The Relationship between Political and Economic Reform in Africa

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More than thirty African countries are now attempting simultaneously to liberalize their political systems and reinvigorate their economies with stabilization and structural adjustment programs. The classic question of the ability of democratic forms of government to sustain economic reform has therefore taken on new urgency in sub-Saharan Africa. However, analyses of the relationship between regime type and economic management have not been very illuminating. In particular, many have tried to understand the relationship between democracy and economic growth across a very broad range of countries instead of focusing on the specific problems faced by African countries that are trying to democratize.

In this paper we identify the salient features of African political systems and economies that are relevant in understanding the relationship between regime type and economic performance. By examining a set of countries that have much in common (poverty, recent independence, few institutionalized democratic practices), we hope to make more useful generalizations about the interaction between economic and political reform.[1] We conclude that the simultaneous pursuit of economic and political reform in Africa will be even more difficult than in most other regions of the world. Indeed, many of the factors that normally might promote the viability of simultaneous change are missing in Africa.

The Confusion over Regime Type and Economic Performance

There are two constellations of thought regarding political liberalization and economic performance. One tendency suggests that, broadly, all good things go together: democracy and economic liberalization are mutually interdependent processes. Certainly, this view has been prevalent among aid donors who increasingly demand both economic reform and political openings. For instance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) notes that its programs in Africa "support the fundamentals of economic and political democracy—the convergence of good governance and democracy."[2] The prudent economic management of many Latin American democracies has bolstered the case of those who argue that developing countries do not face a "cruel choice" between economic growth and democracy.[3] Indeed, *The Economist* argues that, "far from inhibiting growth, democracy promotes it," because leaders are forced to worry about their citizens' prospects.[4] Many thus hope that Africa will develop, in Richard Sklar's now famous words, "a developmental democracy, a democracy without tears."[5]

However, others have argued, especially in the light of the economic success of authoritarian countries in East Asia, that democracy's greater responsiveness to popular demands is nearly a prescription for irresponsible economic policies. For instance, former Singapore prime minister Lee Kuan Yew has suggested that

> [the Philippines] had democracy from the word go in 1945. They never got going; it was too chaotic. It became a parlour game—who takes power, then who gets what spoils. Or take India and Ceylon. For the first three elections after independence, they went through the mechanics of democracy. But the lack of discipline made growth slow and sluggish.[6]

Similarly, Meddi Mugyeni argues that "electability is not the same as capability in handling public policy and management. . . . Elected politicians tend to be populist, but development decision-making tends to be technical."[7]

The empirical evidence on the relationship between regime type and economic performance does not unambiguously support either view. Summarizing recent studies, Adam Przeworski writes:

> The statistical evidence is inconclusive, and the studies that produced it are seriously flawed. Among [the studies reviewed], eight found in favor of democracy, and eight in favor of authoritarianism; the other four discovered no difference. . . . Hence I am not suggesting that democracy generates inferior economic performance—only that we still do not know what the facts are.[8]

A serious problem is the great variation within regime types. When both Great Britain and Malaysia are democracies and both Zaire and Singapore are authoritarian regimes, the labels do not mean very much. Similarly, the economic problems faced by governments as they liberalize are different in Ghana, where per capita income is $450, and South Korea, with a per capita income of $6,790; a universal judgment about the comparative advantages of democratic economic management is thus difficult to render.[9] Indeed, it is unlikely that in the short to medium term we will be able to observe strong correlations between political liberalization and economic outcomes. It is more probable that time lags, exogenous factors, and differentiation among liberalizing countries will produce a picture that is as varied and statistically weak as the results generated by analyses of regime type and economic performance in the past. Therefore, it will be more profitable in the short and medium terms to examine the decision-making processes of economic reform and the place of economic policy debates within the framework of liberalizing versus nonliberalizing systems than to focus on performance outcomes.[10]

For Africa, reference to other countries is also misleading because the debate over regime type has taken place between established democracies and authoritarian regimes. For instance, Atul Kohli examines the performance of long-standing democracies such as India, Malaysia, and Costa Rica to argue that democracies do not perform worse than authoritarian regimes.[11] However, African countries are not well-established democracies; they are instead struggling to undertake some sort of liberalization. Under Huntington's tough definition of democracy—two electoral transfers of power—only three African countries (Mauritius, Niger, and São Tomé and Principe) can be termed "democracies" (see Table 1). Only Mauritius experienced an electoral transfer of power before 1989. All of the other countries in Africa that are undertaking political reform are still in various stages of liberalization, ranging from one free and fair election that resulted in a transfer of power to initial political openings that have not yet led to true political contestation.

