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Democracy Rediscovered: Popular Protest, Elite Mobilisation and the Return of Multipartyism

> The winds from the East are shaking the coconut trees.
>
> President Omar Bongo of Gabon on the knock-on effects of political events in Eastern Europe

> If the owners of socialism have withdrawn from the one-party system, who are the Africans to continue with it?
>
> Frederick Chiluba of Zambia

The last two decades of the twentieth century were not merely remarkable for the extent to which African states surrendered their autonomy in the face of aid conditionalities and the invasion of the NGOs. As striking was the rediscovery of competitive politics. Under one-party and military rule alike, the circles of decision-making had typically narrowed to nested cliques, even though the regimes in question often claimed to be looking out for the interests of the whole population and sometimes lured interest groups into quasi-corporatist structures. Large sections of African society which operated outside the charmed circle may have appeared to confer tacit consent on these arrangements by remaining overtly quiescent, but the silences often belied a more complex reality. Ordinary Africans concentrated their energies on getting by and, if they were lucky enough, exploiting the opportunities for rent-seeking which accompanied the African crisis. Many also found coded ways of deflating the pretensions of the powerful through carnivalesque humour. By the start of the 1980s, cynicism abounded, not least within the single parties and military coalitions themselves. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the pendulum swung back again as significant sections of society weighed into politics with a gusto which had not been witnessed since the heydays of nationalism – and often exceeding it. The cities became the crucible of political opposition, whereas rural populations had learned not to reveal their hand prematurely. In some countries like

Congo-Brazzaville and Rwanda, there was a complete political [illegible], which we will address in the final chapter. However, across the greater part of the continent there was genuine movement in the direction of open debate and an attachment to constitutional order.

The dramatic events which unfolded from 1989 have been associated with the so-called 'third wave' of democratisation, as identified by Samuel Huntington.[1] However, even if one accepts the seminal importance of global transformations, such as the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, these only resonated across Africa because of the rot which had hollowed out incumbent regimes from within. Equally, when the tide finally receded, it did so more quickly in some countries than others and so left a different kind of residue on the political shoreline. In Benin and Zambia, incumbent regimes were voted out of office without further ado. As of 1990, no African government (outside of South Africa) had ever been removed through the ballot box, but within six years no fewer than 18 heads of state had been sent packing. However, the gains were both uneven and fragile. In some countries, such as Togo and Zaire, Machiavellian rulers found ways of fragmenting and frustrating the opposition forces, whilst resorting to naked violence when the tide went against them. The largest set of countries experienced something in between – that is, the opposition made significant inroads, and openings for political debate emerged, but the regime in office still held the decisive advantage. It is these different storylines which I will seek to follow in this chapter. In the first part, I will begin by setting out some of the factors which led to a re-enchantment with politics. In the second, I will trace some of the different trajectories through a series of case-studies.

9.1 The rediscovery of a popular voice

The story which I wish to tell has often been cast in terms of the resurgence of 'civil society', a term which now carries more than its fair share of baggage. Insofar as it refers to an associational life existing beyond the confines of the state, it is a useful shorthand. However, the concept of 'civil society' has been bandied about with such little analytical rigour that it has lost much of the precision which it once possessed. It should not be taken for granted that the associations in question have necessarily been opposed to the state, and nor should it blithely be assumed that they have always been gallantly fighting the cause of democratisation in Africa. The range of associations which have become more visible in Africa since the 1980s – NGOs, religious bodies, trade unions, women's groups and the media – have all played their part in shaping recent developments, but none have been unambiguous in their stance towards democracy. Here, I deploy 'civil society' sparingly and as a shorthand.

9.1.1 *Of dinosaurs, crocodiles and father figures: crises of political legitimacy in the 1980s*

Before looking more closely at the emergence of dissident voices, it makes sense to begin our account with the incumbent regimes themselves, for it was their

legitimation crises which led to the realisation that many an emperor was sorely lacking in the clothes department.

I begin with those one-party regimes (*de facto* or *de jure*) which had been firmly ensconced since independence, and which were dominated by Presidential potentates like Kamuzu Banda in Malawi, Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire, Omar Bongo in Gabon, Ahmadou Ahidjo in Cameroun and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. These were leaders who had managed to hold sway for as many as three decades by virtue of their capacity to sniff out potential threats and to neutralise challengers using a mixture of carrots and sticks. These were also leaders who knew how to work their national and international audiences, sometimes directing different kinds of appeals to each in turn. As a medical doctor who had spent most of his life in Britain, Banda projected an image to the outside world of a sincerely conservative, pro-Western leader who was committed to the modernisation of his country. To his domestic audience, Banda projected a more traditionalist image.[2] As Michael Schatzberg suggests, African leaders tended to portray themselves as father figures in relation to their supposedly grateful wards.[3] The aim was to foreclose discussion and to instil awe by constantly rehearsing the pivotal role of the leader in nationalist history, that is once rival figures had been airbrushed out of the picture, as happened in Malawi. Some leaders appealed to their superior learning and erudition (notably Banda, Nyerere and Senghor) and to their intimate knowledge of the wider world. The grand ideological statements of these regimes, whether couched in the international vocabularies of socialism or capitalism, also constituted part of the tools of legitimation. To a greater or lesser extent, each of the leaders also insulated himself by nurturing relationships of personal loyalty and dependence.

The problem was that the spell only worked for as long as these leaders could be seen to pull the strings which made their underlings move. As they grew older and more out of touch, their ability to manage the show became as halting as their memories. This left some scope for trusted lieutenants to exercise power in their own right, and ultimately in their own self-interest. When Banda, who was already quite old when he became President, exhibited unmistakable signs of senility, effective power increasingly rested with his 'hostess', Madame Kadzamira, and her uncle John Tembo. The magic also began to wear off when it became abundantly clear that the leaders in question were not the colossuses bestriding the world stage that the state propaganda machinery made them out to be. Having to approach the IMF cap-in-hand, and then to sign up to conditions which negated everything which had been boasted of, visibly shrunk the 'father of the nation' before the country's eyes. Nyerere foresaw the problem and chose to resign his office when it became clear that there was no avoiding structural adjustment. Although the 'socialist' regimes ostensibly had the greatest ideological distance to travel, it was often the 'capitalist' ones (such as those of Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire) which felt the greatest sense of indignation because they refused to accept that they had ever deviated from the path of economic righteousness. The imposition of austerity measures, including retrenchment from the public sector and the introduction of user fees in schools and hospitals, naturally taxed the legitimacy of African governments. By the mid-1980s,

many rulers were caught in a cleft stick because digging in was almost as unrewarding as embracing reform. In Zambia, where some 42 per cent of the population was urban, Kaunda was understandably wary of alienating city dwellers. In 1987, after pressure to reduce subsidies on maize-meal led to outbreaks of rioting on the Copperbelt, the government jettisoned the SAP and introduced its own New Economic Recovery Programme (NERP). However, it could not afford to go it alone for very long because the country was in such dire straits. When a reform package was finally relaunched in 1990, the economic situation had deteriorated to the point that UNIP had forfeited whatever popular support it had once enjoyed.

In the early 1980s, a number of Presidents chose retirement rather than preside over a steady decline. When Ahidjo stepped down in favour of Paul Biya in 1982, the oil revenues were starting to flow, but, the context was very different when Senghor made way for Abdou Diouf in Senegal in 1981, when Siaka Stevens handed over to General Joseph Momoh in Sierra Leone in 1985, and when Nyerere transferred power to Ali Hassan Mwinyi that same year. In all these countries, an acute economic crisis formed the all-important backdrop to the succession. Although the incoming President typically enjoyed a honeymoon period, he also faced problems of legitimacy. For a start, the nation could only have one founding father, and although some mileage could be made out of being the chosen son (or *dauphin*) this rather undercut his personal standing in the long-term. Although leaders sought ways of reinfantilising their citizens, the trope of the 'father figure' clearly had its limitations. Some found it preferable to project themselves as new brooms who would retain the basic format of the old regime, but sweep out the inner sanctums. Both Biya and Diouf were originally elevated for their reputed technocratic competence, and this gave them something to build upon. The successor also typically faced a Cabinet whose members did not necessarily owe any personal loyalty to himself. Having been passed over in the succession, they were not always entirely loyal. The new leader therefore needed to bide his time, slowly sidelining potential challengers, whilst cultivating grateful clients of his own. The economic backdrop was important here because a shrinking cake tended to place even greater limits on the ability to dispense patronage.

The first to negotiate the perils of succession was Daniel Arap Moi following the death of Kenyatta in 1978. As we saw in Chapter 5, Moi began by preaching continuity with the Kenyatta era, but once he was safely ensconced he proceeded to weed out those (mostly Kikuyu) politicians whose loyalty he doubted. Moi was fortunate in taking office against a backdrop of comparative prosperity. Unlike Moi, Biya had to come to deal with an ex-President who was very much alive and who refused to relinquish control over party structures. Biya also retained a large number of Ahidjo Ministers to start with, but this did not avert a falling out over who was ultimately in control. As early as June 1983, Ahidjo was plotting his return and when there was an abortive coup attempt in April 1984, his name was inevitably linked to the conspiracy. Having seen off the challenge, Biya was in a position to stamp his own authority on the government.[4]

The remaining transitions took place in the context of a dearth of material resources. In Senegal, the declining fortunes of the groundnut economy

presented Diouf with enough headaches to tax his technocratic acumen, although he was fortunate in that Senghor chose voluntary retirement in France. Diouf played his hand more astutely than most, but his inability to resolve the structural weaknesses of the economy ultimately eroded his support base within the urban areas. In Senegal, opposition parties had been legal since the 1970s, but had failed to make significant inroads against the Parti Socialiste (PS). However, Abdoulaye Wade's Parti Démocratique Socialiste (PDS) began to gather momentum and in the 1988 elections commanded majority support in Dakar. In Tanzania, Mwinyi had to endure some carping from the sidelines by Nyerere, but his greatest priority lay in convincing Tanzanians that the austerity medicine was working. Mwinyi successfully served out his two terms and then transferred power to Benjamin Mkapa in 1995, thereby institutionalising the rotation of the highest office. This was progress of sorts, but the moral authority of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) was at its lowest ebb by the close of the decade.

Military governments faced difficulties of their own. The continent continued to be coup-prone during the 1980s. Hence, the death of Ahmed Sékou Touré in Guinea did not lead to an orderly succession within the single-party state – in part because that eventuality had always been considered a taboo subject – but rather to a military takeover by Colonel Lansana Conté in March 1984. In Nigeria the military regime of General Buhari was overthrown by a palace coup led by Ibrahim Babangida in 1985. The following year, Lt.-Colonel Justin Lekhanya toppled Leabua Jonathan in Lesotho. Finally, the overthrow of General Nimeiri led to a brief civilian inter-regnum in the Sudan before the re-establishment of military rule under General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir in 1989. Although military governance was evidently nothing out of the ordinary by the 1980s, these military regimes still needed to legitimise their seizures of power. As before, they variously passed themselves off as caretakers, reformers, or as the harbingers of a radically different social order. As always, the credibility of the caretakers hinged on their willingness to beat a reasonably rapid and orderly retreat to the barracks, while that of the reformers rested upon their ability to deal with the problems of national unity coupled with the economic crisis. Inevitably, because the perks of office were so juicy, there was a temptation for reformers to find reasons for staying on, thereby slipping into usurpatory mode.

Some of the military usurpers battened onto structural adjustment, insisting that a necessary period of austerity would best be managed by the men in khaki. They calculated (wisely) that there would be little pressure upon them to hand power back to the civilians if they could be seen to be implementing reform. In Ghana, Flt-Lt Jerry Rawlings clasped the structural adjustment agenda with both hands, insisting that there was nothing to be gained by rushing back towards multipartyism. Throughout the 1980s, the regime was praised by the international financial institutions (IFIs), and by Western governments, for its willingness to court unpopularity in the relentless pursuit of economic reform. In Nigeria, Babangida began by proclaiming a corrective agenda. He launched a national debate about structural adjustment and then proceeded to institute a 'home-grown' SAP which was supposed to restore economic equilibrium. At the same time, the junta promised to set in motion a staggered return to civilian

rule, which would come to fruition in 1990. The ability of military regimes to appropriate the reform agenda had its down-side of course, namely that they were forced to impose policies which were deeply unpopular. Paring back expenditure on government salaries was contentious enough, but cutting back on military and police expenditure was potentially suicidal. Some military regimes failed to strike the right balance and succumbed to counter-coups, or were confronted with demands for a return to civilian rule.

The calculus was further complicated at the end of the 1980s when other certainties began to give way. The implosion of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had two important consequences. On the one hand, it gave heart to African 'movements for democracy', whilst rendering the legitimation of military regimes more difficult. On the other, it led to the abrupt termination of the Cold War which had kept certain military regimes in business. In Zaire, Mobutu had been cosseted because he was a useful pawn in American geo-politics. Despite stupendous levels of corruption, the Paris Club of donors had rescheduled debt repayments no fewer than seven times between 1976 and 1987.[5] After 1989, however, the United States and France felt able to adopt a tougher line, although this did not endure. At the same time, the demise of Communism also removed much of the ideological legitimation from avowedly Marxist regimes such as those in the Congo-Brazzaville and Benin. The financial patronage, which was never that great anyway, dried up as the Soviet Union sank into economic doldrums of its own.[6] At the same time, the cachet of belonging to a global Marxist fraternity turned into a liability. Significantly, the only military regime which spoke the language of revolution after 1989 was that of Sudan, and its version of revolution was an Islamic one.

At the end of the 1980s, the IFIs introduced the concept of 'good governance' into aid discourse which had implications for civilian and military regimes alike. It was open to a narrow technocratic interpretation, but in certain quarters it began to be equated with a respect for democracy. The donor community consequently added political conditionalities to an already lengthy list. In 1990, for example, the British government announced its intention to treat economic performance and political pluralism as part of a single package. In June of the same year, President François Mitterrand surprised his African colleagues at a summit in La Baule when he indicated that French aid would similarly be tied to political reform. In November 1991, the European Community (later renamed the European Union) laid down the principle that the future disbursements of aid would be tied to the furtherance of democracy and human rights. This was a highly significant development because the EC/EU and its members states accounted for roughly half of all aid to sub-Saharan Africa in the first part of the decade.[7] African governments which had hoped to insulate themselves from global winds of change were served notice that there was to be no business as usual. And because almost every African state was heavily aid-dependent, the leverage was potentially enormous.

Across the continent, African governments responded by bending with the winds from the East. While making concessions towards an incipient opposition, they conspired to render their position impregnable. The ideal scenario was to become formally elected – using as much chicanery as one could get away

with. Although the presence of international election observers rendered blatant rigging more difficult, there was very little they could do about the enormous advantages of incumbency. Moreover, the fact that the Electoral Commission was often appointed by the President greatly facilitated gerrymandering in all its forms. In some cases, as will see, the flexible response worked a treat, whereas in others incumbent Presidents lost control of the reform agenda and ended up being voted out of office. However, those autocrats who weathered donor pressure in the early 1990s were often able to regain the initiative in subsequent years as Western governments lost interest in African democracy and began to place greater weight on stability. In France, *realpolitik* reasserted itself as early as November 1991. Mitterrand increasingly adopted the persona of a latter-day de Gaulle who, in the manner of an avuncular *paterfamilias*, was indulgent towards his African clients – provided they remained within the Francophone club and resisted the American sirens.[8] When Jacques Chirac assumed the Presidency in 1995, this tendency to place French national interest first was further consolidated. Within the EU, France saw to it that the lofty principles which had been laid down in the early 1990s were rendered a dead-letter.

9.1.2 Rendering unto Caesar: religious bodies and discourses of democracy

Potentially the greatest counterweight to one-party and military regimes was a vast panoply of religious associations – Christian, Muslim and to a lesser extent 'traditionalist' – to which most Africans had some level of attachment. If the Christians and/or Muslims spoke with one voice, depending on the religious makeup of each particular country, even the most intransigent government would have found the going tough. However, such unity of purpose was rarely achieved and governments learned to play Christian off against Muslim, as well as rival Muslim brotherhoods and Christian denominations off against each other. Where religious affiliation mirrored the ethno-regional division within a given country, the world of belief could never be entirely separated from the arena of partisan politics. Nevertheless, there was a qualitative shift in the relationship between religious bodies and the state in a number of African countries at the end of the 1980s.

To start with the Christian churches, most African countries hosted a number of competing denominations. In colonial times, there was often a fierce struggle for converts between the Catholics and the various Protestant denominations, of which the Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists were the most important. The fairly close association between the Christian churches and the colonial power, as well as the strict racial hierarchy within the former, led to the breakaway of a number of African independent churches. Some of these, such as the Kimbanguists in the Belgian Congo and the Watchtower Society in Central Africa, rejected colonialism and all its works, whereas others were more tractable. After independence, the churches came to different levels of accommodation with the state. The Jehovah's Witnesses clashed with the political authorities in a number of countries because of their

refusal to conform with the rituals of nationhood. As far as the others are concerned, there were instances where the mainstream churches were directly linked to the power structure – most notably in Liberia, where the politically dominant Americo-Liberians also happened to be the leading lights in the Protestant churches, and in Rwanda where the Catholic church co-operated with a succession of 'Hutu' regimes.[9] In many others, such as in Gabon and in Malawi, the mainstream churches adopted a theological position which avoided having to take a stand on social issues.[10] In Uganda, for example, the Catholic and Anglican churches were reluctant to criticise human rights abuses under Idi Amin, although the eventual murder of Archbishop Janani Luwum perhaps points to an obvious reason why.[11] In Kenya, the churches conspicuously failed to speak out against the detentions of government critics during the Kenyatta years. Gifford wryly observes that the Catholic Bishops so successfully resisted the introduction of sex education in schools that one is led to wonder what might have happened if they had decided to take up the issue of human rights.[12] Be that as it may, where churchmen were amongst the most vocal critics, these tended to be drawn from the mainstream churches rather than the independent ones. The mainline churches were in a potentially strong bargaining position, given the number of followers they commanded. However, it was almost as if the politicians and the churchmen recognised each other's strength and often steered clear of a take-on which could be damaging to both parties. While the independent churches often did represent the most marginalised sections of society, for precisely that reason they tended to be poorer and less well-organised. This made them more susceptible to offers of patronage by the political elite. Moreover, their own histories often chimed in with official nationalism, whereas the mainline churches were castigated as European fifth-columnists opposing 'African' ways of doing things.

During the 1980s, the picture became yet more complicated with the proliferation of Pentecostal churches, which took much of their inspiration and some of their resources from the United States. These churches came from nowhere to rival the mainstream churches in size. By the close of the 1990s, the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) had almost as many members as the Catholic Church, despite the rather honourable role played by the latter in support of the liberation movements.[13] Given that Christian conversion (outside of Muslim areas) was virtually total by this point, the rise of the Pentecostals inevitably came at the expense of the churches which already existed. The mainline churches suffered from defections because their ingrained traditions often failed to deal with the everyday concerns of their congregations. As Birgit Meyer has brilliantly argued with respect to south-eastern Ghana, the reluctance of the Presbyterians to engage in too much discussion about the nature of the devil, for fear of detracting from the essential point about the greatness of God, left them vulnerable to new churches which attributed misfortune to malign forces such as witchcraft.[14] The Pentecostals won many converts because they were in the business of casting out the demons which many Christians blamed for their misfortune. However, the independent churches seem to have suffered much greater rates of defection than the mainline ones, and during the 1980s they themselves came under the spell of Pentecostalism.

It would be a mistake to assume that all Pentecostals sang from the same hymn-sheet, and in fact there were some significant differences between them. On the question of politics, they tended to adopt a rather ambiguous position. Many Pentecostals sought to keep their distance from the corruptions of politics and enjoined their flocks to concentrate on personal salvation – whereas the mainline churches at least professed to be interested in matters of social concern. Hence the Pentecostals, and other 'born agains', concentrated on building new moral communities in which adherents could immerse themselves totally. Some churches even colluded with the power structure on the principle that this would enable them to operate more freely in the far more important battle for human souls. There was also something of a fit between the behaviour of the political elite, which openly flaunted its wealth, and the message of certain Pentecostal churches that the accumulation of riches was in harmony with God's plan. The Faith Gospel movement, in particular, associated poverty with sinfulness and enjoined its members to aspire towards the accumulation of personal wealth. Whereas some of the older mainline churches had traditionally made a virtue of asceticism, these new churches were encouraging their members to enrich themselves in God's name and to exhibit their wealth at every opportunity – as well, of course, as donating generously to church coffers. In the words of Bishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams of the Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM), which made rapid strides in Ghana:

> God did not predetermine who would be rich and who would be poor. He simply created His spiritual laws and freely gave them to everyone. Every person then has a choice – to implement the laws of poverty, or to implement God's spiritual laws of prosperity.[15]

The simple message that material reward would come naturally with acceptance of God's word went down well with many ordinary Africans who were struggling to make ends meet under the rigours of structural adjustment.

