The Attrition of Democratic Gains in Africa: An Appraisal

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Abstract
Since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in early 1990s, governments in Africa have established measures and mechanisms to institutionalise and consolidate democracy. International community and local non-governmental organizations have been at the forefront in supporting democratisation initiatives by governments. Despite the efforts, there are structural factors that impede institutionalisation and consolidation of democracy. This paper therefore, seeks to offer a critical analysis of the factors that are contributing to the erosion of democracy. Country examples are highlighted to support the thesis of the paper. The paper uses historical trajectory to demonstrate how patronage, ethnicity, electoral authoritarianism and extension of presidential term limit erodes democratic gains in Africa. The paper concludes that in order for democracy to flourish in African, structural impediments to democracy need to be addressed.
Keywords: Democracy, Term Limit, Electoral Authoritarianism, Ethnicity, Electoral Violence

1. Introduction

The concept democracy has been part of man's political life for ages. Indeed, the concept has percolated from the ancient Greek to modern day nation-state. In defining democracy, scholars have identified similar central tenets inseparable to democracy. A definition by Schumpeter in 1947, later refined by Dahl in 1971 emphasizes free, fair, periodic and competitive elections with widespread participation which culminate into lawfully contested political systems. Schumpeter's classical definition of democracy as an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" is in tandem with Dahl's concept of 'polyarchy' which encompasses elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, the right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information and associational autonomy (Chandler, 1999: 7).

Mukandala (2001:4) introduces the social, economic and political dimensions of democracy. According to him, democracy entails the social networks of production, state and state power and accompanying institutions and existing frameworks of social organisation or what he calls "mode of social organisation of society." It is apparent from the foregoing that democracy permeates every facet of human life. It defines and gives meaning to the life of the "political animal" it defines the trajectory of a polity. It goes beyond holding elections and establishing institutions. Gunther (cited in Chandler, 1999: 7) agrees to this by asserting that "merely creating democratic institutions and holding elections captures only part of the process through which stable, viable democratic systems come into being".

For democracy to survive, Bratton and Mattes (2007: 193) submit that large majorities of citizens should demand democracy as their preferred political regime and judge that their leaders have internalized and follow democracy's institutional rules. Dahl, further revealed that "the prospects for stable democracy are improved if its citizens and leaders strongly support democratic ideals, values, and practices. The most reliable support comes when these beliefs and predispositions are imbedded in the country's culture and are transmitted, in large part, from one generation to the next" Ringen (2009: 229). Mukandala (2001:2) succinctly summarizes the standard that can be used to interrogate transition and consolidation of democracy. He highlights (1) holding successive elections (2) peaceful alternation in power of political parties/leaders (3) longevity of regime and (4) respect of democratic governments by other players. Monty G. Marshall (2014:14) yardstick includes (1) competitiveness of political participation (2) openness and competiveness of executive recruitment and (3) constrains of the chief executive. The yardsticks provided by the two scholars are appropriate in understanding democracy in Africa. The two frameworks can be used in different dosage to analyse Africa's democratic trajectory.

Since the second wave of democratisation that engulfed most part of the continent in the 1990s, governments in Africa have attempted to institutionalise and consolidate the tenets of democracy. Multiparty elections have been introduced and constitutions redrafted. Certainly, gains have been made to entrench democratic principles in most post-independence African states. Nzongola-Ntalaja (1997), Chege (1992) and Mukandala (2001) are optimistic on the future of democracy in the continent. To them, democracy continues to disconnect Africa states from the "dark" past, a past that was characterized by authoritarianism, political assassinations, military coups and subjugation of individual rights. They view democracy as a timely ideology that offers a footstool for reforms, strong institution and guarantees civil liberties.

Despite the trumpeted progress, questions have been raised on the commitment of African leaders in propagating ideals of democracy. Venter (2003: 1-2) is poignant in his description of the situation, he writes that "the most common perception is that of a democratic government under siege, of constitutional governance being undermined, of the rule of law being flagrantly disregarded." Indeed, Venter (2003) summarizes the predicament of Africa's democratic quest. The question at this point, therefore, is why is the democracy project not working two decades after the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in Africa? This paper delves into this question in-depth. The appraisal limits its self to the period 1992-2015. This period has been selected premised on the fact that this is the period that African governments have been grappling with entrenching democracy. Both secondary and primary data is used to buttress the argument. Primary data was adduced from key informants who have been involved both academically and in practice with Africa democratisation process. The paper is organised in three thematic parts. Part one discusses existing democratic theories, part two looks at Africa's democratic trajectory and the final part delves on the structural factors that have contributed to the erosion of democracy in Africa.