To date, the old order in Africa, characterized by authoritarian one person rule,

Table 1 Status of Political Liberalizations in Africa (June 1995)

Multi-Party Democracies (Two transfers of power via elections)	Multi-Party Elections but no Transfer of Power	No Multiparty Elections
Mauritius (*)	Angola	Chad
Niger	Botswana	Eritrea
São Tomé and Principe	Burkina Faso	Gambia
	Cameroon	Liberia
(*) Pre-1989 transition	Comoros	Nigeria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Rwanda
One Transfer of Power via Election	Djibouti	Sierra Leone
	Equatorial Guinea	Somalia
Benin	Ethiopia	Sudan
Burundi	Gabon	Swaziland
Cape Verde	Ghana	Tanzania
Central African Republic	Guinea	Uganda
Congo	Guinea-Bissau	Zaire
Lesotho	Kenya	
Madagascar	Mauritania	
Malawi	Mozambique	
Mali	Namibia	
Zambia	Senegal	Source: Kenneth Jost, "Democracy in Africa," CQ Researcher, 5 (March 24, 1995), 256-7.
	Seychelles	
	Togo	
	Zimbabwe	

has fallen. At least some African populations no longer acquiesce in the stifling of political life that so many countries have experienced since independence. Further, the international community increasingly rewards those who liberalize their political systems. As a result, numerous long-time autocrats have been thrown out of office, and many political systems are in flux.

The wave of political unrest sweeping across Africa makes it tempting to believe that politics in Africa has changed so fundamentally that a reversion to military or authoritarian rule by a large number of countries is simply unthinkable, especially when the rest of the world is also moving towards greater political liberalization. However, Europe did not experience a linear movement towards democracy but rather halting progress characterized by frequent failures and reversals. It is sobering to remember that between 1954 and 1961 the military disengaged itself from politics in eleven Latin American countries. Some claimed that politics had changed forever. However, in the mid 1960s a "tidal wave" of coups hit the continent.[12] In appreciating recent changes in Africa, it is crucial to note what has not changed. Political liberalization and economic transformation need to intersect with the reformation of armies and civilian bureaucracies. This reformation will entail reduction of their size, more efficient operation, diminished corruption, and improved public safety and provision of services. But these changes, crucial to the prospects for economic development, have barely begun. The courts, police, regulator agencies, and provision of public goods have not been adequately institutionalized since independence.

The current attempts at political openness in Africa should be seen as the beginning of an extraordinarily complex process that will give rise in the future to a few clear successes, some disasters, and many examples of countries beginning the struggle to design political systems appropriate to their local circumstances. African countries are and will probably remain for several decades in a gray area where the old authoritarianism has been rejected but democracy is not institutionalized.

The tentative nature of African transitions to democracy is demonstrated by the fate of countries that have actually transferred power through an election (see Table 1). In Burundi, President Melchior Ndadaye and several senior officials were killed in an attempted coup. In Lesotho, Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle was deposed and then reinstated by King Letsie III. Congo also experienced sustained violence when the opposition refused to accept the election of President Pascal Lissouba and his party. In Zambia, President Frederick Chiluba declared a state of emergency because he feared a coup d'état by elements of the old regime. Niger was paralyzed for five months because President Mahamane Ousmane (himself an elected president) refused to appoint a member of the opposition as prime minister after his own coalition collapsed. The Nigerian military annulled the election of Chief Moshood Abiola as president. The international community has declared that elections in several countries, including Cameroon, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, and Mauritania, were not free and fair. The losers in some elections, for example, in Ghana and Kenya, have declared boycotts of parliament, while many others have declared their lack of faith in the official election results because they believed the elections were tainted by fraud.

Given the indeterminate nature of most African political transitions, the usefulness of the traditional dichotomous classification of countries into democratic or authoritarian that is central to the overall debate about regime type and economic performance is unclear. President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana noted in his first interview after achieving civilian office that only one thing would change from his days as head of a military government: he would no longer have to worry about whether to wear a suit or khaki.[13] It is thus imperative to capture the particular circumstances of Africa's liberalization in order to understand the fate of political and economic management.

Salient Characteristics of Africa during Reform

Political liberalization varies considerably across Africa. The categories in Table 1 only partially capture the complexity of the countries' transitions. For instance, in both Ivory Coast and Ghana incumbents controlled the process and were returned to power, while in Benin, Congo, Malawi, Zambia, and several other countries leaders were forced to hold elections and lost. However, although African countries may be at different stages of transition, their political liberalization has some common elements.

