those who have tried it – Raila Odinga (Kenya), and Morgan Tsvangirai (Zimbabwe) have all lost in the next elections. May be – all other factors also considered – the voters did not trust them more.

Clientelism and vote-buying have been prevalent in many elections since around 2000 to date. Analysts find that this is the situation⁸. Before we go along let us understand the patron–client networks and clientelism. The patron–client network is a major technique for controlling society’s participation in authoritarian states. This practice is oftentimes called clientelism; a form of political involvement which differs from voluntary participation in liberal democracies. Although patron–client relationships are found in all political systems, authoritarian regimes offer the full expression of such relationships. Patron–client relationships are traditional, informal hierarchies held together by exchanges between a high status (patron) and lower status (client). The clients, lacking resources of their own gather around their patron (as other worker bees around the queen) for security and protection. The patrons are the party leaders, government ministers, ethnic or cultural leaders (e.g. kings or chiefs), employers and landlords.

⁷ See Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:52)

⁸See Wantchekon, L., (2003), “Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin”, *World Politics* 55 (April 2003), 399–422; and Collier, P., and Vicente, P.,(2012), “Violence, Bribery, and Fraud: The Political Economy of elections in Sub-Saharan Africa”. *Public Choice*, Volume 153, Issue 1-2p. 117-147

On the legitimacy and integrity of the electoral process in African countries, the Africa Governance Report II, (2009:33)⁹ puts it that elections have yet to be free and fair in most African countries, even though the intensity of voter fraud is not uniform among the emerging democracies. The report continues that electoral irregularities, rigging and fraud have led some to question the extent to which voting and elections reflect the choices of the people. Electoral violence and ballot fraud, part of voter fraud¹⁰, have been prominent in most the elections in Africa¹¹. Some members of parliament win office through vote buying, rigging, bribery and violence. Studies have shown significant vote buying in countries like Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Nigeria (Stapenhurst et al. 2006).

There is also voter intimidation. Theoretically, this is less expensive than voter bribing. The voters are scared from voting. They don't vote. Voter turn-out reduces. But the incumbent usually takes the day.

Why do dictators allow elections at all? There is a key reason why elections are allowed and held in a dictatorship in African countries. It is more useful to see elections in African dictatorships as a means for recruiting the political elite or as ceremonial performances that help enforce citizen obedience, induce complicity, and socialize the electorate. This is according to Golder and Wantchekon (2004:3) citing Chazan 1979, and Cliffe 1967). Elections also help a regime improve on its image abroad. They begin seeing that country making efforts towards democracy. The IMF and the World Bank can then allow funds support to come in.

References:

Golder, M., and Wantchekon, L, (2004) "Africa: Dictatorial and Democratic Electoral Systems since 1946". Forthcoming in: Colomer, J, (eds.) 2004: Handbook of Electoral System Design. London: Palgrave.

Minnite, L, C, "The Politics of Voter Fraud", Barnard College, Columbia University: <http://www.bradblog.com/Docs/PoliticsofVoterFraudFinal.pdf> (accessed on 11/17/13)
Stapenhurst, R., Johnston, N., and R Pelizzo, R., (eds.), 2006: Role of Parliament in Curbing Corruption. Washington, D.C: The World Bank

⁹ UNECA(2009) , "Africa Governance Report II", Oxford University Press

¹⁰ *Voter fraud is the "intentional corruption of the electoral process by the voter."* This definition covers knowingly and willingly giving false information to establish voter eligibility, and knowingly and willingly voting illegally or participating in a conspiracy to encourage illegal voting by others. All other forms of corruption of the electoral process and corruption committed by elected or election officials, candidates, party organizations, advocacy groups or campaign workers fall under the wider definition of *election* fraud. (Source: Minnite, L, C., "The Politics of Voter Fraud", Barnard College, Columbia University: <http://www.bradblog.com/Docs/PoliticsofVoterFraudFinal.pdf> (accessed on 11/17/13)

¹¹ See Collier and Vicente 2012

<http://www.mondaytimes.co.ug/details.php?option=acat&a=1943#.UsAiPfvobNE> (accessed on 12/29/13) <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Besigye-won-2006-polls---Sejusa/-/688334/2114376/-/2qex1g/-/index.html> (accessed on 12/29/13)

