AUTOCRACY ENDANGERED? AFRICA'S CONTINUOUS SEARCH FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

Africa has experienced varied systems of leadership since the continent was decolonized. About sixty years following independence, Africa remains neck-deep in leadership problems. Many of the constitutional governments that emerged following political independence ended on sad notes. They either overstayed their terms or were overthrown before the end of their tenure. In many such cases, the economic decline was a major factor. Thereafter, the constitutional rule has been interspersed with various shades of autocratic regimes. The argument is that, until about the closing decade of the last century, autocracy had been by far, the dominant style of political leadership in Africa. However, since the 1990s, autocratic rule in Africa seems to have become unpopular. The scholarly approach in this work is a literature survey that dwells mainly on secondary sources drawn from books, journals, magazines, and newspapers, some of which are internet sources. These various sources provide a wide spectrum from which the author identifies the different ways in which African countries have reshaped or redefined democracy as an inheritance from the West. Findings reveal that from the Arab Spring in North Africa, across the Sahara Desert into sub-Saharan Africa, the people have arisen to overthrow some of these regimes. Sudan has never been stable and eventually split in 2011. In Egypt and Libya, Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Al-Gaddafi were pushed out respectively. In January 2017, the ousted Yahya Jammeh of Gambia had to flee under the threat of an ECOWAS military action. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe was booted out in November 2017 and later died in 2019. Could others such as Theodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (Equatorial Guinea), Paul Biya

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(Cameroon), Denis Sassou Nguesso (Congo), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), and Idriss Baby (Chad) be termed the last dinosaurs? What can be said to be the state of the new African democracies today, and is there any hope for the future?

Keywords: Leadership, autocracy, democracy, government, elections

INTRODUCTION

At independence, many African countries adopted the political systems which were bequeathed to them by their respective colonizers. Most notable was the British Westminster style of democratic leadership based on open debate and electoral process (Mazrui, and Tidy,1984). However, within a decade, only very thin traces of this style of leadership could be noticed, the majority having dissolved into new patterns of their kind. Mazrui and Tidy identified three such patterns, namely the elder, sage, and warrior leadership traditions (Mazrui and Tidy, 1984).

They explain the elder tradition as the type of government with the leader being very paternalistic, akin to the father of the nation. It is heavily entrenched under conditions where the original first president still adheres to power. He is seen as the founding father of the nation with prerogatives stretching far beyond the political. He assumes a God-like position and through the delegation of powers, dominates the political scene in the background. The position of such patriarchal leaders derives from the African idea of equating age with wisdom. By this means, they are accorded reverence by their subjects, and since the relationship works to their advantage, they tend to project their African identity to extremity. Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi are examples of such leaders. (Tordoff, 2003).

The second leadership tradition of the post-independence era is the Sage. Under this tradition, the leader becomes the ultimate teacher of the nation. Ideology is used as a monopoly to get the people to respond positively to the ideas coming from such a leader. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Julius Nyerere of

Tanzania belong to this category of African leaders. In his work 'The Philosophy of Revolution', Abdel Nasser sought to project Egypt as the center of the world; precisely, the center of the 'three circles' made up of the Arab world, the Muslim world, and Africa. As the center, he envisaged Egypt to be mandated to lead the others. Similarly, Nkrumah wrote several books to educate Ghanaians as well as other Africans on his vision of the new African society (Nkrumah, 1970). Julius Nyerere, the most typical of this tradition did the same for his countrymen (Nyerere, 1970).

The third tradition is the Warrior Tradition. This manifested in two phases - in the colonial and post-independence periods. In the colonial period, it was first linked to the primary resistance to colonial intrusion as in the Nandi Revolt in Kenya (1903) and the *Maji Maji* Rebellion in Tanzania (1906) and was revived later just about the time colonial power neared its end, as in the *Mau Mau* rebellion in Kenya (1948-1963). The second phase of this tradition occurred after independence and started first in the late 1960s through to the 1980s when revolutionary military regimes swept through the continent, largely as struggles against dependency and in reaction to the failure of the Founding Father rulers whose countries were on the path to ruins. Examples here include Jerry John Rawlings's Ghana, Samora Machel's Mozambique, Mengistu Haille Mariam's Ethiopia, Thomas Sankara's Burkina Faso, and Muammar Al- Gaddafi's Libya (Keith and Agbese, Pita, 2004).

