



Elites and Institutions

Literature Review

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Anna Ormert and Tom Hewitt¹

Introduction

Exploring elites and their relations to institutions can assist understanding the day-to-day realities of politics in Africa (Chabal and Daloz 1999, Amundsen 2001, Lindberg 2003). This review is a scoping exercise in what has been written on the subject in recent years. The main task of the review is to summarise current understandings of how elites work with and through political institutions in Africa.

There is a huge literature in this subject area. We have tried to pick out a) that which is most pertinent and non-repetitive, and b) that which raises as many questions as it provides answers. On the whole we have focused on literature published in the last five to ten years and we have inclined towards the literature on Anglophone Africa.

The review is presented as follows: Section 1 is an introduction to Africa's recent political landscape and it introduces some of the major issues that appear in the literature. Section 2 provides some working definitions of elites, institutions and democratisation as three of the recurring themes in the review. Section 3 reviews literature broadly on democratisation in Africa and specifically on elections and elites. Section 4 examines how political parties have evolved over the last 15 years. Section 5 reviews the three branches of government and Section 6 briefly examines decentralisation and its relation to elites and politics. The remaining sections of the review move outside the more formal political structures to examine the media (Section 7), civil society (Section 8), women's movements (Section 9), Trades unions (Section 10) and business associations (Section 11). The final Section 12 pulls out a number of gaps in the research that we have identified in the course of the review. Section 13 contains a complete bibliography of citations used in the review.

It is crucial to remember that Africa's experiences of democratisation are no more than 15 years old, and many scholars have cautioned that it is still very early to draw any definite conclusions (Amundsen 2001; Randall and Svasand 2002).

1. Africa's political landscape

Interest in politics in Africa mushroomed following the wave of multiparty elections that began to sweep much of the continent during the 1990s. South Africa's President Mbeki hailed this phenomenon a 'political renaissance' and the development community enthusiastically poured time, energy and resources into the electoral project to support this 'third wave' of democratisation². At first glance, it seemed that the 1990s brought significant changes to Africa's political landscape. As Nicholas van de Walle points out:

"Between 1989 and the end of 2000, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed 70 presidential elections (spread across most of the region's 48 countries) involving more than one candidate. Over the same period, legislative elections involving at least two parties were held at least once in 42 countries—an average of more than seven elections a year. By the late 1990s, national legislatures in 39 of the 48 sub-Saharan countries contained representatives from at least two political parties. Only Congo- Kinshasa, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, Swaziland, and Uganda held no multiparty elections whatsoever." (van de Walle 2002).

By the mid-1990s, however, much of the initial euphoria surrounding elections in Africa began to dissipate. While some countries seemed to have made 'substantial democratic progress', others clearly had not (van de Walle, 2002). In many African countries, the first fledgling steps of democracy faltered. Despite the institutionalisation of multi-party elections, some concluded that the 'third wave' of democratisation was in fact not very deep (Gibson and Hoffman 2002).

¹ We wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Nicolas van de Walle, Cornell University, at all stages of the review. We also thank Claire Mcloughlin, GSDRC, for important suggestions and editing, and John Spall, GSDRC, for assistance in translation.

² The coining of this phrase is attributed to Samuel Huntington, who in 1991 observed that transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes occur in waves.

15 years later, the verdict on the democratisation of politics in Africa is equally contested. Burning questions remain for analysts: Have multi-party elections resulted in any fundamental changes in the African political context? If not, why not? What happens next? Crudely speaking, the experience of the 1990s pushed analysts into two opposing categories: the optimists (van de Walle, Butler, Barkan) and the pessimists (Diamond, Lawson, van Walraven, Haynes). The optimists emphasise that democratisation in Africa is still very young, and that positive changes *are* taking place, albeit slowly. Pessimists, on the other hand, argue that democratisation is being undermined by several inherent characteristics within the African system, including personal rule and clientelism. Despite these differences in perspectives, several common themes emerge in the literature relating to the current African political context. These are explored briefly below.