Lack of Explicit Class Conflict Sir W. Arthur W. Lewis noted in his study of West African politics almost thirty years ago that because of the lack of class differentiation in African societies ideological debates that were based on class conflict elsewhere in the world were irrelevant to Africa.[14] Parties were little more than coalitions, often organized around ethnic identity, that sought to capture the state machinery in order to distribute rewards to leaders and followers.[15] Observers of African elections during the 1960s and 1970s repeatedly noted that political contests did not focus on economic issues or ideology. Rather, as in the case of Ghana, "appeals to the voters frequently centered on where contestants came from and what they had to offer."[16]

Given the lack of economic growth and class development in Africa over the past fifteen years, it is hardly surprising that the current wave of political liberalization follows a similar pattern. Since class still is not a salient cleavage in most Africa countries, the ideological organization of parties and associations is highly fluid, and the major issues are still not well-defined. Mali, where forty-seven parties initially registered for elections, and Zaire, with two hundred parties, highlight the lack of clearly defined bases of political organization in civil society, except perhaps around ethnicity.[17] Even in Zambia, where copper miners have an unusually powerful union, Frederick Chiluba created the tellingly named Movement for Multi-Party Democracy to unite everyone opposed to then-president Kenneth Kaunda under a broad tent rather than run as a candidate of the working class.

Observers of elections in Ethiopia in 1992, Ghana in 1992, and Madagascar in 1993, among others, have noted no real debate over issues. According to the National Democratic Institute's report on the 1993 elections in Niger, "support for political parties, in general, depended more on geographic location and ethnic affinity than on political platforms."[18]

General Weakness of Civil Society In the face of the obvious weaknesses of parties, many observers of African politics have pinned their hopes on civil society to promote democracy in Africa. For instance, Naomi Chazan has argued:

> What distinguishes associational life in Africa is its diversity, vitality, and centrality in organizing social relations. . . . These formations have served as the vehicles for community self-preservation and sometimes as frameworks for growth away from the state. In many respects, the vibrancy of associational arrangements in Africa has been the most potent obstacle to authoritarianism.

Presumably through associational groupings, Chazan claims, many Africans have "conducted an unremitting quest for democratic rule."[19] Bates goes much further and argues that there is a powerful class impulse behind the democratic opposition to authoritarian regimes. In particular, he ties (with little evidence) much of the movement for political reform to members of the middle class such as lawyers who, because of their specific skills, can not leave their country. He argues that, after a period of sacrifice when they attain skills, they "need—and demand—a future: a period of time in which arbitrary and capricious acts by political leaders do not deprive them of a return on their investment. As heads of families, moreover, they seek a prosperous future for their children, one based on the life-style of the professional middle class."[20]

In fact, civil society in most African countries, including the democratizing elite, is usually quite weak for several reasons. First, the profound economic crisis experienced by many African countries also has affected civil societies. Most organizations in most African countries lack the resources for or access to telecommunications, computers, published material, and trained staff that would allow them to participate in daily debates. Patrick Molutsi and John Holm were hardly unusual in finding that in Botswana, the country with the longest tradition of free elections in Africa, only two groups, a business association and a conservation group, had staff, analyzed policies, and lobbied government on a regular basis.[21] As Michael Bratton has noted, those few countries where social organizations have access to resources, notably South Africa and Zimbabwe, also have the most vibrant civil societies.[22]

Civil society has been extraordinarily resilient in Africa precisely because people have been able to escape from the state. Among other exit strategies, farmers produce less for markets when paid artificially low prices; villagers refuse to pay taxes and smuggle to avoid high duties. In many countries, the accumulated effect of such uncoordinated actions undermined much of the state mechanism and eased the way for democratic protests. However, the ability to exit does not guarantee that civil society will be able to support democratization in a significant, positive manner. Indeed, exit is an extraordinarily costly strategy for society because it will take many years to reconnect citizens, especially in the rural areas, to the state.

Thus, many oppositional movements, instead of becoming profoundly democratic, were mainly concerned with displacing the incumbent regimes. As Crawford Young has argued:

> The widespread perception of the state as predator will not dissolve with a single election. Indeed, a disquieting amount of the energies of democratization draws upon this vast supply of disaffection with the personalized summit of power and the state apparatus as a whole.[23]

As one Malawi voter said during the May 1994 elections, "we don't care who becomes the next president so long as its not Banda."[24] In fact, most of the oppositional movements that forced differing degrees of political liberalization on African countries had no explicit program beyond overthrowing the incumbent leader.