Apart from these categories identified by Mazrui and Tidy, Prebendalism is another feature of African politics. It is a political system that allows elected officials and government workers to use their countries' resources for the benefit of their cronies, ethnic group, and other associates. The word is believed to have been used first in this sense by Northwestern University Professor, Richard Joseph. He adapted it for his study of the Nigerian political system but has also applied it as a generalization for African politics (Richard Joseph, 2012 a, 202014 b). To some extent, it is a cause of political instability in Africa, such as in the Liberian Civil War, and Rwandan Genocide, and in many

cases of corruption in the Nigerian political system (Demarest L., 2012: 684-702), as well as other African countries.

AUTOCRATIC TENDENCIES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Whether Elder, Sage, or Warrior tradition in any which Prebendalism may play a role or not, it cannot be gainsaid that leadership style in Africa has by and large been autocratic, with the majority being military regimes, at least up to about the beginning of the 1990s (Charlton, 1983, Houngnikpo, 2010). How have these traditions reflected autocratic tendencies? To answer this question, a distinction ought to be made between what in the context of this paper may be termed 'benevolent autocracy/dictatorship' and 'actual autocracy/dictatorship'. In both cases, due constitutional processes are lacking, but a 'benevolent autocracy' may be characterized by relative peace that allows the citizenry to work and earn a living however minimal. There may also be some level of economic progress or none at all. Leaders like Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, Muammar Al-Gaddafi of Libya and Julius Nyerere come under this category. How did the economies of their countries fare, and what was the reaction of their citizens to the state of affairs?

Indeed, Houphouet-Boigny was one of Africa's presidents for life. Gaining independence from France in 1960, he ruled till his death in 1993. Yet the *Independent* observed on its website that during this period, Cote d'Ivoire became one of the most stable and peaceful countries in Africa (Obituary: Felix Houphouet Boigny: www.independent.co.uk).

Comparatively too, it was among the most prosperous countries in sub-Saharan Africa. By the early 1980s, Cote d'Ivoire could boast of one of the highest per capita incomes backed by only agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa. This leap in the country's economy was attributed to what may be referred to as a rare phenomenon on the continent. According to *Britannica.com*, unlike many other African countries in the period which took to state-run industrialization resulting in failure and dire consequences, Houphouet-Boigny stuck strictly to cash crop

production backed by liberal free-enterprise policies (Felix Houphouet Boigny President of Cote Ivoire. www.britannica.com). The main cash crops included cocoa, coffee, palm oil, and pineapple. By the early 1980s, Cote d'Ivoire had become the world's leading producer of cocoa as well as Africa's leading exporter of pineapples and palm oil.

However, these positive indices did not indicate that the country was entirely free from problems. Indeed, the *Independent* noted that the last decade of his reign has been described as a 'tragic paradox.' The country experienced an attempted coup in 1963 and a revolt by students in 1970. Only three years after his death, the post-Cold War political order pushed Houphouet-Boigny into initiating moves for a multi-party system in April 1990. You need to particularly point out how Houphouet-Boigny exhibited autocratic tendencies during his reign in power. That should be the high point of your argument at this stage. For example, his sit-tight rule and probably, suppression of opposition, etc.

Described as one of Africa's most respected figures who left office without scandal and charges of corruption, amassing wealth, or seeking personal interest, it might sound like a wonder that Julius Nyerere could fall under the mantle of autocracy. The simple reason is that he overstayed his time and turned Tanzania into a one-party state. However, what distinguished him from many of his contemporaries like Nkrumah was his willingness at a point, to give up power, and indeed, he did give it up. This is highly uncharacteristic of a typical African leader as pointed out by former US President Barack Obama in his address to the African Union in Addis Ababa in 2015, that, Africa's presidents–for–life are a hindrance to democracy in the Continent. (Barack Obama: 2015, July, Africa's presidents-for-life are a risk to democracy – amp.theguardian.com). Unfortunately, Tanzania remained an economically backward country despite Nyerere's bold attempts to build the country's economy.

By the late 1960s, Tanzania was one of the poorest countries in the world after achieving independence under the leadership of Nyerere in 1961. Geographically or environmentally, the country is not well endowed, but in addition to this were the problems of foreign debt;

a decrease in foreign aid; and a fall in the price of commodities. As a socialist, he devised his African concept of socialism which was spelled out in the Arusha Declaration of 1967 (Ujamma, socialism, and self-reliance). The concept had rural development as its agenda. Under this economic system, people were encouraged or sometimes forced to live and work on a co-operative basis in organized villages called '*ujamaa'*, a Kiswahili word translated literally to mean 'familyhood'.

