DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND NEW DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

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Preamble

Hardly ten years after independence Africa experienced a continuing and deepening crisis of democracy. This was signaled by a series of military coups in 1969 after visible signs of tension in the mid-sixties between civilian and military leaders in some African countries. The generals accused political leaders of corruption and economic mismanagement. They actually spoke on behalf of the people and promised to rid the system of such malpractices, and solemnly promised to return the affected countries to civilian rule as soon as their surgical operations were completed. There was no immediate reason to doubt the sincerity of the then untainted men in uniform. Existentially, neither they nor the public had had any prior knowledge of the evils of absolute power in the new African states. Very quickly the generals discovered that military coups were the easiest and the fastest route to state power, the only economic good left in Africa. Thus, all promises to turn over power to civilian rule at the earliest possible time evaporated into thin air and coups became a recurrent phenomenon. This made it impossible to distinguish between the corrupt civilian presidents for life and military dictators for as long as it lasts. In this context the belated cynical move by the OAU to deny coup-makers any recognition should be seen more as a ploy by the civilian wing of African dictatorships to out-flank their military rivals than as any concern for democratisation on the continent. This is notwithstanding the fact that military regimes, compared to civilian governments, are prone to use directly and uninhibitedly what they know best i.e. naked force. Nonetheless, from the point of view of democracy what is of greater relevance is the fact that all dictatorships rely on illegitimate power and coercive methods. Therefore, depoliticisation of the political process under presidents for life and militarisation of politics under military dictators in Africa are tantamount to the same thing from the point of view of those who seek genuine democracy.

This having been said, it is important to warn that analytically it is not enough to heap blame and opprobrium on acknowledged villains or culprits but to comprehend at the deepest level possible why these palpable aberrations have become endemic in this forsaken land. All kinds of false explanations have been offered to account for autocratic tendencies, corruption, inefficiency and mismanagement among African leaders. These range from predispositions of chiefly institutions in Africa in which power is supposed to be personalised and arbitrary to unlimited access by chiefs to public resources and to venality and lack of ethics among modern African leaders. Such prejudicial suppositions overlook the fact that traditionally Europe was a land of corrupt absolute monarchs and predatory and callous feudal lords. Yet, these institutions were superseded by liberal democracy in Europe under changed socio-economic conditions. In contrast, in Africa where plenty of egalitarian traditional societies and representative political institutions existed liberal democracy never took root. Attempts to adopt liberal democracy after independence succeeded only in producing one-party dictatorships under a veneer of European bureaucratic structures and procedures. Thus, the outcome was neither African nor European. This legacy has plagued virtually all African countries and accounts for a great deal of what went wrong in the post-independence period.

Historical Antecedents

Reference has already been made to suppositions about autocratic/dictatorial rule being part of the African past or traditions. Anthropologically, this claim is at variance with facts. In so far as the African continent featured kingdoms, chiefdoms, uncentralised societies or the so-called "acephalous" societies, clan and lineage societies, there is no political mode that could be described as having been characteristic of its historical past. Therefore, dictatorships in modern Africa cannot in general be attributed to its historical past. Valid answers or historical antecedents have to be sought elsewhere. Prospects for this are very good because Africa has more than one past. While in reality there cannot be any clean break with pre-existing forms of social organisation, politically it is arguable that the present states in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding Ethiopia which fits in the Oriental model) are a derivation of the colonial state *par excellence*. Unlike in North Africa and the Middle East where there exists a prototype of an *Arab state* that manifests all the characteristics of "Oriental despotism" in the form of "the ruler", in sub-Saharan Africa there is no such a historical manifestation or phenomenon. The pervading form is the colonial prototype that is historically extrinsic to African societies. This is a commonplace observation but whose profound implications are only beginning to dawn on us as the continent is being plunged into an ever-deepening crisis of democracy.

Africans are accused of being fixated on colonialism and of blaming everything on it. The tedium notwithstanding, it is extremely difficult to ignore the pervasive impact of European colonialism on Africa. Furthermore, in mitigation it can be pointed out that it has been a mere 40 years since African peoples gained their independence from colonial powers. However, unfortunately for them, the successor to colonialism was not uhuru (freedom in ki-Swahili) but rather neo-coloinialism in which the new African leaders were partners, be it very junior ones. This testifies to two very important things. First, the inability of the African leaders to cut the imbilical cord from their former colonial masters is evidence of their lack of a viable alternative. This needs to be stressed because it was not all due to lack of will or resistance, as is shown by the militancy of such leaders as Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, Gamal Abdel Nassar, Ahmed Ben Bella, and Julius Nyerere immediately after independence culminating in the formation of the OAU and the production in subsequent years of such historic documents as The Lagos Plan of Action (1980) or the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (1989). If these gallant efforts represented an alternative, then the fact that they were easily swept aside is indicative of an enduring weakness in ex-colonial Africa. This takes us to our second point.

