

# THE NEW POLITICAL CONDITIONALITIES OF AID: AN INDEPENDENT VIEW FROM AFRICA

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\* An earlier version of this paper was first presented at the Conference on 'The New Political Conditionalities of Aid' held at the University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna, 23-24 April 1992.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 1990, distinct demands for democratization began to be made on African countries as a new condition for aid by both the multilateral financial institutions, mainly the World Bank and the IMF, and the major Western countries, especially the USA and the UK. In order to understand the historical significance of the new political conditionalities of aid for Africa one needs to locate them within the context of (a) the emerging, apparently-unipolar world; and (b) the nature of African states, making a distinction between the interests of these states and civil society therein. This is because historical events do not mean the same thing for different societies, nor do they mean the same thing for different classes and social groups even within the same society, state or nation.

We propose to look at this question in the following manner. We shall first look at the different points of view of the 'donors' (finance capital), the African states and official organizations, and, finally, independent perspectives of African civil society. We then conclude with what should be done and suggestions as to who can do it.

### 1.1 Five propositions on the new political conditionalities

The first proposition is that the new political conditionalities have nothing to do with the desire of Western countries to actually encourage democracy in Africa. For a long time, Western countries supported dictatorship, for instance in Zaire, Liberia, Uganda and Kenya. France distinguished itself in supporting dictators with open military interventions on their behalf against popular opposition. With the collapse of Soviet-led state socialism, Western countries can no longer justify their support for dictators who have hitherto been called 'bulwarks against communism'.

The new conditionalities in the emerging unipolar world therefore are designed to serve, in the new situation, three purposes: (a) to crush once and for all the ideology of socialism and to replace it unambiguously with the ideology of free enterprise worldwide; (b) to create a new credible source of legitimacy for hegemony and thereby ensure leverage over specific countries which are considered economically and politically useful to the West or specific Western countries; and (c) to justify 'the impending decline in Africa's share of global assistance as resource flows to Eastern Europe begin to mount'.<sup>1</sup>

The second proposition is that the new political conditionalities should be seen as part and parcel of a wider global scheme by the West under various forms, fora, organizations and guises to create a new economic and military world order following the collapse of state socialism and the end of the Cold War, using a populist ideology of democracy. The wider scheme is constituted by the Western governments, multilateral finance capital (mainly the World Bank and the IMF), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), environmentalists and several emergent organizations in the West or old ones which may be put to good use in the new world order in-the-making.<sup>2</sup>

The third contention of this article is that, in any event, the simultaneous application of (a) economic conditionalities by the IMF and the World Bank in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) with (b) the new stipulated political conditionalities is necessarily contradictory and cannot successfully be accomplished together. SAPs are necessarily contradictory to the development and sustenance of democratic government and the free operation of civil society and autonomous civil organizations. This is

<sup>1</sup> For the last point see *African Recovery*, April-June 1990, Vol 4 No 1: 15, 17.

<sup>2</sup> These views are exemplified for instance by the ideas put forward at the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance. See Prime Minister's Office, *Common Responsibility in the 1990s*. Stockholm, 1991. One author has characterized the on-going process as globalization and the attempt by Western states to create a global state and effectively dissolve Third World states using such instruments as the multilateral financial institutions (in particular the

World Bank), NGOs and the environmentalists, the latter two seeking to replace the state at the grassroots level and to arrest and control the development of the underdeveloped countries respectively. See F. W. Jjuuko, 'The State, Democracy and Constitutionalism in Africa'. A paper presented at the Conference entitled, *The Constitutional Protection of Rights: United States/Africa Dialogues*. Faculty of Law, Makerere University/Centre for Human Rights, Columbia University. Held at Makerere University, Kampala 13-15 August 1991.

because SAP 'completely undermines Africa's sovereignty, creates and/or further strengthens authoritarian regimes who will have to implement inherently anti-democratic set of socio-economic reforms entailed in the programme'.<sup>3</sup>