Indeed, what is most striking is not the strength of the coalition for liberalization but rather the weakness of the African states. In hindsight, the profound fiscal crisis of most African states has left them vulnerable to any kind of opposition movement. A close examination of those countries that have actually undergone a transfer of power since 1989 suggests that the transition was due to economic bankruptcy rather than the strength of the democratic coalition. Of the twelve countries that have had at least one transition, only three, Cape Verde, Congo, and Lesotho, have per capita incomes higher than the African average of $530.[25] The poorest countries may well have been forced to undergo a transition because their regimes lacked the resources to continue patron-client relations or even to pay their police and soldiers. When the revolutions of 1989 in Central Europe, the beginning of the transition in South Africa, and the transition in other African countries inspired small opposition groups to coalesce, the governments they confronted were revealed to have feet of clay, though the governments of some countries that are in serious trouble, such as Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe, may well retain enough resources to reward followers and suppress or buy off the opposition.

Absence of Pacts One of the striking features of democratization in Latin America was the agreement of the major actors to pacts that detailed the parameters of the transition. Observers have credited the durability demonstrated by South American democracies to these pacts and have been skeptical of transitions that are not guided from above.[26]

However, in most of the political liberalizations attempted or planned so far in Africa, little attention has been devoted to elite agreements. Precisely because most African societies can not be organized around class or functional divisions, leaders can not make binding agreements about how their followers will act. For instance, little attention has been devoted to social pacts with soldiers which would help develop a consensus that the military should withdraw from politics. Nor, in general, have agreements been reached on individual soldiers' culpability for past human rights abuses or theft. Even the national conferences that are being held in francophone Africa can not be considered pacts because leaders do not speak for well-defined groups.[27] Where even minimal pacts have been worked out, they have had a striking impact. For instance, transition outcomes diverged in Benin and Togo partly because newly elected Nicéphore Soglo in Benin agreed immediately to pardon former president Mathieu Kerekou, while the opposition in Togo planned to ban President Etienne Eyademma's party. Thus, Soglo came to power in Benin peacefully, while Eyademma contrived to outflank the democratic opposition and remain in power.

Africa's Economic Challenges

As with political reform, the economic tasks that African countries face vary considerably. An unfortunately large number of countries need to rebuild basic institutions after protracted civil conflicts and have only the rudiments of a functioning formal economy. Countries also differ in their commitment to economic reform, from those still debating basic stabilization issues to others, like Ghana, whose stabilization and structural adjustment efforts began over a decade ago. However, significant commonalities allow for generalizations, arguably with even more confidence than with respect to political reform, because the era of economic reform began in the early 1980s rather than the late 1980s.

The Need for Institutional Reform Early debate on the politics of economic reform concentrated mainly on price changes, especially because of the specter of

"IMF riots" in many countries. However, price changes are probably not the dominant economic challenge facing African countries. While changing producer prices for farmers, consumer prices for subsidized goods, and the exchange rate can present African countries with numerous political problems, adjustment and stabilization may be less difficult than originally suspected, and many countries have implemented reforms without significant instability.[28]

The bigger problem is the need to change the institutional structure that caused the price problem in the first place. For instance, in Nigeria successive governments agonized for years over raising the price of petroleum and acted only after substantial damage had been done to the economy, only to find that the problem reappeared a few years later. Similarly, while cuts in government spending may be important, African countries will correct their public finances only by addressing the drain on revenue caused by parastatals. While raising the prices paid to farmers is important, changing the institutional structure that determines these prices is critical for long-term agricultural recovery. Financial sector reform, an extremely difficult political and technical issue, is also vital if African entrepreneurs are to gain access to needed capital to take advantage of price changes. African countries need to construct and rehabilitate a series of financial institutions, including central banks, ministries of finance, and statistical services, for the macroeconomy to function efficiently.

Reforming these basic economic institutions is more difficult than changing prices, which, however controversial, can usually be done by administrative fiat. Rebuilding or creating institutions takes years and places enormous strains on the administrative capacities of African states. Moreover, certain institutionalized African economic practices have their own political rationale. For instance, parastatals have long been used to reward the constituencies of African rulers. Similarly, the administrative allocation of foreign exchange has been an important mechanism in cementing patron-client relations. Thus, reforms in institutional practices demand that African leaders fundamentally change the way they relate to and reward their followers.

