

The Structural Adjustment Programme and Democratic Transition in Africa ¹

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Introduction

The political economy of most African states in response to the Intractable Crisis which has constricted it for the last over a decade, is at present in a state of transition. Economic restructuring underlined by a concerted attempt to redirect the pattern of domestic production and capital accumulation from the state to the market process, through the adoption and vigorous implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) is in vogue in most of these states. Concurrently, most African states are also under the intense pressure of political reforms.

The pressures for democratic reforms in Africa are of two kinds. First, there is a groundswell of domestic political opposition to authoritarian political arrangements like military regimes, personalised one party rule and other authoritarian political systems. Secondly, the collapse of the Cold War with the subsequent hegemony of the Liberal Capitalist ideology and the mounting obstructing political forces against SAP have motivated both the Western nations and the IMF/World Bank respectively, to foist a new conditionality of political liberalisation on nations undertaking market economic reforms as a prerequisite for continued aid flow and economic assistance. The World Bank in its 1989 report made it quite clear that issues of good governance, rule of law and political accountability would henceforth be critical elements in its support for economic recovery programmes in African states.² In the same vein, in 1990, Herman Cohen, the United States Assistant Secretary of State, hinted that democratisation will likely become the third conditionality for obtaining

¹ Revised text of a paper presented to the International Political Science Association World Congress, Berlin, Germany, August, 1994.

² World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: a Long Term Perspective Study*, Washington, World Bank, 1989.

United States economic assistance by African states after the adoption of SAP and the assessment of the country's human rights record.³

Since the late 1980s different forms of democratic transition projects have been consummated in Africa. These range from state authored transitions and national conferences to violent processes of reform. Countries like Malawi, Cameroon, Zambia, Benin Republic, Gabon, Cape Verde, Togo, Algeria, Tanzania, Congo Brazaville, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have either embraced the process of democratic reforms or are still grappling with it. The transition projects in these states tend to be different in form and content and are also of a complex and varying character, but this can be located in the peculiar historical conditions and conjuncture of these states, the nature of the interplay of social forces in these contexts and the trajectory of events and processes that propel the change.

The essence of the democratic transition projects however remains essentially the same. It represents not only the demand for competitive electoral politics, multipartyism and civil and political rights, but also the economic empowerment of the citizenry. The latter involves a conscious and progressive march towards ending the criss-crossing networks of oppression and misery of the people. The nostalgia for civil and political freedom which the present struggle for democracy connotes only express an encompassing cry for a better life and improved human conditions. As Mamdani⁴ observed, for democracy to be meaningful to all social classes in the society, especially the dominated classes, it must be related to the living conditions of the people.

As the pursuit of SAP continues in African states, in most cases with debilitating consequences, the process of democratic transition has also been conflict ridden on the continent. In some situations, such processes have been tension and violence soaked, stalled or the entire process annulled as the Nigerian example suggests with the dismantling of all democratic structures by the Abacha Junta in November 1993, after eight tortuous years of a state planned transition to civil rule.

The main unresolved problematic centres on the linkage between Structural Adjustment and democratic transition in Africa. This is so because SAP not only determines the socio-economic base on which the democratic project is being constructed, but also largely set the character and ideological orientation of the political reforms. Indeed, the organisation of the state and polity is usually a reflection of the nature of the economic forces in society. In essence, it thus suggests that there exist a nexus between the two elements. But what is the nature of the relationship? Is it one of a positive symmetry or a negative correlation? In

³ Africa Recovery, April-June 1990, Vol., 4, No. 1, p. 14.

⁴ Mamdani, Mahmood, Contradictory class perspectives on the question of democracy: The case of Uganda, in: Anyang Nyong'o (ed.), Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa, London, 1987.

other words, does SAP promote or undermine the process of democratic transition and consolidation in Africa? What is the effect of the various policy measures of SAP, namely trade liberalisation, subsidy withdrawal on essential services, currency devaluation and the state divestment from the provision of social welfare and security, on political transition projects? Can SAP and the democratic project be concurrently pursued and will lead to the qualitative development of society? Or as Beckett⁵ metaphorically posed the question: Do the spirits of Adam Smith and John Locke shake hands? These are the questions which this paper seeks to address, with an African experience.

First, we undertake a discussion of the basis and character of SAP in Africa, second, we examine the impact of SAP on democratic transition in Africa, both from the theoretical and empirical perspectives, and third, we assess the prospects of democratic consolidation within the context of Structural Adjustment in Africa.

I. Structural Adjustment in Africa: Basis and Character

For Africa, the 1980s could be better described as the "adjustment decade", as most African countries in response to their ailing economic conditions introduced one form of adjustment reform or the other. Between 1980 and 1989, 241 adjustment programmes were put in place by 36 countries in collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank. Only a few small countries like Botswana, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Djibouti and Swaziland did not undertake adjustment programmes with the assistance of the IMF and the World Bank in the 1980s.

Although there are inter-country variations with respect to the extent, duration and intensity of the economic crisis in Africa, the adoption of SAP was driven essentially by the parlous economic condition of these states. While African economies witnessed relative prosperity in the 1960s, the worsening fortune of the world economy in the 1970s began to recycle itself swiftly into these states. This was manifested in declining commodity prices, low foreign exchange earnings, persistent balance of payment problems and a general reduction in economic activities. The prices of Africa's commodities between 1976-1990 dropped for the first time to its lowest ebb in about fifty years. For sub-Saharan Africa, the average growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which was 5.9% between 1965-1973 plummeted to 2.5% in 1973-1970. Growth rate in agriculture fell from 2.2% in 1965-73 to

⁵ *Beckett, L.*, Structural Adjustment and Democracy – Reflections on the Nigerian experience, in: *L. Deng, M. Kostner and C. Young (eds.)*, Democratisation and Structural Adjustment in Africa in the 1990s, Madison African Studies Programs, University of Wisconsin, 1991.