Diversity of 'Africa'

Sweeping generalisations about the political landscape in Africa ignore the reality that African countries are diverse both in terms of their historical experience and local context. At the same time as multiparty elections were being set up in Benin, Ghana and Zambia, other countries on the continent – for example Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Rwanda - plunged into disorder and violent conflict. Even the more peaceful countries showing evidence of democratisation cannot be assumed to be a homogenous group, or even to have similar characteristics. There are further problems with making generalisations, such as using the label 'democracy'. Amundsen stresses that the fundamental problem in defining democracy is how to identify the minimum criteria employable (and at what cost) to distinguish between 'democratic' and 'non-democratic' countries. Regime type and level of democracy cannot be measured directly in numerical terms because they simultaneously embrace many different elements. Consequently, 'the more variables we bring in, the more each African country will stand out as a category of its own' (Amundsen 2001, p.48). Importantly however, the diversity among African countries does not preclude useful cross-country analysis (van de Walle, Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Elections do not mean democracy

The past 15 years have revealed that multi-party politics in Africa does not on its own guarantee democracy (Amundsen 2001). Chabal and Daloz point out that despite the advent of multiparty elections, Africa's leaders have not significantly changed during this period. In several instances since 1990, for example, 'the former African 'dictators'... [have been]...re-elected in recognizably 'free and fair' multi-party elections' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.32). Chabal and Daloz argue that this limited changeover signifies that the very notion of leadership in Africa is synonymous with access to resources as a source of credibility. In other words, it is indicative of the fact that clientelism, or 'the exchange or brokerage of specific services and resources for political support in the form of votes' (Erdmann and Engel 2006), has become the informal style of politics practiced in much of Africa. The very notion of 'representation' in Africa is anchored in informal patronage networks, and arguably people vote because:

"they are expected, or 'asked', to do so, or perhaps because it is indispensable to be seen to be voting a certain way. On the whole, they do not vote because they support the ideas of a particular political party but because they must placate the demands of their existing or putative patron" (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.39).

Tripp argues that it is because democracy in Africa has not moved beyond the Western notion of holding elections that 'the patterns of neopatrimonial rule, personal rule, and state-based clientelism remain in tact and are simply manifesting themselves in a multiparty context' (Tripp, 2001, p.212).

Presidentialism

Because power in most African countries is weakly institutionalised, the fundamental rules of the game have changed very little despite the advent of multi-party elections (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Today, the majority of African countries operate presidential rather than parliamentary systems. Partial exceptions to full presidentialism include Angola, Namibia and Equatorial Guinea (semi-presidential regimes), Swaziland (absolute monarchy), Lesotho

(parliamentary constitutional monarchy), Ethiopia and Mauritius (parliamentary regimes) and Mauritania (military dictatorship) (Resnick n.d.). In reality though, many of these exceptions exhibit the same traits as presidential systems and the more important measure is how accountable a regime is to its citizens. According to Resnick, presidentialism can 'result in the personalisation of power because the executive derives legitimacy from voters rather than from gaining the confidence of the legislature'. (Resnick, n.d., p.14). In other words, leadership is structured around personalised, particularistic networks, rather than formal legislation. In this regard, presidential regimes have undermined democratisation on the African continent.

Ethnicity

Often, the single most important factor (superseding programmatic and/or ideological factors) that enforces loyalty to an individual or party in Africa is ethnicity. Ethnic mobilisation underpins both political interaction and conflict across the continent. Politicians have a strong incentive to maintain the support of their own lineage or ethnic group (van de Walle, 2003b). In order to secure their support base:

"politicians need not only to promise to favour some distinct category of voters, but also to establish greater credibility among this category of voters than other politicians. A strategy of distributing favours equally across individuals from all ethnic categories does not give any candidate a competitive advantage" (Chandra, 2006).