When noticeable cracks in the political monolith began to appear at the end of the 1980s, the mainline churches became much more assertive. In Malawi, the Presbyterians had put up with the authoritarianism of the Banda years with surprisingly little demur. But in the early 1990s, the churchmen found their voice as the regime started to wobble, and their contribution was an important catalyst in the eventual downfall of the regime. In Kenya, individual Bishops and ministers from within the Presbyterian and Anglican churches began to criticise the abuses associated with single-party rule and to lend their voices to demands for the holding of a national conference. When this provoked a furious response from the Moi regime, the Catholic church hierarchy rallied to the side of the Protestant churchmen. By contrast, the independent churches and the Pentecostalists were much less prepared to rock the boat. Indeed, some joined in the attack on the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and openly backed the Moi Presidency.[16] In Ghana, it was the attempt to control the churches through the requirement of formal registration which united the Catholic and Protestant churches in opposition. A freeze on the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons in 1989, and the banning of two local

churches, was accompanied by the introduction of the Religious Bodies Registration Law which required all churches to register with the National Commission on Culture. In the face of a co-ordinated outcry, the Rawlings regime protested that the aim was merely to monitor suspect churches who fleeced and took sexual advantage of their members. However, the mainline churches detected an attempt to muzzle religious bodies as a whole and refused to comply. The government was eventually forced to beat a retreat and to withdraw the offending legislation, thereby signalling an important breach in the 'culture of silence'. The Christian Council subsequently followed up by demanding the release of political prisoners and the convention of a constituent assembly.[17] The Pentecostal church leaders, for their part, either lent their support to the regime or kept out of the political fray altogether. Duncan-Williams even conferred his blessing on Rawlings, although Mensa Otabil of the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) was more overtly critical.[18]

If one is looking for a broad pattern, it is that the mainline churches only intervened once the power structure seemed vulnerable to attack, but when they did so their contribution was weightier than that of the independent and Pentecostal churches who were often apolitical or openly complicit. There are, however, some qualifications which still need to be made. In South Africa, the mainline churches played a consistently combative role, insisting that apartheid was a sin against God. The Kairos Document of 1985, which was South Africa's best approximation to liberation theology, laid primary emphasis upon uprooting apartheid as opposed to saving souls, although its militant tone worried many more orthodox clerics.[19] This set these churches in opposition to the Dutch Reformed churches, many of whose clerics had helped to influence apartheid doctrine. The pattern is, however, confirmed by the behaviour of the largest of the African independent churches, the Zion Christian Church, which gave President P. W. Botha a rapturous welcome in 1985, at a time of mounting turmoil in the townships. The other partial exception is Zambia, where the Catholic Church came to an accommodation with the Kaunda regime, and where the eventual religious backlash was led by those who tended to be associated with the 'born again' churches. Frederick Chiluba, who would go on to defeat Kaunda at the polls, was himself a 'born again' member of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) who claimed to have received the gift of tongues.

Superficially, there is the world of difference between Christian and Muslim terms of engagement with the state. In principle, Muslims might be expected to favour the construction of a polity ordered according to the precepts of Shari'a law, whereas Christians have reconciled themselves to the secular state. Moreover, Muslims lacks a formal hierarchy like that of the Catholic Church through which they can formally negotiate with the power structure. One might therefore expect a relationship with the African state which is conflictual or at best evasive. In reality, there is not that much to differentiate Christian and Muslim interactions with the state. With the obvious exception of the Sudan and Northern Nigeria, African Muslims have reconciled themselves to the practical impossibility of forging an Islamic polity, even where they constitute the numerical majority. At the same time, the coherence and organisation of Muslim brotherhoods in many African countries means that something like a formal

structure does in fact exist. The Sufi brotherhoods have their religious heads and a pecking order of holy men whose eminence is a function of birth and/or success in attracting disciples. In Northern Nigeria, the emirs were both traditional rulers and defenders of the faith. Although they lost much of their formal power after independence, as we have seen, the emirs remained extremely influential spokesmen for the Muslim cause.

In countries where Muslims were in the minority, they applied pressure upon the political authorities to respect their distinctive way of life, including rules concerning marriage, the family and inheritance. Muslims also sought recognition of the right to operate their own schools with adequate government support. Where brotherhoods were weak, Muslims tended to form Islamic associations in order to lobby for their preferred causes. In Kenya, where Muslims made up about a tenth of the total population, the National Union of Kenyan Muslims (NUKEM) campaigned on a range of issues, but most especially on recognition for Islamic schools.[20] Such bargaining necessarily meant an ongoing engagement with the power structure, normally behind the scenes and often on the latter's terms. Where Muslims constituted the majority, their spokesmen sometimes wielded considerable political influence. In Senegal, as we have already seen, the Socialists had to come to terms with the popular base of the Mourides and Tijanis. While the ruling party depended on the *marabouts* to bring out the voters and to secure compliance with official policy, the *marabouts* received money to build mosques and schools as well as displays of public deference. However, as Leonardo Villalón has demonstrated, this relationship was inevitably laced with a certain amount of tension because the state and the brotherhoods were also in competition with one another.[21] At the local level, *préfets* saw themselves as the bearers of modernity and resented having to approach the rural population through the marabouts. On the other hand, the marabouts were often critical of the corruption of the political elite. As in the cases where the Christian churches were well-organised, these two giants realised that they had to co-exist. When the state encroached too far, however, it could be openly rebuffed. For example, when the Senghor regime introduced a new family law in 1972, religious leaders lobbied against it on the grounds that it was incompatible with the Shari'a, and when that failed they threatened to thwart its implementation. In the end, they seem to have succeeded in rendering the offending legislation a dead-letter.[22]

In Nigeria, where Muslims and Christians stood at rough parity, the former lobbied government to put the brakes on campaigning by American evangelists. At the end of the 1990s, they also succeeded in persuading a number of northern state governments to declare the application of Shari'a law. The meting out of harsh punishments to women accused of engaging in extra-marital affairs provoked a furious debate over whether Nigeria truly was truly a secular state.[23] Whereas Muslims in Nigeria knew that they would never be able to win over the rest of the federation, radical Muslims in the Sudan succeeded in capturing power and declaring the existence of an Islamic state. The process began when General Nimeiri introduced Shari'a law in September 1983. Although it was suspended when he was overthrown two years later, it was reintroduced by the military government of Umar al-Bashir after 1989. The Muslim Brothers, led

backing Mobutu, University students proved themselves to the bravest opponents of the regime, for which large numbers paid with their lives. For having dared to challenge Mobutu in 1969, they were forcibly recruited into the army in 1971, where they began to politicise ordinary soldiers before being disgorged from the belly of the beast once again.[26] It should come as no surprise, therefore, that students continued to lead the charge against the regime two decades later. As the momentum for an end to authoritarian rule gathered across Africa, even 'traditional rulers' jumped ship. Although they tended to be seen as creatures of the state, the reality was that they too had been forced to relinquish most of their capacity for autonomous action in the decades after independence.

The African business community, which was supposed to benefit from structural adjustment, was not always the most adept at making its own voice heard. Those business elites who had enjoyed 'sweetheart' deals with the regime in power stood to lose out from liberalisation. Others who were on the outside, however, had an interest in dismantling restrictive practices. Traders within the informal sector often felt threatened by economic reforms, such as efforts to improve revenue collection. In Ghana, the introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) provided the occasion for violent protests in Accra, which were supported by traders and urban dwellers worried about the impact on consumer prices. In Senegal, traders formed an association, the Union Nationale des Commerçants et Industriels du Sénégal (UNACOIS) which used a combination of strikes (in tandem with the trade unions) and demonstrations to pressurise the government to dismantle monopolistic commercial practices and to exempt small traders from payment of VAT. The popular support which it commanded in Dakar forced the Diouf government to come to the negotiating table and to deregulate the marketing of rice in 1995.[27]

Most NGOs preferred to cast their work as 'non-political'. Nevertheless, there was a sub-class of NGOs which set out to perform an advocacy role. By taking up issues relating to government policy, and openly contradicting the authorities, these NGOs inevitably stepped into the political limelight. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a proliferation of NGOs which campaigned on human rights (broadly defined) and did not shrink from exposing government shortcomings. Many were constituted by lawyers who had direct experience of the abuses of the justice system and spoke out more freely than before, in the knowledge that they enjoyed some backup from the donor community and from international watchdogs like Amnesty International and African Rights Watch. In Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, lawyers had long been organised within Bar Associations which maintained a principled stance on human rights issues. The same was true of other professional associations, such as the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB) in Ghana which had been the bane of successive regimes since the 1970s. The emerging advocacy NGOs tended to draw on the expertise and enthusiasm of the members of these professional associations, whilst providing a cutting edge of their own.

It would, however, be a mistake to concentrate purely on the proliferation of formal associations, which most Africans did not belong to. For some governments, the greatest headache was posed by urban youth who were not

'captured' in any formal organisation. The unemployed lived by their wits, and having been born long after independence, were not privy to the glory-days. Growing up at a time of endemic crisis, their alienation from the political system was a source of worry in many a Presidential palace. In many ways, the rest of the continent was following in the footsteps already trodden by South Africa in the 1970s. In a number of African capitals, nothing symbolised the erosion of government support more than the open contempt displayed by youth towards figures and symbols of authority. The urban crowd could take shape in a matter of minutes and was often highly volatile. In Senegal, for example, the youth of Dakar rioted after the 1998 elections which they believed had been rigged. It was partly in an attempt to domesticate unruly youth that the regime began channelling resources to reformist Muslim associations like Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty ('those who seek the straight path'), which were thought to appeal to this popular constituency. The name of the game was to capture the youth in a religious vessel and thereby bring it into dialogue with government. Predictably, the association began to lose its popular following as soon as it became too close to government, with the result that its leader, Moustapha Sy, went into reverse gear. He regained his notoriety prior to the 1993 elections through a popular cassette recording in which he lambasted Diouf.[28]

9.1.4 The media: fourth estate or servants of the state?

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to the ambiguous role played by the visual, aural and print media. In the years immediately after independence, African governments, who were keen to impart their views to the wider public, invested in the kind of media infrastructure which was more elaborate than the colonial states had deemed necessary. Where they did not already exist, Information Ministries and/or Departments were established and given relatively generous budgetary allocations. Sometimes, as in Gabon, these were headed by the President himself. Their remit was to disseminate government information and sometimes to co-ordinate the activities of the various branches of the official media. An early innovation was the regular newsreel which would be shown in cinemas and would sometimes be taken round the rural areas by cinema vans specially purchased for that purpose. These eventually died out, to be replaced by television from the early 1960s. As with the earlier newsreels, television provided a powerful medium through which those in power could represent the world as they wanted it seen. In Zaire and Togo, television became a serviceable instrument in constructing the personality cult of the leader, with the former benefiting from French aid.[29] In Côte d'Ivoire, the regime was more subtle, but actively encouraged television because it recognised its political potential. As in much else, Nigerian television was in a league of its own. In 1983, the budget of the Nigerian Television Authority was about one-third that of the BBC, and this did not even include the multiplicity of affiliated stations in the individual states.[30] Interestingly, the South African government held out against television for a decade longer than the rest of the continent, for fear that it would be unable to control the medium effectively and that it might become dependent

upon foreign programming whose images would be incompatible with apartheid doctrine. In Malawi, Banda never permitted television for the very same reasons, while the Gambia and Rwanda perhaps declined for simple cost reasons.

Television tended to be the most slavish of all the media and remained so even when governments lost their monopolies elsewhere. Although state channels increased their own reliance on foreign programming, this consisted mostly of long-dead 'soaps' and situation comedies which were dumped in Africa, rather along the lines of food aid.[31] The only real shift came with the availability of satellite television in the 1990s, which made it possible for audiences to tap into foreign news channels. However, the Africa content was normally very limited, the coverage of the largest networks like CNN was superficial and the audience in Africa was minuscule because it was usually only international hotels which could afford the subscriptions. The television revolution therefore had relatively few political spinoffs. Although opposition groups could produce their own videos cheaply enough, this format tended to be monopolised by the mass entertainment market. In Nigeria, the spectacular takeoff of the video industry was based on low-budget films dealing with love triangles and the occult, in which there was minimal political content. At best, these popular videos (and even some national television productions) made fun of Nigerian 'big men', but politics proper was a topic to be avoided. A far more important vehicle for dissidence was the clandestine audio cassette which could be played in city taxis and in vehicles plying the inter-city routes.[32]

Given that most rural households had limited access to television, radio was a sister medium which played a more significant role in reaching the national population.[33] There were only some 252 radio transmitters in sub-Saharan Africa in 1960, but in 1975 there were 458. More tellingly perhaps, whereas there were only 32 radios per 1000 people in 1965, this had risen to 164 by 1984.[34] In some cases, UNESCO sponsored efforts at bringing radio to the rural population and involving the latter in shaping the product – all as part of a broader development agenda. But normally, radio programming was centered on the capital city, while its reception was sometimes buttressed by relay stations in outlying urban centres. The news content tended to consist of a predictable round of official speeches and commentaries, with very little space for acknowledging the existence of dissident voices – far less reporting them. Because of the strategic importance of radio, most successful coup attempts involved the seizure of the state-owned radio station and were followed by a broadcast of the official rationale for the takeover.[35]

Although controlling national radio was a prerequisite of political domination, shortwave radio also enabled ordinary people to pick up broadcasts from neighbouring countries and even further afield. With French co-operation, the Gabonese government established a highly successful African service of its own in 1981, but 'Afrique No. 1' was geared towards popular music rather than current affairs. It also happened to be part-owned by President Bongo and members of his family. For many Africans, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio France Internationale (RFI) served as the most dependable source of information about everyday politics in

their own countries. Often Ministers, who would not deign to be interviewed on their own radio stations, were to be heard on the BBC, seeking to rebut allegations which had been made in earlier news stories. Although governments sometimes attempted to ban foreign broadcasts, this was well-nigh impossible to enforce. In the 1990s, an important contribution to the opening up of political debate lay in the legalisation of private radio stations. In Mali, there were no fewer than 12 in operation by 1993.[36] In Accra, the most lively and informed debate took place on the discussion and call-in programmes on FM radio, and although the Regional stations were less daring they provided a forum for people in the rural areas which should not be under-estimated.

Finally, there were the print media, ranging from quality newspapers to simple broadsheets plastered to walls. After independence, governments were determined to control the print media, being fully cognizant of the role once played by the nationalist press. While state resources were pumped into building printing presses and training journalists, pressure was applied to private newspapers to refrain from overt criticism. In Senegal, after a state-of-the-art printing press was installed with French development aid, it was possible to exercise leverage by granting or withholding access to the machinery.[37] Where proprietors owned their own presses, pressure might take the form of restricting access to basic materials such as paper, and when all else failed it was always possible to find an excuse for closing newspapers down, invoking breaches of the libel laws. In Ghana, there were only two daily newspapers which continued to appear during the 1980s, the *People's Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times*, and both of these were state-owned. Their content was essentially a collage of government press releases and speeches by officials commissioning this or that development project. The independently minded newspapers, such as the *Catholic Standard*, had previously been forced to close down. In Zambia, the *National Mirror* survived as an interdenominational Christian newspaper, which maintained a critical distance from the government. However, the two main newspapers, the *Zambian Daily Mail* and the *Times of Zambia* were under state control.

Outside of South Africa, Nigeria was the one country which boasted a vigorously independent press after independence. The federal system lent itself to a more decentralised media structure, in which each state would typically own its own newspaper. There were also private newspapers which were the partisan instruments of political grandees, such as the *Tribune* which was in the pocket of Obafemi Awolowo. Because of the sheer size of the Nigerian reading public, there was real money to be made through the print media. Hence Nigeria threw up media tycoons like M. K. O. Abiola, whose publishing group published the *Concord* locally, but also the *African Concord* magazine from offices in London. The size and strength of the Nigerian press made it much less susceptible to manipulation by central government, although the down-side was that it tended to be highly partisan in tone. The Buhari regime was the first to attempt a crackdown on the press, by means of the notorious Decree No. 4 of 1984. This made it a crime to embarrass a public official, even if the printed allegations happened to be true. This piece of controversial legislation was repealed by Babangida, who promised a return to unfettered press freedom. However, an

ominous sign that things might not be quite that simple came with the assassination on Dele Giwa, the editor-in-chief of the fiercely independent *Newswatch*, by means of a parcel bomb which many believed had been sent by government security agents.[38] As we will see below, the stalled transition in Nigeria led to an unprecedented attack on the print media in the 1990s. At the end of the 1980s, then, there was a veritable explosion of the print media in most African countries, as dozens of private papers suddenly hit the newsstands. Although many of these folded because of the stiff competition, large numbers survived by catering to the thirst of the urban reading public for news about politics. However, relatively few of these newspapers reached the rural areas, where the government press normally benefited from a better-funded distribution system.

Even during the most repressive years, urbanites had revelled in the trails of gossip and rumour known as *radio trottoir* (pavement radio), which had the capacity to propagate itself with remarkable speed. The private newspapers often collected this rumour and committed it to print, thereby lending it further credibility. But at the same time, the private papers initiated rumours of their own which then fed into the realm of the spoken word and underwent further mutations. The net result was that there was very little which government officials could say or do without fear of it appearing in print a few days later – often having become more grotesque as a result of successive retellings. For President and Ministers who were used to fawning journalists, it was profoundly unsettling to have their most intimate financial and sexual affairs dissected in public. It is surely no accident that many of the most successful newspapers also employed the most daring cartoonists, who mercilessly lampooned the highest officials in the land. In the case of Cameroun, where the private press had a field day after 1991, Achille Mbembe has highlighted the social significance of the cartoon. In *Le Messager*, Nyemb Popoli represented Paul Biya through the character 'Popaul' who combines all the pomposity of an African President with obsequiousness in relation to his Western masters. The President who is depicted in the most compromising positions, from the bedchamber to the toilet, was repeatedly set up as an object of public ridicule.[39] Although Mbembe is reluctant to read resistance into expressions of popular vulgarity, it is clear that getting away with printing these cartoons served as a standing invitation to other Camerounians to reject the pretensions of the ruling elite. Because the government was powerless to prevent the lowliest Camerounian from sharing in the laughter, its own hegemonic position was called into question. The Ghanaian cartoonist Jo Mini, who worked for the *Ghanaian Chronicle*, typically chose a different kind of target.[40] As Rawlings endeavoured to clothe himself in civilian respectability, Mini presented him as a boorish thug who winked at corruption at the highest levels of government. There was little subtlety in the humour, but the effect was very caustic. It worked so well because the cartoons reinforced the story lines in the pages of the *Chronicle*, which relayed a constant battery of rumours about abuse of office and waged a highly personalised attack on the Rawlings family. The Jo Mini and the Nyemb Popoli cartoons would have been simply unimaginable in the Ghana and the Cameroun of the 1980s.

9.2 Autumn of the patriarchs or a Prague Spring? Democratic openings and closures

It will be noticed that this broad sweep has made little mention of the peasantry. Yet in spite of the rapid pace of urbanisation, the bulk of the population in most countries was still rural. In most countries, however, the peasantry observed events from a remote distance. In fact, one reason why embattled regimes made the concessions they did was that they reckoned on the innate conservatism of the rural populace. They could be counted on to out-vote the noisy urbanites and put them squarely in their place. When this did not happen, as in Malawi, this was profoundly shocking. However, in many cases governments calculated the odds correctly. In what follows, we will plot the trajectories in greater detail.

9.2.1 *The Lusophone states of West Africa: Cape Verde, São Tomé and Guinea-Bissau*

Whenever the story about the return to multipartyism is recounted, the focus almost invariably falls on one Francophone and one Anglophone state, namely Benin and Zambia respectively. But the first breaches in the wall actually took place in two island statelets off the coast of West Africa, namely São Tomé and Príncipe and the Cape Verde islands. In both instances, the struggle for liberation from Portuguese rule had brought with it an ideological attachment to socialism, but nothing in the way of practical armed struggle. In both cases, the disappointments which followed independence led to a marked decline in support from the ruling party and ultimately to peaceful transitions which were scarcely noticed in the wider world.

In São Tomé, the reversal began with ideological divisions and purges within the ruling MLSTP (Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe) under Pinto da Costa. Although the latter shared a socialist platform, it had never exhibited the coherence of the parties in the other Lusophone states. In 1984, the failure of the MLSTP to make a go of statism led to a decision to abandon links with the Eastern Bloc and to embrace economic and political reforms. The MLSTP signalled this conversion by adding Partido Social Democrata (PSD) to its name. In December 1989, the Da Costa regime became the first in Africa to hold a national conference which endorsed multipartyism, and this was confirmed in a national referendum. This was followed by the creation of opposition parties and the breakaway of younger elements from the MLSTP/PSD to form the PCD-GR (Partido da Convergência Democrática – Grup de Reflexão). In January 1991, the PCD-GR won a majority of the seats in the legislative elections (33 to 50), which signalled that the political dominance of the MLSTP/PSD was over. Da Costa stood down as Presidential candidate and was not replaced. As a result, Miguel Trovoada, who had been purged from the regime in 1979, was elected unopposed, with the support of the PDC-GR and another opposition party. Trovoada was forced to govern through a legislature in which he could not count on a reliable body of support. After fresh legislative elections designed to resolve the impasse in 1994, the MLSTP/PSD emerged with virtual control of the

legislature. Trovoada went on to defeat Da Costa in 1996, ensuring a prolongation of unstable government in which coalitions were made and unmade in quick succession.[41] However, the principle that the ballot box ought to be the sole determinant of the right to govern was firmly established.