2. Theories of Democracy

The literature on democracy theorising has oscillated between modernisation, structuralism, transitional and cultural theories. In the four clusters, different factors have been attributed to have given impetus to the emergence of democracy in different polities. The modernisation school of thought attributes the emergence of democracy to economic development. To the proponents (Lipset, 1959; Rostow, 1960, Almond and Verba, 1963 and Moore, 1966) of this theory, democracy and economic development are twin concepts that coexist side by side. The progenitors of modernisation posit that polities can only embrace democracy if they attain some degree of economic development. Thus, if a polity seeks to be a democracy, it must modernise. Lipset (1959) cogently writes that modernisation provides a fertile ground for the seeds of democracy to germinate. It triggers "widespread education, a large middle class, an independent civil society, and liberal democratic values" (Lipset, 1959:78).

While this narrative can be conceived as true in reference to some countries in Europe and America to be specific, it cannot be entirely generalized to represent the reality in other polities in different geographical space. Comparative political literature is awash with countries that have attained higher degree of economic development without embracing libertarian principles. As noted by a respondent who spoke to us "China is not a democracy but it has attained the Millennium Development Goals (notably it has been particularly successful in reducing the share of extreme poverty). This has translated into great economic dividends for the global economy[1]." The Asian tigers are another example of unprecedented success of prioritising development over democracy. Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan make up this group of countries. Diamond, (2013:6) is exquisite in his analysis. He submits that "Rulers such as Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan (r. 1950–75), Park Chung Hee in South Korea (r. 1961–79), and Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore (r. 1959–90) were able to develop their countries with Lee promoting "Asian Values" of order, family, authority, and community." Their "undemocratic" nature has not prevented them from "attracting high levels of external aid, substantial foreign investment, and economic partnerships with other countries" (Joseph, 2014: 64).

In Africa, the influence of development over democracy can be seen in Ethiopia and Rwanda. The two countries have been cited to circumvent some tenets of democracy by human rights groups. The two countries have been labeled to be practicing "developmental patrimonialism". Joseph, (2014:63) notes that these two countries draw inspiration from the East Asian economies as they make economic policy with the long term agenda in mind and, like the East Asian models, they seek to promote agricultural and industrial initiatives that take advantage of niche opportunities in the global economy. Their governance structures are also different. Rwanda's President Paul Kagame often described as austere and the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia was considered a social revolutionary. Thus irrespective of their governance styles they are similar in that they "promote developmental governance conceived as optimising the performance of public and private institutions" (Joseph, 2014: 64). We argue in this paper that the perceived ability of President Paul Kagame to deliver economic benefits to his citizens is the antithesis of allowing him to overstay his welcome in power – third term. Certainly not withstanding its checkered democratic record, Rwanda under the stewardship of Kagame has performed exceptionally well economically. According to African Economic Outlook 2015, Rwanda's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from 4.7 percent in 2013 to 7.0 percent in 2014. It is projected to rise to 7.5 percent in 2015 – 2016. The above cited examples negate the popular assumption being propounded by modernist that there is a nexus between democracy and economic development.

On the other hand, there are countries that have embraced democracy without achieving economic development. Rakner (2007:8) observes that "a large number of countries experiencing a transition to democracy during the third wave fell in the bottom third of the Human Development Index." Most countries in sub-Sahara

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1 Key informant interview conducted on 3rd November 2015

Africa fall within the purview of this argument. Thus the modernisation assumption becomes a fallacious argument in understanding the emergence of democracy. From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that modernisation theory has some glaring gaps and it cannot account for realities as far as democracy and economic development are concerned.