It can be asserted that Africa more than any Third World region got fully integrated into the metropolitan economies. This can be treated as a proof of its low defence capacity or permeability of its social formations. Compared to Asia, it got balkanised too easily because it did not have any prototypical state formation that might have afforded it maximum political resistance on a wide scale. Consequent to the destruction of the West African mercantile economies during the trans-Atlantic slavery, by the advent of colonialism Africa was in no position to withstand the capitalist onslaught on its economies. It became easy prey to colonial capitalism. This signifies two things, namely, that African economies literally became appendages of European economies and, accordingly, lost their internal dynamic i.e. they got totally subordinated and could not reproduce themselves. Therefore, the colonial political and economic heritage in African social formations runs deeper than most realise.

This objective and historically-determined condition leaves the African leaders with very few options. The first and the only viable options is to commit themselves to a thorough-going process of decolonising their societies, starting with the state and economy. The two are closely linked. The second and the easiest option is to maintain the status quo and try to find opportunities for self-aggrandisement within it. Needless to say, this is the option African leaders have chosen over the last 30 years or so. Contrary to popular belief on the left, in the short- to medium-term this is not an irrational choice, given the fact that African economies have been in decline since the end of the 1960s. Neo-colonial arrangements did not only seem to offer African economies a longer lease of life but also created ideal opportunities for African leaders to reproduce themselves. The temptation was great and certainly not unnatural.

However, like all attempts to get immediate gratification, implicit in it were grievous implications for the future. What started as an economic recession in Africa around 1969 had become a deepening economic crisis by 1979 that called for immediate intervention. It comes as no surprise that African governments were compelled to come up with The Lagos Plan of Action in 1980. The crusade by international agencies since 1976 for "poverty reduction" yielded ground to a dramatic intervention by the World Bank in the form of the Structural Adjustment Programmes that were presaged by the Berg Report under the banner of Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action (1981).

The upshot of this bold neo-imperialist intervention was the widely acknowledged "lost decade" of the 'eighties in Africa, which got subjected to a critical review from all quarters during the early 1990s, starting with the ECA alternative programme referred to above and reaching its apogee in a scholarly critique edited by Thandika Mkandawire and Charles Soludo, Our Continent, Our Future (1999). By the end of the 1980s Africa had hit rock bottom due to the pursuit of neo-colonial policies by its leaders. This is meant in both the subjective and the objective sense. The 1990s became like a coming-out ceremony. The people had had enough and the democratisation movement had started in earnest. The situation had become so dismal that even the military had by and large lost appetite for its futile coups and its leaders started looking for other avenues for scrambling out of the abyss. Africa was plagued by every crisis imaginable – crisis of democracy, economic crisis, political crisis, agricultural crisis, food crisis, and crisis of governance. There was actually nothing to aspire to even among the usual power-mongers. A pervasive air of despair had descended upon the continent, breeding what became known as "Afro- pessimism". The inevitable question that stared African thinkers in the face was: what went wrong? Indeed, what went wrong?

This takes us back to our basic proposition that the African state and economy are a continuation of the colonial state and economy and as such can deliver neither political democracy nor social democracy. This is a very serious indictment and cannot be made, without proffering at least credible evidence. For this to be accomplished would require an accurate characterisation of both the colonial and the neo-colonial African state. This is not meant as an analogy but as establishment of family continuity. In the 1960s the African state was described as "over-developed", in the 1970s as weak precisely because it was not entrenched in society, and in the 1980s and onwards as "non-existent" in the wake of the disintegration of what hitherto had been regarded as African "states". Although justifiable, these are merely contextual descriptions that fail to capture the essence of the African state. Instead, they make the African state look like a phantom with no fixed identity. The colonial state, as the term signifies, was a creation of the colonial powers for their purposes. As such, it exhibits specific characteristics that are not found in the metropolitan state. These are: (i) an imposition from outside i.e. ready-made and extrinsic to the society in which it exists; (ii) a

contrivance meant to administer not citizens but colonial peoples or natives i.e. to administer not subjects but objects; (iii) not accountable to those who are administered but to itself and ultimately to the metropolitan power; (iv) arbitrary use of power and lack of transparency; (v) highly extractive, especially with regard to the peasants; and (vi) disregard of all civil liberties in the colony.