0.3% in 1973-1980. Manufacturing production also dropped from 10.1% in 1960-73 to 8.1% in 1973-80, while export fell from 15.1% in 1960-73 to 0.2% in 1973 to 1980.⁶

The mounting external debt of these nations also deepened the economic crisis. In 1990, Africa's total foreign debt was estimated at 272 billion which was two and half times greater than the 1980 figure. For sub-Saharan Africa, the external debt situation rose to \$161 billion in 1990, thrice as much as the 1980 figure of \$56 billion.⁷

As the African economic crisis deepened, the influence of the IMF and the World Bank soared on the continent. These two International Financial Institutions (IFI) became increasingly involved in the design of domestic economic reform packages for African states, and also in mobilising external resources in support of these reform measures.

In their policy prescription to African countries, both the World Bank and the IMF push to the fore the ideology of market reforms and economic liberalisation as couched in the Structural Adjustment Programme. The policy conceives the state, which in the main has dominated the political economy of most African countries, as the greatest impediment to economic progress and the welfare of the society. Its perennial unproductive investments in the economy, its huge public expenditure, its creation of artificial price level of goods and services through subsidy, are bemoaned. The solution as viewed by SAP lies in the retreat of the state to allow the private sector to be the motor of the economy, cut in its expenditure level and tariff and trade reforms. Although there are variations in the specific details of the reform measures foisted for the different African countries, certain policy elements are usually common to all of them. These include, first, currency devaluation and market determined exchange rate, second, demand management measures like wage restraint, cut in public spending and reduction of money supply, third, the deregulation of economic activities like eliminating price controls, removal of subsidies, on food and energy, interest rate deregulation, liberalisation of trade and fourthly, the privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprises. Once these measures are put in place, the progenitor of SAP, the World Bank, argues, resources will be efficiently allocated, the economy will become more competitive, productivity will rise, and the welfare of the society will be significantly improved.⁸

⁶ Ake, Claude, The Political Economy of Development – Does it have a future?, in: International Social Science Journal, November 1988, pp. 485-499.

⁷ United Nations (n.d.), African Debt: The Case for Debt Relief, New York, African Recovery Unit.

⁸ Biersteker, Thomas, Reducing the Role of the State in the Economy – A Conceptual Exploration of the IMF, World Bank Prescriptions, International Studies Quarterly 34, 1990; Adejumobi, Said, Structural Adjustment and the Prospects of Democracy in Africa – A Nigerian Case-Study, in: O. Omoruyi et al. (eds.), Democratisation in Africa, Abuja, Centre for Democratic Studies, 1994; Olukoshi, Adebayo, (ed.), Crisis and Adjustment in the Nigerian Economy, Lagos, 1991.

But what is the political import of SAP? Some preliminary deductions can be made at this level. First, SAP is a class project, which seeks to create a "stable" economic environment for the accumulation of capital by both the local and foreign bourgeoisie, while suppressing labour through wage freeze, insistence on strict work discipline and reduction in workforce (retrenchment) especially in the public sector. It also seeks to contract the provision of social services and infrastructure like health, education, transportation, and so on, which constitute the major claims the dominated social classes have been able to make on the post-colonial state in Africa. The class character of SAP and the class struggle it accentuates often underline the political and social crises which rupture the policy in most African countries.⁹

Secondly, the political alliances and coalitions which underpin the post-colonial state in Africa will be gradually weakened with SAP. State clientelism and patronages which various fractions of the bourgeois class, including the military, have survived upon will likely be undermined or reduced with SAP. This may promote some fractional struggles within the bourgeois class, and further compound the political crisis of the state. In other words, the state is not only faced with a problem of deligitimation as popular expectations of the people are frustrated, but also confronted with a crisis of political management. It is therefore evident, as Beckman¹⁰ argues, that the political crisis of the African state under a SAP regime is the crisis of SAP.

II. Structural Adjustment and Democratic Transition: Some Theoretical Issues

Democratic transition in the present context in Africa is a project of democratisation for the emergence and institutionalisation of liberal democracy. It constitutes a qualitative shift from the relatively closed and non-democratic political structures, both military and civil, which hitherto litter the political arena in Africa, to democratic ones. Admittedly, the present struggle for democracy in Africa is not a new phenomenon, as the independence struggles constituted not only a rejection of foreign domination but also a demand for participatory democracy and good governance. What is perhaps new in this conjuncture is its invigorated renewal which Nzongola Ntalaja¹¹ aptly describes as the clamour for the second independence.

⁹ *Adejumobi, Said*, Adjustment Reform and its Impact on the Economy and Society in Nigeria, in: *S. Adejumobi and A. Momoh* (eds.), *The Political Economy of Nigeria under Military Rule, 1984-1993*, Harare, 1995.

¹⁰ *Beckman, Björn*, Empowerment or Repression: The World Bank and the Politics of African Adjustment, *Africa Development*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1991.

¹¹ *Nzongola Ntalaja, G.*, The Second Independence Movement in Congo-Kinshasa, in: *P. Anyang Nyong'o* (ed.), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, London, 1987.

The different patterns of democratic transition which exist in Africa include transition through negotiation, transition imposed by the population and transition granted by the political elites from above.¹² These models Huntington¹³ classifies as transplacement, replacement and transformation, respectively. However, these processes are not mutually exclusive.