Prezeworski, A., and Vreeland, J.R., (2000), "The Effects of IMF Programs on Economic Growth", *Journal of Development Economics* 62(2):385-421

UNECA (2009), "Africa Governance Report II", Oxford University Press

Wantchekon, L., (2003), "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin", *World Politics* 55 (April 2003), 399–422;

Collier, P., and Vicente, P. (2012), "Violence, Bribery, and Fraud: The Political Economy of elections in Sub-Saharan Africa". *Public Choice*, Volume 153, Issue 1-2p. 117-147

http://pluslucis.univie.ac.at/FBW0/FBW2013/Material/Rf_Klimek_Elections.pdf (accessed on 10/27/13)

Looking for correlation between democracy and economic growth

In a democracy, the pressures placed upon politicians to survive competition from aspirants to their office bear certain resemblances to the pressures placed upon private entrepreneurs. Private firms compete among themselves in numerous, complex ways to secure the patronage of customers. Politicians similarly compete among themselves for the support of the electorate, and they do this by offering and promising policies and programs which they hope will get them elected or reelected.

James M. Buchanan, *Keynesian Economics in Democratic Politics; Democracy in Deficit: The Political Legacy of Lord Keynes* [1977], *The Collected Works of James M. Buchanan*, 20 vols. Vol. 8 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999-2002)¹²

Democracy: This is the highest form of development of a country. People decide who to represent them and legislate on their behalf, under representative parliamentary democracy. Members of parliament are the representatives of the people in a

¹²

Source:

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:pQ_ummLvqIcJ:oll.libertyfund.org/%3Foption%3Dcom_staticxt%26staticfile%3Dshow.php%253Ftitle%3D1097%26chapter%3D103188%26layout%3Dhtml%26Itemid%3D27+&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk (accessed on 1/4/14)

parliamentary democracy. The elected president serves the country with the mandate of the people. This happens in the developed countries mainly where there is a fully liberal democracy. In the poor developing countries, democracy western-style is not really practiced. The kind of democracy practiced in some countries, if at all is a sham.

There is no univocally accepted definition of democracy. Yet as a concept and form of government, democracy is very old. It dates ancient Athens (currently in Greece) where every member of the community was a member of the council was their own representative to say in a modern parliamentary system. Athens is regarded as the birthplace of western democracy. Athens then was a small city with a very small population. Currently under parliamentary democracies, the people give their power to their representatives. As Aristotle puts it, 'you surrender your powers to the elected representative'. Democracy is derived from two Greek words: *Demos*, and *Kratia*. *Demos* means the *people* and *Kratia* means *to rule*. So when combined the two refer to how people are ruled. The people will always want to be ruled well and treated with respect. Not as clients but as owners of the government.

This in theory means a governance system by the people for the people, as opposed to the rule by one despot (autocracy), or a few (oligarchy)¹³.

The idea of a government made by and for the governed was developed further by John Locke (1632-1704). John Locke, an English philosopher's thinking shaped the liberal vision of the Western state which later underpinned the American Revolution of 1770s. He argued that citizens possess natural rights to life, liberty and property and that these rights must be protected by rulers governing through law¹⁴. Society was placed above rather than beneath the government.

Fayemi (2009) argues, whether under a minimalist or maximalist terms of democracy, there are two basic assumptions of democracy, namely, that all people are equal (equality) and that all people are free (liberty). That certain minimum conditions must be met in order for a system to be labeled democratic and that these include, among others and in no particular order, respect for human rights and the rule of law; collective deliberation, choice and participation; representative and accountable government. Democracy emphasizes that values should not be forced upon people, and stipulates liberty, the separation of power, majority rule, and the sovereignty of the people.

¹³Fayemi, A, K.,(2009), "Towards an African Theory of Democracy: Thought and Practice", Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK)

¹⁴ According to John Locke (1690:412), should rulers violate these natural rights, the people 'are thereupon absolved from any further Obedience, and are left to the Common Refuge, which God hath provided for all Men against force and violence' - the right to resist bad leadership.

Democracy gives primacy to political and moral values of equality, reciprocity, and respect for the views of others¹⁵.