All the above could be said of the neo-colonial African state. First, it was inherited ready-made from the departing colonial powers and remained extrinsic to the African society, despite change of personnel. Second, its bureaucracy maintained the same arrogance as the colonial bureaucracy and has it fixed in its mind that it is administering not subjects but objects. Third, it is accountable to itself and the president for life (an equivalent of the colonial power in the metropolis). Fourth, it excels in arbitrary use of power and does not believe in transparency. Fifth, it is highly extractive, especially with regard to peasant producers but, unlike the colonial state, it has no sense of accumulation or of changing ill-gotten state revenues into productive capital. Sixth, it is characterised by authoritarianism and callous disregard for civil liberties. If we take into consideration such deviations as rampant corruption among state officials, bureaucratic inefficiency, and economic mismanagement, we can legitimately reach the conclusion that the neo-colonial African state is a degenerate derivative or poor reproduction of the colonial state. This is nothing less than an African tragedy. Given the fact that Africa has no prototypical state model, then the question that has to be answered is whether or not the neo-colonial state in Africa can be democratised?

The State of the Arts

By the state of the arts here is meant simply current trends of thought and practices concerning the issue of democracy in Africa and prospects for democratisation. Since the 1970s there has been a continued preoccupation with the neo-colonial state in Africa and its negations among African scholars. With introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s and the conditionalities imposed on adjusting African countries by the World Bank and the IMF, the debate intensified. Topmost on the agenda was “democratisation” and “good governance”. Both terms were given currency by the World Bank and other international agencies. In fact, these were opportunistic intellectual interventions that sought to take advantage of the political and economic malaise in Africa. As has been mentioned, Africans had been concerned about the absence of democracy and gross mismanagement in their countries. But they did not necessarily conceptualise the problem in the terms of the Bretton Woods institutions. Their main concern was the betrayal by the neo-colonial state and its repressive nature. In the 1970s under the influence of the radical left there were insistent calls

for the "dismantling" of the colonial state. It was assumed by the protagonists that the antithesis of the colonial state was a socialist state. The rise of a few self-confessed "socialist" states in Africa seemed to give credence to this belief. But disillusionment comes fast and solid in Africa. The supposed African "socialist" states turned out to be as undemocratric and authoritarian as the rest. The radical left was bitterly disappointed and began to denounce these states in no uncertain terms and rightly so. But the point is that thereafter it had no self-evident alternative to the neo-colonial state. This had to be evolved more or less intuitively i.e. without any pre-conceived ideas but instead reacting to the exigencies of the African situation – not an unwelcome relief from the tyranny of received theories.

Reading in-between the lines, one would say that the turn of the tide nationally and internationally forced the African radical left to adopt a stance that approximates to what one may call radical or progressive nationalism. This is not surprising because the European socialist model had collapsed and the West imbued with a new sense of triumph was on the offence. Whether intended or not, Africa became one of the worst victims of the drive by the West towards uni-polarism and uni-economism . The African state was under heavy attack for the wrong reasons and African economies were being dismantled for imperialistic and ideological reasons under the neo-liberalism of the World Bank and the IMF. While critical of the neo-colonial state and African governments in general, African intellectuals felt obliged to defend the integrity and autonomy of the African state and the right to choose its own path of development. This is undoubtedly a nationalistic reflex that treats the confrontation with own governments as an internal affair. Also, this represented a gestalt-shift from the neo-colonial state *per se* to the actual failures and excesses of African governments. This found expression in popular pressures for "democratisation" and an end to economic mismanagement and corruption. This sounded like reformism rather than the "dismantling" of the neo-colonial state. Is there any significance in this change of perspective?

The significance of this change in perspective lies in the fact that it marked a shift from abstract thinking to more pragmatic thinking. In turn, this helped to narrow the gap between intellectual praxis and practice. Hence, intellectuals and popular forces got involved in the same kind of struggle, as is shown by the democratisation movement towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of 1990s. It had become apparent from the failure of the so-called socialist states in Africa that the issue was not so much the form of the state but its content. The latter refers in particular to the relationship between the state and civil society or the ruled i.e. the behaviour of the state towards its citizens. This harks back to the vexed question of "democracy", "governance", and the well-being of the citizenry. As would be recalled, according to our evaluation, what distinguished the colonial state were its deprivations. From this premise it was not too difficult to show that the African neo-colonial state made no effort to over-come these but instead intensified them for the benefit of the ruling elite. This kind of