The second theory of democratisation is structuralism. The crux of this theory is premised on its inclination to social class. The proponents (Moore 1966; Grugel 2002) of this theory underscore the centrality of social classes in propagating the emergence of democracy. Moore (1966) identifies three interclass relationships that give impetus to democracy: the peasant, land owners and the bourgeoisie. The antagonistic relationship between the classes triggers the birth of a democratic society. A cursory look at Africa, one is persuaded to argue that the African peasant was a force in the democratic emancipation during the independence era. African peasants formed liberation movements to fight for independence and the installation of democratic order. In Kenya for example, the Mau Mau largely composed of petty peasants was instrumental in the independence struggle. The same can be said of South Africa during the apartheid regime. Samyurira (1978:8) citing the South Africa experience opines that:

> the Soweto and Langa uprising in June 1976 were only the visible tip of a fully-fledged [class] struggle between the white bourgeoisie and the black working class in South Africa….The young students who burned down their schools and the workers who refused to go to work represent advanced elements of a proletarian class that has been developing in South Africa for many years.

During multiparty era, the middle class (which was mainly composed of lawyers, intelligentsia, politicians, urban workers and clerks in Marxist term petty bourgeoisie) was instrumental in the agitation for multipartism in various countries in Africa in the 1990s. It is, therefore, not farfetched to argue that the class struggles was and is still is important in the democratisation of the African continent. Despite the utility of structuralism in understanding the emergence of democracy, it has been criticized for over emphasising on the social classes thus overlooking other important aspects such as the role of institutions (churches, civil society organizations, and media) in the emergence of democracy. In addition it does take into cognizance of the role of external factors in triggering the proliferation of democracies. As we will later discuss in this paper, the international community and the Bretton Woods Institutions played a key role in the reintroduction of pluralism in Africa.

Other theories that have been used to explain the emergence of democracy and are relevant in explaining Africa's democratic trajectory are the agency or process-oriented approach and the cultural approach. The process-oriented approach emphasizes on the role of actors interaction in the emergence of democracy. The approach further takes cognizance of prevailing electoral systems, constitutional frameworks, institutions and international dynamics in propagating democracy. On the other hand, the cultural approach accentuates on cultural and religious factors and historical antecedents such as military or authoritarian rule in contributing in the emergence of democracy. It is apposite to mention that the structural and the process-oriented approach have been used to propound the discourse on Africa democratisation (See for example Huntington 1991 and Bratton and van de Walle 1994). After discussing the theoretical underpinnings of democracy, it's incumbent upon this paper to delve into Africa's experience with democracy which we now turn to.

3. Historiography of Democracy in Africa

The historiography of democracy in Africa can be dissected into three phases – the pre-independence, the post-independence 1960-1990 and the post multiparty phase (1990- to current). Two questions abound at this point. Did pre-independence African society practice some form of democracy? If yes, how was it practiced? Afro-centric scholars (Rodney, 1972; Green, 1964; Ezeanyika, 2011) have authoritatively held the view that before the advent of colonialism, African societies practiced some form of "African democracy" that was hitched on egalitarianism. There were institutions that were responsible to make decisions on behalf of the large community – in Rousseau's words the commonwealth. In some communities the decisions were made by elders who sat under a tree through participatory consensus. Citing an example of the Igbo society of Eastern Nigeria, Ezeanyika (2011) lucidly argues that the Igbos had an elaborate political system that bequeathed responsibility to elders to make, execute and adjudicate decisions. According to him, the Igbos indigenous government was decentralized and segmented. Ezeanyika (2011) writes that:

> The Igbos governed themselves through a communalist political system that was largely referred to as democratic, republican or segmentary. The system was considered democratic because it allowed each married adult member of the house hold, kindred, village, clan to participate in debates, express his or her views and vote. It was republican because it embodied a corresponding set of democratic, meritocratic and egalitarian values and political culture. It was segmentary because it was actualized through various segments from the house hold to the clan level.

In Kenya, the council of *Jodongo* among the Luo community played a cardinal role in ensconcing democratic values. They made decisions on the affairs of the community. They held the community together and ensured that the system was cohesive enough for posterity. Everybody was allowed to input into the discussions before a decision was made. The Age-set system also characterized pre-colonial democratic system. According to Bradley (2005:415), the "Age-set system provided a more systematic organisation of the social, political and economic affairs of the particular nation." The Age-set system symbolized societal continuity and prepared individuals for leadership. In summary we argue that the pre-colonial African society practiced what we refer to a "hybrid democracy" that was characterized by:

1. Communal approach to social affairs. The interest of the community superseded individual interest.
2. Largely egalitarian
3. Decisions were made through consensus.
4. Chieftaincy and council of elders were highly revered they made and executed decisions and adjudicated on the affairs of the community. The decisions made were in consonant with the general good.