The salience of ethnicity in Africa also has important implications for economic development, inequality and social stratification.³ It is argued, for example, that Africa is more unequal today than it was 30 years ago (Milanovic 2005). Milanovic proposes that such high inequality is 'principally a political phenomenon' (p.3) and concludes that politics 'works through ethnicity (and religion)' (p.34). Ethnic fragmentation has therefore had a profound impact on all aspects of life in Africa.⁴

Personal rule and patronage

In states without effective institutions, formal rules are openly defied and ignored, so while formal institutions exist on paper in Africa, they do not shape the conduct of individual actors (Hyden 2006). Chabal and Daloz argue that 'the state in Africa was never properly institutionalised because it was never significantly emancipated from society.' This was partly due to historical and cultural reasons, but it primarily resulted from the informalisation of politics. The 'emancipation of the state... rests on the establishment and operation of a civil service unconstrained by the dynamics of social pressures' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.5). This means the public and private spheres become functionally distinct, and appointment and advancement are based on meritocracy. Yet in much of Africa, power remains personalised and based on informal relations, and 'the legitimacy of African political elites derives from their ability to nourish the clientele on which their power rests' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.15). In order to legitimise themselves and secure a broad support base (which is built on practices of redistribution), the political leadership in Africa controls access to resources that others need but cannot get on their own (Hyden 2006).

This clientelist system is in many cases understood to be built upon the capture and control of state resources. In presidential systems, this means access to state resources is also highly concentrated in the presidency (van de Walle 2001, van de Walle 2003, Chabal and Daloz 1999, Hyden 2006). Chandra argues that 'a democracy will not be patronage-based if the private sector is larger than the public sector as a source of jobs and provider of services, or if those who control the distribution of state resources and services cannot exercise discretion in the implementation of policy concerning their distribution' (Chandra, 2006). Neopatrimonial regimes are substantially weakened when their rulers become unable to distribute sufficient patronage, and economic crises can therefore present significant crises of legitimacy for

³ These are aspects that we have been unable to explore in any detail in this review.

⁴ There is little research in this area and it merits attention. See also Gelb (2001) and Nkurunziza and Ngaruko (2002) on Burundi who come to similar conclusions.

African neopatrimonial rulers (Gibson and Hoffman 2002). While the greatest threat to the survival of patrimonialism is the disappearance of state resources, analysts have suggested that this threat only affects the party or individual in power - patrimonialism as a system will survive in tact (Chabal and Daloz 1999, Randall and Svasand 2002b). On the other hand, Hyden also points out that there are African rulers who have remained in power, and carried out their jobs effectively, without the extensive use of public resources (Hyden 2006).

Given the pervasiveness of personal rule in Africa, the pressure from the international community to undertake democratic reform has resulted in 'partial reform syndrome', whereby leaders commit rhetorically to reform, but only carry it out to the extent that it does not hurt politically important individuals among the political elite (Kjaer 2004). Indeed in many cases, neopatrimonialism has become the norm, implying 'a mixture of... patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination' (Erdmann and Engel 2006)⁵. Some analysts further argue that informal, *de facto* traditions and practices are evolving to adapt to new circumstances. It is important to acknowledge that patronage politics exists in many democratic systems that are deemed legitimate – for example, the powerful lobbies that wield influence over Congress in the United States. It is therefore possible to understand democratisation as a mechanism for reducing the illegality of neopatrimonial relations (and instituting a more codified system of patronage), rather than a complete reversal of them (van de Walle).

The degree and nature of neopatrimonialism vary enormously between African countries, although understanding this differentiation and the context-specific characteristics of neopatrimonialism appear to be under-researched areas. It has been hypothesised that the incarnation of neopatrimonial regimes will vary across different regime types (Gibson and Hoffman 2002), although this is also an under-researched area. Amundsen suggests that future research ought to focus on a narrower and more precise delineation and evaluation of the core aspects of neopatrimonialism in different contexts (Amundsen 2001). He also argues that distinguishing 'neopatrimonial' factors from other relevant factors (such as the existing international aid regime and terms of trade), and analysing the relationship between these, will be key to any real understanding of the political landscape in Africa (Amundsen 2001).