The current democratic effervescence in Africa seems to have been stimulated by the changing domestic and international political environment. At the domestic level, there is an increasing demystification of military rule and despotic governments as a facilitator of development in Africa: Indeed, these forms of governments have stultified and negated economic and political development in Africa. The current consciousness and preference is now for democratic rule, especially with the fledging economic crisis. For example, "The African Charter for popular participation in development and transformation" drawn at the Arusha Conference in Tanzania in 1990, a conference attended by over 500 representatives of grassroot organisations from different African countries, unequivocally asserted that the absence of democratic rights was the primary cause of Africa's unyielding decade long economic crisis.¹⁴ Secondly, as we earlier noted, the international political environment has become inhospitable to authoritarian rule.

While both the domestic and international political environment converge to provide a fillip to the present democratic change in Africa, the question is on how favourable the economic context of market reforms is to this political process. Undoubtedly, as SAP redefines the role and scope of the state, the sphere of political competition and struggles and the nature of capital accumulation, it definitely has tremendous impact on the democratic project.

The theoretical and intellectual debate on the impact of SAP on the democratic transition process in Africa exists basically at two levels. First, the World Bank¹⁵ and some liberal scholars like Diamond, Linz and Lipset¹⁶ argue that economic and political liberalisation are complementary and reinforce each other. SAP is viewed as a facilitator of democratic change through three major means. Firstly, as SAP ensures the movement from statist economic policies and structures to deregulated ones, a vibrant private sector will emerge

¹² Nzouankeu, J. Mariel, *The African Attitude to Democracy*, in: *International Social Science Journal*, May 1991, 128, pp. 373-378.

¹³ Huntington, S.P., *How Countries Democratise*, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106 (4), Winter 1991/92.

¹⁴ See *Africa Recovery*, April-June 1990, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 1.

¹⁵ World Bank 1989, fn. 2.

¹⁶ Diamond, L. / Linz, J. / Lipset, S.M. (eds.), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Resistance, Future and Renewal*, Boulder, 1988.

and the conditions laid for the rise of a national bourgeoisie, which will have an independent economic base from the state and serve as a counterpoise to the state and the ruling authorities. Secondly, it is assumed that a reduction in the role and scope of the state in the economy will disengage and diffuse the unbridled struggle for political power as the state ceases to be the locus of capital accumulation. Thirdly, it is anticipated that as the informal economy and the private sector expand, the tendency is for a virile civil society to develop, autonomous of the state. This civil society will then champion the cause of liberal democracy. The summary of the arguments is that economic liberalisation which emphasizes the autonomy and efficiency of market forces is but the other side of the liberal democracy coin.¹⁷ In other words, SAP is expected to promote the development of capitalism in Africa and consequently its political superstructure of liberal democracy.

The counterpunctual argument to the above position is that SAP in fact endangers the process of democratic transition. Drawing from the Latin American experience, Malloy¹⁸ averred that the current international policies toward the debt problem, for example as manifested by the IMF, are undermining democratic transition. The logic is that SAP usually create serious tensions in the economy, which often pose a direct threat to the process of political transition.¹⁹ The tensions created in the economy often translate into political discontents in form of riots, demonstrations and strikes which the state normally responds to through political repression and state violence. In other words, authoritarianism and political repression constitute the flip side of Structural Adjustment. This is the position of most African Scholars.²⁰ Indeed, the implementation of SAP in African countries has imposed severe

¹⁷ *Olagunju, T. / Jinadu, A. / Oyovbaire, S.*, *The Transition to Democracy in Nigeria, 1985-1993*, London, 1993.

¹⁸ *Malloy, James*, *The Politics of Transition in Latin America*, in: *James Malloy and Mitchel Saligson* (eds.), *Authoritarians and Democrats – Regime Transition in Latin America*, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg Press, 1987.

¹⁹ *Przeworski, Adam*, *Democracy and the Market – Political and Economic Reforms in Europe and Latin America*, New York, 1991; *Olufemi, Kola*, *The Problematic of Economic Reform and Transition to Democracy – Lessons for Africa*, in: *S.G. Tyoden* (ed.), *Transition to Civil Rule: The Journey so far. Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association* (N.P.S.A.), 1992.

²⁰ *Bangura, Yusuf*, *Structural Adjustment and the Political Question*, in: *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 37, 1986; *Bangura, Yusuf*, *The Crisis of Underdevelopment and Transition to Civil Rule – Conceptualising the Question of Democracy in Nigeria*, in: *Africa Development*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1988; *Bangura, Yusuf*, *Crisis, Adjustment and Politics in Nigeria*, in: *Akut* 38, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 1989; *Beckman, Björn*, 1991, fn. 10; *Mkandawire, Thandika*, *Further Comments on Development Democracy Debate*, CODESRIA Bulletin No. 2, 1991; *Mkandawire, Thandika*, *Adjustment, Political Conditionality and Democratisation in Africa*, in: *Giovanni Andrea Cornier and G.K. Helleiner* (eds.), *From Adjustment to Development in Africa: Conflict, Controversy, Convergence, Consensus?*, London, 1994; *Olukoshi, Adebayo*, 1991, fn. 8; *Olukoshi, Adebayo* (ed.), *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, London, 1993; *Adejumobi, Said*, 1995, fn. 9; *Adejumobi, Said*, *The Structural Adjustment Programme and the Transi-*

social hardship and misery on most social classes and groups in the society. This include the urban poor, the middle class, the rural population and the unemployed. Adjustment policies of currency devaluation, subsidy withdrawal on essential services, and cut in government expenditure usually result in stagflation, declining real incomes, reduced purchasing power and consumption, unemployment and deteriorating social infrastructure. This situation often provokes serious agitations and popular demand by the people which paradoxically the state cannot fulfil under a SAP regime. The option for the state is to unleash repression on the people, embark on some selective cooptation, or make some paltry concessions to the people which may not vitiate the demands.