In the Cape Verde islands, the rupture with Guinea-Bissau had led to the creation of a separate political party for the islands, the PAICV (Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde). In 1988, the PAICV accepted the need for economic reform, but signalled its intention to cling to its political monopoly. However, two years later the law was changed to allow other parties to contest elections, an opening which was seized by the MPD (Movimento para a Democracia), which attracted some defectors from the ruling party. In January 1991, the MPD won a clear majority of the legislative seats, and in the Presidential elections which followed António Mascarenhas Monteiro won a landslide against Aristides Pereira with 73.4 per cent of the vote. In 1995, the MPD repeated its victory, and the following year Monteiro walked back into the Presidency as the only candidate. As in the case of São Tomé, democratic elections proved to be no panacea, or even a guarantor of 'good governance', but it did at least provide a mechanism for getting rid of politicians who had outstayed their welcome. By contrast with these Lusophone states, the democratisation of Equatorial Guinea was purely formal. Although opposition parties were permitted in theory, they faced so many practical obstacles that they opted to boycott the 1992 polls. In 1996, the opposition were persuaded to take part, but President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who had been in office since 1979, manufactured a result which gave himself 97.8 per cent of the vote. Hence, Equatorial Guinea ranked amongst a handful of states where little meaningful political change occurred in the 1990s.

The course of democratisation also ran less smoothly in the state of Guinea-Bissau. Here the regime of Nino Vieira was carried on a tide of goodwill which followed the expulsion of the Cape Verdeans. However, the coup set a precedent and in subsequent years there was a succession of plots in which the perpetrators were shown no mercy (two mass graves were later found in 1999).[42] In 1991, the Vieira regime decided to embrace multipartyism, whilst seeking to ensure that power did not slip from its grasp. The transition period was marred by further coup plots and political brinkmanship which threatened to derail the entire process. Nevertheless, legislative and Presidential elections went ahead over July/August 1994, in which ethnicity became a significant line of division in a manner which it never had before. The ruling PAIGC succeeded in winning 62 out of 102 seats, but there were now three opposition parties in the legislature. More tellingly, Vieira was elected President with a narrow majority (52 per cent) over Kumba Yalla of the Social Renovation Party (PRS), and not everyone believed that this was an accurate tally. The fact that Yalla was himself an ex-PAIGC cadre underlined the extent to which the party of independence had fragmented. In the years which followed, a democratic veneer barely concealed an autocratic style of governance, conditioned by ad hoc responses to perceived opposition threats and internal party schisms. By the time Vieira was overthrown in 1998, the popularity he had once enjoyed had dissipated, while the PAIGC had gone the way of earlier nationalist parties.

9.2.2 Vive the National Conference: the Francophone states

In the Francophone states, 'pro-democracy' movements typically seized on the demand for a sovereign national conference, harking back to the Estates-General which launched the French Revolution.[43] The remarkable transformation which accompanied the national conference in Benin was widely reported by the media across Francophone Africa and led to copycat demands in the other countries. In a few cases, the results were replicated but in the majority of cases the opposition was less than successful in pulling off its own 'civilian coup d'état'.

9.2.2.1 The successful conferences: Benin, Congo, Niger and Mali

Although there is always a danger of writing with hindsight, the Kérékou regime was ripe for the taking. The regime was placed in an unusually precarious position by virtue of having very little in the manner of taxable resources to sustain the rapid expansion of the state apparatus in the 1970s. The fact that the country was only able to cover 15 per cent of its imports also meant that it was especially dependent on external aid. Although the government recognised that it could not continue as before, and embarked on its first economic restructuring in the early 1980s, it was reluctant to alienate urban interests which had shown their capacity to pull down governments in the past. Kérékou contrived to achieve the worst of all worlds. Although the government entered into negotiations with the IMF in 1984, it was unwilling to accept the conditions and proceeded to muddle through. The result was the regime ceased to be able to maintain social spending, especially in the area of education which many Beninois regarded as their best escape route. This provoked a series of violent confrontations with the students, who were also worried about their employment prospects. More seriously still, the government ceased to be able to pay its 50,000 workers on a reliable basis after the collapse of the banking system, whereas the well-connected were known to be salting away private fortunes. On repeated occasion over 1989, workers took to the streets alongside students and other urban dwellers, who began to demand a return to 'democracy'.

Realising that repression was not working, and that there was mounting restiveness in the army, Kérékou decided on a tactical retreat. He promised to legalise parties other than the PRPB (Parti Révolutionnaire du Peuple du Benin) and to convene a national conference, consisting of a wide range of social groups, to deliberate on changes to the constitution. Between 19 and 28 February 1990, the 500 conferees – consisting of a diverse band of government representatives, opposition politicians, trade unionists, women's leaders, churchmen and the like – set to work. One of their first acts was to declare the conference sovereign, thereby stripping the PRPB of its mandate to govern. Another was to elect the Archbishop of Cotonou, Isidore da Souza, chairman of the conference. The delegates then embarked on a searing attack on the Kérékou years, reducing the latter to tears at one point. Although Kérékou was allowed to remain the titular President, effective power was transferred to an interim government, with responsibility for organising fresh elections. The interim Prime Minister was Nicéphore Soglo, a former World Bank official.[44]

A new constitutional draft was approved by referendum at the end of 1990. This was followed by national elections over February and March 1991, in which Soglo roundly defeated Kérékou and his party.[45] While Kérékou slunk into retirement, Soglo assumed the Herculean task of seeking to implement structural adjustment, while hanging on to his popular base. Benin, a country which had once been a by-word for political instability, had become the model of a successful transition through the ballot box. In 1996, it repeated the trick when it became the first country to alternate its government. On this occasion, the beneficiary was none other than Kérékou himself, now professing to be a reformed character. Under the SAP, Soglo had chalked up some significant improvements, not least to the battered infrastructure of the country. Nevertheless, the economy of the country remained as fragile as ever. Moreover, core constituencies were alienated by the officious manner in which the technocrats went about administering the economic medicine. To make matters worse, Soglo was accused of spinning a new web of patronage in which many members of his immediate family were amongst the primary beneficiaries. The fact that Soglo did not attempt to prevent Kérékou from returning was in itself an encouraging sign. However, when Kérékou sought a renewal of his mandate in 2000, and won convincingly, the opposition cried foul, taking some of the shine off the earlier success.

The country which most resembled Benin was its ideological soul-mate, the People's Republic of Congo (formerly Congo-Brazzaville). Although the Congo had precious oil reserves, and thus profited from the second oil-hike of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the country continued to live well beyond its means. Faced with the threat of bankruptcy, the Sassou-Nguesso regime made its own approach to the IMF in 1986, but was unable to implement the reforms in full. With some 60 per cent of the Congolese population living in the urban areas, and with the state employing a quarter of the national workforce, it was very difficult for the government to comply and in 1990 the IMF and World Bank suspended their programmes due to perceived backsliding.[46] As in Benin, the regime found itself unable to pay its workers, leading the Congolese Federation of Labour to sever its links with the ruling party and to embark on strike action in the early months of 1990. The strikes quickly escalated into an organised campaign in support of the demand for the legalisation of opposition parties and for the holding of a national conference. In July, Sassou-Nguesso followed Kérékou in declaring the abandonment of Marxism–Leninism and an acceptance of multipartyism. He also gave way on the demands for a national conference. When the latter finally convened, between February and April, the similarity to the Benin pattern was uncanny. A wide array of social groups sent delegates; the proceedings were chaired by a bishop, Monsignor Ernest Kombo; the conference declared itself sovereign and Sassou-Nguesso was forced to live with an interim government headed by yet another former World Bank employee, André Milongo. Moreover, the delegates positively revelled in excoriating the leadership, including Sassou-Nguesso himself.

Finally, a new constitution was drafted and national elections were held between March and June 1992. Pascal Lissouba's UPADS (Union Panafricaine Pour la Démocratie Sociale) emerged with a plurality of seats in the legislative

polls (albeit nothing like a majority) and a clear victory in the Presidential runoff. Bernard Kolélas and his MCDDI (Mouvement Congolais Pour le Développement et la Démocratie Intégrale) came in second. Sassou-Nguesso and the former ruling party, the PCT (Parti Congolais du Travail) followed in a rather forlorn third, while Milongo paid for his rather poor showing as interim Prime Minister by being confined to fourth place. As in Benin, therefore, a successful transfer of power had been executed through the ballot box. As we will see in greater detail in the next chapter, the hopes which accompanied these elections were not fulfilled in the longer term. Lissouba, who had entered a working alliance with Sassou-Nguesso of all people, fell out with the latter almost immediately. A process of musical chairs then ensued, as accords between the main parties were successively struck and broken. On each occasion when the music stopped, one party was left without a seat. In the latter part of the decade, large parts of Brazzaville were levelled as armed militias took to fighting the corner of their leaders. Although Sassou-Nguesso had the smallest electoral base, he proved the most adept at raising his own private army and ultimately succeeded in reclaiming power through the barrel of a gun in 1997. This outcome demonstrated that democratisation was no panacea, and was capable of heightening violent competition for power.

In Niger, which had been under military rule since 1974, there was a democratic opening at the start of the 1990s, but this did not endure either. After the death of General Seyni Kountché in November 1987, he was succeeded in office by General Ali Saïbou, who was ultimately chosen as a compromise candidate. Saïbou endeavoured to give the military regime a more acceptable face, but without necessarily intending to initiate a return to civilian rule. His problem was a familiar one, namely that the SAP which being operative since 1986 imposed hardships on urban workers and students who took to the streets of Niamey to voice their demands. In 1990, clashes between students and the army led to many deaths, which – coming at the time that they did – further politicised these constituencies. After a series of strikes, Saïbou endeavoured to regain the initiative by promising that there would be a return to multipartyism and that a national conference would be convened.

As in the other cases, a panoply of parties and associations sent delegates to the conference which was held between July and November 1991. However, the Armed Forces were merely accorded observer status. The conference followed that of Benin in requiring Saïbou to cohabit with an interim administration, but went further in preventing him from standing for the Presidency. Interestingly, the conference also came out against many of the SAP reforms, such as the reduction of expenditure on civil service salaries and a reallocation of educational expenditure towards the primary sector. This reflected the vocality of student and trade union representatives at the conference. In 1993, national elections were held. In the legislative poll, Saïbou's former party, the MNSD (Mouvement National Pour une Société de Développement) won the most seats overall, but fell a long way short of a majority. A coalition of the opposition parties commanded more seats and managed to capture the Presidency on the second round of voting. Mahamane Ousmane was duly installed and the military dutifully returned to the barracks. Although the

people's voice had triumphed, Nigerian electoral democracy was always teetering on a knife's edge. When a vote of no confidence necessitated fresh legislative elections in 1995, the MNSD bounced back. Then, in January of the following year, Colonel Ibrahim Mainassara seized power in a military coup. He had himself elected in another set of elections, but then was promptly assassinated in April 1999. This prepared the way for yet another constitutional debate and fresh elections in which the MNSD won the Presidency once more, but commanded less than a majority of legislative seats.

The only other country where a national conference produced a change of government was in Mali, but here the circumstances were different to start with. The usurpatory military regime of Moussa Traoré, which had come to power as far back as 1968, was confronted by street protests in 1990, initiated in the first instance by women traders. Demonstrations in Bamako rapidly spread to a number of other urban centres. Traoré responded with ruthless repression, but failed to contain this popular insurrection. The crisis was resolved when a section of the army, led by Lt-Col. Amadou Toumani Touré, seized power and announced that there would be a return to civilian rule. The new government, which co-opted a number of civilians, yielded to demands for a national conference, which sat over July and August 1991. In this case, Toumani Touré chaired the conference, which refrained from declaring its sovereignty and from seeking to install an interim administration. The main job of the conference was to prepare the way for a return to constitutional rule, which all sides agreed was the desired end. The bitter denunciations which were a hallmark of the other conferences were directed at the ousted military rulers, whereas the good faith of Toumani Touré was mostly accepted. When national elections were held between February and April, he was not a candidate. Instead, the elections were won by a historian, Alpha Konaré, who went on to repeat the feat in 1997. Although the opposition parties complained about the lack of a level playing field, Mali could fairly be described as a functioning constitutional democracy. After serving two terms of office, as permitted under the constitution, Konaré stepped aside.

9.2.2.2 Abortive national conferences: Zaire, Togo, Gabon

In three other instances, those of Zaire and Togo and Gabon, the opposition forces were successful in calling for national conferences, but failed to unseat the great escapists who occupied the Presidencies. After repeated criticisms of the human rights record of his regime, Gnassingbé Eyadéma had established a National Human Rights Commission, headed by a party loyalist, Yao Agboyibor. Unexpectedly, the latter began to expose human rights violation in the public domain, which provided a space into which other human rights lobby groups could insert themselves. At the close of the decade, there was growing restiveness within the capital, especially as news about the collapse of other dictatorships began to filter through. The public humiliation of Kérékou – no friend of Eyadéma, but a President all the same – seems to been a particularly important catalyst. Moreover, Eyadéma came under pressure from the French to agree to the holding of a national conference. As Eyadéma made concessions to the opposition, such as permitting the first opposition newspapers to be published, strikes and youth demonstrations spread across the capital. Whilst

purporting to be opening up, the regime resorted to cracking the whip. In the most notorious episode, a significant number of protestors were drowned in the Bé lagoon.

As the opposition demonstrated its capacity to paralyse Lomé – with the active participation of traders, dockers, taxi drivers and students – Eyadéma agreed to the holding of a national conference, but subject to certain conditions. The conference chose a religious leader to chair proceedings, namely Monsignor Kpodzro of Atakpamé. The conference also appointed Joseph Kokou Koffigoh, a human rights activist, as the head of an interim administration, while Eyadéma was confined to the Presidency. The delegates also gave vent to their feelings, exchanging a hitherto 'hidden transcript' for a very public denunciation of the dictatorship. Although most of the chiefs kept a low profile, the chief of Mission-Tové publicly stated what everyone knew but had not dared to say, namely that chiefs had been systematically bullied by the ruling party.[47] According to John Heilbrunn, the delegates became intoxicated with the thrill of vilifying Eyadéma, forgetting that he remained in effective control: 'it would not be until the "morning after" that local reformers would bitterly recall that Eyadéma held all the guns'.[48]

When the conference tried to declare its sovereignty, Eyadéma contended that this contravened the accord. He was able to counter-attack with the assistance of the army which he had packed with recruits from his home area. These had good cause to worry about what might happen if southern politicians, baying for revenge, should ever come to power. In December 1991, the army arrested Koffigoh, who was so chastened by the event that he effectively capitulated to Eyadéma. When Presidential elections were finally held in 1993, a number of opposition candidates were disqualified from standing, including Gilchrist Olympio – the son of the first President who Eyadéma once claimed to have shot – who stood much the best chance of victory. The other opposition candidates boycotted and Eyadéma was duly returned to office. Although the opposition parties won many legislative seats, Eyadéma had evidently weathered the storm. Only the French could have altered the result, but they were prepared to contract business as usual with the Togolese dictator. This pattern was repeated in 1998 when counting was stopped at the point when it seemed Olympio might actually win. A highly dubious result was subsequently announced. Finally, in 2003 Eyadéma changed the constitution and stole another election (Olympio was debarred) with even less criticism, at the very time when the United States was defending its policy of 'regime change' in Iraq on the basis of promoting democratic values abroad.

Given the close ties between Eyadéma and Mobutu Sese Seko, it is unsurprising that their political responses evolved along parallel lines. As we have already seen in Chapter 6, the Zairean legislature had displayed an unexpected independence after being elected on relatively more open terms in 1977. Thirteen parliamentarians came out openly to demand political reform in 1980, amongst them Etienne Tshisekedi. Despite systematic harassment and periods of detention, this small group broke away from the ruling party to form the UDPS (Union Pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Sociale) in 1982. The UDPS was illegal, but operated more or less above ground. As external and internal

pressures accumulated, Mobutu announced the formation of a committee to engage in 'consultations' with the public over the political dispensation they preferred. Although Mobutu claimed that the overwhelming demand had been for limited reforms within the framework of the one-party state, he was apparently taken aback by the audacity with which ordinary citizens spoke truth to power: 'The problem, he was frequently told at public forums by people who no longer feared him, "is you Citizen President".'[49] In April 1990, Mobutu announced that he was over-riding the popular will and ending the monopoly of the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR). This precipitated a scramble to form political parties. Sensing that the lion was losing his teeth, many of Mobutu's political associates decamped to join a motley array of splinter parties. However, as Nzongola-Ntalaja suggests, many were actually hedging their bets, intending to associate themselves with whoever eventually came out on top.

Although Mobutu hoped to resist demands for a sovereign national conference, this too was conceded as the clamour for change gathered momentum. The national conference opened in August 1991, but its business was immediately interrupted by rebellious soldiers and then closed down on the orders of Mobutu in January 1992. It was only reopened in April, but then sat until the end of the year, although the pro-Mobutu delegates had broken away by that point. In Zaire, no fewer than 2842 delegates attended the national conference. The patchwork of parties and associations which were represented coalesced into two larger blocs, the Sacred Union of the Radical Opposition (USOR) and the pro-Mobutu FPC (Forces Politiques du Conclave). The conference set itself an enormous task of poring over the entrails of Zairean history in order to discern what had gone wrong and then hammering out a constitutional framework which would, in turn, pave the way for fresh elections. The conference divided itself into 23 commissions, whose task was to report their findings back to the plenary sessions. An immediate concern was who would govern the country in the interim. Militants insisted that Mobutu was a criminal who ought to be stripped of all authority, while the President was equally intent on wrecking the conference. The chairman, Monsignor Monsengwo Pasinyi (the Archbishop of Kisangani), sought to resolve the standoff by brokering a compromise between Mobutu and the opposition forces. The deal which was struck behind closed doors, and which was to prove fateful in the long run, was then presented to the conference as a *fait accompli*. The conference was to appoint a provisional parliament or High Council of the Republic, while the national assembly would be suspended. It was also to appoint a provisional government which would be accountable to the High Council. Mobutu would remain the head of state, but would share power with the head of government. In August 1992, despite the furious machinations of Mobutu, Tshisekedi was duly elected as Prime Minister. Within the national conference itself, Mobutu was publicly vilified, the scenes of which provided riveting theatre for the masses on radio and television.

As Nzongola-Ntalaja (who was himself a delegate) has admitted, the opposition committed a number of fatal errors in their rush to squeeze through the narrow democratic aperture. The former constitution was never abrogated and the old legislature was simply 'suspended'. These oversights enabled Mobutu to

close the national conference in December 1992, to resurrect the mothballed parliament and to appoint a Prime Minister of his own choosing.[50] Of course, he was only able to carry off this coup because he remained in effective control of the armed forces and because Western governments – notably the United States, France and Belgium – refused (as usual) to apply any countervailing pressure. Although the country now had two parallel administrations, the advantage clearly lay with Mobutu. Tshisekedi did enjoy one minor victory when the central bank issued a new 5 million Zaire banknote, which he declared was not legal tender. When traders in the capital refused to accept the notes, there were violent clashes with members of the armed forces at the end of January 1993.[51]

The deadlock was broken in September, but this enabled Mobutu to further consolidate his gains. It was agreed that the parallel administrations would merge once again: that is, a single legislature would be formed from the two parliaments, a new Prime Minister would be elected by it, and a constitution would be drafted prior to holding national elections. At this point, many of the waverers in the opposition jumped ship once more and voted for the Mobutu candidate, Léon Kengo wa Dongo, rather than Tshisekedi who was unacceptable to the President. In January 1994, the FPC was granted a majority of seats within a restructured legislature, thereby signalling the final closure of the democratic door.

Although an electoral commission was constituted, its independence was subverted by Mobutu, while the polls themselves were postponed from 1995 to 1997. By this point, the question of elections had become purely academic anyway. For one, Tshisekedi himself was preparing to boycott the process. More crucially, Laurent Kabila's army had begun its long march on the capital in October 1996 with a view to removing Mobutu through force of arms. The days of Mobutu Sese Seko were evidently numbered, as he was struck down with prostrate cancer in 1997 and had to leave the country for treatment. However, the opportunity which had been present for a return to constitutional rule was lost, with disastrous consequences. Much of the blame lies with the opposition politicians themselves, who took decisions and cut backroom deals without any reference to the rest of the population who became increasingly distant spectators. Time and again, Mobutu was able to buy off individuals who claimed to be on the side of change but caved in when Mobutu dangled the carrot of high office in front of them. Throughout his lengthy reign, Mobutu had cleverly played this game of co-optation, and the same card continued to come up trumps in the 1990s when the rules had supposedly changed. For example, Nguza Karl I Bond, who had been purged and then rehabilitated on successive occasions, was instrumental in the formation of the Sacred Union in July 1991. But in November, he was prepared to do the bidding of Mobutu by replacing Tshisikedi as Prime Minister and closing down the national conference. Nguza perhaps felt justified at leaving his colleagues in the lurch because in July Tshisekedi himself had come to a secret agreement with Mobutu, much to the surprise of his colleagues. If Mobutu had been faced with a purposeful opposition, united in its desire to dethrone him, it is doubtful whether he could have survived the early 1990s. As it was, he had studied and knew the personal weaknesses of his opponents, most of whom had been his clients at an earlier

point. In many ways, it is not surprising that Mobutu held his challengers in such contempt, because he had repeatedly demonstrated that they were biddable.[52] Finally, the role of the West in bailing out Mobutu one more time cannot be ignored. If the United States and France had taken a principled stance in support of Tshisikedi, the subsequent history might have been different. But by this point, it had become a habit to play fast and loose in matters affecting Zaire, without very much concern for the interests of its hostage-citizens. The result was the country was eventually plunged into chaos, which we will consider in greater detail in the next chapter.