In addition, an important psychological dimension must be addressed when reforming parastatals, marketing boards, and exchange and trade regimes. It is now increasingly recognized that to stabilize an economy and eventually to garner new investment it is not enough to get prices "right" or even to make fundamental institutional reforms. The government must be able to signal that it is committed to implementing these reforms for a considerable period of time. Without credible commitment, there will be no stabilization.[29] Indeed, some reforms, notably trade liberalization, will actually harm the economy if they are not viewed as credible.[30] Sustainable reforms are the key to unlocking investment because citizens and foreigners will commit their money only when they are assured that the macroeconomic environment and pricing policies will encourage growth for a long period of time. The investment issue is particularly important because the investment response to date, even among the African reformers, has been disappointing and makes the sustainability of reforms questionable.

Urban Bias African countries exhibit a profound urban bias because the state is based almost entirely in the capital city. Although the majority of Africans still lives in the countryside, the pricing of many goods and the delivery of social services have been heavily biased in favor of the relatively small urban population. Successive nondemocratic African governments have also viewed the urban population as their main constituency because, although votes were not important, the fear of destabilizing urban riots was very real. Regimes that did not have to pay attention to rural voters did not favor agricultural interests and rural majorities.[31] As W. Arthur Lewis put it, "the Third World's failure with agriculture has been mainly at the political level, in systems where the small cultivator carries little political weight."[32] Thus, a critical aspect of economic reform in Africa requires the disruption of the pattern of urban bias that began in the colonial period and continued through the first thirty years of African independence.

Slow Growth Another significant challenge to economic reform in Africa is inevitably slow and uneven results. The World Bank estimates that, even in the best case scenario regarding commodity prices and foreign aid, African countries are unlikely to grow at more than four to five percent if they successfully undertake major reforms.[33] Since sub-Saharan Africa's population is projected to grow at 2.8 percent annually until the year 2000, increases in per capita consumption will not be impressive even if everything else (including commodity prices, the weather, and political stability in neighboring countries) goes exceptionally well, which almost certainly will not happen.[34] Further, even the meager consumption gains generated by reform may not be appreciated because they will go largely to restoring the condition of African populations in the late 1970s by reversing the almost one percent annual decline in per capita income between 1980 and 1992.[35]

Thus, even a government profoundly committed to economic reform will not find an immediately identifiable constituency for economic reform for some time to come. The economic results themselves will not be dramatic, although the costs in terms of jobs lost in the short run from public sector contraction and trade liberalization may be well publicized. While the counterfactual alternative of no reform would produce even worse results, it is unlikely to persuade a population that has already suffered for many years from economic deprivation. Indeed, since economic results are likely to appear slowly, even the winners from reform will not be able to identify themselves for some time, making sustainability of reform a continual problem.

Political and Economic Reform

We can now explore what, if any, aspects of political liberalization, in contrast to authoritarian regimes, will help promote economic reform. First, aspects of political reform that require the fewest assumptions about intentions and capabilities to implement economic reform and, then, those that require considerable information and knowledge to assume a positive correlation between the two types of change will be examined. We will therefore be able to go beyond generalizations about the interaction of political and economic reform to an understanding of the specific dynamics of change in Africa.

Regime Turnover The great advantage of a new leader is that he may not be as beholden to the established intricate network of patron-client relationships that underpin power structures in most African countries and have contributed so significantly to poor economic performance. It is probably no coincidence that the two most significant economic reformers in Africa, Rawlings in Ghana and Museveni in Uganda, came to power through relatively unorthodox means with the express intent of destroying the existing power structures. Rawlings staged a coup from the lower ranks of the air force, while Museveni fought his way into power after organizing a rural insurgency. In contrast, it is exceptionally hard for long-standing leaders to engage in dramatic economic reform precisely because reform essentially disrupts the way they govern and hurts those on whose support they most depend. The economic ineptness of incumbents is particularly relevant in Africa because, contrary to common perception, many countries have experienced extremely long periods of rule by one leader.[36]

Arguably the least difficult way to prove a positive association between political liberalization and economic reform is to focus on the increasing frequency of leadership turnover. Indeed, the wave of elections across Africa has resulted in the most changes of leadership since 1965–1969, when a rash of coups swept Africa.[37] The "new broom" argument is particularly powerful because it does not depend on any judgments of whether the emerging leadership is democratic or particularly knowledgeable about economics. Rather, new leaders will simply tend to change previous reward structures, and in the current international economic environment economic change will usually involve some kind of economic reform supported by the international donors.