As state authoritarianism and political repression are intensified in the midst of scourging poverty, so is the level of socio-political discontent and the tendency for greater recusancy and resistance by the civil society like professional bodies, associational groups and labour movements then take up the challenge to mobilise the people and make vociferous democratic claims. In other words, it is the resistance to SAP and not SAP itself that breeds democratic forces and accentuate the course of democratic reforms in Africa. SAP, as Beckman²¹ points out, could be credited to have contributed to this process not because of its liberalism, but because of its authoritarianism.

The latter theoretical analysis thus provides a better insight into the nexus between adjustment reforms and democratic transition in Africa. However, this perspective also has its own limitations. While the resistance to SAP serves a catharsis for the democratic movement and invariably results in democratic change in some countries, in some others SAP tend to subvert the democratic agenda and the popular aspirations of the people as in the Nigerian example. Before we delve into the concrete experiences of some African countries, let us attempt a critique of the theoretical arguments of the World Bank and the liberal perspective.

The whole notion of SAP being complementary to political liberalisation and the transition to democracy is tenuous. First, in the introduction of SAP in African countries, the IMF and the World Bank never encouraged discussion, negotiation or consensus building, hence

tion to Civil Rule Project in Nigeria: 1986-1993, "A Shrinking of the Democratic Agenda", in: *O. Mimiko et al. (eds.), Nigeria's Democratisation Process: 1986-1993*, forthcoming, 1995; *Momoh, A., The Philosophical and Ideological Foundations of the Transition to Civil Rule in Nigeria*, in: *Bernard Caron et al. (eds.), Democratic Transition in Africa*, Ibadan, 1992; *Kaela, Laurent*, Structural Adjustment and the Democratisation Process in Zambia: The Rise of the Third Republic, Paper presented to the African Association of Political Science (AAPS), Biennial Congress, Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania, January 1993; *Toye, John*, Interests Group Politics and the Implementation of Adjustment Policies, Paper presented to the UNRISD / SIAS / CNI Joint Symposium, Bergen, October 1990.

²¹ *Beckman*, 1991, fn. 10.

democracy. SAP was a political imposition. In every case, as Ake²² rightly observed, the World Bank and the IMF were quite content to settle the issues with the president of the client country or his economics or finance minister. Having done so they constantly urge the political will to carry out the programme – a euphemism for its coercive imposition.

To be sure, the World Bank itself envisaged that the draconian measures of SAP could only be implemented within an authoritarian political framework. Deepak Lal²³, the World Bank economist, argues:

"... courageous, ruthless and perhaps undemocratic government is required to roughshod over the newly created interest groups."

The recent changed position of the World Bank in its 1989 report to emphasize issues of human rights, public accountability and democracy as essential political elements for the implementation and success of SAP seems to have been influenced by the need to respond to the global political tide of democratic reforms and more importantly, is the desire to contain the growing political opposition and resistance to SAP on a democratic polity, the World Bank seeks to domesticate the policy. Anyang' Nyong'o puts the issue quite poignantly:

"The Structural Adjustment Programmes came in the midst of the blossoming of authoritarian regimes, the advocates of the SAPs have now realised that popular pressures have been mounting against the consequences of these programmes. Rather than pick their bags and go, these people were smart enough to try and see how SAPs can be implemented in the context of democratic politics."²⁴

However, the extent to which these adjustment policies could be domesticated within the context of democratic politics and popular participation remains to be seen.

Secondly, the theoretical assumption that as SAP roll back the frontiers of the state and stimulate the private sector, the outcome would be the emergence of a national bourgeoisie and a thriving capitalist economy which would provide a base for the practice of liberal democracy is confuted by the experience of most African states. The crowding out of the state from the economy has not encouraged local entrepreneurial initiative to take over the economic sphere, rather foreign capital represented by multinational corporations (MNCs) and in some cases foreign nationals, particularly Asians (i.e. Lebanese, Pakistanis, Indians) as in Ghana and Tanzania, have gradually taken over the domestic economy to fill the void

²² Ake, Claude, Rethinking African Democracy, in: Journal of Democracy, Winter 1991.

²³ Lal, Deepak, The Poverty of "Development Economics", London, 1993.

²⁴ Anyang Nyong'o, cited in Bajtenjujs, Rob and Rijnierse, Elly, An Overview of the Literature – Democratisation in sub-Saharan Africa, 1988-1992, Netherlands African Studies, Centre, 1993, p. 70.

created by the state. Most local enterprises are usually hard hit by the adjustment reform measures as most of them either fold up or are operating grossly below their capacity level. As we have argued elsewhere, this is because these local enterprises do not have the capital base, international network and market penetrations which the present adjustment process requires.²⁵ Indeed, it is the underfunctioning and imminent collapse of many local industries which has led to the claim of the de-industrialisation in the economies of most African states.²⁶ In essence, the whole argument of SAP creating a national bourgeoisie and positively aiding the transition to and survival of democracy in Africa is precarious.

We examine below the experiences of some African countries on the impact of SAP on democratic change.