The questionable role of the French is also apparent in the case of Gabon, where the Elf oil corporation had long enjoyed a privileged position and Paris had underwritten the security of Omar Bongo. The French had intervened to restore Léon M'ba, when he was overthrown in February 1964, and had engineered the subsequent succession of Bongo. During the 1980s, the most significant challenge to the rule of the PDG (Parti Démocratique Gabonais) emanated from a movement within the Catholic church which began to insist on a more socially committed reading of the gospel. In 1981, Father Paul Mba-Abbesolé was instrumental in the formation of MORENA (Mouvement de Redressement Nationale), which demanded fundamental political reforms. That the church became the focus of an emergent critique of the regime is significant because Bongo had turned the manipulation of religion into a fine art. He had established a cosy relationship with the Catholic and Protestant hierarchies, even after his conversion to Islam in 1973. He had also positioned himself in important positions within the Bwiti and Ndjombe secret societies, thereby claiming protection from traditional spiritual forces. To cap it all, he had adopted a leading position within the two principal Masonic lodges.[53]

The roots of the malaise in Gabon were rooted in certain material facts of life. The country suffered greatly from the Dutch disease, in the sense that oil revenues had killed off other productive sectors of the economy, while there was a wholesale movement of population to the cities in search of public sector jobs. Whereas only 15 per cent of the population was urban in 1960, the figure was close to 75 per cent in 1990, with Libreville becoming the principal magnet. What this meant was that when oil revenues began to decline, there was less money to pay salaries and to fund the educational provision which Gabonese expected as of right. In 1990, students at the University clashed with the Police, while workers resorted to a series of debilitating strikes, which crossed the divide between the public and private sectors.[54] In order to recapture the initiative, Bongo indicated that he was prepared to contemplate an end to one-party rule and he agreed to the holding of a national conference in March 1990. However, this conference was very muted by comparison with Benin. Bongo was able to insist that he remain the substantive President and that the conference was merely advisory in character. Behind the scenes, he was engaged in secret negotiations with certain members of the opposition, which somewhat undercut the formal proceedings.

When Bongo formed a new government at the end of the conference, most of the posts went to members of the PDG, with a token inclusion of opposition politicians. All eyes were then turned on the legislative elections which were

held in September and October 1993. These gave the PDG a slim majority, but mainly because the distribution of seats was weighted in favour of Bongo's home province of Haut-Ogooué. With Presidential elections scheduled for December, Bongo had every reason to be worried, especially as many of his long-term associates decided to stand against him. When the first results seemed to point towards a victory for Mba-Abbesolé, the Minister of the Interior simply declared Bongo the winner with a convenient 51 per cent of the vote. These results were later validated by the Constitutional Court, presided over by the alleged mistress of Bongo, and backed up by military force.[55] Once again, the external reaction was crucial to determining the viability of such outright manipulation. According to David Gardinier, the centre-right coalition in France, headed by Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, decided to back Bongo in return for his not making waves over the proposed devaluation of the CFA franc. He also makes a more serious allegation to the effect that the French assisted with vote-rigging in the two provinces where the PDG controlled the local administration.[56] The net result was that Bongo was able to literally steal a win. However, as in the case of Zaire, the opposition contributed to its own demise by succumbing to internal bickering and to the lure of petrol money. When Bongo convened a coalition government after the elections crisis, it was very much on his own terms.

9.2.2.3 The controlled release: Central African Republic, Guinea, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Chad

In the remaining cases we need to consider, the opposition failed to achieve the critical mass which was needed to bring about the holding of a national conference. In the Central African Republic (CAR), General André Kolingba had attempted to legitimise his usurpation of power in 1981 through the creation of a one-party state which was supposed to facilitate popular participation. In 1986, he had himself elected to the presidency under a new constitution and the following year legislative elections were held after a long period of abeyance. However, these limited reforms appeared to be little more than a subterfuge and at the turn of the decade students and intellectuals began to demand a return to multipartyism. In 1991, the CCCCN (Comité Coordonnateur pour la Convocation d'une Conférence Nationale) was established to campaign for a national conference. Kolingba attempted to get away with convening a 'national debate' instead, but this failed to persuade the most important opposition politicians who kept up the pressure and won some external backing.[57] Realising the dangers associated with holding a national conference, Kolingba agreed to hold Presidential and legislative elections instead, on the assumption that he would be able to manipulate the process to his advantage. When it became obvious in the polls of October 1992 that he was going to lose, he cancelled them, set up and interim administration and announced fresh elections for the following year. When he was heading for defeat once again, it appeared as if Kolingba intended to annul the elections for a second time. On this occasion, the French made a timely intervention by announcing a suspension of aid. This forced Kolingba to beat a retreat and ultimately to accept a humiliating exit in the first round – alongside David Dacko. The victor in the second round was Ange-Félix Patassé,

a former Bokassa Prime Minister, who bested another veteran, Dr Abel Goumba. In the Parliamentary polls, Patassé's MPLC (Mouvement Pour la Libération Centrafricain) won 40 per cent of the seats and was therefore forced to construct a coalition government. On somewhat rickety foundations, a multiparty system was erected. Although the opposition had failed to push through a national conference, the demise of Kolingba arose from his clumsy political footwork and the eventual withdrawal of French support.

In Guinea, a culture of authoritarianism remained deeply ingrained. After five years at the helm of what was effectively a military regime, Lansana Conté announced the legalisation of political parties in 1989. However, it was not until December 1993 that the first multiparty elections were actually held. In the Presidential polls, Conté only managed 51.7 per cent of the vote, which was an indication that his popularity was far from assured. The crucial legislative elections were not held until as late 1995, when Conté's Parti de l'Unité et du Progrès (PUP) received 71 out of 114 seats. Although Guinea had gone through the democratic motions, the legitimacy of the regime remained weak at every level. Despite Conté's military background, mutineers actually came close to toppling him in 1996. Two years later, a second Presidential election was held and Conté claimed victory once again. On this occasion, international observers were critical of the harassment of opposition candidates and many other electoral irregularities, but concluded that the exercise had been an improvement on 1993.[58] This rather weak criticism probably owed something to the recognition that Guinea was one of the few countries in this part of West Africa which had avoided civil war (see Chapter 10). By such a pragmatic yardstick, Guinea seemed to be limping along tolerably well. Conté himself was quick to appreciate that conflicts within the sub-region could serve a useful political purpose at home. In September 2000, following incursions from the Liberian side of the border, Conté alleged that there was a great conspiracy to topple the government, involving Charles Taylor of Liberia, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso and the opposition leader, Alpha Condé. Significantly, it was the latter who had presented him with the greatest challenge at the polls. By resurrecting a very old theme, in which fifth-columnists were supposedly everywhere, Conté tapped into a latent fear of foreigners which had been carefully instilled by Sekou Touré.[59] It is doubtful how many Guineans were persuaded that Condé was truly in league with foreign armies, but it reminded many that the authoritarianism of the present system was preferable to the devastation of Liberia ad Sierra Leone.

In Cameroun, Paul Biya was fond of pointing out that he had put the question of democracy on the agenda as far back as 1983, thereby precipitating his breach with Ahidjo. From that point, it was theoretically possible for more than one Presidential candidate to stand, while the principle of competition was later introduced into party structures and for the legislature itself. There was also a liberalisation of media restrictions. However, the catch was that Cameroun was to remain a one-party state, for the usual justification that this would sublimate latent ethnic divisions. While the limited reforms won Biya some initial support, these had ceased to satisfy many urban Camerounians by the end of the decade, when economic conditions had also taken a decisive turn for the worse. In 1990,

a series of attempts to found opposition parties led to arrests and violence. As the pressure continued to mount, Biya conceded the legality of opposition parties at the end of that year. However, like Kolingba, Biya resolutely resisted demands for a national conference in the face of demonstrations, strikes and campaigns to bring the cities to a halt, billed as *opération villes mortes*. His resolve stiffened by the French, the most Biya was prepared to concede was a Tripartite Conference. The talks were held the following year, but opposition leaders refused to sign the final report on the basis that the exercise was a charade.

Biya endeavoured to maintain the initiative by bringing legislative elections forward to March 1992, which gave the opposition something to play for. With the question of a national conference off the agenda, Biya and his revamped Cameroun People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) set out to ensure that they triumphed at the polls. Although the CPDM managed less than an outright majority (88 out of 180 seats), it remained the largest party in the legislature and achieved a working majority by striking a deal with smaller parties. In the Presidential elections which followed in October, Biya achieved a slim majority of 39.9 per cent of the vote, as against 35.9 per cent won by John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and 19.2 by Bouba Bello Maigari of the Union Nationale Pour la Démocratie et la Progrès (UNDP), to mention only the serious contenders. These elections were marred by widespread irregularities which were identified by credible external observers.[60] The protests which ensued, especially in the Anglophone west, were put down with some force.

The insouciance of France was a crucial factor in ensuring that Biya's gamble paid off. However, once again, it has to be recognised that the opposition proved to be its own worst enemy. The SDF boycotted the legislative polls and thereby gifted a number of crucial seats in the North-West Province to the CPDM. Moreover, the opposition parties failed to field a common Presidential candidate, thereby ensuring that Biya would retain his office. As in Gabon and Zaire, opposition politicians also proved extremely susceptible to bribery and co-optation. Even a fraction of the Union des Peuples du Cameroun (UPC), which had been the most consistent opponent of the ruling party, had been lured into collaborating with the CPDM in the legislature in return for scraps from the governing table. In subsequent years, personal and deep-seated ethnic rivalries prevented the opposition from rallying together to unseat Biya. The leadership of the UNDP, for example, was mistrustful of the pretensions of Fru Ndi and the SDF, and refused to participate in the Allied Front for Change which was established in 1994.[61] Instead, the party entered into an alliance with the CPDM which proved to be its undoing, as its support-base evaporated.[62] Equally, the growing expressions of alienation by Anglophone politicians helped to accentuate a latent line of cleavage within the body politic, which undercut the national appeal of Fru Ndi, who was himself an Anglophone from the North-West Province. This fracturing of the opposition, combined with a calculated policy of frustrating its attempts to organise and to gain equal access to the media, enabled the CPDM to repeat its electoral triumph in the legislative elections of 1997 – precipitating an opposition boycott of the Presidential elections which followed.[63] From this point, things went from bad to worse for the opposition. In 2002, the CPDM managed to increase its haul of

legislative seats from 116 to 133 seats, while the SDF fell back from 43 to 21 seats, 19 of which were located in the North-West Province. When Fru Ndi decided that the SDF should take up its seats, rather than boycott the legislature and municipal councils, there was a spate of prominent defections from the party. By this point, the hopes of unseating the Biya regime had become but a distant prospect, as Cameroun returned to being dominated by one party.

In Côte d'Ivoire, as we have seen, Houphouët-Boigny had proved himself to be one of the shrewdest political operators in the political business. With a downturn in the economic fortunes of the country at the end of the 1970s, perhaps the most important instrument of personal rule, namely co-optation, had been rendered deeply problematic. Without the resources to buy off dissent, and with countervailing pressures from the IFIs to implement austerity measures, Houphouët was cornered. His initial response was to release some of the pressure through controlled political reform. From 1980, it became possible for more than one candidate to stand in legislative elections, and in the polls which followed there was a substantial turnover of personnel. However, Houphouët remained the sole Presidential candidate, while the principle of one-party rule remained inviolate. However, these reforms failed to satisfy students and teachers who bore much of the brunt of declining expenditure. Over 1982–83, the students', teachers' and lecturers' unions resorted to sustained strike action and forced the government on to the back foot. Although it subsequently recaptured some of the initiative, there was a renewed challenge at the end of the decade when Houphouët was forced to impose even more draconian austerity measures, including a halving of cocoa and coffee producer prices, salary cuts and substantial retrenchment from the public sector.[64] On this occasion when students and teachers demonstrated, they received support from the urban unemployed and even some social groups who had hitherto remained loyal: the list included 'bus drivers, dock workers, police, soldiers, and even doctors and dentists'.[65]

The bread-and-butter grievances fed into growing demands that the monopoly of the PDCI (Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire) be brought to a timely end. In April 1990, Houphouët gave his response when he came out firmly against a national conference, but agreed to the holding of multiparty elections later in the year. This was vintage Houphouët in the sense that the he was well-aware that the opposition was ill-prepared to put up a credible challenge. Although Laurent Gbagbo succeeded in rallying other parties behind his candidacy, Houphouët beat him in less-than-fair elections by an order of 81.7 to 18.3 per cent. In the legislative poll, the PDCI also won 163 of the 175 seats. Although the opposition now had a toe-hold in parliament, where Gbagbo had himself secured a seat, its fundamental weakness had nevertheless been exposed. In the aftermath of these elections, the regime went out of its way to make it virtually impossible for opposition parties to mobilise their supporters, while Gbagbo himself received a two-year prison sentence for incitement in 1992.

So far so Biya. However, the unforeseen factor which threatened to upset everything was the confirmation that Houphouët was suffering from terminal prostate cancer in 1993. Such was the shadow cast by *Le Vieux* over the political life of the country that his sudden disappearance from the scene was bound

to create a vacuum of enormous proportions. When he finally passed away in December, Henri Konan Bédié lost no time in claiming the presidency for himself as president of the legislature. Under the terms of the constitution, his tenure was supposed to last until the next set of elections. Bédié's game-plan was to milk his temporary advantage and thereby turn himself into the legitimate successor of *Le Vieux*. Finding himself out-manoeuvred, Alassane Ouattara resigned the post of Prime Minister, which he had held since 1990, and took up a senior position with the IMF in Washington. As the 1995 elections hove into view, the politicking came fast and furious. Bédié's supporters pushed through a new electoral code which stipulated that both parents of a prospective candidate had to be of Ivoirien nationality. The barely disguised intention was to disqualify Ouattara, on the basis that his father was a Burkinabé. Given that around a third of the population came from outside Côte d'Ivoire – and had made a seminal contribution to the expansion of cash crop production on which the entire 'miracle' had been based – this was as cynical as it was divisive. The net result was that the opposition parties resolved to boycott the elections, permitting Bédié to romp home on a much lower turnout. As we will see in the next chapter, this was a thoroughly Pyrrhic victory because the legitimacy of Bédié, which was shaky to start with, was further impaired. Moreover, the new President lacked the political savvy of his predecessor, and by unwisely choosing to stoke up ethnic divisions he unleashed forces which ended up devouring the PDCI and his own presidential pretensions.

Across the border in Burkina Faso – the new name for Upper Volta chosen by Thomas Sankara in 1984 – the final outcome bore some similarity, although the route taken was very different.[66] Sankara had articulated a radical populist position, in which the empowerment of women and the peasantry, had been placed at the top of the 'revolutionary' agenda, alongside some good old-fashioned nationalism. Sankara, who was rarely to be seen outside his military fatigues and who took pleasure in tweaking the nose of his French overlords, could not have cut a more different figure to the patrician Houphouët. In October 1987 – when the 'revolution' already in deep trouble because of its failure to carry critical constituencies like organised labour with it – Sankara was assassinated, quite possibly at the instigation of his friend, Blaise Compaoré.[67] Stepping into the limelight, Compaoré sought to reconcile many of the social groups which had been alienated by the revolution. Drawing an explicit parallel with *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, he also set in motion a process of reform in which independent political parties were made legal and press freedoms were reintroduced.[68] Compaoré tried to bind the parties which sprang up in 1989 into a Popular Front, but relatively quickly the latter found the embrace of the regime too suffocating and opted for an independent existence. To all intents and purposes, the Front consisted of Compaoré's own party, the ODP/MT (Organisation pour la Démocratie Populaire/Mouvement du Travail). The opening up of Burkinabé politics therefore preceded the political upsurge elsewhere on the continent.

Inevitably, however, these events had a direct impact on Burkina Faso where the opposition parties began to insist on the need for a national conference. As in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroun, the government response was to call early

elections at the end of 1991, after a referendum on the adoption of a new constitution. The opposition parties boycotted, thereby ensuring Compaoré of an easy victory in the presidential polls. When legislative elections were held in May 1992, the opposition parties took part, but the ODP/MT nevertheless emerged clutching 78 of 107 seats. In the years which followed, Burkina Faso exemplified the pattern of a qualified democracy. While the odds were stacked against the opposition parties, there was an independent and vocal press, while students and workers were permitted some freedom to strike and demonstrate against the effects of the SAP which came into effect in 1991 – although the former were on the receiving end of state violence in 1996. Unlike Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso at least managed to avoid a fracturing of party politics along ethnic lines.

The story of democratisation in Chad was equally mixed. Ever since the mid-1960s, Chad had come to symbolise the abject failure of the post-colonial state. Between 1979 and 1982, when Goukhouni Weddeye was normally ruling the country – which effectively meant controlling N'Djamena – Chad had effectively ceased to function, although the international system kept up the pretence of statehood.[69] Hissein Habré enjoyed a greater measure of success in restoring central control after 1982, but with time he alienated many of his allies who complained of dictatorial tendencies. The dissidents included Idris Déby who crossed the border into Sudan in 1989, where he was permitted to mobilise his own rebel army in the Dafur region. When Habré allegedly entered into negotiations with American oil interests, he alienated his most powerful patron in the shape of France. Mitterrand who had come around to the merits of democracy in Africa now purported to find Habré unacceptable and offered covert support to Déby who invaded and seized the capital in December 1990 – rehearsing a very familiar script.

Déby was a most unlikely champion of democracy, having lived the life of a Chadian warlord, but shortly after coming to power he made encouraging noises. An independent press was permitted to operate and in January 1992 political parties were legalised. Between January and April of the following year, a national conference was convened, which asserted its sovereignty but without removing Déby from office. An interim prime minister was appointed and a new constitution was drafted. However, Déby fully intended to succeed himself and when (after some obvious stalling) Presidential elections were finally held in 1996, the opposition and international observers alike cried foul. Five years later, the story was repeated against a chorus of opposition protests. The Déby regime, which drew most of its support from the North, enjoyed little legitimacy in the South where rebels once more took up arms. But even in the North itself, one of Déby's associates, Youssouf Togoimi, rose up against the government and scored some military success. At the end of the 1990s, therefore, the survival of Chadian democracy was once more in question.

9.2.2.4 *A special case: Senegal*

The Senegalese trajectory differed in significant respects from that of the other Francophone states. As we have seen, Senghor had initiated a return to controlled multipartyism as far back as 1976, following which the opposition parties had endeavoured to convert popular dismay at the economic failings of

the PS into votes. In 1983, Diouf had put the seal of legitimacy on the managed succession by winning 83.5 per cent of the Presidential vote. However, it did not take long before disillusionment set in. In the 1988 elections, Abdoulaye Wade, the leader of the PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais), purported to believe that the party stood a genuine chance of winning, and when this failed to transpire there were violent demonstrations fomented by urban youth. These protests led to the declaration of a state of emergency and the conviction of Wade and others for incitement to commit violence. As events began to unfold elsewhere, the Diouf regime recognised the need to engage the opposition in a dialogue in order to keep the lid on things. The upshot was that Wade and other opposition leaders were granted an amnesty and brought into the government in 1991. Moreover, opposition demands that the electoral code be amended – by amongst things, granting equal access to the media and lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 years – were conceded by the PS. By making these concessions, the PS managed to avoid holding a national conference, although interestingly Wade distanced himself from this particular Francophone fashion.[70]

One consequence of the reforms was that the opposition convinced itself that victory was inevitable in the 1993 elections: any other result could be taken as proof of rigging.[71] Confirmation of the fact that PS dominance was crumbling came when the marabouts failed to issue their customary *ndigals*, or injunctions to their followers to vote for the governing party. However, disillusionment with the regime did not necessarily translate into opposition votes, especially as the newly enfranchised young voters generally opted to abstain. When the results of the Presidential polls were finally announced, and indicated a Diouf victory with 58.4 per cent of the vote, the opposition cried foul and the political system was rocked by a fresh bout of demonstrations and arrests. Moustapha Sy, who led the Moustarchadines into direct confrontation with the regime, was arrested along with opposition leaders and the movement was formally proscribed in February 1994.[72] By this point, the moral authority of the PS was at an all-time low, not helped by the devaluation of the CFA franc which took a further bite out of urban incomes. The latest round of brinkmanship ended when Wade re-entered negotiations with Diouf and joined the government in March 1995 as a Minister of State at the presidency. In return, Wade surprisingly dropped his demand for an independent electoral commission.