2. Definitions

Elites

Elites are the most powerful people within any national political system. They can number very few, especially in small countries (perhaps 800-1000 in Benin or Malawi). Larger and more urban countries (for example Nigeria or South Africa) have more. Nevertheless, in all cases elites make up a small portion of the population - perhaps 3-4% at most (Hossain and Moore 2002). Elites can be broadly characterised as:

"the people who make or shape the main political and economic decisions: ministers and legislators; owners and controllers of TV and radio stations and major business enterprises and activities; large property owners; upper-level public servants; senior members of the armed forces, police and intelligence services; editors of major newspapers; publicly prominent intellectuals, lawyers and doctors; and – more variably – influential socialites and heads of large trades unions, religious establishments and movements, universities and development NGOs ... In most developing countries, governing elites tend to be especially powerful. They often command a particularly large slice of the national income, and the influence that goes with it." (Hossain and Moore 2002)

Daloz argues against a simplistic dichotomy of a modernising elite opposed to the backward and irrational masses and makes the important argument that elites in Africa are actually enmeshed in vertical cleavages, communal or faction-based, and have to maintain vertical networks of subordinates who exert a kind of continuous blackmail on the elites. These networks are maintained through an informal and constantly renegotiable logic (Daloz 1999).

⁵ Erdmann and Engel provide a useful review of the literature and definitions around neopatrimonialism, arguing that analysts and Africanists tend to use the term in a variety of ways. Please see Erdmann, G. and Engel, U., 2006, 'Neopatrimonialism Revisited - Beyond a Catch-All Concept', GIGA Working Paper, German Institute of Global and Area Studies

In Africa, elites have invariably been associated with the formal political institutions of the state. As Chandra notes, those who have the capital to launch a political career tend to be 'elites'; i.e. upwardly mobile middle class individuals, better educated and better off than the voters whom they seek to mobilise. She notably uses the term 'elite' interchangeably with the terms 'politician', 'candidate', 'incumbent', and 'entrepreneur' (Chandra 2006). We should note here, however, that the term 'elites' is (often) used differently from the term 'middle classes'. The latter is frequently employed to describe the people engaged in business activity - an entrepreneurial class, a branch of the elite but distinguished, for example, from the 'political elite'.⁶ This middle class is actually often absent in African countries – it is the missing middle that donors were keen to promote in the era of structural adjustment. Sklar (Sklar 2000) discusses the lack of an 'autonomous bourgeoisie' in many post-colonial African countries. Where a middle class *is* developing, he describes important differences, for example between northern (traditional) and southern (more modern) Nigeria, or in Ethiopia where a middle class developed within a 'feudal-type framework', or in East Africa where Asians held important economic positions (along with Europeans) until processes of 'Africanisation' were put in place.

The important point is that elites are not a homogenous block; they are divided by ethnicity, functionality, politics and economics. At the same time, an important characteristic of elites in Africa since decolonisation is that both politics and economics have been almost entirely linked to the state. Elites have, therefore, developed within (or in close proximity to) the state.

Political institutions

Institutions are broadly the framework of rules, habits, customs and routines (both formal and written, or, more often, informal and internalised) that govern society at large.

Douglas North defines institutions as:

"The humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction. They are made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behaviour, conventions, and self imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics. Together they define the incentive structure of societies and specifically economies." (North, D., 1993, 'Economic Performance through Time', Lecture to the memory of Alfred Nobel, December 9)

Institutions and organisations are often conflated. For the purpose of this review, we see organisations as bodies or actors that get things done, and institutions as the framework in which that doing occurs. There is of course considerable overlap between the two: Organisations can become institutions (can be 'institutionalised') whereby they come to embody important social norms and values (think of the World Bank or the United Nations).