behaviour cannot be attributed immediately to the form the state adopted for the same form served the European citizens well precisely because after many years of social struggles the state became subject to their will. In this sense liberal democracy, with all its shortcomings, is not an illusion but part of the evolution of the European state. Such things as separation of powers, representative government, the supremacy of parliament, rule of law, and an accountable bureaucracy are attributes that would go a long way in transforming the African neo-colonial state. But this will entail a sustained struggle as the only way by which African citizens could claim the state and stamp it with their own character. The battle is already enjoined and the negative attributes of the African neo-colonial state enumerated earlier are being strongly challenged. This has been the case since the end of the 1980s, notwithstanding some serious blunders that have been made by the leadership of the democratisation movement. Even these have to be studied carefully because they are not accidents but acts of volition inspired by the usual thirst for power. If fully understood, these deviations can be counteracted by adopting pre-emptive strategies in the course of the struggle for democracy itself. In other words, the concept of "democratisation" should be applied reflexively.

While philosophically we cannot say with certainty which comes first, form or substance, we can assert that the way in which the struggle is conducted against tyranny has a bearing on the outcome. So far the outcomes of the various attempts at democratisation in Africa have proved a failure because those at the helm used the same methods and stratagems as their yester opponents to guarantee power for themselves as soon as they had won state power. In other words, they usurped the popular forces that had made it possible for them to gain ascendancy. This is a sign that in Africa civil society has not yet been able to assimilate into itself the political society whose ultimate incarnation is the state. It is not as if this question had not been raised by some African scholars. But the problem is that there are no easy answers. It had been suggested by some that one way of entrenching the African state in society and of counteracting the colonial imposition would be to incorporate in the emerging democratic state traditional forms of governance such as chieftainship and village councils. This is an interesting idea but, as experience shows from the only democratic state in Africa, Botswana, it is not easy to implement for various reasons. First, the desire of the state to be always in control is ever-present. Even more important than this is the fact that the history of traditional authorities under colonial rule is too varied to allow any consistent approach to them. Their own role after independence is not unproblematic. For instance, in southern Africa chiefs were used by succeeding colonial governments against the people and consequently peasant rebellions against them became part of the struggle against colonial rule and white minority rule. In South Africa and Namibia they were made to preside over the hated Bantustans. Those who refused to collaborate were either demoted or exiled. Thus, the institution of chieftainship was destroyed or discredited in the region. For these reasons, the black nationalists treated the chiefs with

justifiable hostility. In South Africa, to add insult to injury, virtually all the Bantustan leaders sided with the enemy during the critical negotiations between the ANC and the apartheid regime. This more or less sealed their fate in a free and democratic South Africa. This is notwithstanding the fact that recently there have been some opportunistic demands by the chiefs that they be rehabilitated. Bureaucratically, this could be done. But if the peasants had any say in it, they would veto it because they know from experience that the only reason why the chiefs wish to be re-instated is to control distribution of land and not the people themselves. So, it could be said that the discredited South African chiefs represent nobody but themselves. This is not what is meant by democracy.

Elsewhere in Africa, particularly in West Africa, though used indirectly by the colonial government, the chiefs did not get degraded as much as in southern Africa. They still command respect among their subjects and, indeed, some of them joined the national political parties in their own right and became national heroes. In the circumstances there are no reasonable grounds why the institutions they represent could not be part of a more pluralistic democratic structure. Needless to say, this would depend on how egalitarian they are. For instance, it would be very difficult to embrace the Northern Nigerian emirates in the name of democracy nor the stratified kingdoms of the Great Lakes. It is interesting to note that the political formations alluded to became a problem of democracy and national integration after independence. Therefore, it would be contradictory to oppose the autocratic African neo-colonial state only to exempt local or traditional autocracies. Local political structures must be democratised as well. The only way this problem could be broached is to think of democratisation of local political institutions as part of the decentralisation of the modern African state. The unitary structure has proved to be unsuited to African socio-cultural conditions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should do away with the idea of the state in Africa. The state is still potentially the most important single actor in the political and economic arena in Africa, especially under the threat of globalisation. Therefore, the problem is how to reconcile democratic pluralism with the integrity of the state, however defined.