III. Some Empirical Cases

The character of SAP and the devastating socio-economic consequences it has on the different countries has influenced politics and the democratic project in different forms in Africa. In francophone African states like Benin, Togo, Niger, Gabon and Congo, the predilection has been for national conference. The civil society in these countries, under an excruciating SAP regime, have witnessed some improved organisation, consciousness and mobilisation in making democratic claims on the state. The civil societies in these countries have not only demonstrated the political will to challenge the ruling autocratic regime, but also to supplant it and provide alternative government through the democratic process as the experience of Benin Republic clearly shows.

This form of democratic transition (i.e. national conferences) which takes root from below has been possible through the interplay of two factors. First, at the franco-African summit at La Baule in June 1990, President François Mitterrand told heads of state of the French speaking African countries that future economic assistance to their countries will depend on the degree of political reforms in these states. However, for despotic rulers who have enjoyed a fairly long tenure of office such political reforms cannot be readily embraced. The responsibility and challenge therefore lies primarily with the civil society to demand for political reforms.

Secondly, the economic deprivations and poverty which SAP further imposed on the people induced political agitations of a monumental proportion. For example, in October

²⁵ *Adejumobi, Said*, The Structural Adjustment Programme and Multinational Corporations in Nigeria: Impact and Implications, Mimeo 1994.

²⁶ *Mwakandire, Thandika*, The Road to Crisis, Adjustment and Deindustrialisation: The African Case, in: Africa Development, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1988.

1990, Togo witnesses the most profound anti-government demonstrations in the post-colonial history of the country. The demonstrators confronted the coercive apparatuses of the state – the police and the soldiers –, set police stations ablaze, and destroyed government properties. Similarly in March 1993, there was a four month nation-wide workers strike which virtually paralyzed economic activities in the country. As the state faces a gravious legitimacy crisis, organized interests within the civil society like professional bodies and the opposition parties who have largely been marginalised in local politics and also badly hit by SAP, then seized the initiative to launch a cohesive political battle against the state, rallying the people around the democratic cause.

In Benin, Niger and Togo, the national conferences which emerged from the trajectory of the democratic struggles proclaimed themselves sovereign, set up transitional governments to manage the political transition process and stripped the incumbent political ruler of most of his powers where such was still retained in office. In Togo, Joseph Koffigoh was appointed as the interim Prime Minister; and in Benin Republic, Mr. Soglo, who later won the presidential election in March 1992, was appointed as the leader of the transitional government. Essentially, the democratic movements were able to sustain their opposition against the state, and the campaign for democratic reforms, with overwhelming support, partly because of the pervasive socio-economic discontent which SAP provoked in the society and partly due to the dismal record of political tyranny and economic mismanagement which the ancient regime was reputed.

In anglophone African states the pattern of political reforms tilt towards the state led political transition projects, with the state setting up machinery for the transition to democracy but with varying outcomes. In Zambia for instance, the tortuous process of democratic change resulted in the displacement of the ruling regime. In Ghana the outcome of the transition process is what Adekanye²⁷ aptly refers to as a military turned politician model in which the ruling junta metamorphosed into civilian leaders through national elections. It is simply a system of military continuism. While in Nigeria the military's turbulent eight year transition to civil rule, defined by the logic of SAP, was ultimately aborted by its authors in June 1993. What constitutes the politics of SAP in these countries and the subsequent adjustment of politics which it evoked? To this we will shall turn presently.

In Zambia, the adoption of SAP in 1985 produced serious contradictions in the country's political economy. Zambia was a country which had been governed by Kenneth Kaunda's philosophy of humanism, a euphemism for a welfare state. The public sector dominated economic life and delivered social services, the retreat of this arrangement and the accompanying social fallouts from SAP which include a high inflation rate estimated at about

²⁷ Adekanye, Bayo, Dilemma of Military Disengagement, in: *Oyeleleye Oyadiran* (ed.), Nigerian Government and Politics under Military Rule, 1987-79, London, 1979.

120% by 1990, low capacity utilisation in industry and soaring unemployment led to a powerful opposition against the policy. The reforms, as Callaghy²⁸ noted, was quite unpopular among virtually all strata of the population, from the cabinet and party figures right down to the unemployed urban worker. The opposition was very pervasive and highly institutionalised. In 1987, there was the maize meal riots and shortly after, series of strikes were carried out by workers in the public sector (nurses, teachers, mine workers etc.). Given the magnitude and intensity of the domestic opposition to the policy, coupled with the fact that the economy itself was not showing any palpable sign of recovery, in May 1987 Kenneth Kaunda announced the abrogation of SAP. However, in a couple of years later Zambia returned back to the IMF fold.

The implementation of SAP and its debilitating social consequences had a calamitous political effect on the Kaunda regime. It shattered the regime's political base constructed on a welfare policy and the ideology of humanism. As a result, the regime became alienated from most segments and groups in the society, which hitherto it alloyed support from. This include, the labour movement, the local bourgeois class, the urban population and even the clergy. A constellation of these opposition forces produced the movement for multi-party democracy (MMD) in Zambia, with Arthur Wina, a businessman and former cabinet minister in Kaunda's regime, as Interim Chairman. The MMD between 1989 and 1991 vigorously mobilised and campaigned for political reforms. By September 1990, the government succumbed to pressures for democratic reforms. Consequently, it announced a transition plan to multi-party democracy. the constitution was amended in December 1990 to allow for multiparty politics and thereafter, there was the drafting of a new constitution. In October 1990, multi-party elections were held. At the polls, the United National Independence Party (UNDP) which had been in power since 1968 was defeated by the MMD and Mr. Frederick Chiluba, the presidential candidate of the MMD and former labour leader, assumed political power as President of Zambia.