Despite the glamorous picture being painted above on the pre-colonial African "hybrid democracy," it was not devoid of blemish. The pre-colonial democratic system has been accused of being discriminatory. Women were not allowed to participate in most community decisions. In fact in some communities women were considered as men's property or categorized as "children". Therefore, by discriminating against women, the system negated the democratic principles of popular representation and participation. A number of pre-colonial chiefdoms were also totalitarian in nature. Ezeanyika (2011: 10) mentions the emperors of Ethiopia, the Kabakas of Uganda and Shaka Zulu of South Africa as notable examples. The leaders of these chiefdoms ruled with an iron hand and opposition to their rule was scorned at. The leaders abhorred any opposition. Despite the pitfalls, it is incumbent upon Africa scholars to appreciate the democratic culture that permeated the various facets of pre-colonial African society. However rudimentary, some typology of democracy was practiced as elucidated above.

The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 that culminated in the scramble and partition of Africa led to the dismantling of the traditional African democracy. It ushered the colonial rule. The colonial rule was mainly geared towards exploitation and accumulation – what we call giving life to imperialism. Osha (2014:34) argues that "the colonial [rule] emasculated and bastardized the indigenous political institutions." The colonial rule introduced new values, religion, education system, new mode and means of production and above all new system of governance much to the chagrin of the natives. In the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, King Leopold established administrative apparatus that were used for control. Leopold used mixed system for economic exploitation, enacted taxation laws to compel the natives to pay taxes and crafted policies that guaranteed resource accumulation (Kisangani, 2012: 12-13). The same scenario was replicated in Nigeria and Kenya under the British rule and Mozambique under the Portuguese rule.

With the lethargic colonial rule becoming unbearable, nationalist movements emerged under the leadership of African elites to defeat the already entrenched colonial hegemony. By late 1960s most Africa colonies had attained independence. New systems of governments were introduced and new constitutions enacted. It suffices to mention that post-independence constitutions advocated for democratic values – rule of law, separation of power, civil and political rights, political participation and periodic elections. However, the gains of independence were immediately reversed. Authoritarian rule was soon established, constitutions amended, monolithic political parties established and presidents for life installed (Gentili, 2005:4). In Malawi for example, Mpesi and Svåsand, (2012: 2) allude to the fact that Hastings Kamuzu Banda engineered a constitutional change that made Malawi a *de jure* one party state. Politics was highly personalized and dissenting views were not tolerated (Otele and Etyang 2015:30). From the foregoing it is apparent that democracy had been severely challenged. Ham and Lindberg, (2015: 522) poignantly note that by the end of the 1980s "42 out of 47 regimes in Africa were either closed autocracies or socialist regimes holding non-competitive, single party elections." The consequences of the closed political system were the many coups that were recorded between 1960 – 1990. Goldsmith (2001) observes that out of 180 leadership changes that occurred between 1960 and 1999, 101 occurred through coup d'états or uncouth means. Osha (2014:34) on the other hand submits that by the dawn of 1985, 23 coups had been recorded in Africa.

Table 1:1 Trends in the Nature of Governance and Multiparty Democracies in Africa.

Political State	Not yet independent	Leader at Independence	Coup d'etat	Other transitions	Single-party elections	Multi-party Elections
1975	11	5	12	10	12	3
1985	3	3	11	12	18	7
1995	1	1	6	12	4	30
2005	1	1	3	14	1	34
2015	0	2	0	3	1	43

Source: Brookings Institute of African Leadership, 2015

The oppressive neopatrimonial rule that characterized most post-independence regimes in Africa, economic meltdown of 1980s coupled with the third wave of democratisation that swept through Spain and Portugal and unrelenting pressure from Bretton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) and internal pressure from civil society organizations, churches, media forced many Africa governments to reintroduce multiparty pluralism (Huntington, 1991, Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997, Brown, 2001). Elections have been held, new constitutions enacted and democratic institutions established.