The system was people-centered, and aimed at raising the standard of living of the people and developing them rather than focusing on increased production. Concerning human development and self-reliance, some success was achieved in the areas of health, education, and political identity, but it did not lead to any significant economic progress. The system was marred by the corruption of the officials who executed it. It was resisted by the people who were not used to the idea of collective farming and living in rural communes.

By the time Nyerere left office in 1985, he had not succeeded in lifting his country out of poverty. Though, a socialist and a Pan-Africanist like Nkrumah, he was not 'pushed' out before his time, neither by his people nor the West. Upon retirement, he went to neither jail nor exile, but rather to his home village, Butiama, near the shore of Lake Victoria. Even the Roman Catholic Church had attempted to canonize him. Yet, he was an autocrat of a sort and a benevolent autocrat for that matter. He left the country in poverty as he found it, but there has been no evidence that like many African rulers, he put himself in a much better economic position than his countrymen. In short, Tanzania under Nyerere was an autocracy in which the autocrat shared in the problems of his subjects.

Another good example of benevolent autocracy was Libya under Gaddafi. Seizing power in 1969, Gaddafi transformed the small but oil-rich country into a purely socialist political economy (Begat, 2005). Surely, he was an autocrat and held on to power for about four decades, but economically, Libya rated among the highest in Africa, and Libyans fared better than other several other Africans. Under Gaddafi, Libya was spared of the operations of foreign imperial multinationals and the country was classified as an Upper Middle-Income Economy by the

World Bank (Source). Libya was one of the richest countries in the world in the early 1980s and adequately met the needs of its small population in such areas as health, housing, and education. Therefore, though a dictator, his dictatorship did not amount to excluding his countrymen from the country's wealth (Vandewalle, 2011). Libya even became a hub for migrants from other parts of Africa and by that, shared its resources with people on the Continent. Your discussion is very interesting. However, you need to always point out the specific traits in the reigns of these leaders that make them autocratic. I think that is the thrust of your work. It is not enough to simply describe them as autocrats or dictators.

Politically, Houphouet-Boigny, Nyerere, and Gaddafi may be different in many ways, yet their differences did not set them apart as autocrats. Nyerere and Gaddafi were ardent proponents of African unity while Houphouet-Boigny showed ambivalence towards the concept. Again, though both supported African unity, their approaches to it were different. However, all three ruled without term limits and for very long periods. While Houphouet-Boigny ruled for life and Nyerere resigned in old age, Gaddafi stayed on till he was forcibly removed. This indeed formed the basis for their autocracy. Correct!

SOME FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COLLAPSE OF AUTOCRACY

Several factors account for the drift away from autocracy since the 1990s. First was the prevailing international political climate marked by the end of the Cold War. For the period that it lasted, the West and America had tolerated and sometimes even supported dictators to outmaneuver their communist rivals. The stimulus that coerced these prosperous nations of the industrial West into friendship with the African regimes was removed, following the disintegration of the Communist bloc. As liberal democracies, their terms for the new friendship now depended on the willingness of the African regimes to toe the line of their dictates. (Keylor, 2011).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the removal of its influence introduced new conditions under which the rich industrial nations of

the West granted aid. The determinants for aid to the post-Cold War countries in Africa now include good governance, discontinuation of state-controlled economic development, and the promotion and sustenance of human rights among others (Keith, Somerville, 1999). Some African autocratic regimes which benefitted from the bipolar superpower politics came crumbling in the years following the end of the Cold War. Some other countries had to quickly amend to fit the new political order to survive. The following events give a picture of the political situation in Africa following the end of the Cold War: between January 1990 and July 2000, as many as 12 African leaders left power after being defeated in elections. They include the following:

1. Aristide Pereira, Cape Verde (1991)
2. Mathieu Kerekou, Benin (1991)
3. Kenneth Kaunda, Zambi (1991)
4. Denis SassouN'Gueso, Congo Rep. (1992)
5. Didier Ratsiraka, Madagascar (1993)
6. Pierre Buyoya, Burundi (1993)
7. Andre Kolingba, CAR (1993)
8. Hastings Banda, Malawi (1994)
9. AneroodJugnaugh, Mauritius (1995)
10. NicephoreSuglo, Benin (1996
11. Malam B. Sangha, Guinea Bissau (2000)
12. Abdou Diouf, Senegal (2000)

This occurrence was unprecedented on a continent where previously, most African heads of state left office through a military coup, political assassination, or some other form of violent or forcible removal (Decals, 1976, Posner and Young, 2007). Only in Mauritius until 1990 did an African leader leave power after losing elections and this was in June 1982. However, this was just the beginning and time would tell whether the trend was going to be maintained.