The reasons why Wade and the leaders of other parties like the Ligue Démocratique-Mouvement Pour le Parti du Travail (LD-MPT) agreed to enter a coalition are at first sight puzzling. Clearly, the PS was aiming to defuse potential sources of protest, whilst plotting its next triumph at the polls. For a leader like Wade, there was an obvious risk of ceasing to be seen as an alternative to the PS. However, as Beck points, participation also gave the opposition parties access to patronage which they could dispense to their followers lower down in order to keep them on the political hook.[73] This gamble eventually paid off when, having once more distanced himself from the administration, Wade finally succeeded in defeating Diouf in Presidential elections in 2000. Many observers feared the worst in the run-up to these polls, but when it became clear that Wade had won an overwhelming majority on the second round, Diouf

accepted the verdict of the people with good grace.[74] The well-springs of PS supremacy, which were close on four decades old, had finally dried up. The final implosion of the PS, which was confirmed in the legislative elections of 2001, was arguably every bit as profound as the defeat of Kérékou a decade earlier. However, the historic victory also concealed the same underlying reality that the incoming regime faced an enormous task in seeking to satisfy raised expectations. Throughout the 2000 campaign, Wade was decidedly unclear about what he would do which was different. The campaign slogan of *Sopi!*, or change, was effective, but it scarcely amounted to a serious platform. Wade therefore faced the strong likelihood that voters would turn against him if he did not deliver the goods in short order.

9.2.3 The Anglophone states

Although there was inevitably some cross-fertilisation of ideas, it would be a mistake to underestimate the gulf separating the political cultures of the Francophone and the Anglophone countries. In each case, geographical proximity counted for less than established patterns of thinking about and practicing politics. Hence, the Benin model exerted less of an influence than one might expect upon the states of Anglophone West Africa. Because there were no Francophone states in Eastern or Southern Africa, there was even less chance of a crossover in these regions. The Anglophone states also diverged from each other to a far greater extent than their Francophone counterparts did, because they did not share such an intimate relationship with the former colonial power. Perhaps the most striking difference was that the opposition in the Anglophone states did not bother themselves unduly with demands for national conferences. In most cases, they proceeded directly to agitating for free elections, preceded if necessary by the holding of a referendum. Britain did not play a particularly pro-active role, although it became *de rigeur* for the Commonwealth to send election observers who either legitimated or attached health warnings to the final results. Finally, in those Anglophone countries which did undergo successful transitions, there was a strong sense of history repeating itself, as the liberators were seduced by the attractions of public office and had to be prised away from the levers of power.

9.2.3.1 Two qualified victories and a partial defeat: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe

Amongst the Anglophone states, Zambia became as much of a beacon as Benin was for the Francophone ones. The overturning of the UNIP regime was, if anything, an even more remarkable feat because Kaunda was one of the founding generation of nationalist leaders with a better-than-average nose for politics. The problem facing UNIP was a simple one, namely that its practice of buying compliance from core urban constituencies became untenable as the mining economy descended into terminal decline. The living standards of most Zambians fell substantially over the course of the 1980s, due to a combination of rising unemployment (particularly in the mining areas), falling real wages and

collapsing social services. Whereas UNIP had previously maintained subsidies on foodstuffs for urban dwellers, this became increasingly unsustainable and workers began to feel the pinch. In 1985, 1987, 1988 and 1989 there were illegal strikes across the public sector, as well as food riots in 1986 and 1990. In 1989, the ZCTU gave these protests a more explicitly political edge when it laid the blame for the suffering of Zambians squarely at the door of UNIP. In June of the following year, the doubling of maize meal prices led to further angry protests, which was accompanied by the torching of a national monument glorifying Kaunda's role in the freedom struggle.[75] Moreover, the mainstream churches became more overtly critical of the regime, particularly through the pages of the *National Mirror*, which was jointly owned by the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ) and the Episcopal Conference of Zambia, and the Catholic Church's Bemba-language monthly *Icengelo*.[76]

Kaunda desperately sought to rekindle older loyalties to UNIP, whilst assiduously playing the Christian card to tap into revivalist currents sweeping the country. Hence in November 1990, he invited a number of African heads of state to join him in a prayer breakfast. Moreover, Kaunda sought to play for time. In July 1990, the National Interim Committee for Multiparty Democracy had been formed to campaign for immediate elections. Kaunda insisted on the importance of first holding a referendum, which he then sought to postpone for a year, supposedly to permit a proper voter registration exercise to be carried out. In this, as in much else, he was forced to give way after the opposition took to the streets to demand immediate multiparty elections. In January, the Committee transformed itself into a political party, the MMD (Movement for Multiparty Democracy) which proceeded to select Chiluba as its own Presidential candidate. The MMD flexed its muscles by holding a succession of mass rallies which demonstrated the depth of urban alienation from the regime.

However, Kaunda still held one trump-card. Although he had served the rural population poorly in the past, by forcing peasants to subsidise urban consumption, he gambled on the presumption that the MMD was a purely urban phenomenon. With the majority of the voters still residing in the countryside, the day might still be saved when the ballots were cast. The chiefs, in particular, were showered with patronage, including Toyota Land Cruisers, and some were even fielded as UNIP candidates.[77] Kaunda also made a special pitch for the women's vote. Unfortunately for him, UNIP structures had withered at the local level, whereas the MMD had managed to insinuate itself into even the more remote rural locations. When all else failed, UNIP resorted to blatant vote-buying and scare tactics, hinting at the possibility of a civil war if the opposition should ever come to power. As for the MMD, it did not promise a radically different set of policies, being firmly wedded to a neo-liberal agenda, so much as a cleaner leadership. The results of the October 1991 elections demonstrate the extent to which UNIP had forfeited its popular mandate. Only the Eastern Province remained loyal, whereas elsewhere the MMD swept the board in both the urban and the rural areas. In the legislative elections, the MMD won no fewer than 125 out of the 150 seats, while in the Presidential poll Kaunda was trounced by Chiluba who received close on 76 per cent of the votes case. Like Kérékou, Kaunda salvaged some residual respect by accepting defeat and bowing out gracefully.

Although Zambia had become the first Anglophone country to change its government through the ballot-box, it did not take very long before it was being held up as a model for a different reason. From an early point, it became evident that the MMD leadership was no less immune to the temptations of office than the UNIP grandees had previously been. Ministers revelled in the many perquisites of office, including sumptuous housing and chauffeured cars. This came with the territory, but it also contrasted with the plight of the average citizen. Moreover, MMD politicians went much further in their quest for accumulation. Some Ministers were forced to resign for alleged implication in drug-dealing in 1994, while many other allegations of corruption and abuse of privilege began to stick. Those who were sacked or resigned their offices split from the MMD and made some of the most damaging allegations, which the private press was only too happy to relay to a wider audience. Chiluba responded to the welter of allegations in a high-handed manner, as if corruption was logical impossibility in a country ruled by a devout born-again Christian such as himself. When Chiluba insisted on formally proclaiming Zambia a Christian country, against the inclinations of the mainline churches, the gap between the holier-than-thou rhetoric of the regime and the behaviour of its public representatives was too great for many to tolerate. In January 1995 the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (CCJP) linked the government to a culture of profiteering, in which it was supported by the Bishops.[78] The Christian Council was equally searing in its criticism. This brought the MMD into open confrontation with the churches as well as with the independent press, which was subjected to systematic harassment.

The Chiluba government responded with increasing paranoia to what it claimed was a grand conspiracy to return Kaunda to power. As early as 1993, the government claimed to have uncovered a UNIP plot to mount a coup, with foreign backing, and swiftly imposed a State of Emergency. This was the first of many alleged plots involving Kaunda, none of which stood up in court, and which were widely believed to have been fabrications. Chiluba, who had suffered at the hands of Kaunda, perhaps enjoyed exacting his revenge, and he was certainly determined to ensure that there would be no comeback. To the consternation of civil society groups, Chiluba was prepared to resort to questionable expedients to have things his own way. He first of all tried to have Kaunda deported on the basis that his parents were Malawians rather than Zambians, but after this provoked a storm of protest he fell back upon a 1996 amendment to the constitution which required a Presidential candidate to have both parents born in Zambia.[79] He refused to submit the new constitution to a referendum or even to enter into negotiations with civil society groups as had been advocated by the architect of the document.

These moves were seen as a transparent attempt to disqualify Kaunda who had come out of retirement in 1995. Further controversy surrounded the conduct of the urgently needed voter registration, subcontracted to an Israeli computer company, when it produced surprisingly low returns.[80] In June, following a series of bomb blasts, eight UNIP leaders were arrested and put on trial for treason. Against a backdrop of escalating violence, UNIP resolved to boycott the 1996 polls, alongside some other opposition parties. Given the

resources which were at the disposal of the MMD, the result was a predictable landslide for the governing party against a number of smaller challengers, a number of whom had previously split from its ranks.[81] Although international monitoring groups signalled their lack of confidence in the exercise by refusing to send observers, three out of four internal monitoring bodies, issued detailed reports to back up their conclusion that the elections had not been free and fair.[82] The opposition parties, including those which had contested and those which had boycotted, cried foul and threatened to make the country ungovernable. Although Chiluba had won, the claim that Zambia was at the forefront of African democracies had worn rather thin by this point: 'At the end of 1996, democracy was barely surviving, and its future did not look promising.'[83]

After the polls, Chiluba continued to conjure up fresh conspiracies, supposedly involving hostile Western governments, and announced his intention to subject NGOs to closer monitoring. However, he had to respect some autonomy for opposition activity as the price for the resumption of foreign aid. However, following another attempted coup, a second State of Emergency was imposed in 1997 and Kaunda was imprisoned for some time. Two years later, against a backdrop of political machinations, the High Court finally ruled that Kaunda was not a citizen. This finally spiked Kaunda's hopes of 'doing a Kérékou'. The weakened opposition was reduced to playing a waiting game in the knowledge that the MMD had a history of internal divisions, which were likely to be exposed in the run-up to the third set of elections scheduled for 2001. For the reality was that Chiluba was only permitted two terms of office under the constitution. Any attempt to alter the constitution was likely to provoke an uproar, not least within the MMD where many budding successors were waiting in the wings. In the first half of 2001, the MMD leadership was openly divided over the issue. The Vice-President, Christon Tembo, and eight other Cabinet Ministers were expelled from the party for openly urging Chiluba to go quietly. They formed a breakaway party of their own, the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD). As the churches, students and other associational bodies spearheaded a mass campaign against him, Chiluba was forced to accept the inevitable and to agree to go into retirement. For a second time, Zambians had succeeded in unseating an incumbent, if not the ruling party.

With his principal detractors now outside the party, Chiluba was free to handpick his successor at the head of the MMD. To universal surprise, he selected Levy Mwanawasa who had resigned as Vice-President in 1994 in protest against corruption. He was therefore regarded as a man of considerable integrity. The elections held at the end of 2001 were closely contested and might have been lost by the MMD if the opposition parties had presented a united front. However, due to the peculiarities of the electoral system, which made no provision for a second round of Presidential voting, Mwanawasa triumphed with a mere 29 per cent of the vote, to 27 per cent of Anderson Mazoka of the United Party for National Development (UPND) and 13 per cent for Tembo at the head of the FDD. The opposition complained of systematic irregularities and unsuccessfully contested the Presidential and Parliamentary results in the courts. In an attempt to be seen as his own man, Mwanawasa put together a government which was short on Chiluba loyalists. Moreover, he subsequently

supported the removal of his predecessor's immunity from prosecution on charges of corruption. The turnover in the MMD leadership was a limited triumph of internal democracy over personalism, but whether the opposition would receive a fair crack of the whip in future remained to be seen.

The Malawian experience bore more than a passing similarity to that of its larger neighbour. Here, the political transformation of the early 1990s was bound to be still more profound given that Life-President Banda had treated Malawi as his personal estate after the purging his rivals in the Cabinet crisis of 1964.[84] Although the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was supposedly supreme, the party was a creature of Banda. The regime enforced rigid censorship over the media and academic debate at the University, and policed the most intimate discussions of its citizens through a dense network of informers. Amongst the instruments of social control, the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) was a para-military organisation which was encouraged to regard itself as the equal of the police and the army. After a quarter of a decade of closure, the decompression which occurred once the first small puncture had been made, was spectacular.

The process began with a pastoral letter which was read from the pulpit of Catholic churches across the country in March 1992. This calculated attack on social inequality, injustice and mass impoverishment came like a bolt from the blue, given the relative quiescence of the churches in the past. Although the regime responded with threats and bluster, there was no disguising the fact that its presumed right to rule had been called into question. The University students immediately rallied to the side of the Bishops, inducing the government to close the campuses.[85] This turn of events provided the occasion for dissident politicians to gather in Zambia to co-ordinate demands for fundamental political reform. Chafukwa Chihana emerged from nowhere as the main leader of this group. When he returned to Malawi, he was promptly detained and became a symbol for the opposition. His supporters moved to establish the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), while the United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed by ex-MCP politicians who had not attended the Lusaka meetings. As in Zambia, it was urban protesters who forced the pace through a series of rolling strikes and rioting in Lilongwe and Blantyre.

In the past, repression had worked because it had been targeted, but the mass movement which was beginning to take shape could not be dealt with in this way. Moreover, foreign donors indicated that they would respond to repression by shutting off the aid flow. Although the MCP initially refused to budge from its adherence to one-partyism, Banda eventually relented by agreeing to a referendum on the issue. This provided a focus for the opposition forces who knew that if they defeated Banda in June 1993, his moral authority was likely to evaporate. Banda used all the resources at his disposal in an attempt to snatch a victory, but the result was a decisive vote for multipartyism by a ratio of two to one. As the political game threatened to run away from him, Banda insisted that he was under no immediate obligation to organise elections. However, whatever room for manoeuvre the MCP still enjoyed rapidly dissipated. First of all, Banda himself had to be rushed to South Africa for medical treatment in October, arising from a brain tumour, leaving others in the MCP to manage the crisis.[86] Then in December, the Malawian army, which had been smarting at the

favouritism displayed towards the MYP, turned on the latter in 'Operation Bwezani' and, having disarmed it, ran its members out of the country. The MCP now found itself forced to negotiate from a position of weakness when it came to shaping the constitutional revisions under which national elections would be held.

In the run-up to the elections, the opposition front cracked. As AFORD and the UDF came to see each others as rivals for a succession which was virtually in the bag, the former began to deflect its fire away from the MCP. Whereas AFORD held up Chihana as a man of bravery, it dredged up allegations that the UDF candidate, Bakili Mulizi, had once been convicted over the theft of six pounds as well as having served as Vice-President under Banda.[87] In the elections which followed on 17 May 1994, the MCP was roundly defeated, but not disastrously so. Banda, who had banked on women and rural voters, received 33 per cent of the vote, trailing behind Muluzi on 47 per cent, but ahead of Chihana on 19.5 per cent. One reason why the MCP did so well was that the political map had fragmented along ethno-regional lines, unlike in Zambia. The UDF triumphed on the basis of its support in the more populous south, the MCP clung on to the loyalties of the central belt and AFORD was confined to its northern stronghold. Banda gracefully accepted the verdict of the electorate, and withdrew from the fray with a surprising amount of goodwill on all sides. His death finally followed in 1997. Muluzi was duly installed as the new president and because the UDF did not command a parliamentary majority, a deal was struck with AFORD in which the latter was offered Ministerial appointments in return for support in the legislature.

As in Zambia, it did not take too long before some of the worst practices of the ousted regime began to repeat themselves. The fact that so many leading UDF figures were recycled MCP politicians suggests why this should not have been unexpected. Government Ministers were not slow in cashing in on the privileges of office and in cornering scarce resources for themselves.[88] Moreover, once UDF politicians had tasted the fruits of office, they were determined that power should not slip from their grasp. In the run-up to the second elections in 1999, AFORD cut its ties and joined forces with the MCP. The latter, proclaiming itself reformed, hoped to stage a comeback by fielding Gwanda Chakuamba, a former Banda prisoner of 25-years standing, as its Presidential candidate. Using all the resources which came with incumbency, including control of the country's new television network, Muluzi and the UDF were able to maintain their grip on power.[89] Although the opposition complained about the voters' register, AFORD agreed once more to re-enter an alliance with the UDF. During 1992, the issue of a third term soon became a key point of controversy, with the churches and many other associational bodies demanding that the terms of the constitution be respected. Although Muluzi attempted to find his way around the obstacles, he was eventually forced to capitulate along the lines of Chiluba.

In Zimbabwe, the Mugabe regime managed to parry the onslaught of domestic opposition, but only at the cost of aggravating social cleavages and precipitating an economic collapse. At the time of independence, the main challenger to the absolute dominance of ZANU-PF had been PF-ZAPU. However, the reign of terror which the Fifth Brigade conducted in Matabeleland in the

mid-1980s led PF-ZAPU to throw in the towel. In 1987, the two parties signed a Unity Accord, which in reality meant that Joshua Nkomo's party was swallowed up. In the decade which followed, Zimbabwe formally operated a multiparty system, but ZANU-PF remained the only show in town. When Mugabe signalled his intention of formalising the one-party state in 1990, he faced spirited opposition from the ZCTU, but also from within the ranks of his own party. Edgar Tekere, who had a reputation of being a ZANU-PF firebrand, was amongst those who broke away to form ZUM (Zimbabwe Unity Movement) with a view to contesting the 1990 elections. Although ZUM fielded candidates in the majority of constituencies, it managed to win only two legislative seats, although it won a very respectable 23 per cent of the vote.[90] These figures demonstrated that there was some mileage in the electoral route and in subsequent years a number of other opposition parties were established. Most of these failed to make an impression, and in the 1995 elections it was rebel ZANU-PF candidates who gave the regime the greatest cause for concern.

Whereas the ZCTU had agreed to remain neutral during the polls of 1995/96, its decision to broker the formation of the MDC in September 1999 presented the government with a serious challenge. The MDC appealed to those interests which felt most alienated from the regime, especially urban workers, intellectuals, the youth, Ndebele peasants, white commercial farmers and their many farm labourers. ZANU-PF responded by raising the stakes. In 1997, the War Veterans Association had begun to place pressure upon the Mugabe regime to deliver compensation for sacrifices made during the second Chimurenga. The embattled government conceded a lump sum payment of Z$50,000 to each veteran plus a monthly pension, without giving much thought to where the money was going to come from. However, it was the veterans' demand for land which took the lid off a political brew which had been simmering since independence. Mugabe was quick to sense that taking up the land issue was likely to mollify the veterans and play well with the Shona peasant majority whose votes would be decisive in any future election. Hence 1471 white farms were earmarked for seizure in 1997, and two years later Mugabe indicated that no government compensation would be forthcoming. When the MDC attacked the government's approach, the ZANU-PF was able to claim that the MDC was in the pockets of white settlers.

The first real trial of strength came in February 2000, when a ZANU-PF constitutional amendment, which included the land seizure provisions, was put to a national referendum. On this occasion, the opposition forces scored a famous victory, although that did not prevent Mugabe from inserting the land provisions into the existing constitution. With legislative elections to follow in June, a vengeful government gave the green light for the War Veterans to invade the land. Moreover, the government deployed systematic violence against MDC supporters. Despite the intimidation, which rendered campaigning next to impossible across much of the country, the MDC performed extremely creditably, winning 57 seats to 62 by ZANU-PF. Significantly, all the Harare seats were won by the MDC. But while Tsvangirai had high hopes of defeating Mugabe in the March 2002 Presidential poll, the latter managed to claw his way back to victory, using every dirty trick in the political book. By no stretch of the

imagination was this a fair election, although the South African Observer Mission did the ANC no favours by asserting that the people of Zimbabwe had made their considered verdict.[91]

The two sets of results did, however, underline the limitations of an urban-based opposition movement when much of the rural population was prepared to stick with ZANU-PF or (increasingly) preferred to abstain altogether. In 2003, Zimbabwe was locked in a downward spiral of epic proportions. The national economy was in tatters and possibly as many as a million peasants were teetering on the brink of famine. Moreover, insofar as the economic crisis was attributable to political causes, the situation looked set to deteriorate still further. Mugabe had cocooned himself in a circular logic which attributed all opposition to external conspiracies which justified the resort to extreme measures. If the military hierarchy had not been so preoccupied with profiteering from the war in the Congo (see Chapter 10), one might have said that Zimbabwe was ripe for a coup.

9.2.3.2 *The great survivors: Multipartyism in Kenya and Tanzania*

Our next pairing consists of two countries where well-established ruling parties managed to fend off an early challenge to their dominance, in large part due to the inability of the opposition politicians to submerge their differences. In Tanzania, the CCM managed to trounce the opposition in successive elections, whereas KANU eventually stumbled in the elections of December 2002. However, it was the bungled succession from the Moi Presidency, as much as the deft footwork of the opposition, which produced this outcome, as we shall see.

By the early 1990s, disillusionment with the Moi regime was deep-seated, due to falling living standards, rising urban unemployment, conflicts over land in which the government was seen to be partial and rampant corruption. To this has to be added a highly ruthless manner of dealing with awkward characters: the unexplained murder of Foreign Minister, Robert Ouko, in 1990 was a further illustration of the dangers of falling on the wrong side of the ruling clique.[92] Disillusionment was rife within KANU itself, where the existence of concentric circles of influence meant that entire factions and communities were cut out. The manner in which a Kalenjin bourgeoisie had been nurtured by Moi on state patronage, while Kikuyu businessmen were relegated to the sidelines, was a source of considerable resentment in Central Province which constituted the original heartlands of KANU.