Posner and Young (2007:130) opine that "by the 1990s, more than 90 percent of presidential elections were contested, and by the 2000–2005 periods, this share had risen to 98 percent." The burgeoning democratic culture being touted in the continent seems to be the new way forward for presidents and governments that want to be politically legitimate. However, the much cherished legitimacy has been questioned in the face of "democracies" that have had their presidents overstaying their welcome in power. Some notable examples of such presidents include: Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, in power since 25 October 1997, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda since 29 January 1986, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe since 22 December 1987, Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea since August 1979, Paul Biya of Cameroon since November 1982 and Yahya Jammeh since 1994. These unfolding political events prompt this paper to interrogate factors that have contributed to the attrition of democracy in Africa in the last two decades.

4. Democratic Attrition in Africa 1990 -2015: Why the Erosion?

Different factors have contributed to the erosion of democracy in Africa in the last two decades. One of the factors has been the blatant extension or removal of presidential term limit. Certainly the discourse on presidential term limit has gained currency in the recent past. Scholars have with gusto delved into the merits and demerits of term limit. According to available statistics 17 countries in Africa have amended/replaced or disregarded/suspended presidential term limit since 1990. The proponents of term limit have argue that term limit enhances electoral turnover, propagates political competition, nurtures democratic culture, prevents electoral authoritarianism and guarantees peaceful political transition (Dulani, 2015; Amstrong, 2011; Baker, 2002, Przeworski et al. 2000; Maltz, 2007 and Corrales and Penfold, 2014). On the other hand opponents of term limit conjecture that term limit deprives society of good leaders and prevents the leaders from finishing their "projects" (Baker, 2002). Citing Hume (1752), opponents of term limit contend that term limit deprives society of the best possible leaders. Hume assumes that an ideal and progressive government would not institute term limit on its chief executive. These reasons have been peddled to remove term limits thus reversing democratic gains.

In Uganda for example, term limit was removed in 2005 to allow Museveni to continue with his "good work" of restoring and maintaining peace in Uganda. The removal of term limit in Uganda has allowed Museveni to be in power for 30 years. The same argument has been touted to remove or extend term limit in Congo Brazzaville and Rwanda. Certainly, the ability of President Paul Kagame to deliver economic benefits for his citizens is the greatest argument for allowing him to extend his stay in power for longer. He has been the president since 2000 and is serving his second term in office for Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). This is not to say that all Africa leaders have overstayed their welcome in power, Presidents Joachim Chissano, Amarndo Guebuza, Jakaya Kikwete, Goodluck Jonathan, Hifikepunye Lucas Pohamba, Festus Mogae have honourably relinquished power

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Democratic overstay in Power 1990- 2015

#	Country	Leader	Means of Overstay	Year of Instituting the Overstay
1.	Algeria	Abdelaziz Bouteflika	Amendment	2009
2.	Angola	Dos Santos	Disregarded	2007
3.	Burkina Faso	Blais Compaore	Amendment	2014
4.	Burundi	Pierre Nkurunziza	Disregarded/Court interpretation	2015
5.	Cameroon	Paul Biya	Amendment	2008
6.	Chad	Idriss Deby	Amendment	2006
7.	Congo Brazzaville	Sassou Nguesso's	Amendment	2016
8.	Eritrea	Isaias Afeworki	Disregarded	2007
9.	Gabon	Omar Bongo	Amendment	2003
10.	Guinea	Lansana Conte	Amendment	2001
11.	Namibia	Sam Nujoma	Amendment	2000
12.	Niger	Mamadou Tandja	Suspended	2009
13.	Rwanda	Juvenal Habyarimana	Replacement	1990
	Rwanda	Paul Kagame	Amendment	2015
14.	Sudan	Omar Al-Bashir	Replacement	2008
15.	Togo	Gnassingbe Eyadema	Amendment	2002
16.	Tunisia	Ben Ali	Amendment	2004
17.	Uganda	Yoweri Musevenu	Amendment 20015	2005