The fourth contention is that the limitation of the definition of democracy to mere political pluralism, namely equating democracy with multi-party politics, amounts to the return of Africa to square one, that is, the first few post-independence years. The definition of democracy by (multilateral and bilateral) finance capital today leads once again to the creation and/or consolidation of the winner-takes-all situations which discredited and delegitimized the immediate post-colonial forms of pluralism. But what was wrong with the political reforms that preceded independence and continued for a while thereafter? As M. Mamdani recently put it:

though pluralist in its claim, the reform presented pluralism only in its political aspect, while it equated political pluralism with multi-partyism. It was a deft movement which served both to emancipate and to stifle; it undermined social and ideological pluralism. Its realization led to the flowering of political parties, but the wilting of social movements and the popular press. It is in this contradictory context that nationalist parties with a transformative social agenda were recast, usually from within, into no more than craft unions of professional politicians, their objective restricted to enhancing their political careers.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed it must be added that the political conditionalities variously referred to as 'better governance', 'political reform', or simply 'democracy' do not really seriously refer to the popular participation of civil society in the decision-making process of the state and the political economy. Even reference to the observance of human rights is still in the narrow sense of rights of the individual and his/her protection from arbitrary or illegal state action against such individual. The concept of rights under the framework of the new political conditionalities does not take into account the changed situation in Africa 30 years after independence. Group and social rights are not articulated. And precisely because a multi-party system is a winner-takes-all system and because it would depend upon the external aid being dangled as a bait, the winners become beholden to the 'donor' and must try and be good boys (and/or girls, if any). They therefore become even more compradorial and concerned about their partisan local supporters and the foreign donors and not the whole of society. Such a result would do little to advance the cause of human rights, individual or group.

Finally, and probably most important, the very idea that people can be forced to be democratic and/or free is quite startling. Freedom and liberation from autocratic rule as well as democracy and accountability cannot be decreed. They must have a social basis in which they arise, are nurtured and sustained. If the western financial institutions and 'donors' genuinely wished to assist the development of democracy in Africa then this would be done from the perspective of the majority, of civil society and the participation of the latter in the formulation of the democratic programme and not by decreeing from afar what constitutes democracy.

There is no doubt therefore that the project of the new political conditionalities is none other than an attempt by the big western capitalist powers to create a new legitimacy in a new post-Cold War world order whereby discredited dictatorial/authoritarian regimes in Africa or elsewhere in the Third World are replaced by new leaders under the ideology of pluralism, democracy and free enterprise (the market system) while maintaining hegemony over countries which are economically and politically useful to those western powers.

## 2 CONTRADICTIONARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEW POLITICAL CONDITIONALITIES

Having outlined our own views on the new political conditionalities, it is imperative that we lay bare the different perspectives taken by three interested parties: (a) the donors (finance capital) and their intellectual ideologues; (b) African regimes and official African institutions such as the OAU (Organization of African Unity) and ECA (UN Economic Commission for Africa); and (c) the people themselves seen as constituting civil society — especially as represented by radical organizations and intellectual opinion.

### 2.1 The donors' view

One must begin from the premise that most African governments have been undemocratic, whether they proclaimed themselves socialist or capitalist. However, the definition of what constitutes democracy is not agreed amongst the three parties mentioned above. Although lip-service may be paid by all to certain requirements for democracy, especially the question of **popular participation** and the involvement of **women**, distinct perspectives may be identified. The donors' view first.

First of all the 'donors' — or finance capital, to put it in less euphemistic terms — view and present their role as

<sup>3</sup> 'Editorial', *Codesria Bulletin*, No 2, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> M. Mamdani, 1992, 'Africa: Democratic Theory and Democratic Struggles'. Paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of

CODESRIA, Dakar, 10-14 February, also available at CBR (Centre for Basic Research, Kampala) mimeo: 7-8.

crucial in the struggle for democracy in Africa. One observer put it this way:

It is now clear that the main cause of the wave of political change sweeping Africa is not the aspirations of African intellectuals, much as they long for liberty; nor is it a union of the political opposition and the masses, which has been conspicuous by its absence with fitful exceptions in Zambia, Kenya and Zaire . . . No. The principal cause of Africa's wind of change is the World Bank and the donor countries. They are explicitly demanding political change as a condition for further loans to Africa.<sup>5</sup>