However, it is somewhat unclear how "new" these new African leaders actually are. Five of the twelve new leaders who succeeded authoritarian regimes after 1989 were major players in previous governments: Alpha Oumar Konare in Mali was once General Moussa Traore's sports and culture minister; Lissouba in Congo was prime minister from 1963 to 1966; Ange-Felix Passe in the Central African Republic was prime minister under former emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa; Miguel Trovoada in São

Tomé and Principe was prime minister from 1974 to 1979; and Bakili Muluzi in Malawi was once Banda's protégé. However, a few leaders represent a dramatic break with the past: Albert Zafy in Madagascar had no previous contact with the old regime; Mokhehle in Lesotho was in exile for over twenty years and lacks the strong ties to tribal elders of the old Basotho National Party; the late Ndadaye in Burundi was a Hutu who had been in exile in Rwanda. Still, it should be clear that in Africa elections do not automatically sweep into power leaders who are at odds with the existing power structure, as opposed to the leader at the top.

Strikingly, many incumbents who came to power in a nondemocratic manner have now been elected. Since 1989 such incumbents, often in power for a decade or more, have been elected in twenty-one countries (see Table 1, "multi-party elections but no transfer of power").

The evidence to date therefore suggests that political liberalization is less successful in promoting leadership transition in Africa than is usually assumed and is less successful than elsewhere in the world. Bates' suggestion that democratic pressures are due to alternative elites' pressuring to come to power with new policies looks somewhat suspect, as does Bratton and van de Walle's claim that "the political protests of 1990 sowed the seeds of an alternative ruling coalition, even though those seeds did not everywhere sprout and grow."[38]

Political liberalization produces fewer new leaders in Africa than elsewhere for several reasons. Since elections are more referenda on the paramount leader than contests over issues, politicians who are extensively involved with the incumbent regimes find it easier to compete in them. Also, many African leaders have now learned how to manage the electoral process to circumvent pressure from both foreign critics and domestic groups for fair elections. Finally, elites are so small in Africa and the channel to power, the single party or the military, has been limited for so long that it may be unreasonable to expect quick change.

Changing Constituencies It is commonly assumed that political liberalization may change constituencies and therefore promote economic reform, although this assumption requires more evidence to prove than arguments based on leadership turnover. Normally, democratization would alter the processes of economic decision making and the nature of economic policies when it leads to changes in leadership, ethnic and class bases of power, the accountability of leaders, and levels of decision-making authority. That is, democratization should affect the centralization of authority and the ways that power is accumulated and wielded in society. Indeed, a regime that has to take account of voters who have not previously had influence may well shift the allocation and distribution of resources. For example, rural voters or particular ethnic groups that have been frozen out may now have more spending devoted to them, or differential pricing of goods may now favor them.

The argument that new democratically elected governments are more likely to enact economic reform would be especially powerful if there was immediate evidence that elections changed the constituencies that leaders have to reward. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen has argued that "the beginning of the movement for democratic change in Africa coincided with, and was stimulated mainly by, structural adjustment, which realigned economic power from urban elites to rural populations and the business community."[39] If this description were accurate, it would be strong evidence that democratization and economic reform go together. However, in Niger in 1990, Sudan in 1985, and Zambia in 1990 protests *against* the perceived costs associated with structural adjustment propelled the movements to overthrow the old order.[40] Moreover, the protests against the annulment of the Nigerian elections of 1993 are being led by the Nigerian Labour Congress, an adamant opponent of economic reform. The assumption that protests against the old order are automatically liberal in both the classic political and economic senses is dubious.

More generally, the comparative statics of economic reform in Africa provide little reason to believe that either the middle classes or alternative elites which may champion political reform hold structural adjustment as a high priority. In fact, urban elites are major medium-term losers in structural adjustment. While they may suffer from declining living standards, they also receive subsidized food, housing, fuel, health care, and university education, usually at the expense of the rural population. Middle class elites in the private sector may also be badly hurt by trade liberalization, devaluation, and the end of crony relationships between ministries and favored companies.