Is there a correlation between democracy and economic growth, and then economic development?

Empirical studies and analysis shows that there is no direct correlation. Almost all of the rich developed countries in the west are democracies. The fact all of these countries are democratic has for long been taken as iron-clad evidence of the progression from economic growth to democracy.

In its simplest form, the argument is that: economic growth produces an educated and middle class that understands what is good or bad leadership and sooner or later begins to demand to have control over its own fate. That the process of this society demanding for control over its own fate and the movement from authoritarianism to democracy is gradual but that it will later happen. Recent history at least in China and re-emerging Russia has complicated matters. The argument cannot hold very well. As events now exhibit, the link between economic growth and a liberal democracy is actually quite weak. Since 1978 when Chinese reforms of the market orientation and increasing middle class in China – having gotten over 300 million out of poverty by around 2010 – liberal democracy has not yet come to China. During the 1980s, the regime began to introduce elections for members of the village committee in rural areas - and find that elections affected policy outcomes in a way that is consistent with the predicted effects of increased local leader accountability¹⁶. According to Martinez-Bravo and et.al. (2011), the most important positions among them were the village chief (VC). Previously, this position was directly appointed by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials. The regime believed that elections would provide the VC with a democratic mandate, and thereby more legitimacy to implement and enforce central government directives in the village. In addition, many proponents of this reform argued that villagers would use elections to monitor and discipline village officials, who were in many cases suspected of corruption and shirking (Martinez-Bravo, et.al. (2011:2). In a 1990 nationwide survey 74.6 percent of rural residents reported that village committee elections had been held in their villages and 37.1 percent said the elections were semi competitive; that is, there were more candidates than seats. Three years later a survey of the same locales revealed that 75.8 percent of respondents reported that their villages had held elections and 51.6 percent

¹⁵ Fayemi, A, K., (2009), "Towards an African Theory of Democracy: Thought and Practice" Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK)

¹⁶ Martinez-Bravo, M., Miguel, G.P., Qian, N., and Yao, Y., (2011), "Do Local Elections in Non-Democracies Increase Accountability? Evidence from Rural China", NBER Working Paper No. 16948.

of them reported that elections had been semi competitive. Even though the CCP still organizes the elections (Shi 1999:389)¹⁷

However, this is not fully liberal democracy – western style in China. We take it that this is a long period and enough to have seen changes to a liberal democracy. It is true that among already established democracies a higher per capita income contributes to stability. It is also valid that poverty and social exclusion are linked to the causes of conflicts and wars in Africa – some conflicts are actually over the sharing of the national cake.

The empirical and econometric studies have found out that there is hardly any correlation between regime type and economic performances. While agreeing that economic freedom promotes growth, some scholars doubt whether more political freedom improves economic performance. The argument that what is important is not democracy but having in place the rule of law and policies that improve economic freedom¹⁸. According to Robert Barro in his article *Democracy and Growth*, the favourable effects on growth include maintenance of the rule of law, free markets, small government consumption and high human capital (Barro, 1996). He adds that once these variables and the initial level of per capita growth are held constant, the overall effect of democracy on growth is weakly negative¹⁹.

Some analysts point to an ominous and poorly appreciated fact: economic growth, rather than being a force for democratic change in tyrannical states, can sometimes be used to strengthen oppressive regimes. Although development theorists are right in assuming that increases in per capita income lead to increases in popular demand for political power, they have consistently underestimated the ability of oppressive governments to thwart those demands²⁰. Authoritarian regimes are getting better and better at avoiding the political fallout of economic growth-so good, in fact, that such growth now tends to increase rather than decrease their chances of survival²¹. Autocrats have been forced to introduce modest political changes but have nonetheless managed to limit their scope and hold on to power²².

¹⁷Shi, T., (1999), "Village Committee Elections in China: Institutional Tactics for Democracy", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Apr., 1999), pp. 385-412

¹⁸ Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:46)

¹⁹ Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:46)

²⁰ de Mesquita, B.B., and Downs, W.G., (2005:78), " Development and Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct., 2005), pp. 77-86

²¹ de Mesquita, B.B., and Downs, W.G., (2005:78), " Development and Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct., 2005), pp. 77-86

²²de Mesquita, B.B., and Downs, W.G., (2005:78), " Development and Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct., 2005), pp. 77-86

Jagdish Bhagwati (2002:151) in his article 'Democracy and Development: Cruel Dilemma or Symbiotic Relationship?' says that democracy is not necessarily better for development. Only when combined with markets and openness does democracy offer the best prospect of achieving the efficient, dynamic society that allows development to thrive?