The insistence by international agencies such as the World Bank to have an attenuated African state and "deregulated" African economies should be seen as part of the strategy to expose the economies of the developing countries to the ravages of "globalisation". As the history and current practice of the developed countries shows, states can and do play an important role in protecting their national economies against critical external economies. But it is only neophytes such as George Bush who are naïve enough to make this apparent by constantly referring to what he calls "the national interest". It is very revealing that the neo-colonial African state has no such a concept. Consequently, we know of no African leaders who adopt a militant stand in "the national interest" but none misses the opportunity to speak sternly on the TV or in public rallies in the interest of his government. It transpires, therefore,

that the state/government is not concerned with the national question but rather with individual interests and its own survival. It is precisely this lack of a notion of public interest that makes the neo-colonial African state unserviceable and unviable. It is in recognition of this parlous state of affairs and in opposition to the Washington consensus that African intellectuals are advocating the establishment of a "democratic developmental African state". This might not be the most elegant coinage but it successfully encapsulates the two cardinal points it is meant to, namely, the question of democracy and the active involvement of the state in national development. These demands represent a considered position against both the neo-colonial state and the new western neo-liberalism. As far as the latter is concerned, they signify a growing new pan-Africanist nationalism against "globalisation" or the new imperialism led by the Americans and implemented by the World Bank and the IMF. This should not be surprising because the antidote to "globalisation" is *regional nationalism*, which technically could be construed as *regional integration.* It is important not to confuse this with rejection of foreign aid *per se* but of all forms of external imposition. However, this position cannot be sustained, without a full commitment to the principle of *self-reliance.*

The New Democracy

The way human beings see themselves from one epoch to another changes and so does their sense of their rights and entitlements. Traditional democracies such as liberal democracy and its Social Democratic variant have held sway for a very long time. This is so much so that liberal democracy in particular has come to be treated as universally valid and everlasting. Yet, the emergence of the concept of "neo-liberalism" is indicative of the need to revise classical notions of liberal democracy. For instance, while liberal democracy upholds the principle of equality of all citizens in front of the law, it does not address the question of social equity. Accordingly, it is unable to deal with some of the major issues that have come to haunt contemporary society such as increasing poverty globally and intolerable social injustice within nations and among nations. Indeed, it is highly handicapped because the theory of laissez-faire on which it is founded obliges it to accept such phenomena as poverty and social inequality among citizens and nations as a natural outcome of the right of the individual to choose. Philosophically, it is precisely this that is being challenged in a world in which the fate of individuals and nations is determined by pre-existing economic and power structures that are rigidly maintained by the privileged. This has reached a point where the powerful believe that they have the moral right to use force nationally and internationally in the name of "law and order" or in defence of liberal democracy or "western values". It is obvious that in the modern world liberal democracy cannot satisfy the emerging political and economic demands that are a

result of new forms of social awareness. It is no accident that nowadays the defenders of the status quo can hardly find a place to meet anywhere in the world. Wherever they go, they are literally followed by hundreds and thousands of protestors. It would seem that the old order has to yield a place to change not only nationally but also internationally.

In the past many predictions had been made about what the change will be e.g. "socialism" which, though not theoretically unsound, floundered primarily because it put the cart before the horse. From hindsight, it appears that it is people that determine the rate and, above all, the success of any major social change. If left out or far behind, failure is almost guaranteed. This is not to deny the advanced elements in society the right to take the initiative. But they have to recognise the fact that they are the trigger and not the gun. This has been said before but it does not appear that it has been taken with the seriousness it deserves. Therefore, in proposing a new democracy a new approach should be adopted. First, the sovereignty of the people should be recognised as both a basic necessity and a fundamental right. Second, social justice, not simply formal rights, should constitute the foundation of the new democracy. Third, the livelihood of the citizens should not be contingent on ownership of property but on equitable access to productive resources. It is incongruous that under liberal democracy citizens belong collectively to the same territory but a selected few has access or a right to its resources. This argument could be extended to the global system where some nations own resources outside their territory to the detriment of the inhabitants. In the modern age and under "globalisation" it is apparent that territorial boundaries are an excuse for control and monopolisation of resources by the privileged and the powerful. For instance, there is a continued plunder of resources by the developed countries well beyond their borders and yet they reserve the right to shut out the victims of their centuries-old exploitation of overseas territories. Could there be a worse form of global injustice?