Also, the African Union's stance on military coups has been a major factor in jettisoning dictatorships in Africa. In furtherance of the course of its predecessor, the OAU, the AU has initiated the concept of Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG). Three main policy

instruments are contained in this broad definition. The first of these is the Lome Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to unconstitutional Changes of Government known as the Lome Declaration. This was adopted in July 2000 in Lome, the Togolese capital (OAU 2000). The second instrument is the Constitutive Act of the AU (2002), and the third one is the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. This third one was adopted in Addis Ababa in January 2007 and became operational on 15th February 2012 (AU 2007) (Issaka, 2014). In addition to these, the following situations have also been considered by the AU as instances of Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG): Intervention by mercenaries to replace a democratically elected government; Replacement of democratically elected governments by armed dissident groups and rebel movements; The refusal by an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning political party after free, fair and regular elections; Any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change of government.

Although some lapses in the AU normative policy have been identified, it by no means has influenced governance in certain positive directions. For example, one of the weaknesses noted in the Lome Declaration is that it focused mainly on the mode of 'accession to power' while neglecting or proving powerless vis-à-vis 'unconstitutional preservation of power' (UPP) by sitting leaders (Ikome, 2007). Also, while the AU normative policy condemns military coups and insists on the 'restoration of constitutional order'', no clear-cut definition explains what it entails. In other words, what happens to a leader who is deposed, and what arrangements are there to replace him if he is not to be reinstated? (Witt, 2012).

Buttressing this point is the fact that between 1990 and July 2000, of the 15 successful coups which were recorded on the Continent, more than half of them overthrew legitimate rulers. These countries were either democratic entities or were in the process of holding multi-party elections. They included the following: Burundi, (1993, 1996); The Gambia, (1994); Niger, (1996); Sierra Leone, (1997); the transitional ones

were Nigeria, (1993); Guinea Bissau, (1999); Comoros, (1999). Indeed, while the wind of change was sweeping across Africa, at the same time, the eruption of these military juntas raised the important question of whether democracy can be upheld in Africa. Can the AU and the post-Cold War climate establish and sustain democracy in Africa?

Besides, younger Africans have over the years observed that many of those, usually the military, who seize power from failed governments or rulers, have not been able to redeem their countries from economic ruin, but in many cases have trod the same ruinous path of those they seized power from. Even elected public officeholders have jettisoned the trust imposed on them by indulging in various acts which are not compatible with their positions. They violate the rights of the citizens; embezzle state funds; dole out government positions to members of their family, friends, and favorites; appoint their children and friends; and remove opposition against them using state security agents, just to mention a few. Many examples abound on the continent. Until the last military coup in 1980, the Ghana military after overthrowing Nkrumah in 1966 never succeeded in making the country better than they found it.

After Lumumba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire) experienced the worst form of the economic regime under Mobutu Sesse Seko, under whose rule the term kleptocracy was coined to describe one of the worst forms of corrupt states in Africa. In Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida after nullifying election results in which Moshood Abiola was believed to have won, was succeeded by Gen Sani Abacha, who visited a regime of terror on the oil-rich nation until he died in 1998. Indeed, so far, military regimes in Africa have not demonstrated that they are a better option.

Young Africans have been witnesses to these and other debased norms which characterize the African political system. Perhaps the only way to keep such governments out of the way is to rise against them if they can. The force of the ordinary people was manifest in the uprising in Libya against Gadaffi, in Burkina Faso against Campoare, where protesters burned the Parliament building and set fire to the homes of

relatives and aides of the President, and in the most recent case, in the Gambia against Jammeh. When a young man of about twenty or thirty years has lived all his life to see his country under only one leader in an international community where other countries have regularly changed governments through peaceful elections, they are bound to develop nostalgia for what is generally upheld to be the ideal form of government.