Only over the long term, if economic growth is significant, will the middle class benefit from both political and economic reform. However, even the winners in economic reform will be able to identify themselves only slowly because of information bottlenecks and uncertainties about the pace of structural reforms. For instance, few Nigerian businessmen could predict with confidence that they could reorient their business from import substitution to export production after devaluation. They would have to be sure that the devaluation would be sustained. They would also have to be confident that they could get credit to buy necessary new machines. Moreover, the delivery of electricity and water, as well as road and port infrastructure, would have to be drastically improved to make the new goods competitive on the international market. Finally, skilled labor, a very rare commodity, would have to be recruited. Thus, the middle class, while perhaps a constituency for political reform, may not be a strong constituency for economic reform because many of its members have benefited from some of the distortions that have handicapped African economies in the past, notably urban bias in the provision of schools, clinics, and consumer goods.

Also, economic change has clearly not been driven from below. Organized groups such as trade unions, cooperatives, and state employees have not pushed for IMF-type reforms. Indeed, they have often led the opposition to economic reforms, especially reductions in government expenditures and policies that discriminate against the urban population. If trade unions and civil servants are allowed to organize without political repression, strikes against policies that hurt them in the short run can be expected. Politics may become less violent, compared to coups and riots, if channeled into votes, strikes, and protests, but even more orderly protests can weaken a government's resolve to persist in reform and thereby further attenuate the relationship between political and economic reform.

Large firms, often involving foreign interests, rural producers, and individual technocrats, have pushed for reforms, but they are not well-organized, domestically strong economic interest groups. For instance, rural producers are spread across the hinterland and often not supported by a strong communications or transportation infrastructure. Also, because many rural producers chose the option of exit in the past, they are not oriented toward influencing the government. Similarly, the opposition groups that have taken power in Africa do not include many of the new business people who might explicitly support economic reform.

The lack of a solid coalition for both political and economic reform makes economic reform fragile. It is often initiated by the old leadership itself. Robert Bates sees political reforms as undertaken as part of economic reform.[41] But to us they seem more discontinuous in time, and the impetus for them seems different. Reform in Africa is not a political-economic package, no matter how much outside donors and international agencies might wish it was. Separate reforms may create new conditions, and thus possibilities for new realignments may exist, as Bates suggests. But these conditions do not yet exist.

Indeed, elections have affected least the urban-rural divide. Revolts against African authoritarianism since 1989 have been largely urban affairs, with almost no participation by organized rural groups.[42] Not surprisingly, few if any of the political parties founded since 1989 have strong rural roots. In none of the twelve countries where power was transferred after 1989 have the new leaders self-consciously developed a strong rural constituency. Similarly, in the 1992 election in Ghana, which should have reflected the new political dynamics of structural adjustment after a decade of economic reform, the only region where Rawlings did not win a majority was Ashanti, precisely where economic reform reinvigorated cocoa farms and dramatically increased gold mining. Professor A. Adu Boahen's New Patriotic Party, in the Danquah-Busia tradition, won 60.5 percent of the vote in the Ashanti region, a clear sign that ethnic tensions between the Ashantis and Rawlings' Ewe-based military government still influence elections more than economic reform.[43]

Winning coalitions have often formed around traditional ethnic coalitions rather than dramatic economic changes. In Benin, Soglo won by receiving more than 80 percent of the vote in his native south but only 10 percent in the north. In Malawi, Muluzi and the United Democratic Front won overwhelmingly in the south but lost every seat in the north. In Kenya, Daniel arap Moi won reelection although he lost all seats in the Central province, dominated by the Kikuyu, and won only one seat in Nyanza province, home of the Luo.[44] Election results also followed ethnic divisions in, among other places, Angola, Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia (1995), and Guinea. Only a few politicians, such as John Fru Ndi, have developed innovative new approaches to reduce the salience of the old social divisions. While losing an unfair election, he broke through the traditional anglophone/francophone split in Cameroon by speaking pidgin.

The timing and sequencing of reforms make the lack of supportive constituencies particularly pernicious. Knowing they have no constituency they can rely on, leaders feel that the only way they can move forward is to keep everyone off balance and thus unable to anticipate their next move. For example, in the early days of Nigeria's structural adjustment program General Babangida was known as "Nigeria's Marodona" because his moves were as unpredictable as those of the soccer star.[45]

Macroeconomic policy is consequently unstable. Nigeria's program was unsuccessful because it never got beyond a pattern of drift, followed by dramatic change to stabilize the economy and placate foreign lenders. A stop-and-start reform process will not enhance the credibility of reform in the eyes of domestic and foreign leaders. Indeed, failure to demonstrate a sustained commitment to reform may, because of Africa's economic problems, doom attempts at structural adjustment.