This perspective views African civil society as too weak to struggle for and achieve democracy. But to understand the perspective of finance capital one needs to uncover actual behaviour of Western states representing this capital prior to the end of the Cold War and to a large extent even today. France 'actively aided the suppression of the dissident movements in all French-speaking countries and provided intelligence on the exiled opposition to African secret police services. The United States created Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and tolerated Samuel Doe in Liberia. Britain favoured Daniel arap Moi in Kenya.'<sup>6</sup> Despite protests by Africans generally, some specific opposition parties and groups in civil society, the West supported repressive regimes and opportunistically described them as 'moderates'. And while in 1990-91 the main donor governments were declaring that they would give more aid money to governments which respected human rights and exhibited better and accountable governance, the USA continued to 'shore up President Mobutu in Zaire' while the British government continued to give more aid to Kenya than any other African government.<sup>7</sup> As one explanation goes:

the selectivity with which these new criteria are being applied suggests that an insistence on good governance could be used as an excuse to abandon those African countries considered basket cases while maintaining leverage over the more interesting ones, with less regard to the standards they adopt.<sup>8</sup>

It was right from the beginning of 1990 that political conditionalities began to be made. World Bank President Barber Conable, at a meeting of the Bretton Woods Committee in Washington in April 1990, advanced 'better governance' as the first requirement in initiating African recovery and hinted that donors

would increasingly link aid to this question.<sup>9</sup> At the same conference, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, more bluntly stated that governments not responding to democratic change would be at a disadvantage in obtaining external assistance. He further stated that 'it was likely that democratization would become the third conditionality for US assistance after World Bank/IMF approval of economic policies and US assessment of a country's human rights record'.<sup>10</sup> This message has subsequently been emphasized in many places. In May 1990 John Major, then UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, had warned at the IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington that 'in a situation where aid resources are limited, donors would place strict conditions on spending, including moves towards better government'. Governments had to 'become more accountable to their peoples before rich nations could justify further aid'.<sup>11</sup> And in a keynote speech in June 1990, at an international Conference in London organized under the auspices of the UN Africa Recovery Programme, UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd categorically linked aid to democracy. 'The principle of conditionality', he stated 'has been clearly laid down by the British Government, by the European Community and by the USA'.<sup>12</sup>

The explanation given by donors is that they are using economic leverage to enhance accountability of African regimes to their peoples and to ensure that repressed popular energies and misappropriated aid monies are both released for development. Openly putting it in ideological terms, while justifying the new political conditionalities, Douglas Hurd argued that 'free markets, open trade and private property are the best way known to mankind for improving its standards of living'.<sup>13</sup> It should also be pointed out that the new political conditionalities are supported by some right wing African or Africanist scholars such as Professor Ali Mazrui.<sup>14</sup> However what clearly unmasks the ideological character of the new conditionalities is the attitude of the Western countries to the democratic experiment in Algeria. The Islamic Front had democratically won the Algerian local elections of June 1990 and went ahead to win the first round of parliamentary elections of December 1991. But because the West could not tolerate a democracy where the Islamic party would have won democratically, it has since the subversion of that democratic experiment by a coup supported the coup-makers.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Africa Confidential*, Vol 31 No 15, 27 July 1990: 3.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> *Africa Recovery*, April-June, 1990, Vol 4 No 1: 15.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Africa Recovery*, July-September 1990, Vol 4 No 2: 28.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Professor Ali Mazrui for instance as early as November 1990 at the CODESRIA Conference on Academic Freedom in Kampala 26-29 November 1990 supported the conditionalities and saw them as the way forward.

<sup>15</sup> See *Africa Events*, Vol 8 No 2, February 1992: 7-8 and A. El-Affendi, *Who's Afraid of Islam?*: 32-35.

## 2.2 The views of African governments

The second perspective on the new political conditionalities is that of the African regimes generally and other official African institutions such as the OAU and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. This category may be divided into two groups: those who favour democracy but argue that it must not be imposed; and those who are opposed outright to democracy although they pay lip-service to the concept. Those who are opposed to democracy and accountability are mainly constituted by the ruling regimes although many have now been forced to accept the multiparty definition of democracy by a combination of the political conditionalities for aid as well as internal resistance, especially where this has been strong as in Zambia, Kenya and Mali.<sup>16</sup> At heart they have not accepted the new multiparty systems and would do anything to subvert them. In a BBC interview President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya accepted that he had been forced to accept the multiparty definition of democracy by Western finance capital (the donors). He stated succinctly:

You are not allowed to think, but you are told: do what we want you to do. If I make a suggestion, which I know is good for my people, and they say no, you must follow this, you must accept what has been decided all over the world, that is not going to help my people. The donors, it is a pity that they tell us: do this, you must accept it. It is not something that comes from your heart.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, many of the 'new-breed' leaders believe that the conditionalities are necessary. After all, it is these conditionalities which shored up their resistance and led to the moves by incumbent regimes from the one-party to the multi party system. But in essence the definition of democracy by the 'new breed' is as narrow as that of the immediate post-independence era where the majority in civil society were being systematically excluded following 'the struggle for independence' in which mass support had been crucial. In some cases, such as Ivory Coast and Gabon, the long-serving Presidents have been able to continue in power. Indeed 'in many countries the creation of new parties has not directly involved many citizens from outside the existing political elite, and particularly not in the rural areas'.<sup>18</sup> But more interesting is the fact that, even in countries where incumbent leaders have been ousted, as in Benin:

the new power-holders come, by and large, from the same political class and even the same families as those who were close to the centre of power in the previous three decades. In country after country, the new opposition leaders or the victorious

democratic politicians are often none other than people who served the single party long and faithfully without any great signs of a crisis of conscience. Some of the successful new-breed politicians are simply old-breed politicians who chose the right moment to break with the past and engage in the new watch-words of good governance and respect for human rights.<sup>19</sup>

This characterization of the changes applies to most of Africa.

Further, although the new breed politicians generally have legitimacy, such as the MMD of Zambia, or FORD of Kenya (still in waiting) or the Sacred Union of Zaire (still outmanoeuvred by Mobutu Sese Seko) they have weak links with civil society: workers, the informal sector, women and peasants. Indeed any links that may now exist are very tenuous or merely temporary due to the common enemy in the existing political status quo.

The alternative variant of the view of African governments, held by some African leaders and also, notably, the OAU Secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), is that, while democracy must be supported, its definition must be left to the Africans. The OAU Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim, argued that democracy must involve fundamental freedoms of expression, association and political choice and the ability of all citizens to participate in the process of national governance, thereby allowing/enabling people to exercise their talents and responsibilities. Democracy is not a revelation, but must be expressed, concretely and necessarily in different ways from society to society.<sup>20</sup> A similar view has been emphasized again and again by President Museveni of Uganda.

Further the OAU Secretary-General argues in these terms:

more misleading is the emerging notion that multipartism, in a magical way, can bring about development. For no matter how many political parties an African state may have, that will not alter her economic fortunes. It will not change the price of coffee, cocoa, cotton, sisal or copper . . .

Democracy must also apply to the international system. This system is created by the major economic nations, evidently to suit their priorities and interests . . .

This for instance is particularly the problem in Zambia. The major problem there has been the fall of the price

<sup>16</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 10 January 1992, Vol 33 No 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Africa Events*, supra. 29.

<sup>18</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 10 January 1992, op. cit.: 1.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Africa Recovery*, July-September, 1990, op. cit.: 28.

of copper on which the country almost solely relied; secondly the SAP programme and debt repayments have meant a near-bankrupt country. The triumph of the MMD has clearly not changed these facts.

Thus as Salim Ahmed Salim rightfully concluded:

while Africa must democratize, our efforts will be hamstrung by the non-democratic international economic system in which we operate and which militates against our development. Logically I would have thought therefore that an argument for democratization of African societies would have been linked to the democratization of the international system; only such a synergy will work to pull Africa out of her current economic suffering.<sup>21</sup>

This view is further buttressed by the fact that the new political conditionalities are not meant to increase aid to Africa but either to retain existing levels<sup>22</sup> or reduce them.<sup>23</sup> This view, against the new conditionalities, is again supported by the fact that 'if democracy cannot revive Africa's economic fortunes, then it has little chance of success. No system, democratic or otherwise, is going to bring peace, harmony or stability unless it is able to give to its citizens a certain degree of material well-being.'<sup>24</sup> This truth may be illustrated by two examples. The effectiveness of the Islamic Front (FIS) in Algeria since the mid-1980s, resulting in its electoral successes of 1990-91 in the local and parliamentary elections was in large measure a result of increasing debt and falling oil prices for the Algerian state which had for long produced enough jobs and services (the so-called providential state) to satisfy a large portion of the population.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Kenyan middle class generally, though interspersed with individual elements of resistance and opposition and radical but marginal voices and organizations like **Mwakenya**, had essentially acquiesced to the KANU one-party dictatorship. As late as April 1991, one commentator was able to note that, despite some predictions, President Daniel Arap Moi survived 1990 intact thanks, *inter alia*, to:

his control of the army, the indulgence of the British government, and the existence of **a large middle class, with a vested interest in stability which surpasses even its dislike for its government** (emphasis added).<sup>26</sup>