He believes that the tradeoff between democracy and development, or the "cruel dilemma" as he called it nearly thirty years ago is by no means a compelling necessity, that the pursuit of political and civil virtue, as the embrace of democracy implies, need not be at the expense of the drive for economic development²³.

IMF staff (Giuliano, et al., 2010) undertook a study on the impact of democracy on the adoption of economic reforms using a new dataset on reforms in the financial, capital and banking sectors, product markets, agriculture, and trade for 150 countries over the period 1960–2004. They found out that democracy has a positive and significant impact on the adoption of economic reforms but there is no evidence that economic reforms foster democracy²⁴.

John Gerring and colleagues (2005) in their article *Democracy and Economic Growth: A Historical Perspective* found that the *net* effect of democracy on growth performance cross-nationally over the last five decades is negative or null. Citing over a dozen studies including Barro (1996, 1997), Yi Feng (1997), Przeworski et al., (2002), and Rodrik and Wacziarg (2004), Gerring and colleagues (2005) make the following conclusions:

To be sure, democracy may have some positive indirect effects for example, greater stability or more extensive property rights. The econometric evidence suggests, however, that these positives are balanced by negatives such that the *net* effect of democracy on growth performance cross-nationally over the last five decades is negative or null²⁵.

They continued to say that although most of the rich countries in the world are democratic, the direction of causality is unclear. One must keep in mind that many rich countries grew from under authoritarian stage to democracy. Indeed, this is a common argument among authoritarian leaders in the developing world.²⁶

²³Bhagwati, J. N.,(2002:151-152), 'Democracy and Development: Cruel Dilemma or Symbiotic Relationship?', *Review of Development Economics*, 6(2), 151–162, 2002.

²⁴Giuliano, P., Mishra,P., and Spilimbergo, A., (2010), "Democracy and Reforms: Evidence from a New Dataset", IMF Working Paper, WP/10/173,

²⁵ Gerring, J., Bond, P., Barndt, W., Moreno, C., (2005: 323). "Democracy and Economic Growth: A Historical Perspective", *World Politics* 57 (April 2005: 324), 323–64.

²⁶ Gerring, J., Bond, P., Barndt, W., Moreno, C., (2005): "Democracy and Economic Growth: A Historical Perspective", *World Politics* 57 (April 2005), 323–64.

According to Lee Kuan Yew (former leader of Singapore who ruled for more than 3 decades), democracy is emphatically not equivalent to justice; it is, at best, a component of justice.²⁷ It would be wrong for first-world actors to presume that a democratic organization of politics is preferable for countries in the developing world if another regime-type promises greater material reward.²⁸ Citing *The Economist* of August 27, 1994: 15, Bhagwati (2002:151) writes that Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew speaking on how his "soft" authoritarian rule allowed Singapore to sustain high rates of growth. Lee Kuan Yew has argued thus "I believe what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy. The exuberance of democracy leads to indiscipline and disorderly conduct which are inimical to development."²⁹

Bhagwati continues to say that indeed, the phenomenal success of the East Asian economies like Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and mainland China—none of them having democracies in a substantive sense during their miracle years, has created for some a sense that democracy is inconsistent with development³⁰. As a comparison, he also notes that the fact is that nondemocratic countries have had an immense variety of performances, ranging from the spectacular in East Asia to disastrous in many nations of Africa. Looking only at the developing countries in the postwar period, therefore, he notes that it would be hard to conclude that democracies have had less rapid developmental performance³¹.

Let us conclude that econometric, time series and any analysis should not take away the fact that democracy is good for harmony, peace and stability of countries in Africa which are always divided and disunited by the politics of ethnicity and regional discrimination. Let us go for values attached to democracy such as freedoms, human rights and equality before the law and tolerance of the differences that exist because of the ethnic origin, age, and gender.