Source: Authors Compilation 2016

It is imperative at this juncture to distill the political illusion and unfounded innuendos that surround the subject of term limit. We argue in this paper that the increasing appetite of African leaders to tinker with the constitution to removal term limit has halted the democratic pendulum. The removal of term limits has wrecked democratic institutions thus paving way for anarchy. In Burundi for example, Nkurunziza's push for a third term has plunged Burundi into chaos and triggered human right crisis. The root of the crisis lay in the question as to the proper interpretation of Article 96 of the Burundi Constitution providing that the "president of the Republic is elected by universal direct suffrage for a mandate of five years renewable one time" (Kabumba, 2015). Opposition parties argued that the interpretation brought by Nkurunziza contravened the Arusha Accord that limited the presidential term to two. The consequence of removal/extension of term limit was the attempted coup, which was staged on 13th May 2015 by Godefroid Niyombare. It has also led to unwarranted political assassination and civilian deaths and displacement. According to inter-agency monitoring report 2016, 239,754 people have been displaced and 439 have been killed. Institutions such as the media have been clamped down. In Burkina Faso, the attempts by Blaise Compaore to extend his 27 years stay in power culminated in his deposition. The vacuum created by his deposition led to a coup. The extension of Sassou Nguesso's term through a plebiscite led to chaos and the death of 17 people (International Business Times, 2016). The above discussion brings us close to the conclusion that democratic gains are being eroded through extension or removal of term limit. The extension or removal of term limit is an upfront to the constitution which offers a footstool to the democratic culture. The increasing propensity of leaders to remove or extend term limit erodes democratic gains and frustrates the consolidation of democracy.

Related to the issue of presidential term limit are the issues of election and electoral authoritarianism. Suffice to say that elections are very critical in championing the tenets of democracy. In other words they midwife democracy. In Africa elections have become a periodic ritual held to assuage the electorates or the international donors. In fact the debate has morphed from the number or frequency of elections to the quality of elections. This prompts us to talk about electoral authoritarianism. Schedler (2006: 1-23) defines electoral authoritarianism as a government under the control of a totalitarian leader who purports to establish "the institutional facades of democracy including regular multiparty elections for the chief executive in order to conceal harsh realities of authoritarian governance." From Schedler's (2006) postulation we advance the view point that the concept speaks to the issue of engrained undemocratic culture of elections manipulation or rather election rigging to favour the incumbent. The elections are thus organized in a predetermined pattern designed to uphold the status quo. Schedler laconically submits that "electoral contests are subject to state manipulation, so severe, widespread and systematic that they do not qualify as democratic." Goldsmith, (2010) notes that "one way to determine the outcome of elections is to intimidate voters and opposition candidates to such an extent that competition is reduced sufficiently for the incumbent to stay in power." Echoing Schedler supposition, Powell

(2000) notes the issue with not-so clear democracies is that "they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than instruments of democracy." In other words they fail the test of democratic rigour.

In Africa, electoral authoritarianism has continued to manifest. The continued manifestation of electoral authoritarianism has eroded democracy in some countries. According to Wanyande (1998:57) "rather than provide the electorate with the opportunity and freedom to choose a government of their choice, the government imposes itself on them". Thus, the electoral system has been used to prevent structural and institutional attempts to challenge the primacy of the ruling party government; a factor which undermines the democratic condition. In Burundi for instance, electoral authoritarianism was evident in the way the National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) manipulated the judiciary and the electoral commission to legitimize the "sad term". Media houses were closed and majority of opposition parties were intimidated into exile. Electoral authoritarianism was manifested by a lack of consensus among key stakeholders on pertinent national issues such as election calendar, insecurity, and return of refugees, media freedom, civil liberty and composition of the electoral body (see East African Community preliminary statement, 2015). This situation led to the boycott of election by a majority of the opposition candidates. Most the candidates that we interacted with argued that participating in the election would give Nkurunzinza political legitimacy. In Uganda, during the February 2016 general elections the National Resistant Army (NRM) was accused of harassing and intimidating opposition parties. The opposition leader, Kizza Besigye was constantly under house arrest during the electioneering period. As one respondent noted "You cannot intimidate the main opposition candidate and expect people to endorse your win. The political playing field has not been fair to warrant credible elections[1]." In its preliminary statement the European Union Election Observation Mission wrote:

> The National Resistance Movement's (NRM's) domination of the political landscape distorted the fairness of the campaign and state actors were instrumental in creating an intimidating atmosphere for both voters and candidates. The incumbent had access to funding and means, including to public media that were not commensurate with those available to his competitors. The lack of transparency and independence of the Electoral Commission (EC), and its markedly late delivery of voting material on election day to several districts considered opposition strongholds – most notably in Kampala, decreased the opportunity for voters to cast their ballots. The Uganda Communication Commission blocked access to social media on Election Day which unreasonably constrained freedom of expression and access to information.