For the last two decades African scholars have debated back and forth the question of democracy in Africa, without breaking any new ground. In all probability the reason for this is that the issue got reduced to accepting liberal democracy or rejecting it for its inadequacies. Those who accepted liberal democracy used an minimalist argument, namely, that it is "better than nothing" or it is the "best thing we have". On reflection this was an unconscious admission by those who so spoke that though born under a different sky they could not think differently or creatively. Likewise, in the wake of the collapse of Eastern European "socialism" their antagonists were left bereft of an alternative. The most the die-hards among them could do was to repeat the same old slogans. This was of no avail in a period of disillusionment. This was a time for rethinking and reformulating old concepts. Interestingly enough, the right in the West saw the opportunity very clearly and took advantage of it. This is confirmed by the introduction of such concepts as "structural adjustment", "liberalisation", "deregulation", "democratisation", "good governance", "human rights", "poverty reduction", "globalisation"

etc., etc. These proved to be a great detraction to African intellectuals because, instead of setting their own agenda for deconstructing old paradigms and replacing them with new ones, they were obliged to take off time to debunk these western concepts and suppositions. The debate on the Structural Adjustment Programmes alone took more than a decade. Similarly, the World Bank's idea of "democracy" and "good governance" has preoccupied African scholars and research organisations such as CODESRIA, AAPS, OSSREA, and DPMF since the mid-1980s and continues to be in vogue, as is shown by the auspices under which this very paper is written. Yet, no real clarity has been reached besides rebutting some of the neo-liberal suppositions of the World Bank. This need not be the case, as will be shown presently.

The idea of The New Democracy proposed above might help to break the impasse in which the African scholars find themselves. It might also give them a respite for re-tooling because it requires reflection and thinking afresh. It is not definitional but rather suggestive in that it provides possible lines of departure. As has already been stated, these are: recognition of the sovereignty of the people, social justice as against juridical notions of justice under liberal democracy, and social equity i.e. access to productive resources that is not contingent on the bourgeois notion of ownership of property. This is a very important point to raise because the African concept of property is radically different from that of the West in that it is social and not individualistic. This has led to divergent views about prospects for development in Africa. The conventional European view among both bourgeois and Marxist scholars is that development of private property, especially in land, is a necessary condition for development in Africa. This submission has proved impossible to clarify because during the 1950s and the 1960s agriculture flourished in Africa, without privatisation of land. One has to think of the renowned cocoa-farmers in Ghana, Polly Hill's "migrant capitalist farmers", the coffee-producers in Bugisu and in Kilimanjaro, the grain growers in Sukumaland, the cotton-producers in the Gezira Scheme in Sudan, the ground-nut producers in Senegal, the famous maize growers in Zambia, and the general agricultural expansion among middle peasants in many African countries. These pioneers were referred to as "progressive" or "commercial" farmers by colonial agricultural officers, despite their own predispositions. After independence they were referred to disapprovingly by Marxists as "agrarian capitalists" or "kulaks", which was a mistake because their emergence did not entail expropriation or direct exploitation of the small producers (except in Malawi and to some extent in Kenya). Looking farther afield, it is instructive to remember that the agricultural revolution in Japan after the Meiji Revolution took place on *family plots.* Finally, accumulation for industrialisation in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and among Chinese immigrants in Malaysia and in Indonesia was accounted for by strong family ties that transcend space.

Apart from lingering Eurocentrism, one suspects that the confusion stems from the use of the term, "private". In the African context it is used in opposition to "collective" or

"communal" property that is believed to be a peculiar attribute of African production systems. This is a gross misconception. "Social" is not incompatible with exclusive rights in relation to its object of appropriation. Corporate groups such as lineages and production units such as households in Africa have exclusive rights to what has been allocated to them and what they have accumulated over time. But no individual has the right to exclude others from what is a common endowment within given kinship groups. This does not mean that there is no inequality in this social milieu. There are differences in endowment and rates of accumulation among various kinship groups and households. These are indicative of the potential for social differentiation or actual class-formation in African societies. However, this is apart from the fact that so far there is no empirical evidence to prove that African systems of social organisation necessarily constitute a barrier to accumulation and economic expansion. This is unmistakably a Eurocentric presupposition. In the past African producers have shown themselves to be very responsive to the opportunities offered by the capitalist market but reserve the right to use their own modes of social organisation. Afterall, this is their democratic right. In the current crisis it is not certain whether they are *demand-constrained* or *supply-constrained*. The World Bank brazenly tried to impose the western model, which as mentioned earlier was consciously rejected by the Japanese capitalist aspirant government, without prior investigation. It failed dismally. If it had consulted the majority of the producers, it might have discovered that there is a number of factors that constrain African agricultural producers and that there is more than one path to development. In passing one cannot help surmising that the Chinese withstood the onslaught from the West after the collapse of Eastern European socialism precisely because they have retained some of their indigenous modes of social organisation. Their country is now destined to become the world's biggest economy in the next few years. In contrast, the copycat Russians were completely devastated because they had nothing intrinsic to fall back upon. The Africans should take note and insist on their right to choose as part of their struggle for genuine democracy.