At the start of the decade, a familiar coalition of churches, professional associations and civil society bodies found their voice and began to demand an to end to one-party rule. When Kenneth Matiba, Charles Rubia, Raila Odinga and others were detained in June 1990 for calling for reform, this prompted the donor community to adopt a much tougher line with the Moi regime, which in turn emboldened the incipient opposition. One product of the first cycle was the formation of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) which was conceived of as a broad anti-KANU front, encompassing radicals and moderates alike. Although Moi sought to hold the line, donors threatened to cut off aid unless he conceded the principle of multipartyism. The upshot was that he

was forced to accept a change to the constitution. However, just as KANU appeared to be on the ropes, the opposition front began to fracture along lines which were partly ethnic, partly ideological and very largely personal.[93] To start with, not all opponents of the regime wanted to be associated with FORD, which they regarded as altogether too strident. Hence Mwai Kibaki, who had been a Finance Minister under Kenyatta and a Vice-President under Moi, led a secession of well-to-do Kikuyu politicians out of KANU and into the Democratic Party of Kenya (DP). More dramatically, FORD itself split into two separate political parties once multipartyism was conceded. On the one side, there was FORD-Kenya, which largely orbited around the person of Oginga Odinga, who still enjoyed the radical reputation which he had earned after his clash with Kenyatta. The 'Young Turks' who wanted to pursue a more progressive line remained loyal to Odinga, as did most Luo politicians who resented their perceived marginalisation at the hands of the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin elites. On the other side, there was FORD-Asili, which coalesced around Kenneth Matiba and which was regarded as more 'bourgeois' and Kikuyu in composition.[94]

Instead of presenting a single Presidential candidate at the 1992 elections, or reaching an agreement over the distribution of legislative seats, the opposition parties chose to fight each other. Needless to say, KANU already enjoyed enormous advantages of incumbency, including privileged access to the media and material resources, which the opposition could not hope to match.[95] Moi also stirred up ethnic violence against Kikuyu settlers in the Rift Valley in the hope of forging greater solidarity amongst non-Kikuyus. This was crucial to Moi's strategy of ruling Kenya through a coalition of ethnic minorities: the so-called KAMATUSA, which originally comprised the Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu, but was later broadened to include other minorities like the Luhya, the Somali and the Mijikenda.[96] By definition, this strategy left much of Kenya outside the fold and susceptible to opposition appeals. If the opposition parties had prioritised the defeat of KANU, the next decade might have looked very different. But while Moi only polled 36.4 per cent of the Presidential vote, this was enough because the rest of the votes were split between Matiba (26.2 per cent), Kibaki (19.1 per cent) and Oginga Odinga (17.6 per cent). Equally, KANU managed to capture 95 out of 188 seats, which provided a wafer-thin majority. But Moi was able to build on this majority by tempting opposition MPs to cross the carpet. Although KANU did not win all the by-elections which followed, it captured enough through promises of access to amenities, to reassert its national dominance.

The shortsightedness of opposition politicians, many of whom were former KANU loyalists, cost them dearly. Having failed to win public office, their local support began to melt away. Moreover, there was an eruption of disputes within each of the main parties as fresh contenders blamed the incumbent leadership for defeat. Moi gave a little nudge here and there to ensure that the opposition parties broke into warring factions. Kibaki survived a challenge from younger elements with the least damage done. FORD-Kenya was split by an inter-Luo power struggle after the death of Odinga in 1994, which was transformed into a bitter Luo-Luhya rift. The upshot was that the party segmented into two

parties claiming to be the real FORD-Kenya – one led by Raila Odinga (the son of Oginga) and the other by Wamalwa Kijana. The party which suffered most of all was FORD-Asili which tore itself apart as Matiba refused to cede his dominance to a rival faction led by Martin Shikuku.[97] When Matiba lost control, he attempted to form another party, but this never got off the ground. Given the factional nature of KANU, it was to be expected that it suffered internal divisions of its own. The struggle between a so-called 'KANU A' and 'KANU B' was potentially damaging, but (as ever) Moi found ways of playing them off against each other.

Given the complete disarray in opposition ranks, it comes as no surprise that no broad front was forged in time for the elections in 1997, despite several attempts. The outcome was an even greater victory for the ruling party. Against a backdrop of ethnic violence, Moi increased his share of the vote to 40.4 per cent, while KANU secured a working majority with 108 out of a total of 210 seats. On this occasion, Kibaki came a close second with 30.9 per cent, while his DP won 39 seats. At the head of the National Development Party (NDP), Odinga came in third on 10.8 per cent, while the Wamalwa version of FORD-Kenya received 8.2 per cent. Next came Charity Ngilu of the SDP on 7.9 per cent, who had campaigned on an anti-poverty platform and was expected to do well, followed by a number of smaller parties.[98]

Ever since his succession, Moi had demonstrated his intimate knowledge of the fault-lines in Kenya politics and how to exploit them to optimal effect. However, there were signs that the KAMATUSA front was beginning to fragment, with KANU support being reduced to a pastoralist core. Moreover, the reality of the situation was that Moi was only permitted two terms under the constitution. This meant that his personal authority was always likely to dissipate as his tenure ran down. Be that as it may, Moi fully intended to preside over the choice of a successor to lead KANU and it became increasingly apparent that this was likely to be Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of the first President, who Moi brought into Parliament and then catapulted into a Ministerial position. Moi could claim to be broadening the appeal of KANU, given that Kenyatta was a Kikuyu and not another member of the KAMATUSA minorities. Equally, in March 2002, Moi pulled off a merger with Odinga's mostly Luo NDP, which had signalled its willingness to play ball soon after the elections – a further indication of the biddable nature of the opposition. The problem was that there were individuals within KANU who harboured their own designs on the Presidential nomination, including Odinga himself. When Moi began to campaign openly on behalf of Kenyatta, a number of Ministers chided the President and insisted that there should be an open contest. George Saitoti, the Vice-President, was sacked for daring to declare about his own intention to stand. Saitoti and Odinga then proceeded to form the 'Rainbow Alliance' within KANU to press for internal democracy. In the interim, the DP, Wamalwa's FORD-Kenya and Charity Ngilus's National Party of Kenya had united to form the National Alliance for Change which intended to present a unified challenge to KANU in 2002, with Kibaki as their common candidate. As the rift within KANU deepened, the Rainbow Alliance finally jumped ship, preparing the way for the creation of an expanded opposition front, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC).

In the general elections of December 2002, the KANU bubble finally burst. Kibaki polled 62.2 per cent of the vote to 31.3 per cent by Kenyatta and 6 per cent by Simon Nyachae of FORD (a former 'KANU A' leader). In Parliament, NARC controlled 125 seats to 64 by KANU, 14 by FORD and seven by smaller parties. While Kenyatta and Moi accepted the verdict of the electorate, Kibaki proceeded to stitch together a government composed of leaders of all the parties which had participated in the alliance. Inevitably, these consisted of a large number of former KANU stalwarts of different generations – Kibaki was a first-generation politician, Saitoti was a product of Moi era (and a player in KANU B'), and Odinga was a recent convert. This profile somewhat qualifies the euphoric media depictions of a historic vote for the politics of change. In some respects, what had occurred was a shuffling of the KANU pack, with the Moi loyalists losing out to others who were steeped in older KANU traditions. Given that many Kikuyu politicians regarded KANU as their own creation, and never ceased to treat Moi as a KADU interloper, it almost seemed as if Kenyan politics had come full circle. The only anomaly was that the son of the first President found himself on the wrong side of the fence. Equally, the promise that NARC would tackle corruption and tidy up politics has to be regarded with some scepticism. Although the Kibaki regime was keen to reopen negotiations with the IMF, which had broken them off over corruption allegations in 2000, it was Saitoti (as Minister of Finance) who had played the pivotal role in the scam of 1992 which had thrown national finances into crisis and shattered the confidence of the IFIs.[99] Finally, given that NARC was a front rather than a party, it remained to be seem whether Kibaki could hold such a diverse team together.

In Tanzania, the CCM had long taken its monopoly of power for granted. Under Nyerere, the practice of allowing voters to choose between two candidates had enabled party bosses to maintain that it was possible to practice democracy within a one-party state, whilst avoiding the threats to national unity which multipartyism was likely to bring in its train. At the end of the 1980s, however, the moral authority of the CCM was at a low ebb. Tanzanians could not fail to be conscious of the deterioration of their material conditions. Moreover, when the government was finally forced to capitulate to the IFIs, it lost face. And even before the abrogation of the Leadership Code in 1991, a flurry of conspicuous consumption, just as ordinary Tanzanians were being advised to tighten their belts, rendered the rhetoric about a continuing commitment to probity and social equality particularly hollow. In the humour of the street, CCM was rendered as short for Chama Cha Majangili or 'Party of Crooks'.[100] Finally, in a country which was relatively open, Tanzanians would have been well-aware of developments unfolding elsewhere.

Curiously, however, there was no upsurge of popular protest in Tanzania, along the lines of Zambia, Malawi or indeed Kenya. Commentators who are broadly sympathetic to the CCM have been inclined to credit the regime with the lingering attachment of its citizens, while sceptics have suggested that Tanzanians had never known anything different.[101] The latter is scarcely convincing because neither had Malawians or Zambians. The learned behaviour of Tanzanians in finding ways of evading and beating the system, rather than challenging it head on, may account for some of the lack of activism. As far as the

potential counter-elite is concerned, it may well be that the enthusiasm with which it members threw themselves into NGO activity detracted from political militancy. Be that as it may, it was ironically Nyerere himself who reopened the question of multipartyism in his ongoing capacity as CCM Chairman. Having consistently argued that a multiplicity of parties was potentially divisive as well as a luxury in a poor country, Nyerere publicly revised his opinion in February 1990. In his assessment, the party had atrophied because of the lack of an alternative and so would be toughened (and cleaned) up by having to defend its platform. Moreover, as he saw it, international pressures were only likely to intensify, and so it was better to jump rather than to be pushed – or, as he memorably put it, invoking a different metaphor: 'When you see your neighbour being shaved, wet your head to avoid a dry shave.'[102]

President Mwinyi, who finally took over the chairmanship of CCM from Nyerere shortly thereafter, was initially unconvinced by this revisionism. However, in February 1991 he set up a Presidential commission, headed by Chief Justice Francis Nyalali, to solicit popular opinion on the merits of multipartyism. With possible reform in the air, there was at last some stirring of activity outside of CCM circles. The National Committee for Constitutional Reform was established by professionals and intellectuals to lobby for a national conference. Another organisation which was founded with broadly similar objectives, but with a more radical edge, was the Civil and Human Rights Movement.[103] The Nyalali Commission eventually concluded that the majority of Tanzanians favoured the retention of the one-party state, but it nevertheless came out in favour of multipartyism on the basis that people wanted 'modifications' which were difficult to reconcile with the one-party system.[104] This recommendation was accepted by the Mwinyi government and, after the legalisation of opposition parties in December 1992, feverish attempts were made to establish political parties. As the country moved towards national elections in 1995, the opposition managed to mount several large rallies, especially in Dar es Salaam, which showed how a well-organised movement could give vent to popular alienation. Even so, the CCM regime was still operating within a wide margin for manoeuvre by comparison with President Moi. Interestingly, the fact that the tenure of Mwinyi was set to end, and could not be renewed under the constitution, did not greatly upset things. Such was the continuing respect attached to the opinion of Nyerere that his preferred choice of CCM candidate, Benjamin Mkapa, was selected ahead of Mwinyi's own client – a further illustration of the extent to which Tanzania was characterised by a rather unique political dynamic.[105]

Almost full three years after the acceptance of multipartyism, national elections were held and these were contested by thirteen political parties, of whom five could be considered national in coverage: the CCM, the National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR), the Civic United Front (CUF), Chadema and the United Democratic Party (UDP). Remembering that Zanzibar enjoyed a special status within the union, with its own President and legislature, the first round of elections was held there. Whereas the CCM stood by the advantages of the union between Zanzibar and the mainland, the CUF adopted a more autonomist position. Amidst some controversy over the fairness

of the exercise, the CCM won by 26 to 24 seats and managed the most slender of victories in the Presidential poll, with the island of Pemba giving all its seats to the CUF.[106] In the national election which followed, however, the CCM won comfortably, although further questions were raised about the conduct of the poll – to the extent there needed to be a re-run in Dar es Salaam. Mkapa won 62 per cent of the vote, with Augustine Mrema of the NCCR managing a distant second on 28 per cent. The ruling party also captured as many as 219 out of 274 legislative seats. The only region where Mkapa was defeated was in Kilimanjaro, which was the home region of Mrema. The Chagga, who are famous in Tanzania for their business acumen, had never looked favourably on Tanzanian socialism and seized their opportunity to punish the CCM. But outside of Zanzibar, the CCM had proved itself to be by far the most coherent political force. Even in the capital city, which was safe opposition territory in most African countries, the CCM won with ease, with Mkapa capturing 72 per cent of the vote. In subsequent years, real politics was conducted inside the CCM, with MPs lobbying hard to attract NGOs and government spending for their home areas.

9.2.3.3 *The populist response: the fate of democratic alternatives in Ghana and Uganda*

In two Anglophone countries, Ghana and Uganda, the leaders set their faces against multipartyism, not on the basis that the one-party state was capable of doing a better job, but rather on the principle that political parties were themselves the enemies of democracy. For them, the pursuit of 'no-party democracy' was not a contradiction in terms, but an insight derived from bitter experience. In Ghana, which had tasted one-partyism under Nkrumah and multipartyism under Busia and Limann, Flt-Lt Jerry Rawlings maintained that parties tended to be the instruments of the wealthy, who alone could afford to have themselves elected and who then typically recouped their investments through graft. Rawlings could also point with some justification to the paralysis which had characterised the Third Republic, due to incessant infighting within the ruling party. In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni equated multipartyism with a history of ethnic chauvinism and violence which had made the lives of its people a misery. In both instances, the leaders in question spoke of forging a new kind of democracy, one in which power would rest with a conscientised populace rather than with professional politicians. However, in each case, the slow process of trial and error which was contemplated ran counter to the consensus that there was no realistic alternative to electoral pluralism. The response of Rawlings and Museveni was a significantly different one.

In Uganda, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) had been forged in the crucible of the war against Obote and the Okellos. After the seizure of Kampala in January 1986, the model of resistance councils was propagated across the country – much as FRELIMO had attempted to disseminate the 'dynamising groups'. The councils were directly elected at the primary level, and these proceeded to elect the membership of higher councils up to and (supposedly) including the National Resistance Council (NRC) which enacted the

laws. However, the NRM at the summit left itself the freedom to co-opt individuals from all the political traditions and regions of Uganda. In February 1989, national elections were held for the village councils, followed by indirect elections to the higher tiers. The exercise was repeated in 1992, but the NRC remained unelected at this point.[107] Thereafter, the councils were converted into the building blocks of a decentralised system of local government, in which finances and responsibilities were devolved downwards.[108]

Political parties were not made illegal, and the Democratic Party (DP) and UPC (Uganda People's Congress) remained in business. Indeed, at various points they even joined the administration. However, they were not permitted to campaign or field candidates for election. Moreover, the primary elections were conducted by a queuing system rather than by secret ballot. Although the refusal to allow unfettered political competition was criticised inside the country and abroad, Museveni continued to insist that the system was thoroughly democratic in practice, and made for a more consensual system of decision-making. Like Rawlings, he insisted that formalistic definitions of democracy were misleading because they did not take account of the minimal conditions for the enjoyment of democratic rights. In his fifth anniversary speech in January 1991, Museveni stated the point thus:

> Whichever way democracy is defined, it must incorporate the rule of law, social justice, and the observance of basic human rights. You, no doubt, remember that during the second Obote regime, from 1980 to 1985, Uganda had a multi-party system complete with Parliament and Leader of the Opposition. That multi-party democracy did not embody the democratic elements I have referred to. The polarisation of society along ethnic and religious lines cannot form a basis of democracy and Uganda's recent history has proved this point again and again.[109]

This was an argument which possessed some force because, with the exception of parts of the North bordering on to Sudan, where the Lord's Resistance Army wreaked havoc, the country was enjoying stability and freedom from fear after two decades of extreme insecurity.[110] Moreover, while power had been won by the National Resistance Army, the regime bore the trappings of a civilian rather than a military regime.

Of course, Uganda was not immune to the pressures emanating from the external environment, including the donors. However, Museveni and his associates were not about to roll over and conform to the new political orthodoxies which, they argued, had proved unworkable in the past. The NRM won itself some breathing space with the donors by demonstrating its commitment to economic reform, whilst remaining largely free of complaints about human rights abuses. Nevertheless, Museveni appreciated the perils of standing still and therefore initiated a search for a new constitutional dispensation on the basis of popular consultation. In fact, an enabling law was passed as early as 1988, which provided for a Constitutional Commission to come up with concrete proposals. The Commission got off to the slowest start imaginable, in part because it was forced to operate with minimal resources.[111] However, the lack of headway also had a great deal to do with the remit of the Commission which was required to

engage in a two-way discussion with the people (organised through their resistance councils) about what system of government they wanted. This was to be achieved through seminars and workshops held across the length and breadth of the country. The final product was a very detailed document – ten times longer than the American Constitution – which was accepted with minor changes by the Constituent Assembly which was elected to approve it in 1994.[112]

The 1995 constitution confirmed the principle that political offices should be filled by election, including that of the President, but left it to a referendum to decide whether political parties should be permitted to compete. The document also came down in favour of a unitary state, in which chiefs would exercise only 'cultural' rights. While the four monarchies of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro and Busoga were allowed to reconstitute themselves, they were to be on a par with other chieftaincies and no special privileges were reserved for them. Most Baganda, who had long been smarting at the abolition of their kingship by Obote, rejoiced when Mutebi II (who had been languishing in the Britain in the intervening years) was recognised as King of Buganda in 1993.[113] Despite the reservations of the government, the advocates of the monarchy set about restoring its former grandeur. Finally, the constitution was remarkable for the extent to which, as part of a concern for human rights, it enshrined gender equality as something to be actively pursued – going as far as to provide for 'affirmative action'. Amongst other things, a gender balance was to be maintained in all state bodies, including the legislature, placing Uganda far in advance of most countries in the world. This did not so much reflect the benevolence of the NRM as the relative success of the women's movement in Uganda in furthering its own agenda.[114]

Not everyone was impressed by the outcome. The two main parties, the DP and the UPC, interpreted the entire exercise as a cynical attempt on the part of Museveni to cling to power. Although the referendum of 2000 would decide their fate, they complained that it was impossible for them to campaign for their preferred option for as long as the restrictions on party activities remained in place. They eventually decided to mount a boycott, whereas some of the smaller parties sought to persuade the electorate to vote for the multiparty option. Needless to say, the NRM used the media and other state resources to make the case for retaining a no-party system. On a 52 per cent turnout, in which there was some voter abstention, this option won 91 per cent of the poll. Michael Bratton and Michael Lambright conclude that many Ugandans did not vote on the merits of the issue, but credited Museveni with heading an effective government and supported the government on that basis.[115] Insofar as the result was a vote of confidence in the NRM, this was no mean achievement, given that it had been in power since 1986. The authors also argue, on the basis of a pre-election survey, that many Ugandans were in favour of multipartyism in principle, but voted with the government because they had such a low opinion of the main parties. To that extent, Museveni had won Ugandans over to his view that the professional politicians were not to be trusted. The no-party elections which followed in 2001 led, not surprisingly, to victory for Museveni.

Whether Uganda had genuinely created an alternative model of democracy is open to question. Some have concluded that the NRM was a one-party state

in all but name, albeit on the more benign end of the spectrum.[116] The revelations of high-level corruption surrounding privatisation, in which Museveni's own brother was complicit, are an illustration on the fact that important decisions continued to be made behind closed doors despite the best efforts of the legislature to monitor performance.[117] Nevertheless, it appears that the no-party system had won acceptance amongst war-weary Ugandans. It is no accident that the greatest levels of disaffection were apparent in the North, where the Museveni regime defeated Alice Lakwena's rebels in 1987, but was unable to crush the Lord's Resistance Army. The latter repeatedly crossed the Sudanese border to burn villages and seize the next cohort of child soldiers. Elsewhere, the social contract struck by the NRM rested upon its guarantee of peace and freedom from arbitrary violence, and some economic improvement.

Rawlings was as much of a dissenter on the question of democracy as Museveni was, but he struggled to shape a clear vision of what the alternative might look like. In the early days of the revolution, the People's and Workers' Defence Committees (P/WDCs) offered something akin to the Ugandan resistance councils. However, Rawlings did not appreciate what he regarded as efforts by the left to hijack them, and after a series of purges, the P/WDCs were replaced by Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) at the end of 1984. Whereas the P/WDCs were supposed to be the building blocks of a new democratic order, the CDRs were relegated to a support role. The National Commission on Democracy (NCD) which was set up that same year under the chairmanship of D. F. Annan (a retired judge) was encouraged to look elsewhere for its inspiration. Annan, who also sat on the PNDC, was given the difficult task of hammering out proposals for a new dispensation which would not slavishly follow Western models. As Annan himself expressed his quest:

> We feel that a truly democratic system should take into consideration our tradition, history and culture. We must measure the performance of the modern political system since independence against our traditional system and see whether the modern period could not have been improved by an interrelationship with the traditional system ...[118]

In a strange way, the cultural relativism of the colonial period had come full circle. However, what sounded like a ringing endorsement of chieftaincy was actually nothing of the kind. To be sure, the PNDC abandoned its earlier anti-chiefly rhetoric, and made its separate peace with the Asantehene, but there was never any serious intention to build on 'traditional' institutions. What the regime appeared to envisage was working through new institutions which would incorporate some 'traditional' symbolism.