SOME FEATURES OF THE NEW AFRICAN DEMOCRACIES – MODES OF TRANSITION

An examination of some of the features of the new democracies indicates that there are cracks in the system - Africa is still in search of better governance. Tesfatsion Medhane notes that though democracy is the ultimate goal, there is no consensus on the way to achieving it. (Tesfatsion,1993). He identifies the following to be the patterns of transition:

i. National Conferences
ii. Constitutional revision and multi-party elections
iii. The peaceful transfer of power in elections
iv. UN – assisted transition
v. Transition following the overthrow of a regime
vi. The cease-fire, multi-party elections, and compromise
vii. Limited and controlled democratization from the top
viii. One-party-dominated multi-partyism
ix. Indemnity clause and multi-party elections
x. Blend of authoritarianism and participatory democracy (Tesfatsion, 1993).

The National Conferences also known as 'the Jacobin model' is associated with Francophone African countries. It is an adaptation of France's 18th century Estates General with a theoretical basis rooted in the ideas of the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau; that 'all power emanates from the general will of the people'. In the National Conference, all parts of the populace are supposed to be represented - all the political parties, the elites as well as the country's social, ethnic,

economic, regional, religious, and occupational groups. The aim is to get the authoritarian leadership to accept the will of the people for multi-party elections. This system of transition occurred first in Benin where Mathieu Kerekou lost his bid to win the elections but was granted irrevocable amnesty.

From the Beninois experience, the success of the process was engineered by both internal and external conditions. Internally there was a drastic deterioration in the financial and economic situation, and externally holding the sovereign meeting became a condition for any form of aid. The impact of the process was the fizzling out of the old ruling party by the time elections were held. Though this pattern is identified with the Francophone countries it did not work in some like Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Togo. Its failure in these countries could be attributable to the unavailability of the conditions for take-off or did serve to prove the ineffectiveness of the process.

Constitutional revision and multi-party elections are the models in Anglophone African countries. This model provides for a loose coalition of parties against the incumbent. It surfaced first in Zambia resulting in the defeat of Kenneth Kaunda by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) and also in Kenya where the incumbent regime was defeated by the Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD). The internal and external conditions were important in both cases. The situation compels the incumbent into cooperating with the new regime but remains mainly as opposition whether it adheres to the principles of democracy or not.

Another pattern of transition, perhaps a much better one is the peaceful transfer of power in elections. Under this model, a ruling party that is not authoritarian in a one-party state agrees to hold elections with chances of its defeat. Cape Verde has been the only example in this case. Though a drought-stricken country with very few natural resources, its socio-economic status was a much-enhanced one compared to most countries in Africa. Its populace could be described as politically mature since the people were ready for political transformation (multi-party

democracy) and for which there was international support. The opposition emerged victorious and received the mandate to rule.

Under UN-assisted transition as the name suggests, elections are held under the auspices of the United Nations. The only example in this category is Namibia which attained its independence in 1990. The international situation of the period facilitated the process in the Namibian case. The post-Cold War political dynamics nurtured a spirit of compromise involving the US, the USSR, South Africa, and Cuba concerning the implementation of Resolution 435 on Namibian independence. Consequently, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) supervised a multi-party election leading to the country's independence in 1990.

Transition following the overthrow of a regime has taken place only in Mali and Ethiopia. President Moussa Traore was removed from office following popular discontent backed by the military in 1991. The Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) emerged victorious following elections in early 1992. In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) ousted Mengistu Haile Mariam and established a Transitional Council consisting of representatives of several organizations with the EPRDF as the dominant force.

The Cease-fire, multi-party elections, and a compromise was first identified in Angola. The MPLA ceased fire and participated in multi-party elections, judged as free and fair, and won. Following the elections, an effort had been made to bring about compromise and understanding between the main contending groups.

Limited and controlled democratization from the top provides for a regime in power to preside over an election in which the contending political parties may be its own choice or creation. Some also refer to it as authoritarian democracy (Tesfatsion, 1993). . This occurred in Nigeria where the regime saw the establishment of only two parties- the Social Democratic Party (somehow leftist) and the National Republican Party (somehow rightist). The regime dissolved the leadership of both parties in October 1992. Other examples in this

category include Ghana and Uganda and to some extent Botswana and Senegal.

One-party-dominated multi-partyism is a situation where the ruling party is the major player or the dominant one though some political parties may exist. Such a party holds a monopoly over the infrastructure which enhances chances for supremacy in political competition. Botswana and Senegal are typical examples and to some extent Tanzania.