Indeed the selfish behaviour being exhibited by middle class leaders of FORD in Kenya cannot be a cause for optimism. Their struggle, which has been mainly for leadership rather than the strengthening of the

organization and formulation of programmes, does not indicate a group of people intent on democratizing a hitherto undemocratic polity. A combination of an undemocratic international system with an opportunistic 'new breed' leadership should not deceive anyone into believing that this amounts to a move towards democracy. So long as the majority of the people are not involved in **and** in control of the definition of the political issues, the political programmes and the political process likely to take place represents a mere changing of the guard.

### 2.3 The popular view

The third view, which is hardly heard but which in our view objectively represents popular opinion, is that the struggle for democracy must be essentially a struggle of the oppressed themselves. The definition of, as well as the means to attain, this democracy must be left to the subjects of democracy, namely, the African people. Democracy must be as comprehensive as possible for the whole of civil society. One writer who subscribes to this view has noted that both proponents of one-party regimes and multi party politics 'begin with a definition of pluralism so narrow as to negate its social and ideological dimensions, and limit it to its political aspect.' He then goes on to say that:

today, this shared premise is boldly upheld in the simple equation that multiparties mean democracy, and single party — dictatorship. True, there have been demands for pluralism that have not been narrowly political; for example an opposition demand in Rwanda for an end to state monopoly over broadcasting media. But these have been few and scattered. As a rule, the tendency to interpret democratic pluralism narrowly to mean no more than party pluralism remains strong in opposition movements between the Sahara and the Limpopo.<sup>27</sup>

This characterization of the opposition movement is generally correct. However, what Professor Mamdani does not venture to explain is the class character of these opposition movements and therefore their equally class-specific definition of democracy. The reason why on the eve of independence the political parties had generally been organically separated from the co-operative (peasant) and trade union (workers') movements was that the colonial state had nurtured a middle class or a petty bourgeoisie who would play a compradorial role for the metropolitan bourgeoisie in the post-colonial era. It is this petty bourgeoisie that formed and led the political parties for independence. Ideologically, the aim of the colonial state was to

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*: 29.

<sup>22</sup> S. Decalo, 1992, 'The process, prospects and constraints of democratization'. *African Affairs*, Vol 91 No 362: 7-35. See also *Africa Confidential*, 11 January 1991.

<sup>23</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 25 October 1991, Vol 32 No 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 10 January 1992, op. cit.: 2.

<sup>25</sup> R. Mortimer, 1991, 'Islam and multiparty politics in Algeria', *Middle East Journal*, Vol 45 No 4, Autumn.

<sup>26</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 5 April 1991, Vol 32 No 7, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> M. Mamdani, *supra*. p. 9.

prevent the development of left-wing or radical political organizations, which they dubbed 'communist'.<sup>28</sup> However, the petty bourgeoisie that led the struggle for independence needed the working class and the peasantry only to oust the colonial regime. After independence the militancy of the peasants and more so of the workers was no longer necessary. The continuation of autonomous trade unions, co-operatives and a free press was taken to be contrary to the interests of national unity, peace and the attraction of foreign finances (public and private). Although the opposition movements and 'new-breed' middle class leaders are currently forced to acknowledge the need for pluralism and autonomous organizations of civil society — for workers, peasants, women, the professions, religious groups, etc — they are unlikely, if voted into power, to tolerate the autonomy and militancy of these organizations because their interests are more often than not contradictory to those of these organizations/classes. Accumulation for a state bureaucracy or even private capital requires the exploitation of peasants and workers. Moreover the continuation of structural adjustment programmes with their attendant adverse effects on the so-called vulnerable groups (represented in many cases by these very organizations of civil society) means that the new regimes, however democratically elected they may be, will be forced to unleash the army or the police against demonstrations, strikes and other forms of protest that are bound to emanate from civil society. For instance, even in a fairly well-to-do society like the Ivory Coast, following recent multiparty elections the Prime Minister, A. D. Quattara:

has been unwilling to initiate more traumatic cuts that would be politically suicidal requiring as they do 'strong [authoritative] governments to sack public officials or increase consumer food prices without incurring equivalent off-setting expenditure on the military or on repairing riot damage.'<sup>29</sup>

But for how long can this 'unwillingness' continue, given the demands of the SAP and debt repayment obligations which mean less and less money available for social services and long-term development plans? Most likely not for long. Indeed, as a result of protests by the affected groups in Africa, programmes for the so-called alleviation of the social effects of structural adjustment are being instituted.