When the first fruits of these deliberations were revealed, there was nothing especially innovative about them. Picking up on an early promise, the regime announced that genuine grassroots democracy would arise out of a decentralisation of decision-making powers. Over 1988/89, the first elections were held to newly created District Assemblies (DAs) which were expected to assume enlarged responsibilities. Two-thirds of the membership was directly elected, but the remaining one-third was appointed by government. Wisely, the PNDC

did not pack the DAs with its cadres, often selecting chiefs and other respected local figures instead. Nevertheless, a sound local government system did not a democratic dispensation make. In 1989, the Rawlings regime seemed to have the political situation well under control. It had managed to keep potential opposition under wraps through selective harassment rather than by outright repression. However, its sense of being on top of things led it to tread on toes which it would have been better advised to avoid. The Religious Bodies Registration Law of 1989 stung the churches into action and, once they found their voice, they proceeded to attack other aspects of PNDC rule. The PNDC also engaged in a vendetta against the acting head of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), L. G. K. Ocloo, and clashed with the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), which had long been a thorn in its side.[119] In August 1990, a broad coalition of anti-government intellectuals and politicians, from across the ideological divide, finally came together under the banner of the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ). The objective was to target repressive laws and to campaign for a return to democracy. Although the MFJ campaign was less successful than in many other countries, in part because it pulled its punches, the mounting internal pressure fed off changes in the external environment.

Rather than be forced into a defensive position, the Rawlings regime decided to accelerate the momentum of reform from above. In 1990, the NCD was charged with organising seminars across the country to debate the contours of a new dispensation. When the NCD issued its report in the early part of 1991, opposition expectations of a rehash of PNDC principles were confounded. The NCD signalled that the overwhelming demand was for a return to multipartyism which it endorsed, subject to a caution about 'unacceptable features of party politics such as when parties become corporate vehicles of investment which must be recouped'.[120] In May, the PNDC accepted the NCD findings and set up a Committee of Experts to draft concrete constitutional proposals which would then be debated by a Consultative Assembly. The operative word here was 'consultative' because the PNDC was intent on reserving to itself the right to approve or amend the final document. It also wanted to avoid losing control of the agenda, as had happened in Benin. Although the opposition continued to cry foul, a number of its members participated in the proceedings, and most eventually expressed their satisfaction with the final document.

At this point, political parties were still proscribed, but as soon as it became clear that elections were on the way there was a feverish attempt to reconstitute old political networks under the cover of 'private clubs' and 'friendship societies'. The Nkrumahists, who had never ceased to regard themselves as Ghana's natural rulers, ended up forming a number of rival clubs, whereas most of the erstwhile supporters of the Progress Party (PP) rallied to the Danquah-Busia Memorial Club. While the intentions of Rawlings were still unclear, loyalists established their own stalking-horse in the shape of the Eagle Club. In May 1992, the legal barriers came down and these clubs quickly converted themselves into fully fledged political parties. The Danquah-Busia Memorial Club reconstituted itself as the New Patriotic Party (NPP), and selected Professor Adu Boahen (a historian) as its Presidential candidate.[121] By contrast, the Nkrumahists remained split between the People's Heritage Party (PHP),

the National Independence Party (NIP), the National Convention Party (NCP) and the People's National Convention (PNC) – the latter led by ex-President Limann who continued to insist that he was the legitimate leader of the Nkrumah family. On the government side, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was inaugurated, pushing the Eagle Party into a support role alongside the NCP once the latter had been taken over. Why Rawlings had decided to set off down the somewhat risky electoral road is an interesting one. Throughout the transition period, he admitted to lingering reservations about multipartyism. However, he realised that he could not halt the momentum. He was also persuaded that he had nothing to fear from elections, the likelihood being that Ghanaians would vote for him in droves if given the chance.

In the national elections of November 1992, the polls were staggered. When the Presidential results revealed that Rawlings had won with 58.3 per cent of the vote, to 30.4 per cent by Boahen and 6.7 per cent by Limann, the opposition cried foul and boycotted the Parliamentary election. The NPP later published a document entitled *The Stolen Verdict* which presented a less than convincing case for wholesale fraud. The Commonwealth Observer Group had, however, pronounced the elections 'free and fair, and free from fear', and the legitimacy of the results were mostly accepted outside of Ghana. The NPP had revealed itself to be a largely Ashanti phenomenon, while the rifts in the Nkrumahist ranks had proved to be as disastrous as predicted: the Limann challenge had failed to materialise, while Kwabena Darko of the NIP and General Erskine of the PHP had managed a desultory 2.8 and 1.7 per cent respectively. The opposition decision to boycott the Parliamentary elections was a further blunder, as was subsequently admitted, because it conferred a monopoly of power on the NDC for the next four years. The only real voice which the opposition was left with was the private press which was unrelenting in its attacks on the government.

When the second set of elections came around in December 1996, the opposition sought to avoid repeating the same mistakes. The NIP and the PHP merged to form the People's Convention Party (PCP), although the PNC continued to stay outside the fold. The PCP and the NPP also reached an alliance over the Presidential polls, under which J. A. Kufuor (NPP) would be the joint candidate with K. N. Arkaah serving as his running-mate.[122] Unfortunately, the parties were unable to conclude a binding national agreement over the Parliamentary seats, which meant that they fought each other in many constituencies. As in 1992, the NDC enjoyed all the advantages of incumbency. It used state vehicles to move its supporters around and it enjoyed the lion's share of official media coverage. Moreover, the December 31st Women's Movement (DWM), which was headed by Mrs. Rawlings but posed as an NGO, provided a conduit for election funds, as well as a mechanism for harnessing female voters. On this occasion, there would be no bandwagon effect as the Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held on the same day. Despite the optimism of the opposition, Rawlings took 57.4 per cent of the vote to 39.6 per cent by Kufuor and 3 per cent by Dr Edward Mahama who had been brought in to lead the PNC challenge. The NDC also emerged with a comfortable Parliamentary majority, having captured 133 out of 200 Parliamentary seats.

The NPP won 61 seats, which was far short of what it had been expecting. It remained a largely Ashanti phenomenon, but managed to make some inroads into the Eastern Region and performed well in Accra. The PNP took a mere five seats, while the PNC was confined to a single seat in the Northern Region.

The second term of Rawlings witnessed a progressive deterioration in the standards of governance. The President appeared to have become weary of politics, and distanced himself from much of the day-to-day administration. Meanwhile, a number of senior politicians within the NDC sought to cash in – ironically vindicating everything which Rawlings himself had said about the moral rot which would accompany electoral democracy. Moreover, the NDC itself became decidedly twitchy over the succession question, given that Rawlings was confined to two terms under the 1992 constitution. As in Kenya a couple of years later, the failure to address this issue to the satisfaction of party members proved the undoing of the NDC. Once Rawlings decided to advance the cause of his Vice-President, John Atta-Mills – who had been parachuted into the NDC in time for the 1996 race – those who felt cheated by the lack of a leadership election seceded. Goosie Tanoh, who at one point was being groomed for the succession, led the breakaway of the National Reform Party (NRP). Others who were less than enthusiastic about Mills, including Mrs. Rawlings, reduced their campaign funding. Moreover, the attempt by headquarters to impose candidates on the constituencies led to a grassroots revolt in which those who felt aggrieved stood against the official candidates – and in four cases actually won.

In the December 2000 polls, the NPP and the Convention People's Party (as the PCP had been renamed) were unable to reach an accord and fought the NDC separately. This was a high risk strategy, but on this occasion it paid off for the NPP.[123] The CPP performed dismally, ramming home the point that Nkrumahism meant very little to a young electorate which had no memory of the First Republic.[124] Kufuor, standing in his second election, scored 48.2 per cent on the first round, some way ahead of Mills on 44.5 per cent. None of the other candidates made a dent, and when the runoff was held Kufuor was the only likely winner. In the legislative elections, the NPP also won half of the seats and was soon assured of a governing majority. The defeat of the NDC owed a great deal to infighting within its ranks, and the public perception of corruption on a grand scale. Moreover, the NPP shed its rather stuffy image and appealed directly to the youth vote in a manner which paid dividends. The sluggish performance of the Ghanaian economy in the second half of the 1990s had exacerbated the problem of youth unemployment which the NPP promised to deal with. Nevertheless, despite gains across the board, the North and the Volta Region remained as detached from the Busia-Danquah tradition as they had always been.

The electorate had been enjoined to vote for 'Positive Change' which (as in Senegal) was a suitably vague slogan. What remained to be seen was whether the Kufuor regime would be able to retain the goodwill of the population, including the young majority, which it undoubtedly enjoyed in 2001 and 2002. It also remained to be seen whether the NDC would recover from the blow of electoral defeat. For most Ghanaians, though, these elections had demonstrated

the beauty of the ballot box. Indeed the enthusiasm was so infectious that NDC politicians went out of their way to give the administration a chance, to the extent of praising Kufuor's first two years in office. Ghanaian politicians it seemed had fallen in love with one another.

9.2.3.4 *The perpetual transition in Nigeria: 'Babangidocracy' and 'Abachange'*

The African colossus, Nigeria, deserves special treatment in its own right, in that its staccato movement towards civilian rule bore many unique hallmarks. Nigerians had long taken a pride in their irrepressible private press and vibrant associational life, and often found the political timidity of other Africans incomprehensible. Nigerians, it used to be said, would simply not tolerate a Banda or a Mobutu. The obvious anomaly was, of course, that Nigeria had been ruled by the military for most of the period since independence. But even the soldiers appeared to accept their shaky legitimacy by claiming to be ushering in a return to civilian normality. It came as a great shock to many Nigerians, therefore, that at a time when other African countries were witnessing a democratic opening, their own country regressed. During the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of Nigerians lost their lives, not just in paroxysms of ethnic and religious rioting, but at the hands of the police and army. Moreover, journalists, human rights activists and aspirant politicians were repeatedly detained, harassed and (in some cases) subjected to judicial execution. Although the civil war years had been traumatic enough, the decade of the 1990s arguably represented the darkest hour of Nigerian independence because it seemed that things could only get worse.

In the mid-1980s, nobody would have predicted the painful journey which was about to follow. When General Ibrahim Babangida overthrew Muhammadu Buhari in August 1985, one of the reasons given was that the latter had failed to come up with detailed plans for a return to civilian rule. Whilst setting himself up as the first substantive military President, with complete personal control over appointments, Babangida promised that he would remain in office for only as long as was necessary to get the economy and democracy back on track.[125] Indeed, he was quick to set the date for the eventual handover at 1 October 1990. In January 1986, he appointed a Political Bureau which was expected to pore over the entrails of Nigerian history and to come up with 'blueprint' for a lasting democratic order. The Bureau received and collated no fewer than 27,324 submissions, which is an indication that Nigerians took the process very seriously.[126] It then came up with a voluminous set of recommendations, reflecting some of the pet schemes of its academic members. The government excised many of the proposals which appeared overly radical, but took on board some others, most notably the principle that the country should be run according to a two-party system. A Constitution Review Committee then drafted a new constitution, subject to certain 'no-go areas', which was then submitted to a Constituent Assembly for approval. Throughout this laborious exercise, the cream of the Nigerian intellectual establishment were involved in an ambitious – and arguably wrongheaded – attempt to fabricate the perfect constitutional document. Because the (supposedly) outgoing military government

was expected to preside over the holding of a much-needed census, the formation of political parties, and the conduct of elections at the local, state and federal levels, the initial timetable soon became untenable. To the consternation of some watchdogs, the terminal date was pushed back to October 1992 and then to late August 1993. However, for as long as the transition was on course, most of the would-be politicians were prepared to tolerate some measure of delay.

However, the transition process quickly descended into something more approximating a farce. One underlying reason was the dubious assumption that it was possible to legislate for political stability by concocting the right constitutional formula. Within the Constituent Assembly, there was a predictable coming together of members who shared a common political outlook. On this basis, some 88 associations had been formed by July 1989, angling (as in Ghana) to seek formal registration as parties. However, under the new constitution only two nationally based parties would be allowed to stand, which was supposed to ensure competition whilst deterring organisation along ethno-regional lines. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) was not greatly impressed by the national spread of the parties which put themselves forward, with the result that the military dissolved all of them. In their place, it announced two parties of its own creation – one 'a little to the left' and the other 'a little to the right' – namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). The exercise became almost surreal when the NEC drafted the manifestoes for the parties and the transition committee crafted their symbols.[127] More understandably, the government agreed to fund the creation of the two new parties in their infancy.

A reasonably well-executed census was held, and local government elections were successfully held in 1990.[128] Despite some disputes which reached the courts, and constant changes of mind over which old politicians were debarred from standing, the elections for state governors, the state legislatures and the federal legislature were also completed in 1992.[129] However, the process began to run into serious trouble when it came to the selection of the Presidential candidates within parties which were artificial constructs. In the first attempt at holding primaries, the losing candidates complained of vote-buying when ex-Major-General Shehu Yar'Adua and Adamu Ciroma looked set to take the SDP and NRC nominations respectively. In October 1992, the government took the drastic step of cancelling the primaries, disqualifying all of the candidates and dissolving the party executives. It then proceeded to organise fresh primaries, starting with nominations at the ward level and ending with national conventions. The net result was that the fabulously wealthy Yoruba, Moshood Abiola, captured the SDP nomination, while another businessman of Kanuri extraction, Alhaji Bashir Tofa, won the candidacy of the NRC. Both were Muslims. Up until this point, Osaghae maintains, it is probable that Babangida had intervened out of frustration at the behaviour of politicians which was at odds with the idealistic quest for a new breed of politician.[130] But beyond this point, all the indications were that Babangida was merely looking for an excuse to prolong his own stay in office. The spectacular levels of corruption which Babangida and his associates were engaged in provides one clear reason why this might have been so.[131]

In the run-up to the elections, shadowy pressure groups began to place newspaper advertisements and to issue statements calling for Babangida to remain in office. Amongst these was the Association for a Better Nigeria (ABN) which the junta claimed to disapprove of, but did not ban. On the eve of the Presidential election, the ABN secured a court injunction against the holding of the elections which nevertheless went ahead without any hitches on 12 June 1993. The unofficial results appeared to demonstrate that Abiola had won hands down. Significantly, he had polled well not just in the South, but in large parts of the North as well – indeed Abiola beat Tofa in his home state of Kano.[132] However, the ABN succeeded in securing a court order preventing the NEC from releasing the results. Then, on 23 June, the junta abruptly announced that the election had been terminated and that all legal proceedings were suspended. The military regime gave a number of reasons for the annulment, but the most revealing was that the top brass simply found Abiola unacceptable.[133] Given the limitations which had already been placed on who could compete, and the terms under which they could so, this was the final nail in the coffin of a smooth transition. The announcement was followed by widespread rioting, especially in Lagos and other parts of Yorubaland, and acts of civil disobedience designed to force Babangida to back down. However, this turn of events merely played into the hands of the junta. The more Abiola's supporters complained of a nefarious northern plot to prevent a Yoruba from assuming the presidency, the higher the ethnic stakes became. The northern support which Abiola had hitherto enjoyed fell away, even within the SDP, and politicians from the South-east proceeded to strike a deal with their northern counterparts who insisted that the annulment was not negotiable. Abiola did not help his cause by going into exile over August and September, just when his ingenuity in holding together a unstable front was most needed.

Meanwhile, Babangida endeavoured to fabricate support for a prolongation of his tenure by some biddable traditional rulers and other 'leaders of thought', whilst promising that another election would follow. Remarkably, Babangida had taken these momentous decisions without even consulting his colleagues, which evidently rankled. On 27 August the latter asked him to stand down. The junta now formally gave way to an Interim National Government (ING), headed by a civilian (and a Yoruba) by the name of Ernest Shonekan. However, General Sanni Abacha remained the Minister of Defence and was evidently the power behind the throne. Although Shonekan won some support abroad, where the pressure for sanctions was mounting, the ING enjoyed little real power. In November 1993, a court ruling that the ING was illegitimate because Babangida had signed the enabling decree after he ceased to be head of state, provided Abacha with the excuse he needed for an outright seizure of power. In a nutshell, a process which was supposed to have culminated in a resumption of civilian rule had ended in the installation of another military dictator – one who was known to have been biding his time for many years.

Abacha did the prudent thing and sought to distance himself from the Babangida legacy. A series of official probes were set up which (to no-one's surprise) revealed the spiriting away of millions of dollars of oil money, and some eminent individuals were placed on trial for corruption. This included even

the Sultan of Sokoto, Ibrahim Dasuki, who had ridden to office on the coat-tails of Babangida and now became a casualty of the turnover.[134] The junta also offered prominent civilians some key Ministerial positions – including Abiola's erstwhile running-mate, Babagana Kingibe. Moreover, Abacha promised to address demands for a more equitable distribution of the oil money, and brought Buhari back to head a Petroleum Trust Fund. The leadership was quick to claim that it had been invited in by opposition groups to sort out the constitutional impasse. In fact, it would seem that Abiola entered into secret negotiations with Abacha, and agreed to suspend his agitation in the expectation that his victory would eventually be restored. However, Abacha proceeded to take Nigerians down a route which had become all-too-familiar by this point: namely yet another transition programme. All the elected bodies which had been so laboriously created under Babangida were summarily dissolved and the political parties were proscribed, casting the country – in snakes and ladders fashion – all the way back to 1996. Abacha promised another constitutional conference, which would come up with yet another constitutional document, on the basis of which the electoral process would resume from scratch.

It did not take long for the penny to drop that this was yet another attempt by a section of the military to keep its nose in the trough long enough to amass personal wealth. Abiola realised the mistake he had made in trusting Abacha and reverted to the demand that he be instated as President. In May 1994, a coalition of (mostly Yoruba) politicians came together under the wing of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) – which Toyin Falola has described as 'a strange gathering of political opportunists and committed democrats'.[135] On the first anniversary of the abortive election they issued an ultimatum to the government to resign and to recognise Abiola as the duly elected President. Abacha responded by banning NADECO, thereby precipitating a popular revolt in the South-west of the country, backed up by a series of crippling strikes. The most damaging of these was led by oil workers, organised within the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), which paralysed production and hence domestic supplies. This frontal challenge elicited an even more severe crackdown on the part of the junta. Large numbers of opposition figures were detained; Abiola himself was charged with treason; militant trade unions, including NUPENG, were dissolved; and three groups of newspapers were closed down. In March 1995, the government raised the stakes further by announcing the discovery of a coup plot, implicating Olusegun Obasanjo and Yar'Adua. The latter were sentenced to death by a special military tribunal, but the personal intervention of Nelson Mandela, through Desmond Tutu, led to a commutation of the sentences to life imprisonment. However, the death sentence passed on Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in a separate case went ahead in November. The upshot was that Nigeria became a pariah state and was suspended from the Commonwealth, despite the solidarity extended some other African leaders like Jerry Rawlings.[136]

In fact, Abacha's ambitions went much further than even his civilian detractors had imagined. As the transition process ground on, it became increasingly evident that he intended to stand for the presidency himself, borrowing a leaf from the Rawlings book. In September 1996, only five out of fifteen new

political parties cleared the final hurdle for registration. Ominously, all of these were closely allied to elements within the junta. Over 1997 and 1998, these parties contested the local government elections, the legislative and gubernatorial elections across the 30 states (including six new ones), and the federal legislative elections. This left the choice of President. Against a backdrop of stage-managed rallies and the distribution of 'support Abacha' buttons, the five parties followed the script and plumped for Abacha as the single candidate.[137] However, the enthronement never took place because Abacha died suddenly on 8 June 1998, to widespread public rejoicing.

General Abdulsalami Abubakar stepped into the resulting vacuum, indicating his intention to perform no more than a traditional caretaking function. Abubakar did his best to distance himself from the Abacha legacy, dismissing most of the loyalists of the deceased general. However, before he could find a face-saving means to release Abiola, the latter also died under circumstances which many opponents of the military regarded as highly suspicious. The death of Abiola did spare Abubakar the embarrassment of having to deal with ongoing demands for restitution of the 1993 elections results. The recently elected bodies were once again dissolved, along with the five political parties, and the way was opened for freedom of political association. Eventually, the registration of nine political parties was approved, and these coalesced to form a final total of six. The Babangida project of cultivating a new class of politicians had evidently failed, as the leading lights were experienced politicians, often sporting a less than spotless record of public service.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) managed to win the greatest number of state governorships, together with a majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate. When it came to the Presidential elections, Obasanjo of the PDP beat Olu Falae, a former Babangida associate standing on behalf of both the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All People's Party (APP). Although the culmination of the process was a return to civilian rule, the fact that Obasanjo was a retired General qualified the completeness of the transition. Moreover, he had won the presidency with the backing of much of the northern political and military establishment, while many Yoruba voters apparently regarded him as a stooge. The Obasanjo presidency was characterised by a state of almost perpetual crisis, as politicians at every level of the system pursued vendettas against each other, and as ethnic militias engaged in repeated bouts of fighting. Moreover, the religious divide became wider than ever when a number of northern states proclaimed the adoption of Shari'a law, despite the President's insistence that this was unconstitutional.