However, it has to be acknowledged that as far as mobilisation of resources and use of value are concerned Africans are far behind not because they are socially-inclined but because they are technically disadvantaged. The importance of this fact should not be minimised by supposing that Africans do not want development, as some cranks are inclined to think. It is in this context that the idea of a "democratic developmental state" assumes great significance. In spite of what the World Bank thinks, there is no virtue in waiting for individual entrepreneurs to emerge on their own in Africa. A people-centred state can play a leading role in the development of human capital and in intensifying technical factors in production. In an age where protection of the environment has become a major issue, it is desirable that governments and regional organisations take an active interest in developing appropriate technologies in order to augment the labour productivity of the majority of the producers, without causing any

damage to the environment. It is worth noting that private corporations through greed and avarice have been the worst offenders regarding the latter, despite their vaunted technical capabilities. At the beginning this was certainly unintended effects. But since then so much scientific information on the subject has been accumulated that they have no excuse, except their selfish interests. If so, why should the future of the world and humanity be left to self-centred private corporations? We know the damage they have caused to the rain forests, the great European rivers, the oceans, and the stratosphere. Only a narrow-minded president such as George Bush thinks that addressing such burning social issues is "against the national interest". But we all live on the same planet and as such it is our democratic right to be protected from the hazards of pollution and degradation of the environment by responsible governments all over the world.

Democratic Governance

The debate on governance in Africa started off as a debate on "good governance", a concept first introduced by the World Bank as a response to what was seen as gross mismanagement by African governments. It is obvious that the concerns of the World Bank were more technocratic than social. For the success of its Structural Adjustment Programmes it needed efficient, transparent, and uncorrupt African governments. It did not want a radical transformation of African governments but rather conformist ones. At the same time, in a changed political climate it did not wish to appear to be supporting dictatorships in Africa as it did before, including such notorious dictators as Mobuto and Banda. Bill Clinton endorsed this change of tag during his African tour when he declared, as a great act of contrition, "we were wrong". Nonetheless, the position of the World Bank remained utterly contradictory. While, on the one hand, it called for democracy and good governance, it fought running battles with governments that were supposed to be democratising in Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, and Ghana. On the other hand, while demanding that African states take a back seat in development, it wanted "strong states" or authoritarian governments to implement its unpopular programmes. Thus, it could be charged that the World Bank's concept of "good governance" had undemocratic connotations and that the World Bank itself was far from being democratic in dealing with African governments. Furthermore, it ignored completely the needs of African small producers, a view that was confirmed by the Khartoum Declaration (1988) that called for development with a "human face". It is, therefore, not surprising that African intellectuals became critical of the World Bank's concept of "good governance" and ultimately rejected it.

However, it is fair to point out that the journey was long and tedious. At first African scholars wanted to re-define the concept of "good governance" so as to overcome the

unacceptable connotations in the World Bank's definition. Their aim was to make it more social by linking it directly to the question of democracy and popular participation. The intention was good but the mechanics for realising it not so easy because use of the same terminology would obscure the underlying differences. After a great deal of mental gyrations, as is revealed by CODESRIA, OSSREA, AAPS, and DPMF publications, some scholars retreated into a generic position by positing that governance was one thing but could there be "bad governance" as against "good governance"? The verdict was that there could be no such a thing as "bad governance"; bad governance is no governance. It seemed that we were stuck with "good governance" until very recently in a workshop organised by OSSRIA where the participants agreed to settle for "democratic governance". The argument was that there could be "good governance" in the sense of the World Bank, without democracy. Shortly after Museveni's revolution in Uganda and Rawlings' coup d'etat in Ghana both countries seemed to enjoy "good governance". But it would be unreasonable to suggest that it was democratic. It did not take long for this to become evident. There are historical examples such as Germany after unification and Japan after the Meiji Revolution where "good governance" prevailed during the drive towards industrialisation but no democracy to talk of. What emerges, therefore, is that "democratic governance" implies, over and above technical efficiency and probity, regular interaction between government and civil society and free participation by the latter through its institutions and popular organs. In turn, this presupposes that democracy prevails in general.