More disturbing in the African situation is the fact that, because of the low level of development of productive forces, politics is taken to be a job and control of

government as the only sure way of making a living or protecting what is already acquired. The Nigerian experiments in democracy are quite revealing in this respect. Although Nigeria is one of the richest African countries, the view that politics is a job to be won and kept at all costs is thriving. The most recent and on-going Babangida experiment in state-managed democracy clearly shows this point. A government report in 1989, following the applications by various organizations for registration as political parties, pointed out very candidly that the power tussles and factionalism among these various organizations betrayed:

a view of politics as a do-or-die battle-field where stakes are high and where the winner takes all and the loser loses all. The implications of this view of politics are so grave that one cannot but discern in it portents of the destructive consequences of the politics of intolerance and victimization that sounded the death knell of our previous experiments in democratic government.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the recent experience in the Nigerian primaries for presidential candidates for the two state-created parties, the Social Democratic Party and National Republican Convention, underlines the point. The August 1992 elections within each party were so full of rigging and other malpractices that they had to be repeated in September. Therefore, although the opening up of political space under multiparty politics (partly as a result of the donors' political conditionalities) is positive for civil society in Africa, the strengthening of civil society is not seriously envisaged as part of the programme of the new democracies, whether by the donors who are imposing the conditionalities or by most of the new-breed leaders.

### 3 WHAT IS TO BE DONE: WHO CAN DO IT?

We have identified five propositions about the character of and motivation for the new political conditionalities. We have also looked at three contradictory interpretations of this new development and what it means for Africa.

Taking these new conditionalities at face value and adopting the point of view of finance capital (donors) will serve no useful purpose for the African peoples. Indeed, to do so would be simply to aid the project of finance capital. However, at the same time the point of view of most of the incumbent regimes — mainly that they are being forced to accept a specific definition of

<sup>28</sup> On this point for Tanzania for instance see I. G. Shivji, 1986, *Law, State and Working Class in Tanzania*, TPH, James Curry, London, for Uganda see J-J. B. Barya, 1990, *Law, State and Working Class 'Organization in Uganda 1962-1987'* unpublished PhD thesis, Warwick University.

<sup>29</sup> S. Decalo, *supra*, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> National Electoral Commission, 1989, *Report and Recommendations on Party Formation* (Lagos, 1989): 8-9 in O. Oyediran and A. Agbaje, 1991, 'Two partyism and democratic transition in Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 29 No 2: 225.

democracy, namely multi partyism — however enticing it may be, should also be firmly rejected. While democracy cannot be forced on a people, as we have consistently argued, the autocratic leadership of Africa should not be allowed to use independence and the right of 'self-determination' to lord it over the masses. But the objection to this must be by the African people themselves and not any self-appointed 'god-father' or 'new philanthropist'.

There are, in our view, two approaches which should be combined to enhance the prospects of democracy. The arguments presented by the OAU and the ECA about the undemocratic nature of the international economic system should be taken together with the need to oppose SAPs and to agitate for the scrapping of Africa's (or Third World) debts. After all, a lot of the debt monies did end up in the hands of the dictators, who were being maintained in power with the support of the donors who have now 'suddenly seen the light'. 'As a senior French official observed . . . on 28 February (1990) in *Le Monde*, African dictators are in effect taking French aid money and depositing it in Swiss Bank accounts or buying Japanese goods with it.'<sup>31</sup> Again in 1990, a senior French official noted in *Le Monde* that there was actually no debt crisis in French Africa since 'the personal fortunes of Africa's élites outside the continent were greater than the debts of the countries in question'. In 1988 for instance the Bank of France had purchased US\$ 1.8 billion worth of CFA banknotes fraudulently transferred to Europe in 'full suitcases and diplomatic bags'.<sup>32</sup> The approach to the economic problems of Africa must therefore be linked to the democratic project, because this project is both social and political. The question of democracy itself has both economic and socio-political implications at the international level and at the level of the African state.