Towards the end of 2002, the course of Nigerian politics took a more peculiar turn when Obasanjo's main challenger for the next set of elections became none other than Muhammadu Buhari. The latter managed to secure the nomination of the All Nigeria People's Party in circumstances which were as controversial as the renomination of Obasanjo himself. Hence Nigerians were asked to choose between two retired Generals, which was a rather curious inversion of what is normally understood by democratisation. The willingness of civilians to tolerate the incursion of the Generals is, on the face of it, surprising. However, as more than one commentator has noted, it was politicians and

intellectuals – particularly academics – who had repeatedly done the bidding of Babangida and Abacha, lending them the legitimacy which they craved.[138] In 2003, Obasanjo prevailed in an election vitiated by widespread fraud. To the relief of many, however, the predicted breakdown cataclysm was averted.

9.2.3.5 *The old stagers: Botswana and the Gambia*

As in the case of Senegal, there were two African countries which had enjoyed long periods of multipartyism prior to the continental movement of the early 1990s: namely Botswana and the Gambia. In the former case, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) had contested six elections between 1965 and 1989 and had won each them with ease against a fragmented opposition. Although the BDP exploited the advantages of incumbency to the full, the opposition was given a free hand to organise and to criticise the performance of the regime. The success of the BDP in holding on to its position rested on the conjuncture of a number of circumstances, largely of its own making. First of all, the regime had presided over extremely impressive rates of economic growth which brought substantial improvements in living standards to most of the population. Secondly, and somewhat ironically, President Seretse Khama and his successor, Ketumile Masire, had taken the politics out of development by investing the civil service with remarkable levels of operational autonomy. This minimised the kind of squabbling over the pork-barrel which tended to divide ruling parties in other African countries. Thirdly, the BDP and the civil service continued to work in alliance with the Tswana chiefs who remained the most influential players in the rural areas. Khama had carefully consolidated his position within the largest chiefdoms – those of his own group, the Bamangwato, and the Bakwena – which minimised the mathematical chances of defeat, and Masire endeavoured to keep the winning coalition together even though he himself belonged to a smaller Tswana group.[139]

However, by the early 1990s the ruling party began to encounter more serious challenges, which were equally of its making. External pressures were minimal, in that Botswana had dispensed with most forms of aid and was looked upon by Western governments as a model state. It was more a case of past success generating unforeseen problems. To start with, Botswana experienced possibly the fastest rate of urbanisation in Africa, estimated at 12.3 per cent between 1960 and 1994, which arose from the concentration of decision-making and much economic activity on the capital.[140] This swelling urban population began to encounter unemployment and housing shortages which had not initially been envisaged as a problem. Moreover, urban dwellers broke free of the pressures to support a rural bloc vote and embraced a more scurrilous form of political expression which was unimaginable in rural society. A related point is that the age profile of the population was very young, with as many as 44 per cent being beneath the age of 15 years. As in other countries, alienated youth ceased to be swayed by the arguments for a continuation of BDP rule, knowing (and caring) little of its past achievements. The fact the voting age was pegged at 21 years meant that there was little outlet for the frustration of urban youth who responded in more anomic ways.

Another development was assertiveness of interests which had previously been regarded as tame. The women's movement in Botswana became particularly bold in attacking forms of patriarchy, especially in the rural areas, which the BDP was accused of benefiting from. The San (or Bushmen) who had been treated as second-class citizens also began to assert their rights as 'first peoples'. The Botswana National Front (BNF) astutely brought the San into the party and fielded them as candidates in areas where they represented a significant minority or a numerical majority. One of the San complaints was about dispossession at the hands of ranchers who were closely allied to the ruling party. The participation of prominent BDP politicians in the land-grab, and the unwillingness of Masire to curb their excesses, became a source of considerable controversy in the early 1990s – as did revelations of blatant corruption in a regime which had always boasted of its high moral standards.

In the 1994 elections, the BDP was given a run for its money by the BNF. Three members of the Cabinet lost their seats. Although the BDP still won with 54.4 per cent of the vote and 27 of the 40 seats in parliament, this was its worst performance ever. Conversely, this was the best result achieved by the BNF which took all of the remaining 13 seats. Tellingly, the BDP was trounced in Gaborone, where the BNF won all four constituencies, and in other urban locations.[141] Whereas Botswana had always been a by-word for political stability, even this began to look fragile in the aftermath of the elections. In February 1995, demonstrations by University and school students in Gaborone led to clashes with police and an outbreak of youth unrest and student strikes across the country which were repressed with considerable brutality. The Botswana Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's NGO Coalition and the Catholic Church expressed solidarity with the students and accused the government of heavy-handedness. The BDP weathered this crisis and in 1998 it managed a successful leadership transmission from Masire, whose two terms under the constitution were up, to Festus Mogae. However, there was every sign that Botswana politics was likely to become more hotly contested than in the past when a broad social consensus had existed. Nevertheless, the future of multipartyism in Botswana still seemed much secure than in most African countries.

The same could not be said of the Gambia which followed a different path altogether. Like Botswana, the Gambia had managed a measure of political pluralism since independence, including regular elections. However, Dawda Jawara's People's Progressive Party (PPP) was very much in the driving seat. The regime was severely shaken in 1981 when it took Senegalese troops to reverse a coup. The price for this bail-out was a confederation which Jawara finally managed to extricate himself from in 1989. The subsequent public rift with Senegal meant that Jawara would no longer be able to rely on his more powerful neighbour to underwrite his security. This necessitated building up a loyal army and police force, which needed to be played off against each other. Although the PPP won the next set of elections in 1992, the popularity of the regime was lower than ever. Two years later, a section of the army seized power and, when the Senegalese sat on their hands, Captain Yahya Jammeh proceeded to set up an Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). When the

junta signalled its intention of staying on until 1998 the donors suspended aid. Although Jammeh was forced to bow to external pressure, and to hold elections, there was nothing to stop him from trading in his fatigues for civilian clothes. In 1996, a new constitution was adopted and Jammeh retired from the army to form a political party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorganisation and Construction (APRC). In the Presidential polls which followed, Jammeh won a clear majority. However, the old parties were banned from contesting while the new ones were spiked until a few weeks before the polls.[142] The prospects for democracy in the Gambia therefore looked rather poor at the start of the new millennium.

9.2.3.6 *Kings and democrats: Lesotho and Swaziland*

We turn now to the fate of democracy in two African countries where indigenous monarchies retained real power. Of the two, the Swazi monarchy was by far the most powerful. As we have already seen, Sobhuza II had resorted to the drastic step in 1973 of abrogating the constitution, declaring a state of emergency (which was never rescinded) and banning political parties. In 1978, Sobhuza introduced an Order-in-Council which created an alternative arrangement for choosing leaders, the so-called *tinkhundla* system. Swazis at the local level were permitted to elect representatives on an individual basis. These then constituted an electoral college which selected parliamentarians, to whom the king added ten appointees of his own. This indirectly elected assembly then chose ten members of the Senate, while the king added an equal number. The screening process ensured that it was only pliable politicians who reached the top. Moreover, the powers of the legislature were limited by virtue of the fact that the king continued to rule by decree. Underpinning this political structure was a willingness to use repression to deal with any dissent, on the basis that this was 'un-Swazi' and signalled a lack of respect for the king. Sobhuza, who had been king for some 61 years, finally died in 1982, unleashing a struggle for power within the court. This was finally resolved when his teenage son succeeded in 1986, as Mswati III. Those who hoped that the young king would break with the conventions of the Sobhuza years were soon to have their illusions shattered, as Mswati signalled his intention to continue ruling as the continent's last absolute monarch.

In 1983, in the midst of the crisis of the monarchy, the first attempt to mobilise support for radical change began with the formation of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO). The support for PUDEMO, which operated underground, came from students, workers and intellectuals who were disillusioned by the rampant corruption and abuse of power, including the seizure of valuable land by Ministers and royal favourites. Many of its sympathisers were active within the trade unions, including the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the Swaziland National Association of Civil Servants (SNACS) as well as the Swaziland Association of Students (SNAS). All of these drew inspiration from popular movements in South Africa. In 1990, the government arrested the leaders of PUDEMO and put them on trial for high treason, alleging that they had been plotting an insurrection.[143]

The collapse of the trial merely emboldened the incipient opposition, especially students at the national University.

Mswati attempted to recapture the initiative by setting up two enquiries to look into reform of the electoral system. However, hardliners within the regime insisted that any concessions represented the thin end of the wedge. In 1998, the Public Order Act was passed to enable the government to employ more drastic expedients, and Decree No. 2 of 2001 empowered the authorities to muzzle the press and to restrict the autonomy of the courts. Moreover, the President of PUDEMO, Mario Msuku, was once again placed on trial for treason. At the end of 2002, the regime found itself in open conflict with the judiciary, the labour movement, the churches and a resurgent PUDEMO over its refusal to rescind the 1973 legislation. The regime also incurred a great deal of negative publicity by announcing its intention to purchase a luxury jet at a time when many Swazis were facing the prospect of famine. Although the United States threatened to impose sanctions, external pressure failed to produce any movement in the direction of a constitutional monarchy.

In Lesotho, as we saw in Chapter 4, Leabua Jonathan had tamed the king, Moshoeshoe II. The Basotho National Party (BNP) operated a one-party state, not unlike that in many other African countries. The peculiarity of Lesotho was that it was surrounded by, and economically dependent upon South Africa and was therefore vulnerable to pressure from beyond its borders. From 1974, Jonathan offered his support to the ANC, which drew the ire of the South Africans. The latter retaliated by permitting Ntsu Mokhehle – hitherto a strident opponent of the apartheid regime – to set up the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) on their soil. The demise of Jonathan finally came in the context of a South African blockade in 1986. However, the coup which toppled the regime also had other causes. One was the feeling within the Lesotho Para-Military Force that Jonathan was practicing favouritism. Amongst the complainants was Major-General Justin Lekhanya, who did not mastermind the coup, but was its immediate beneficiary. Another reason was that Jonathan was believed to favour the ambitions of the Molapo royal house, from which he hailed, whilst undermining the dignity of Moshoeshoe II.[144] The king had his revenge by failing to come to the aid of Jonathan when the plot was revealed. Once the coup was complete, the king offered his seal of approval, commenting that under Jonathan 'human life was no more valuable than that of a house-fly'.[145] In the period of military rule which followed, Moshoeshoe II became in effect a co-ruler and an arbiter in the affairs of a factionalised junta. The perception that the king was siding against Lekhanya provoked another trial of strength in which Moshoeshoe came off second best. In March 1990 he was sent into exile in Britain to 'cool off', but after keeping up his invective he was stripped of his office in November – the first time that a Lesotho king had ever been dethroned. In his place, his son was installed as King Letsie III.

At this point, the military decided to initiate a return to civilian rule and convened a Constituent Assembly to that end. But before its work could be completed, a revolt by certain Captains forced the removal of Lekhanya in April 1991 and brought about the retirement of the upper echelons of the military. Major-General Ramaema, who was co-opted, made it clear that his task was to

engineer a smooth exit, remarking that 'I am the driver of a lorry without a reverse gear. It will only shift forward.'[146] In March 1993, national elections were finally held in which the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), which had been robbed of victory in 1970, finally received its reward. The BNP, for which Lekhanya stood as a candidate, failed to win a single seat.[147] Under the terms of the transition arrangements, Moshoeshoe was brought back, but following his untimely death in a motor accident, Letsie III resumed the kingship for a second time in 1996. The king retained certain political prerogatives, notably the right to name one-third of the members of Senate, but in other respects Lesotho conformed to a conventional Westminster system.

The new democratic institutions could not have been more fragile. In 1997, the BCP split in two, in the wake of which Prime Minister Mokhehle founded a new political party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). In 1998, after Mokhehle had handed the baton to Pakalitha Mosisili, fresh elections were held. The LCD won a landslide in the face of opposition protests. The chaos which threatened when sections of the army began to take sides led SADC (the Southern African Development Conference), in the shape of South Africa and Botswana, to send in troops to restore 'order'. This became a highly messy operation, and an acute embarrassment to the South Africans. Nevertheless, it culminated in the installation of an interim administration, including the LCD and the opposition. In May 2002, fresh elections were held which were won by Mosisili and the LCD, against the backdrop of renewed opposition complaints. Whereas in Swaziland the pressing question was whether the monarchy would ever relinquish its grip on power, what was at issue in Lesotho was the ability of the politicians to sublimate their differences so that the army was not presented with a fresh excuse to intervene.

9.2.3.7 Not so fast there: the making of a New South Africa

Having indicated many of the pitfalls and reversals associated with democratisation across Africa, we conclude this survey with a comparative success story. At the start of the 1990s, there was every possibility that South Africa would slide deeper into chaos. Various branches of the security apparatus had established a measure of operational autonomy and were actively fomenting violence in an attempt to disable the opposition. Meanwhile, ANC supporters and Inkatha fought for control of Kwazulu/Natal.[148] That the apocalypse was averted owes everything to the willingness of the major protagonists to pull back from the brink. As early as 1989, President P. W. Botha had been engaged in exploratory talks with the country's most illustrious prisoner, Nelson Mandela. However, it fell to F. W. De Klerk, who ousted Botha in August of that year, to break with the National Party (NP) dogma that the ANC was nothing more than a terrorist organisation hell-bent on turning South Africa into a Communist satellite. The implosion of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe came at a rather fortuitous moment. In February 1990, De Klerk surprised Parliament when he announced that he was unbanning the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and other proscribed organisations; repealing the state of emergency provisions; and releasing Mandela

without conditions. Nine days later, Mandela walked free and a fresh chapter in South African history began.

South Africa became the only Anglophone country to go down the national conference route, although the participants were wrong in their belief that they were engaged in something altogether unique. The NP and the ANC set about negotiating the conditions under which political rights for all South Africans could be enjoyed whilst reassuring the minorities. De Klerk had cause to worry about being outflanked by the far-right, which was resolutely opposed to any negotiations. Equally, as the ANC began to operate above ground, it had to satisfy its own mass constituency by pushing for the rapid dismantling of apartheid. The instrument which was vested with responsibility for ushering in a negotiated settlement was the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). This was a more exclusive club than that of other national conferences, in that only eight political organisations took their seats in 1991. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and Inkatha remained outside the negotiations, complaining about a secret compact between the ANC and the NP. Despite the conspiracy thesis, the relationship between the main parties was characterised by acute mistrust, and in 1992 the ANC withdrew from CODESA after the killing of its supporters at Boipatong by hostel dwellers, apparently aided by the police. However, in September of that year a further mass killing at Bisho (in the Ciskei) was followed by a resumption of the CODESA negotiations, lest the process break down completely. Crucially, the ANC conceded the formation of a Government of National Unity once national elections had been held. This reassured the NP that it would retain a measure of input into decision-making for the next five years. CODESA II culminated in agreement on a Interim Constitution, in which the NP support for federalism won out over the wishes of the ANC to concentrate power. However, it also led to the creation of an Independent Electoral Commission, which was placed beyond the control of De Klerk. In the run-up to the elections, a Transitional Executive Council was established to keep a check on the Cabinet. Finally, the design of the final constitution was to be delegated to the legislature which was elected in April 1994.[149]

The electoral stakes could not have been higher, but while there was many flaws in the execution, the polls passed off remarkably smoothly. For the vast majority of the population, this was the first time that they had ever voted, and the enthusiasm was palpable. Under the Interim Constitution, South Africa adopted a system of proportional representation, in which members were chosen from a party list rather than being elected from single-member constituencies. Simultaneous elections were held for the nine provincial legislatures and the National Assembly and Senate. As had been predicted, the ANC demonstrated its overwhelming popular appeal, winning 252 of the 400 seats in the National Assembly and control of seven provinces. By contrast, the PAC performed dismally, winning only five seats in the national legislature on the strength of 1.25 per cent of the vote. The NP emerged with 20.39 per cent of the national vote and control of the Western Cape, having successfully convinced Coloured voters that they would be the losers if a black government ran the province. Inkatha, which was only persuaded to participate at the last moment, won 10.54 per cent of the national vote, but control of

Kwazulu/Natal. The party of white liberals, the Democratic Party (DP) took only seven seats on the basis of 1.73 per cent of the vote, and was therefore excluded from the Government of National Unity. The right-wing Freedom Front managed a mere 2.17 per cent and was equally excluded. What was crucial was the margin of the ANC victory. Its 62.65 per cent share of the vote fell short of the two-thirds it would have needed to write the next constitution single-handedly. This meant that the ANC was forced to engage in dialogue with the other parties in drafting a document which did not eventually differ that much from the Interim Constitution.

On the back of the 1994 elections, Mandela was installed as President, while De Klerk became one of two Vice-Presidents. The Ministerial portfolios were distributed between the ANC, the NP and Inkatha as the only parties which had polled above 5 per cent. Although there were inevitable stresses, the Government of National Unity managed to transact its business in a consensual fashion. The political violence which had continued in the transition phase was brought under control and a new constitution was finalised at the end of 1996. This was a document with which all parties felt relatively happy, especially in its guarantees for individual rights and gender equality. The importance which was attached to judicial independence was underscored by the submission of the draft constitution to the Constitutional Court for approval. The latter in fact insisted on certain modifications, which had to be inserted.[150] After the adoption of the new constitution, the NP withdrew from the government, with a view to plotting its success at the next set of elections scheduled for 1999.

After 1994, the ANC appeared somewhat vulnerable for two main reasons. On the one hand, there were signs of division within the party at both the provincial and national levels. One ANC Minister, Bantu Holomisa, broke away after coming off second best in a private vendetta with Stella Sigacu, who he had once overthrown in a coup when she was Transkeian Prime Minister. Holomisa, who had a solid constituency within the party, joined Roelf Meyer (formerly of the NP) in creating the United Democratic Movement (UDM) which targeted corruption in government. Mandela's furtherance of the Presidential ambitions of Thabo Mbeki was also a source of internal discord. On the other hand, the ANC was unable to satisfy the aspirations of its popular constituency. In 1994, the government had launched the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which envisaged the injection of large sums of money into education, housing, land redistribution and other programmes designed to mitigate the legacy of apartheid. However, the leadership quickly realised that it lacked the resources to embark on such an ambitious programme. If it sought to make the business community pay for social improvement, there was every chance that capital would simply pull out. In 1996, the RDP was therefore subsumed by the Growth, Redeployment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. Whereas the RDP had been interventionist in tone, GEAR was premised on the attraction of foreign capital which would promote faster growth and thereby generate both jobs and the resources needed to pay for social amenities. The problem was that the trickle-down was painfully slow. One study estimated in 1998 that unemployment stood at around 24 per cent, and predicted that it would hit 40 per cent in ten years unless GEAR hit its target

of 6 per cent growth per annum.[151] The problem was that GEAR consistently fell below those rates. Black South Africa continued, therefore, to be faced with massive unemployment, inadequate housing and a lack of basic amenities. To compound the malaise, a crime wave (born in part out of poverty) made the lives of urban dwellers a daily misery.

The adoption of neo-liberal policies placed the relationship between the ANC and its historic allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the 'civics', under some strain.[152] However, an even greater worry was that voters would shop elsewhere or, more likely, not to turn out to vote at all. In fact, in 1999 the ANC increased its share of the national vote to 66.35 per cent, while the New National Party (NNP) slid back to 6.87 per cent, polling fewer votes than the DP on 9.56 per cent. However, the share of the population who voted was substantially smaller. It has been estimated that perhaps as many as 91 per cent of adults voted in 1994, but only 60 per cent did so five years later.[153] Admittedly, on this occasion voters had to make the effort to register, but still this lower turnout arguably reflected a growing sense of disenchantment with politics.

9.3 Conclusion

In a sense, South Africa was not so unlike the rest of Africa after all. In countries like Ghana and Senegal, where the opportunity to change governments by the ballot box had been seized with alacrity, the stark reality was that the victors were almost bound to disappoint their constituencies because they lacked the resources to deliver jobs and basic amenities. For that reason, the question of democracy became inseparable from the reality of Africa's marginalised position in the international division of labour. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was launched on the initiative of the new democrats – Thabo Mbeki, Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdoulaye Wade – was an attempt to link democracy to ambitious plans for continental economic renewal along broadly neo-liberal lines. In this, it enjoyed the support of the African Union, which replaced the OAU. Under NEPAD arrangements, African leaders were expected to police their own adherence to democratic norms through the African Peer Review Mechanism. Whether leaders would feel bound by the opinion of their colleagues, and whether moral pressure alone would suffice to significantly modify the behaviour of rogue Presidents and Generals, remained open questions at the end of 2003. As far as the West was concerned, there was no sign that the politics of self-interest was going to give way to something more altruistic. In 2003, the administration of George W. Bush courted a number of governments in Africa with extremely poor track records, such as Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea, with a view to protecting American oil interests. The imperative was to find an alternative to Middle Eastern oil which was potentially at risk from so-called Muslim fundamentalism. Across Africa, oil was negatively correlated with 'good governance' and there was nothing in the Bush overtures to suggest that the latest oil bonanza was going to lead to anything significantly better.