The indemnity clause and multi-party elections occurred in Ghana where after a long time of resistance to yield to democratization, the government finally gave in reluctantly. There was no other choice because of the prevailing conditions of the post-Cold War era. The constitution included an indemnity clause granting amnesty to officials of the then-military regime under Jerry John Rawlings. He contested the elections as a civilian and won massively.

Finally, another feature identifiable with the new democracies in Africa is that of a Blend of authoritarianism and participatory democracy. Under this model, other parties exist but function only under the strict control of the ruling party. This occurred in Uganda where structures for political participation exist within the framework of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) (Tesfatsion, 1993).

Through these various styles of transition, Africa to some extent had managed to nurture some tottering democracies by the close of the twentieth century. How have these democracies faired? Are they sustainable and is there any hope for the future?

THE JOURNEY SO FAR – ADJUSTMENTS/MALADJUSTMENTS IN AFRICAN DEMOCRACIES

A measure of good governance is depicted in the standard or quality of life of the people. The *Guardian* on its website quotes the former UN Secretary-General on democracy as

> 'Democracy is not just about one day every four or five years when elections are held, but a system of government that respects the separation of powers,

> fundament freedoms like the freedom of thought, religion, expression, association and assembly and the rule of law…Any regime that rides roughshod on these principles loses its democratic legitimacy, regardless of whether it initially won an election
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> (Kweifio-Okai, C. and Holder J. 'Democracy in African Countries: five myths explored.'http://www.theguardian.com/global-develpment/datablog/2016/feb...25th February 2016).

Africa remains the poorest continent, a fact that underscores the incapability of leadership to properly direct the affairs of states to benefit the people. Where democracy is said to be thriving in Africa is usually where 'peaceful', or 'free and fair' elections are held, making elections the sole indicator of a thriving democracy. In countries where elections are continuously conducted without marked or noticeable disturbances for a considerable length of time or the purpose of generalization since the 1990s, such countries are considered to be democratic, at least in the African sense. In this sense, true democracy is not understood in terms of what the government can achieve for the people, but rather a country's ability to hold peaceful elections and transfer power without visible rancor. This prevailing condition has enabled and nurtured an aspect of what in the context of this paper is called 'benevolent autocracy'. The leaders of this category have devised cunning ways of entrenching themselves.

One way African democratically elected leaders have resorted to, is to change or amend constitutions to enable them to cling to power. In 2003, Gabon removed constitutional restrictions on term limits, making more room for the Bongo dynasty to continue. The same tact was applied in Chad enabling Idriss Deby to win a third presidential term in 2006. Omar Guelleh also amended Djibouti's constitution for the same reason. Others who tried but failed were Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Bakili Muluzi of Malawi (Jo-Ansie van Wyk, 2007). Writing on African democracy, the *Economist* on its website notes that Presidents Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Dennis Sassou Nguesso (Congo-

Brazaville), and Pierre Nkurunziza overstepped their term limits which required them to step down, and won elections described as flawed while using all means available to deal with opposition. In Rwanda, Paul Kagame changed the constitution that allowed him to run for a third term in 2017, while in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Joseph Kabila refused to hold elections. He disregarded a constitution prepared under his auspices in 2006 and justified his action by citing logistical problems as the major obstacles.

The use of public order acts is another means by which democratic governments in Africa suppress opposition. This is not to say that they are not useful in a democratic setting. Kate Byom indicated on the website of Freedom House that at least in theory, they are applied to get the security agencies to maintain public safety during planned protests and demonstrations (Byom, K., 'Africa Authoritarian 20/Freedom House http://freedomhouse.org/blog/african-authoritarianis-20, They have been used in some African countries with a certain level of success like Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland. In Uganda, the Public Order Management Act has been used to limit demonstrations to only areas that will attract little attention for the demonstrators.

Civil liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press among others, often enshrined in constitutions may be so done only in principle in the African situation. The Guardian's website cited the case of opposition leader Kizza Besigye, who was arrested four times in a week during the 2016 elections in Uganda. He was arrested for attempting to express his grievances regarding the elections. Yet this is a democracy in which people should be free to express themselves.

Kate Byom also gave another example in Liberia on the website of Freedom House where the libel law was twisted to get rid of a journalist. The libel law was misapplied in Liberia in 2013 to imprison Rodney Sieh, an investigative journalist who was involved in a report concerning the misappropriation of public funds amounting to about $6

million (Byom, K., 'Africa Authoritarian 20/Freedom House http://freedomhouse.org/blog/african-authoritarianis-20).