At the level of the nation state what should be emphasized is the creation or strengthening of autonomous civil organizations (organizations autonomous of the state) covering peasants, workers, women, the informal sector, professional and religious organizations, etc. The strength of these and probably their relationship with the different political parties would determine whether the 'new democracy' being fought for can be achieved and sustained. The role of the donors here should be simply to encourage this situation. The donors should deal with any elected government. It is the duty of the nationals to struggle for the best form of government. The definition of democracy by foreigners will not necessarily coincide with the definition by civil society and the majority of the people in the African countries.

In this regard it is imperative that autonomous civil organizations in Africa link up with those in the developed countries, especially in the major capitalist countries, to struggle against the international economic system or, as it is now called by some scholars, the New International Division of Labour and Power (NIDL).<sup>33</sup> The policies of the IMF, the World Bank and Western countries should be actively opposed by autonomous organizations in the West: trade unions, women's organizations, the Green and Environmental movements and other progressive political organizations or parties. The existing and emerging civil organizations in Africa should therefore make links with a selection of these organizations in the West; 'a selection' because some of them are pushing forward the interests of their states and/or finance capital and not all can be regarded as allies. This is in fact very important because, with the collapse of Eastern European state socialism, it has become untenable for Western states to prop up fascist and dictatorial regimes with impunity. The smoke screen that such fascists/dictators were 'bulwarks against communism' has been removed. Because further demands to financially support Eastern Europe are being made on their economies, ordinary people in Europe now want to know why money is being spent on a given country. It is at the point of these demands by civil society in Europe that popular forces and autonomous civil organizations in Africa should forge links to ensure that their respective governments are accountable to them. The possibilities of the success of this strategy are presaged by the fact for instance that the World Bank and IMF, following protests against the structural adjustment programmes, have attempted to create all sorts of programmes to 'alleviate' the adverse social effects (so-called social costs) of those programmes. The new world order that the West is trying to create is therefore not a foregone conclusion but will also be shaped by the character and strength of popular resistance to it.

But how can the multi party system in Africa work? The multi party system in Africa has, among other things, at least two major problems. The first one is the lack of consensus among the middle classes as to the rules that should govern such a system. We refer to the middle classes because they are invariably the leaders and programme formulators of the parties. It is because (a) the African middle classes are not economically autonomous at the level of the nation-state but dependent structurally on the Western capitalist system, and (b) because most of these different political parties in Africa are tied to particular Western state or multinational company interests, they are almost invariably cornered into compradorial roles. The

<sup>31</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 9 March 1990, Vol 31 No 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Africa Report*, January-February 1991: 19 quoted in S. Decalo op. cit.: 19.

<sup>33</sup> T. M. Shaw, 1991, 'Reformism, revisionism and radicalism in African political economy', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 29 No 2: 191-212.

second problem is the exclusion of organized civil society, or worse still its fractionalization along the divisions among the middle class parties, so that the effective operation of organized civil society becomes difficult to sustain. Besides, the compradorial character of these parties will of course very quickly alienate them from the majority of the African populace.

It should also be understood that the state of Africa as it stands today cannot possibly withstand external pressure on its own. This was hard enough during the era of the Cold War when the Soviet Union provided countervailing checks to Western hegemony in the world. But in a unipolar world, at least for the foreseeable future, there is no alternative to regional integration and co-operation. This should become more meaningful with the liberation of South Africa.

Finally, we point out that it is the obligation of the organic intellectuals in African countries to identify and publicize the dangers of the new political conditionalities and form/join organizations that will

fight them. But more important is the need for civil society and organizations autonomous of the state to try and use the new political space in Africa, now, whatever its genesis. At the same time, they must resolutely reject the new compradorial elements which are now being encouraged by the West or individual countries like France, the UK or the USA for their political interests. Some of the new political parties/groups are popular or at least sections of them represent popular classes/groups in African society. They should be identified and alliances made with them. This should be taken even more seriously in a situation where policy is still being made and alternative ideologies and strategies being formulated for the purpose of creating a new form of legitimacy, with new middle class leaders replacing discredited dictatorial regimes. Otherwise, to expect moral transformation of the West and the Western states in particular and to entrust the democratization process and demand for rights to them is an abdication of our own responsibilities for which we would pay dearly under the new type of hegemony. We cannot expect other people gratuitously to make history on our behalf.