Aalen and Tronvoll (2008) report of instances of electoral authoritarianism in Ethiopia during the April 2008 local elections for neighbourhood and county parliaments. According to them, the ruling party, Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) harassed and overawed the opposition parties. In summary we argue that elections are becoming ritualistic events meant to legitimized otherwise illegitimate regimes thus eroding democratic ideals. Electoral authoritarianism is not only limited to elections it has also been exhibited during referendums. In the concluded referendum in Congo Brazzaville, the European Union refused to send an observer mission arguing that the prevailing legal and institutional framework did not guarantee a free and fair referendum. To them, the process was predestined to sanitise Sassou Nguesso's quest to extend his term in office.

The consequence of electoral authoritarianism leads to another factor that has contributed to the erosion of democratic values in Africa - political patronage. Patronage systems chokes democratic requirement for transparent institutions. Citing Jackson and Rosberg (1982), Arriola, (2009:1344) posits that patronage system destabilise power and create "a system of relations linking rulers not with the 'public' or even with the ruled (at least not directly), but with patrons, associates, clients, supporters, and rivals, who constitute the 'system." The power dynamic is a result of the complex personal bonds that are founded on mutual material advantage. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2004: 165) are more nuanced in their analysis; they contend that "the patron furnishes excludable resources to dependents and accomplices in return for their support and cooperation." These parasitic relationships between the ruler and the ruled can be fashioned according to religious or ethnic, clan of family cleavages and their impact is usually based on the availability of benefits and how they can be apportioned. A patronage network is advantageous to the political elites because it ensures that they have loyal people working with them and for them. In most case the patron-client relationship or what Bayat refers to as *politique du ventre',* is sustained by appropriation of state largess much to the chagrin of the indigent population. In rare occasions the ties can be advantageous for democratic accountability if the leader's team is composed of technocrats and managers who share the aspirations and policy agenda of the leader and can be trusted to implement programmes without sabotage (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2004: 167).

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[1] Key informant interview on 20th February 2016

Patronage has been destructive to democracy in Africa. It has permeated both political and economic spheres thus weakening democratic institutions. Existing literature indicate that patronage systems have been used by African leaders to distort economic policies and tinker with constitutions. Due to patronage ties, governments in Africa have ended up having bloated cabinets. The bloated cabinet, in most cases, formulated around patronage ties ends up consuming a lot of resources meant for development. Kroeger (2012:9) gives an example of Cameroon which had 44 ministers in 2000 against its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) converted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) that was slightly higher than 23 billion. The resultant effect is poor provision of services premised on the fact that a huge chunk of the money is used to run the huge government. Mugabe has been accused of sustaining himself in power through patronage. The consequences have been economic meltdown of the Zimbabwe economy; violence experienced in 2008 and a stunted democratic agenda in Zimbabwe. In Kenya, after the 2007/2008 post-election violence, the largest cabinet was constituted under a grand coalition government. It was made up of 40 ministers and 50 assistant ministers.

The amount of resources used to sustain the huge cabinet was colossal. However, on a positive note it is apposite to mention that despite the huge cabinet, the grand coalition was able to initiate a raft of reforms and development projects. Patronage system has also been used to manage elite relations and promote peace in ethnically divided societies (Arriola, 2009). In Côte d'Ivoire, Félix Houphouët-Boigny was successful in keeping the country stable from 1960-1993 by skillfully utilizing patronage. He distributed key party position and state largess to key elites in the system (Vogt 2007:53). Boigny ensured that all important ethnic groups were represented in government – in the political party, government, parliament and key state institutions. Vogt (2007) in fact considers Boigny "a prototype of a clientelistic one party system". Implicit in this clientilistic system was a carefully ensured ethnic and regional balance.