In Ghana, the pursuit of adjustment reforms (referred to as the Economic Recovery Programme, ERP) and its politics under the Jerry Rawlings regime also had profound impact on the nation's political process. The Rawlings junta which reassumed power in December 1981 (after its initial intervention in 1979) prides a populist cliché of a revolutionary government. Rawlings stated in his broadcast to the nation that his seizure of power should not be regarded as a coup but a revolution, "something that would transform the social and political order of the country"²⁹. At inception, the regime rallied tremendous support from a broad strata of the population, especially from students, workers, radical intellectuals and

²⁸ Callaghy, Thomas, *Lost between the State and the Market – The Politics of Economic Adjustment in Ghana, Zambia and Nigeria*, in: Roschild and N. Chazan (eds.), *The Precarious Balance – State and Society in Africa*, Boulder, 1988.

²⁹ See Hansen, Emmanuel, *Ghana under Rawlings: Early Years*, Lagos, 1991.

the rural population. As part of its populist agenda, the regime created organs of popular power both at the workplace and the local level. These include the workers defence committees (WDC) and the peoples defence committees (PDC). It gave radical intellectuals prominence in government and embarked upon adhoc crisis management economic measures which include, public expenditure cuts, strict supervisory control of the public finance and punitive steps to deal with cases of economic and public office misdemeanour.³⁰

These initial economic policies of the Rawlings regime proved quite ineffectual. Between 1981 and 1983, the decline in the Ghanaian economy continued with real GDP plummeting by 4.6% in 1983, inflation averaging about 120% and essential consumer goods grossly in short supply. In 1982, the regime opened discussions with the IMF. By June 1983 an economic recovery programme (ERP) of the standard IMF/World Bank SAP package was adopted. Between 1983 and 1986, the Ghanaian currency, the cedi, was devaluated for over 300%, about 40% of the public service workforce were laid off, real wages was kept low and trade reforms undertaken.

The political costs of the ERP for the Rawlings regime and the state in Ghana were enormous. First, there was an ideological apostasy of the junta from a left wing (socialist orientation) to a right wing monetarists path. This precipitated serious political contradictions and crisis within the ruling military elite. Two coup attempts were reported in 1982. Consequently, the Rawlings regime had to putsch itself of most of the radical elements in its government. Secondly, the popular support which the Rawlings regime enjoyed at inception from groups like students, labour and radical political movements were rolled back. This was substituted for political opposition. Thirdly, with growing political opposition, the option of political repression became attractive to the state. For example, in 1987 and 1988 university campuses were closed down and student leaders arrested in a major clampdown on tertiary institutions in Ghana. Local critics of the regime like Kwesi Pratt and some labour leaders were also arrested and detained. Fourthly, as state repression intensified, the ire and resistance of the opposition groups also deepened. They mounted serious demands for political liberalisation.³¹

In 1988, the state in Ghana started yielding ground for democratic change. Elections into the district assemblies were held. By 1992 arrangements were completed for the holding of a presidential election. On November 3, 1992, the presidential election was held with Jerry Rawlings as the candidate of the National Democratic Congress Party (NDC) and Professor Boahen as candidate for the main rival party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The election

³⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

³¹ See *Ninsin, K.A. / Hansen, E.* (eds.), *The State, Development and Politics in Ghana*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1989; *Gymah Boadi, E.* (ed.), *Ghana under PNDC Rule*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1993.

was won by the NDC, with Rawlings continuing in office as the President of Ghana. The election and its aftermath elicited serious acrimony and violence, especially in the cities of Kumaso and Tema, with allegations of electoral misconduct levied against the NDC.³²

In Nigeria, the SAP was introduced into the economy in July 1986 by the Babangida regime just as the regime gradually unfolded its transition to civil rule plan. The issue of SAP and the IMF loan was subjected to a national debate by the regime with a result of a overwhelming antipathy against the policy. However, as the regime subjected the IMF loan to a popular debate, it paradoxically subjected the economy to IMF economic discipline.³³

On the political transition project, a political Bureau was constituted in January 1986 to undertake the intellectual spadework for it. The Bureau's primary task was to fashion both a model and philosophy of government for the country based on the popular aspirations of the Nigerian people. The Bureau in its comprehensive report of march 1987 recommended, among others, a socialist philosophy of government, presidential democracy, two party arrangement and the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, which include the banking and the oil industry, to give economic effect to the socialist philosophy.³⁴

These recommendations, especially on the idea of a socialist philosophy of government and the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, were in the main a contradiction to the economic policy of SAP. Consequently, the government rejected these recommendations. On the contrary, the government proceeded with privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprises, the devaluation of the Nigerian currency – the Naira – and other market economic reform measures. In essence, the pursuit of SAP obstructed the democratic agenda which the Nigerian people choose to set for themselves.

The essence and content of the transition to civil rule programme, which the state then manufactures, was shaped mainly by SAP in many respects. First, in October 1989, the state imposed two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC), on the Nigerian people. The constitutions and manifestos of these parties were drawn by the state, which gave overt approval to SAP and the

³² See *Mordi, Raymond*, Ghana after the Storm, in: *The African Guardian*, November 23-26, 1992; *Jeffries, R. / Thomas, C.*, The Ghanaian Elections of 1992, in: *African Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 368, 1993, pp. 331-366; *Oquaye, Mike*, The Ghanaian Elections of 1992 – A Disserting View, in: *African Affairs* 94, 1995, pp. 259-275; *Boahen, Adu*, Note on the Ghanaian Elections, in: *African Affairs*, 1995, pp. 227-280.