In order for political and economic reforms to reinforce each other through a coincidence of constituencies, African countries will have to create innovative political structures from scratch. For instance, leaders will need to mobilize the rural population to support economic reform in the new democracies. This exceptionally difficult work will take many years to complete, especially because rural producers are now politically marginal. African leaders also will have to develop new ideologies and political vocabularies to explain why economic and political reforms go together. While calls for democracy in Africa are met immediately with enthusiasm, pleas for capitalism and market-driven reform are not similarly resonant. Because of the lack of issue-driven campaigns in Africa, it will be difficult to create platforms that justify simultaneous political and economic reform. African transitions thus differ fundamentally from some of the more successful liberalizations in Latin America. In Chile and Uruguay, political and economic reform could be adopted simultaneously partly because party politics were stable from the beginning of the transition; political contestation reverted to the class-based ideological pattern of previous democratic episodes.[46] In Latin America, once the global collapse of socialism eliminated the hard left, market-based reformers found a natural constituency.

Economic Reform Through *Diktat* Even more questionable is the assumption that democratization will allow individual leaders who firmly believe in drastic economic reform to come to power even if they do not have a firm constituency. Soglo of Benin, who was previously employed by the World Bank, is the outstanding example. This argument realistically modifies the suggestion that new elites have strong interests in economic reform but does not assume an immediate constituency for reform. This view is even more difficult to uphold than the arguments about constituencies because it requires somewhat heroic assumptions about the real intentions and capabilities of leaders.

It is particularly difficult for an African leader convinced that the economy has to be changed to initiate reform from above because of Africa's economic problems. A leader may be able to induce stabilization by surprise, as Fujimori did in Peru shortly after his election. However, a government with no constituency for reform and no long-term ideology favoring growth through the private sector may not be viewed as particularly credible by domestic or foreign investors because leadership sentiment could soon change. For instance, even though Ghana grew by five percent a year during the last decade, its investment performance has been poor because investors did not know how many people other than Rawlings and finance minister Kwesi Botchwey supported the reforms.[47] Because economic reform in Africa will take a decade or more, constituencies and programs still have to be created in order to sustain committed leaderships.

It will be difficult for new leaders, even if committed to reform, to avoid the traditional clientelistic pattern of African politics. Elections may actually increase the use of patronage, as in other parts of the world. Traditional patron-client relations have often been critical in winning recent elections, indicating that the nature of African politics has not changed despite the new liberalizations. Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya have all reported massive overspending as governments sought to reward traditional supporters, notably members of particular ethnic groups and civil servants, to smooth the transition process or gain votes. Ghana's reform program, the only macroeconomic policy in Africa rated at least "adequate" by the World Bank, was dealt an enormous blow when the government greatly increased civil service wages before the election.[48] Finance minister Botchwey was forced to admit: "The expenditure control system seems to have broken down, and a number of commitments have been entered into without due regard to the financial regulations."[49]

Once in power, leaders would best be able to proceed with reform and avoid the temptation to revert to clientelistic politics and the concomitant economic distortions if they were relatively confident about the stability of the newly democratized system and their ability to serve out their terms. However, African leaders have the least confidence that the democratic systems will endure. Most are unsure of the level of social support for their new democracies since elections were often contested over the ruler rather than policies or systems of rule. The lack of pacts and agreements among major actors also makes democratization more uncertain in Africa than in Latin America. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect economic policy in Africa to be relatively short-sighted during the period of political reform compared to Latin America, where social agreement about the nature and durability of the new democratic institutions is firmer. Thus, the argument that democracies are irresponsible is simplistic. The particular circumstances of political liberalization in Africa cause leaders' horizons to be relatively short and therefore induce particular strategies such as clientelism which may be unnecessary where democratic structures are more institutionalized.[50]

Should leaders have to resort to clientelistic politics to stay in power and paradoxically to move the economic reform program forward, the long-term prospects for the economy are questionable. In the past the politics of favoritism has often generated rapid shifts in policy and given rise to uncertainty, exactly what Africa can not afford. At the very least, credibility will take a very long time to establish.

Conclusion

The particular circumstances of most African countries give little support for the view that "all good things go together." Indeed, there is less reason to believe that political reform can speed economic reform in Africa than elsewhere in the world. Both foreigners who seek to promote change in Africa and African governments themselves will have to recognize that the relative lack of tensions between political and economic reform in the West and even Latin America is not applicable to Africa. It will therefore be especially important to identify changes in the political system, such as truly new leaders and the mobilization of rural constituencies, that support difficult economic reforms.

NOTES

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