References

²⁷According to Arneson (2004), justification for democracy rests on its propensity to reach just decisions, thus identifying the virtue of democracy with the larger virtue of justice. (Arneson, R.J., (2004), "Democracy Is Not Intrinsically Just" (<http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/rarneson/democracyandjustice1.pdf>) (accessed on 1/11/14))

²⁸ Lee Kuan Yew, quoted in *The Economist*, August 27, 1994, 15.

²⁹ Lee Kuan Yew, quoted in *The Economist*, August 27, 1994, 15.

³⁰Bhagwati, J, N., (2002), "Democracy and Development: Cruel Dilemma or Symbiotic Relationship?", *Review of Development Economics*, 6(2), 151–162, 2002, Blackwell Publishers Ltd 2002.

³¹Bhagwati, J, N., (2002), "Democracy and Development: Cruel Dilemma or Symbiotic Relationship?", *Review of Development Economics*, 6(2), 151–162, 2002, Blackwell Publishers Ltd 2002.

Bhagwati, J. N., (2002), 'Democracy and Development: Cruel Dilemma or Symbiotic Relationship?', *Review of Development Economics*, 6(2), 151–162, 2002.

de Mesquita, B.B., and Downs, W.G., (2005), "Development and Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct., 2005), pp. 77-86

Fayemi, A. K., (2009), "Towards an African Theory of Democracy: Thought and Practice", *Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK)*

Gerring, J., Bond, P., Barndt, W., Moreno, C., (2005): "*Democracy and Economic Growth: A Historical Perspective*", *World Politics* 57 (April 2005: 324), 323–64.

Giuliano, P., Mishra, P., and Spilimbergo, A., (2010), "Democracy and Reforms: Evidence from a New Dataset", IMF Working Paper, WP/10/173,

James M. Buchanan, *Keynesian Economics in Democratic Politics; Democracy in Deficit: The Political Legacy of Lord Keynes [1977]*, *The Collected Works of James M. Buchanan*, 20 vols. Vol. 8 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999-2002)

Martinez-Bravo, M., Miguel, G.P., Qian, N., and Yao, Y., (2011), "Do Local Elections in Non-Democracies Increase Accountability? Evidence from Rural China", NBER Working Paper No. 16948.

Shi, T., (1999), "Village Committee Elections in China: Institutional Tactics for Democracy", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Apr., 1999), pp. 385-412

African Leaders staying long in power: Is his is a problem?

Before we examine the impact of leaders staying longer in power in either Asia or Africa, we need to observe that a leader staying long in power is first and foremost that individual's choice. Nelson Rolihala Mandela (who died in December 2013) would have stayed in power for life and a few would have dared to challenge him. Instead he was president of South Africa for only one term. No other current leader in Africa can claim 'more love' for his country than Nelson Mandela. He was tormented. He was jailed on Robben Island and other prisons for 27 years by the apartheid racist regime. He came out without bitterness. Still to add on to this, he served only one term. Period. Characterizing democracy, Aristotle (1962, book VI), proposes that the "*Tenure of office should be brief and no man should hold the same office twice (except for the military positions)*".

We have observed that in Africa, where most leaders have betrayed their people's hopes, most opposition politicians and several academics blame the problems on leaders overstaying in power (and they are not completely wrong, as, indeed, some leaders have had long spells in office and with negative results, going by all the indicators of progress). This is not, however, to mean that staying in power for long is necessarily a negative factor. The problems occur when those who remain in power fail to implement a successful agenda for development. (Twineyo-Kamugisha 2012:52). We have leaders in both Asia and Africa who have stayed long in power. Some in Asia have had big achievements. Most of those in Africa have left their countries in poverty and misery. But some have recorded economic growth and reduced the spread of and death by malaria, HIV/Aids in their countries.

So the question is: "Is a leader staying too long in power necessarily bad?"

We need to examine this question critically. We need also to look at individuals themselves who have stayed long in power and critique their performance in terms of reducing poverty and enhancing economic growth.