Ethnicity has compounded the problem of patronage in Africa. Ethnicity is intertwined with patronage system. Since the advent of multiparty politics, ethnicity has continued to ebb the tide of democracy. Ethnic competition based on patronage networks has continued to define the nature of political competition and the nature of resource distribution. In Ghana for example:

> Successful national elections since 1992 have been marked by the emergence of ethnic bloc voting. And patron-client politics works very effectively within the electoral process, as it does in so many countries outside Africa, exchanging client votes for patron/leaders for expected distribution of material benefits. (Berma, 2010: 26)

The winner-take-it-all model further exacerbates ethnic competition for state power. Ethnic groups use existing democratic institutions to seise power at the expense of small ethnic groups. This ultimately results to corruption and plunder of state resources as ethnic groups maximise on "our turn to eat." The politics of the belly becomes the norm. As recognized by El-Khawas (2001) "the winner-take-all model has presented a serious problem that, in the long run, undermines the success of democracy in Africa" because of the resulting instability that emanate from entrenched ethnic cleavages. As noted by a respondent, "in Ivory coast and Kenya ethnic politics make it hard for opposition parties to be purely opposition parties without their opposition being viewed from an ethnic lens[1]." In Kenya, political parties and political coalitions have been formed along ethnic lines to maximise on "our turn to eat." Party ideology has been ignored as ethnicity reigns supreme. The consequence of "eating" has been unprecedented corruption where public resources are diverted for personal use. The cases of corruption reported in Kenya (NYS and youth fund cases) buttresses the above argument. The second consequence of ethnic politics is electoral violence. Political exclusion of major ethnic groups raises ethnic antipathies that result in ethnically motivated electoral violence.

That electoral violence has become infused in the political process in Africa since the reintroduction of party pluralism. Electoral violence has been used by groups to influence electoral process and to oppose the system under which elections have been held. In Africa, it will be right to argue that all the elections with an incumbent defending have been violent. The experienced violence can largely be attributed to electoral authoritarianism tactics employed by incumbents to remain in power and the fear of defeat and disenfranchisement from power. In Kenya, for example, election related violence was experienced in 1992 and 1997 when President Moi defended his position in office. The violence was mainly experienced in the Rift Valley, Coast and Nyanza Regions. In 2007/2008 high voltage violence was experienced when we had the incumbent President Kibaki defending his second term. In Côte d'Ivoire in 2010/2011, electoral violence was triggered after the incumbent – Laurent Gbagbo refused to relinquish power. In Burundi, violence continues unabated due to the failure of Nkurunziza to exit after servicing his two terms in office. Other countries that have experienced electoral violence include Nigeria in 2003 and 2007, Lesotho in 1998 and 2007 and Zimbabwe in 2008. The above examples lead us to conclude that electoral violence recorded in the last two decades have eroded democratic gains in Africa.

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[1] Key informant interview on 5th November 2015.

5. Conclusion

Challenges to democracy abound. As demonstrated in this paper democracy still faces a myriad of challenges. It's also not lost on this paper that significant strides have been made by countries in Africa to institutionalise and consolidate democracy. Countries like Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Ghana have made plausible progress in the consolidation of their democracy. Therefore, there is need for concerted efforts to ensure that democracy takes root in the entire continent. Unrelenting appetite by leaders to tamper with the constitution to extend their overstay in power should be abhorred. International, regional, national and local civil society's efforts need to go beyond rhetoric to safe guard the sanctity of constitutional provisions. African philosopher kings should be encouraged to relinquish power at the expiry of their term. Electoral authoritarianism should be rooted out of the electoral process. Elections should a have a meaning to the electorates. They should not be used to assuage the egos of chief executives. Elections should be held in a free, fair, transparent and peaceful, environment. The outcomes of a credible process should be respected by all the actors in the electoral process. The African Union vision of silencing the gun by 2020 should be a reality for democracy to thrive. Silencing the gun will weed out the continent of the perennial electoral violence. Genuine democracy should be allowed to thrive and take root in Africa. It should be able, as Abraham Lincoln once said to promote "a government of the people, by the people and for the people."

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