Social Democracy

The concept of "social democracy" was introduced by Marxists and Social Democrats during the latter half of the 19th century, as a critique of liberal democracy. It was argued that liberal democracy grants direct producers only formal democracy and not the substance of democracy, namely, social equity. For the Marxists, this had already been laid out in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* written by Marx and Engels in 1847-48 and published in 1850. It became part of the socialist programme that advocated social ownership of the means of production and the dictatorship of the proletariat or the direct producers. But, significantly enough, Marx and Engels avoided using the term "socialist" because: "In 1848 two kinds of people were considered Socialists. On the one hand were the adherents of the various utopian systems…… On the other, the manifold types of quacks who wanted to eliminate social abuses through their various universal panaceas and all kinds of patchwork, without hurting capital and profit in the least" (Engels, 1890). The people Engels was castigating became Social Democrats and gained respectability, especially in-between the two World Wars. After the

1917 revolution in Russia not only did they distance themselves from the Communist Parties but became out-rightly anti-communist. Thus, we now have in Western Europe "socialists" (adherents of the former Labour Parties) who are in every way part of the capitalist orthodoxy. Former Eastern European communists are following suit, without paying attention to the negative impact this has on their emerging societies. This is probably of no interest to Africans but it is brought up here to show how the concept of "social democracy" has come to have ambiguous connotations and is treated with suspicion by both the right and the left for different reasons. The prejudice against it is strongest in the Anglo-Saxon world where social democracy has never been seen as an issue (except by the Fabians). In continental Europe this is not the case. Struggles there for social democracy led to the institution of the welfare state and consequent elimination or reduction of poverty in north-western Europe. Whether intended or not, this had the effect of blunting the cutting edge of the communist movement and bred petty-reformism. Consequently, since the demise of Eastern European communism the Christian Democrats or conservatives in Western Europe have found it expedient to downgrade the welfare state. Is this a cause for jubilation or regret among those on the left? These questions have not been properly addressed in the various African debates. As a result, we do not know exactly where we stand.

It is obvious that Africa, with its very low level of labour productivity, cannot aspire to any kind of welfarism. Second, given its own past and a combination of objective factors both internal and external, Africa cannot hope for a socialist transformation in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, it is evident that the capitalist model of accumulation will prevail globally for yet some time. The rise of something called "market socialism" in countries such as China, Viet Nam and, possibly, Cuba after Castro is symptomatic. In the interim or transitional period what are the real chances for Africa? The need for a new democracy is self-evident and does not immediately commit African countries to any particular model of accumulation but to freedom and equity. It is the latter that the concept of "social democracy" is meant to address. But the quintessential question is: need it have reformist connotations in the African context? We are here entering a treacherous terrain because if the answer is "No", then, whether wittingly or unwittingly, we are bound to commit that cardinal sin, abandonment of universalism in favour of relative theory or particularism. Even so, we cannot ignore the fact that an unevenly developed world might predicate different solutions for different regions at different historical junctures. Apart from the fact that at the moment the mood in Africa is more nationalistic than universalistic, on the whole Africans are still faced with a basic question of *ugali nanyama/matoke nanyama/fufu* with relish ("bread and butter" freely translated). For instance, it would be very difficult to convince the multitudes of poor blacks in South Africa that there is a superior universal order they should wait for before their present plight is dealt

with. They want social justice and social democracy now. If this could be achieved in the short-run rather than in the long-run, which is indefinite, why not?

It seems, therefore, there is a case to be made for "social democracy" in Africa. In practice this would mean, over and above the civil liberties ushered by liberal democracy, that citizens by virtue of belonging will be entitled to decent livelihood and access to productive resources. The latter need not be construed as "private property" in the bourgeois sense. The producers should have the right to choose between different forms of social organisation for production. These demands are thoroughly consistent with the idea of a new democracy espoused earlier but they do not exhaust its field of reference. As such, "social democracy" can be subsumed under the "New Democracy". While the former cannot be used as a basis for national liberation, the latter can. Once again, this confronts us with another awkward question. In our circumstances, would this constitute a radical departure from what came to be popularly known as "independence" or a continuation of an unfinished revolution? In his inauguration as the President of the ANC, Thabo Mbeki proclaimed that in South Africa "the revolution is as yet incomplete". After the recent reversals in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Zambia or upheavals in Zimbabwe, the same could be said. In the next round, what is it going to be? What is to be done or can be done under the determinate conditions in Africa? I believe that the idea of a new democracy provides the best orientation to the next round. Africa is pregnant with new meanings but its problem is agency.