Mendoza et al., (2013, p.2) argue that the political extended time horizons maybe necessary for socio-economic reforms and enable adequate planning and implementation of policies with long-term goals. Politicians with short and/or tenuous tenures tend to shun the difficult but necessary reforms that pay-off in the future and yield to populist demands in order to improve their chances of re-election. The extended time horizons afford them the longer reform runways necessary to pursue policies and programs that are critical to sustained, robust, and inclusive economic growth. It is also possible that the behaviour of such politicians is driven by legacy-related goals that are linked with the overall outcomes in their respective jurisdictions. Thus, the longer their tenure is, the more they tend to care about long term outcomes.

Such leaders in Asia who stayed long but led their countries to prosperity have been acknowledged – even in the west. Huntington suggests that Lee Kwan Yew, who led Singapore for decades, gave that country political leadership and was determined to create a non-corrupt society, which in large part he did³². But even when no longer in office, the majority of their people (and even renowned Western political science scholars such as Huntington) still hold such leaders in high esteem, a clear indication of their leadership skills and ability to advance society³³.

³²Huntington, 1999cited Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:42)

³³ Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:42)

There is an emerging issue why some leaders stay long in power: fear for their lives out of power. This takes different forms. One could be that you fear how to live almost like the rest of society. The writer was told by one formerly senior person about how living the life of salutes to the one 'budgeting' made him want to go back to government. But this means that probably such a person never stole while in office. Second is the fear that once you live office, there could be those that you unfairly treated because you had power. This is the issue of retribution and attribution.

Others in the traditional setting will want to attach directly: some have in the past burnt such a leader's houses; and or killed their livestock. The other is the modern approach: go to court and sue the former ruler(s). In Africa, heads of state cannot be tried in any court. People wait when they out of office. This calls for the assurances that once I am out of office I will be protected – mainly from prosecution. This calls on the leaders to rule according to the laws of the land. Those laws should have been genuinely passed by the legislature. We mention that soccer referee at times makes a few mistakes but they are protected by the rules of the game.

There is another reason suggested as early as 1972 by James David Barber; that is our emotional attachment to presidents' shows up when one dies in office³⁴. In 1985, James David Barber asserts that history shows that whenever a president dies in office, whether heroic or debased the same wave of deep emotion sweeps across the country³⁵. On the other hand, except for Nelson Mandela whose death became one of the most powerful modern send-offs of this generation, the death of an ex-president brings forth no such intense emotional reaction³⁶. Yes. A big should be sent like a big man but once out of office, some have been buried in unmarked graves with no gun salute having been denied a return visa to be buried at home. Some have been buried home thanks to the good relations their family had with the current rulers. This is bound to make rulers want to stay on until they pass on.

We need to state the fear of most people why about the leaders staying longer in power: i) if a leader stays long without establishing institutions, it will affect growth and development; ii) staying long without growth affects the country in both the short and long-run with negative consequences of poverty, diseases and conflicts; and iii) after the

³⁴Source: James David Barber, *"The Presidential Character"*. The Presidential Character, 3rd Edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1985: (at <http://acad.fcps.org/ss/puch/apps/readings/barber.pdf>)

³⁵Source: James David Barber, *"The Presidential Character"*. The Presidential Character, 3rd Edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1985: (at <http://acad.fcps.org/ss/puch/apps/readings/barber.pdf>)

³⁶Source: James David Barber, *"The Presidential Character"*, The Presidential Character, 3rd Edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1985: (at <http://acad.fcps.org/ss/puch/apps/readings/barber.pdf>)

exit of such a leader, the country almost starts from a situation like before the exiting leader took power.

The success of countries mostly depends on leadership

In most African countries, the 'big man'³⁷ still calls all the shots dictating who gets what in society. In most cases, the success of such a society economic-wise will depend on how such a politician views the benefits of economic growth for his/her political success and self-enrichment. It has been observed that in most, it is these leaders themselves first and foremost.

In illiberal democracies, it is the powerful leader rather than the strong institutions that we see. Rather than serving as a representative of the people (an agent representing the principal), the leader (president or prime minister) plays the part of the personal ruler, taking care of the people's needs directly whom they hand-pick and claiming their respect. This means that having elected a 'saviour', the voters are only expected to cheer from sidelines or the stands – and entering the political field at their own risk.