³³ *Bangura, Yusuf*, Crisis in Sierra Leone and Nigeria – A Comparative Study, in: *Journal of African Marxists*, No. 9, 1988.

³⁴ Report of the Political Bureau, Abuja, 1987.

commitment to continue its implementation. Secondly, the forces opposed to SAP were labelled "extremists" by the state and were either banned or effectively marginalised in the political process. Thirdly, a SAP political class was created with the acronym of "newbreed politicians". These were composed of buccaneer commercial capitalists engaged mainly in currency speculation and money laundering in the adjustment era and also former cabinet members of the Babangida regime who benefited tremendously from the state adjustment policies. The SAP political class was a self-seeking and opportunistic group who could not make any meaningful democratic demand on the state. Fourthly, although there occurred some anti-SAP riots and protests in major Nigerian cities in 1988, 1989 and 1990, and some associational and professional groups in the civil society, like the Academic Staff Union of Universities (SAUU), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and the Campaign for Democracy (CD), took up the challenge to make democratic demands, especially by advocating for the convenance a sovereign national conference and the repudiation of SAP, however, the inertia and bankruptcy of the SAP political class weakened the democratic struggle, with the state imposing vicious political repression on these democratic groups and their leadership.

Nigeria's transition to civil rule programme (1986-1993) dictated by the logic of SAP was therefore a mechanistic, undemocratic and overregulated political transition project. It evoked serious contradictions which invariably led to its collapse in 1993. The overriding contradictions inherent in the transition process include, first, the problem of the military, and undemocratic institution, pursuing unpopular economic policies having to midwife democracy. Second is the marginalisation of broad and important segments of the population from the political transition process, and third is the problem of anchoring the transition project on an uncommitted and frail SAP political class. The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, which precipitated a trajectory of events that led to the collapse of the transition programme, was the product of a political conspiracy between the ruling Babangida junta and some members of the SAP political class who were desirous of perpetuating military rule in Nigeria and consolidating their personal "gains" from SAP.³⁵

In the empirical cases reviewed above, the pattern of democratic change and the nature of the impact of SAP on the political process differ. However, some common decimal are discernible in all the situations. First, SAP provokes serious contradiction sin the political economy of these states. Second, it strains state-civil society relations. Third, it engenders political repressions and social tension, and Fourth, it creates serious legitimacy crisis for the ruling regime. These factors influence the course of democratic transition in varying dimensions in these countries.

³⁵ *Adejumobi, Said*, The Structural Adjustment Programme and the Transition to Civil Rule Project in Nigeria: 1986-1993, "A Shrinking of the Democratic Agenda", in: *O. Mimiko et al. (eds.), Nigeria's Democratisation Process: 1986-1993*, forthcoming, 1995.

IV. SAP and the Prospects of Democratic Consolidation

A recurring debate on democracy in Africa is on whether its practice constitutes an end in itself or a means to an end.³⁶ In the African context, democracy is meant to serve both purposes. To the extent that democracy provides safeguards for the basic political and civil rights of all citizen (particularly in African countries where such rights have been long denied), it this serve as a valuable end in itself.³⁷ However, interfaced with it are material and social needs of the people, which is assumed that a responsive and democratic government will be quite sensitive to and readily provide. Indeed, the demand for democracy for the majority of the people in Africa is partly a strategy for survival and material betterment. Ake³⁸ puts the issue quite clearly:

"How about the ordinary people, those who are voting for democracy with their sweat and blood on the streets of Kinshasa, Yaounde, Lome and Accra? What does democracy mean to them? What are they struggling for? It is too early to see clearly, but a general pattern is discernible. They are struggling for material betterment and political freedom ..."

The prospects of democratic consolidation in Africa will, as such, depend on two factors. First is the preparedness of the political elite to internalise the values and nuances of democratic politics. They must, according to Dudley³⁹, abide by the constitutive and regulative rules of political competition and electoral process. The emerging trends in Africa's democratic transition seem not to hold out too much hope on this for now. For example, the multi-party elections in Ghana, Niger and Togo in 1992, 1993 and 1994, respectively, were marred by political acrimony and allegations of electoral impropriety especially against the ruling party. Furthermore, the democratic regime must be able to meet the basic needs of the people. The inability of the democratic state to deliver these basic human needs to the society may undermine its legitimacy and authority as relative economic deprivations often

³⁶ *Anyang Nyong'o, P.*, Political Instability and the Prospects of Democracy in Africa, in: Africa Development, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, 1988; *Anyang Nyong'o, P.*, A Rejoinder to the Comments on Democracy and Political Instability, in: Africa Development, Vol. XIII, No. 3, 1988; *Mkandawire, Thandika*, Comments on Democracy and Political Instability, in: Africa Development, Vol. XIII, No. 3, 1988; *Mkandawire, Thandika*, Further Comments on Development Democracy Debate, CODESRIA Bulletin No. 2, 1991; *Mkandawire, Thandika*, Beyond Crisis: Towards Democratic Developmental States in Africa, Paper presented to the CODESRIA General Assembly, July 1995; *Shivji, Issa*, The Pitfalls on the Debate on Democracy, IFDA Dossier 79, October/December 1990, pp. 55-59; *Mafeje, Archie*, Theory of Democracy and the African Discourse: Breaking Bread with my Fellow Travellers, in: *Eshetu Chole and Jibrin Ibrahim* (eds.), Democratisation Processes in Africa. Problems and Prospects, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1995.

³⁷ See *Sandbrooks, Richard*, Liberal Democracy in Africa, A Socialist Revisionist Perspective, in: Canadian Journal of African Studies, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1988.