The winner-takes-all style is widespread in the African political system. No other choice will suit such a generation of leaders whose lust for power is insatiable, other than that which allows the incumbent to use state power and resources to entrench itself. Sir Paul Collier, an economist at Oxford University believes that this characteristic adopted in politics in much of the continent creates a vicious dynamic such that instead of governing well, politicians resort to manipulating the system and use state funds to bribe rig elections and such other means to maintain their hold on power. Emphasizing this on the website of Freedom House, he pointed out that for this reason, countries like Ghana and Kenya slated as democratic may still rate high on the corruption index while others like Ethiopia may rate low comparatively even though an autocratic regime is in power.

Another phenomenon that seems to be surging up is the tendency of some leaders to run the government as a family business, usually in the form of father-to-son presidential transitions or the appointment of sons/daughters or other family members to key positions in government. Indeed, Vera Songwe a non-resident Senior Fellow of Global Economy and Development, Africa Growth Initiative notes on the *Brookings* website, that such political dynasties are not unknown in world politics (Songwe, V. 'From father to son: Africa leadership transitions and lessons/Brook…https:www.edu/blog/Africa-focus/2015/05/06/from—fathe…, May 6th, 2016).

The early decades of the American Republic record the example of John Quincy Adams, son of John Adams, the second President of the United States who became President from 1825 –1829. In contemporary American politics, the George Bush family has set another example where both father and son have had a turn to rule the nation. Asia and South Asia are other unique examples of daughters of former heads of state being elected to the presidency. In this category are President Pak Geun-hye of South Korea, former President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, and Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India. In Africa itself, this phenomenon is not rare. On record are three sons of a

founding father (that is, the first president or prime minister after independence) who are leading their states in present times. Among these are President Ian Khama of Botswana, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, and Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam of Mauritius. In all these American, Asian, and African cases, the presidency was won by daughters or sons long after the fathers had left office or the scene. Therefore, they were normal unique cases in which intrigue or direct manipulation could not have played a role.

Contrary to this is a current phenomenon, more noticeable in sub-Saharan Africa, where there has been immediate succession by sons of heads of state. Examples include Togo where Faure Gnassingbe succeeded his father Gnassingbe Eyadema when the former died in 2005 and has ruled the country ever since. In Gabon, Ali Bongo took over from his father and won the August 2009 presidential elections under the ticket of the Gabonese Democratic Party. When Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001, his son Joseph Kabila stepped in his stead and has since kept his grip on the state as the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Though Teodora Obiang Nguema Mbasogo is still President of Equatorial Guinea, he has sounded a strong note of his intention to have his son succeed him by appointing the colorful playboy Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue as the country's Second Vice President.

Samantha Spooner elaborates more on this issue of government as a family business in Africa on the website of the *Guardian* by indicating that the Mbasogo family of Equatorial Guinea also rates among the group of African first families which run the state as such. The President himself, having inherited the state from his uncle, Fransisco Macias Nguema by assassinating him, also has another son, Gabriel Nguema Lima occupying other important government offices as former Secretary of State for Mines and Hydrocarbons and later as Vice Minister of Mines, Industry, and Energy (Spooner, S. 'All the Presidents' offspring: Are Africa's First Children a good bet for…'http://mgafrica.com/article/2014-07-29-why-africas-first-children-are-... 3rd August 2014). In Uganda, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, son of

President Yoweri Museveni is a Brigadier in the Ugandan People's Defence Force and the Commander of the Special Forces Group which combines with a section responsible for providing security to the President of Uganda, known as the Presidential Guard Brigade.

The Bongo family of Gabon also features prominently in this category. Three of Omar Bongo's children had served in government while he was President and including Pascaline who had served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and later as Director of the Cabinet of the President: a son, Martin Bongo had served as Foreign Minister of Gabon and before taking over from his father as President, Ali Bongo had previously served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence Minister.

While Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became President of Liberia, her three sons all had their turns to occupy positions in government. Fomba Sirleaf as head of the National Security Agency, Charles Sirleaf as Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia, and Robert Sirleaf as Chairman of the National Oil Company of Liberia (NOCAL). Karim Wade, son of former President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, was reported to have been assigned responsibilities that far outstripped those held by regular ministers. His portfolio drained the country's budget by an estimated 46%. His father's exit from the presidency resulted in allegations of corruption against him and subsequent imprisonment. Though this phenomenon seems to be dominant in sub-Saharan Africa, it has been played out in Libya in North Africa where former Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi had engaged his children in politics: examples being Muatassim Gaddafi as National Security Advisor, Ayesha Gaddafi as a Libyan Mediator, with the most notable one being Saif Gaddafi, member of his father's inner circle who was in charge of public relations and diplomacy.

To draw the curtain on these uncanny adjustments in 'democratic African states', it is worth looking at how much these were reflected in some elections held on the continent. Out of the 18 presidential elections which were held in Africa in 2016 as cited on the website of *Roguechiefs*, just about four out of the lot were considered to have been conducted free and fair, under transparent conditions, and included that of Benin, Sao Tome and Principe, the Gambia and Ghana

(17 Presidential Elections in Africa So Far In 2016: It's a Story of Blood, Tears and Some Drops of Joy.'http://www.roguechiels.com/2016/17-presidential-elections-africa-far). Some three long-serving incumbents were retained through various forms of manipulation, the dominant one being the scrapping of term limits, and included those of Uganda (Yoweri Museveni), Chad (Idriss Deby), and Equatorial Guinea (Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo). Term limits for the three countries were scrapped in 2005, 2005, and 2011 respectively.

There was also the manifestation of the other bizarre methods characteristic of the emerging African democracies, such as weakening opposition through political repression, limiting their financial capacity, and using patronage backed by state resources. Such tactics were played out in Djibouti, Comoros, Niger, Chad, Gabon, Uganda, and Zambia. While elections in the Central African Republic were held amidst the crisis, those of DR Congo and Somalia were postponed.

CONCLUSION

To answer the question of whether autocracy is endangered in Africa, the answer is a mixed one. The disenchantment against rulers without term limits is registered in the myriad of uprisings against such rulers in contemporary times. The common people have assumed the mandate to exercise their political prerogatives through these protests. Indeed, there is already the notion as noted by David Pilling, that though the 'march of democracy is slow', the space for autocrats is shrinking gradually. If democracy is taken to mean simple peaceful elections and transfer of power, democracy can be said to be thriving. However, since this is never the case and involves more accountability on the part of the ruler to the ruled, Africa still has a long way to go.

Given that the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership was not awarded in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2019, not because of any hindrance, but the failure of prospective awardees to make the mark, drums home the point that leadership in the continent, and for that matter, democracy is still fraught with serious deficiencies. Created in London in 2006 and inaugurated in 2007, the

prestigious award was instituted by a Sudanese businessman, billionaire, and philanthropist, Dr. Mohammed Mo Ibrahim. A winner of the prize must have been a former African executive head of state, who was democratically elected, left office in the last three years, served the required or constitutionally mandated term, and must have demonstrated exceptional leadership. In its fifteen years life span (2007 – 2022), the Prize has been given only six times to only seven African former heads of state, one being an honorary award conferred on Nelson Mandela (2007).

The others include Joachim Chissano of Mozambique (2007), Festus Mogae of Botswana (2008), Pedro Pires of Cape Verde (2011), and Hifekepunye Pohamba of Namibia (2014), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia (2017), Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger (2020). There was no winner for the prize in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019**.** This situation is reflective of the fact that the kind of democracy practiced in Africa is largely defective since a whole Continent with about 54 countries is unable to produce a winner on regular basis. Yet, in 2015, *How Africa News* on its website listed the following to be the top ten most democratic countries in Africa:

i. Mauritius (parliamentary democracy),
ii. Ghana (presidential representative democratic republic),
iii. Botswana (parliamentary representative democratic republic),
iv. Namibia (semi-presidential representative democratic republic),
v. South Africa (parliamentary representative democratic republic),
vi. Benin (presidential representative democratic republic),
vii. Lesotho (parliamentary representative democratic constitutional monarchy),
viii. Senegal (semi-presidential, democratic republic),
ix. Tanzania (unitary presidential democratic republic),
x. Sierra Leone (presidential representative democratic republic).

Surely democracy is planted in Africa, it is growing but growth is slow because there are obstacles in the way. One of the major obstacles is the guise of autocracy in democratic regimes, making the

journey a very long one. Can we get there? Poor governance and weak institutions resulted in corruption, poverty, disease, and out-migration to Europe and America in particular, and recently the Gulf regions still rage on.

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