These leaders use three groups to stay and enjoy their power: striking deals and obtaining patronage of a network of power-brokers; the military; and control of the media. Such rulers operate recognizing the need to strike deals with other power-holders in business, the church and the regions. They rely on the control of three key resources: the military, patronage, and the media. These rulers maintain a strong military and security presence, and to sustain their position, they need to be perceived as willing to use the military. Given the past and levels of illiteracy in these African countries, the military presence always reminds them of where they came from. In these societies usually the past is paraded with torture, brutality, tyranny and murder. Therefore use of the military³⁸ is an effective tool to keep in power in these societies.

Strong men also maintain their hold onto power and position through both the unofficial and official patronage networks in which other power-holders are incorporated. They are incorporated by providing them with resources such as control over jobs (which are scarce in these countries) and access to money – making opportunities which they can then

³⁷ We will use 'big man' as a term to refer to what we see as leaders who suffocate the institutions. Most literature uses such terms as strong men and despots. In its original meaning, despot means any barbaric and arbitrary ruler who treats his subjects as little more than slaves. Some feudal kings and queens – if not most- treated their subjects as slaves. They would even spit in the mouth of some. So we can't use this term to apply to current rulers in African even-though we may identify some who are excessively close.

³⁸ In Uganda for example, the competitive candidates have been those who are associated with the military and having fought. Even quietly, the opposition is always looking for someone with military credentials to tussle it out with the incumbent president, a retired army General, Museveni.

distribute – in turn to their group and own supporters. In this way in these countries, unfortunately allegiance to one's immediate patron and through the patron indirectly to the regime becomes the key to a successful career. These client-patron relationship pyramids extend through society and as long as the clients are politically sound, their patrons will ignore their shady behaviour (such as corruption). This should help to explain why less democratic (and authoritarian) regimes are corrupt and highly nepotistic in Africa. With this arrangement, the institutions in these societies tend to be weak but the pragmatic alliances tend to be strong, hence providing the regime the glue. This allocation of resources such as jobs, contracts and investment through private patronage leads to substantial misallocation of capital, a weak banking sector, reduced FDI (King 2007). As long as these rulers continue to control key economic commodities such as oil, they can carry on purchasing political loyalty.

The media and the regime survival: The media can influence either a positive or negative image of a leader among different publics. To obtain a positive view from the media, the leaders have sometimes owned the media, or censored it by law. It can be noted that even in China, as the Chinese Communist Party introduced reforms to market mechanisms to many parts of the economy including privatization of state owned enterprises, they did not privatize the mass media³⁹. The Chinese leaders have more than the control of the mass media to rely on and manage the political relationships and they have the constitution. The Chinese constitution is clear on democracy and dictatorship. Article 1 of the Chinese constitution, 1982 states⁴⁰:i) Article 1: The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.

ii) The socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China. Disruption of the socialist system by any organization or individual is prohibited.

References

Barber, J.D. , "*The Presidential Character*", *The Presidential Character*, 3rd Edition. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1985: (at <http://acad.fcps.org/ss/puch/apps/readings/barber.pdf> (accessed on 1/12/14))

³⁹ See too Esary, A., (2007). *Speak No Evil: Mass Media Control in Contemporary China*. New York: Freedom House

⁴⁰ Source: The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/2007-11/15/content_1372963.htm (accessed on 12/24/13); and Tschentscher (2004), *China Constitution*, International Constitutional Law Project, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ch00000_.html (accessed on 12/24/13)

Esary, A., (2007). *Speak No Evil: Mass Media Control in Contemporary China*. New York: Freedom House

Huntington, S.P. 1999. Keynote address, *Cultures in the 21st Century: Conflicts and convergences*. Colorado College's 125th Anniversary Symposium, 4 February 1999. See <http://coloradocollege.edu/Academics/Anniversary/Transcripts/HuntingtonTXT.htm> (accessed on 4 October 2010).

King, S., (2007), "Sustaining Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa", *Political Science Quarterly* (122), 433-60

Mendoza, R., Beja Jr, E., Venida, V., and Yap, D., (2013) "Political dynasties and poverty: Resolving the \"chicken or the egg\" question", MPRA Paper No. 48380.

The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/2007-11/15/content_1372963.htm (accessed on 12/24/13); and Tschentscher (2004), *China Constitution*, International Constitutional Law Project, <http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ch00000.html> (accessed on 12/24/13)