³⁸ *Ake, Claude*, The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa, Ibadan, 1992.

³⁹ *Dudley, Billy*, Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics, London, 1982.

engender social tension and political conflicts in the society. Pirages and Enrich aptly capture the argument:

"Political stability and democracy have been preserved by an expanding economy that offers a rising standard of living to most people. Whether political stability and democracy can be maintained under austere conditions remains to be seen."⁴⁰

However, this does not suggest that economic development is a precondition for the practice of democracy, rather the argument is that a virile economy compliments and strengthens the practice of democracy. On the contrary, serious economic decline and material shortages may endanger democratic politics. For instance, the general wave of political instability and the breakdown of democracies in Latin American countries in the 1970s and 1980s, as Walton⁴¹ and Muller⁴² aptly demonstrated, were due principally to the declining economic fortune of the state, which prompted severe economic inequalities and scarcities in the society especially under the IMF SAP regime.

The role of SAP in promoting a stable democracy in African states, therefore, will depend on the extent to which the policy is able to improve the living conditions of the people and shove up the material resources of the state, hence the capacity of the nascent democratic regimes to actually govern. Military intervention in politics in sub-Saharan Africa have often been rationalised by its executors, among other reasons, mainly on socio-economic factors. These include the deteriorating living standards of the people, collapsing social infrastructure and a downward trend in the economy. Although relative economic prosperity may not be a sufficient bullwark against military coups, it may partly make the social environment unfavourable to it. Also, a relative improvement in the material well-being of the people may attenuate the intractable inter-group conflicts, which are prevalent in most African countries, as some of these conflicts have their causation in economic inequalities and privations among the groups. Social harmony is undoubtedly relevant for the consolidation of democracy.

The impact of SAP on the economies of African states and the human condition thus far does not provide a glowing picture of its capacity to promote democratic consolidation in Africa. The economic crisis in Africa has continued to deepen and human welfare is on the

⁴⁰ *Pirages / Enrich*, cited in *Gurr, Ted*, On the Politics Consequences of Scarcity and Economic Decline, in: *International Studies Quarterly* 29, 1985.

⁴¹ *Walton, John*, Debt, Protest and the State in Latin America, in: *Susan Eckstein* (ed.), *Power and Popular Protest, Latin American Social Movements*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1989.

⁴² *Muller, Edward*, Dependant Economic Development, Aid Dependence on the United States and Democratic Breakdown in the Third World, in: *International Studies Quarterly* 28, 1985, pp. 445-469.

decline. For example in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, it is estimated that about 60-70 percent of the population have suddenly become very poor under SAP.⁴³ In Nigeria, the per capita income plummeted drastically from US\$778 in 1985 before the inception of SAP to US\$108 in 1989 under a SAP regime. Most people in sub-Saharan Africa are at present living below the poverty line. If the present trend continues with SAP, the apparent possibility is that just as the condition of severe material shortages and poverty prompted socio-political discontent to bring down authoritarian regimes, it may also in the distant future undermine democratic rule.

Conclusion

Democratic transition in Africa should be viewed not as an event, but a process, through which democratic structures emerge, popular participation in governance is promoted and democratic values and nuances are nurtured. It is simply a project of democratisation.

Structural Adjustment has produced varying impacts on the process of democratic transition in Africa. In some countries, it has influenced the organisation, mobilisation and resistance of the civil society against the state through the deepening poverty and social hardship it imposes on the society, thus accentuating the demand for political liberalisation and democratic reforms. In some others, it has aided the subversion of the democratic agenda.

The prospects of democratic consolidation within the context of SAP in Africa is however very tenuous. SAP continues to exacerbate economic and social crises in Africa which may have severe consequences for the growth of democracy and political stability both in the short and long term in Africa.

⁴³ *Kamidza, Richard*, Structural Adjustment Without a Human Face, in: Southern Africa, Vol. 7, No. 6, March 1994.

ABSTRACTS

The Structural Adjustment Programme and Democratic Transition in Africa

By *Said Adejumobi*

Beginning from the 1980s, Africa witnessed two fundamental changes in her political economy. First, there was a drive towards market economic reforms and liberalisation as couched in the Structural Adjustment Programme. Indeed by 1993 over 40 countries in Africa have adopted one form of adjustment reform or the other with the support of the I.M.F. and the World Bank. Simultaneously, African countries during this period also came under the intense pressure of political reforms. The wave of Democratisation which blew across Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, also gathered momentum in Africa.

The thrust of this paper is to examine the impact of the Structural Adjustment Programme on the process of democratic transition in Africa. The Structural Adjustment Programme, though primarily an economic policy, also has a political logic. The political essence of it lies in redefining the role and scope of the State, the sphere of political competition and struggles and the nature of accumulation within the State.

Also, the socioeconomic impact, which the various elements of the policy (vis devaluation of national currencies, trade liberalisation, subsidy withdrawal on essential services, trade liberalisation and so on) engender, has serious consequences for the process of democratisation on the continent. Undoubtedly, the socioeconomic base of democratic reforms in Africa is being presently defined by the Structural Adjustment Programme.

Ghana's Return to Constitutional Rule under the Provisional National Defence Council

By *Joseph R.A. Ayee*

The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), the longest regime that ever ruled Ghana during the post-colonial period (having been in power from 31 December 1981 to 6 January 1993), returned the country to constitutional rule after twelve years of authoritarian rule on 7 January 1993 with the inauguration of the Fourth Republic. The inauguration was preceded by the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections on 3 November 1992 and 29 December 1992 respectively.