Similarly, the distinction between formal and informal institutions is 'fuzzy'. Informal norms and behaviours permeate even the most formal of institutions. We refer to formal institutions as the rules that govern the different organisational components of political life, such as: political parties, bureaucracies, electoral processes, the branches of government (executive, legislative and judiciary), constitutions, trades unions, business groups and civil society organisations.⁷ These, of course, are subject to both the formal and informal constraints identified by North above. Informal institutions are more ambiguous, but Hyden's definition is useful here: "[institutions are] an inter-personal trust that is more immediate and exclusively reliant on unwritten rules in use" (Hyden 2006).

Several authors have highlighted the importance of looking at both formal and informal institutions. Lund argues that "while government institutions are important, the state qualities of governance – that is, being able to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on

⁶ For the case of Ghana, see (Luckham et al. 2005). Here they distinguish four kinds of 'middle class' group: the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, professionals and other independent educated groups, state elites, and middle class members of Ghana's diaspora community (p. 3).

⁷ This list is extendable since it could include customs services, the police, extension agencies and such like. In addition, there are local institutions – considerably less researched in Africa than national or urban institutions – would include local government and administration, local justice systems, social networks, property rights and land tenure arrangements, local heads/chiefs, community-based organisations, and so on.

members of society – are not exclusively nested in these institutions. A wider variety of institutions are at play in this enterprise” (Lund 2006b).

Democratisation

A practical definition of democracy is: “a form of political regime in which citizens choose, in competitive elections, the occupants of the top political offices of the state” (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997).⁸ These attributes can be found in Dahl’s notion of polyarchy: 1) elected officials; 2) free and fair elections; 3) inclusive suffrage; 4) the right to run for office; 5) freedom of expression; 6) alternative information; and 7) associational autonomy (Dahl 1989). Such a formulation is frequently used as the basis for discussions of democracy and about whether or to what extent a particular country or region is democratic. From this has burgeoned a substantial literature from which we can derive important indicators about research methods, research needs and policy formulation.

One important aspect of the debate on research methods in political science concerns definitions of democracy. Put another way, it is: “the twofold challenge [of] increasing analytic differentiation in order to adequately characterise the diverse regimes that have emerged in recent years and maintaining conceptual validity by avoiding conceptual stretching” (Collier and Levitsky 1997). In the case of research in African countries, the dilemma of “democracy with adjectives” has become quite acute. On the one hand, it is evident that the orthodox understanding of liberal democracy is only partially applicable in the case of many African countries. On the other, the explosion of adjectives to describe different regime types has put the notion and validity of comparative politics under strain. For example, terms to describe political elites’ attempts to look after their interests include the state as ‘kleptocratic’, ‘predatory’, ‘pirate’ and ‘vampire’ (Thompson). Another set of qualifiers describe the institutional condition of states; states that are ‘failed’, ‘collapsed’, ‘fragile’, ‘minimally institutionalised’, ‘institutionalised but non-competitive’ (Grindle 2004), and so on. Political regimes are fluid, de-stabilised, stable (Lindberg) or free, partly-free, not free (Freedom House), or Gunther and Diamonds classification of political parties.⁹

There is much overlap in these terms and clearly it is essential to make such distinctions if a nuanced understanding is to be gained. Researchers need to bear in mind what is being compared to what in order to avoid the danger of misrepresentation.

3. Democratisation and elites

The literature on democratisation in Africa since the early 1990s addresses a variety of questions, many of which have so far yielded only partial or tentative answers. Questions concern the extent of democratisation, the nature of the electoral process and its outcomes, democratic consolidation, the nature of political parties, incumbents and oppositions, the changing role of branches of government and the civil service and the effects of decentralisation. Within these broad questions are others related to ethnicity, religion and local politics/elites.

As noted in the introduction, most African countries in 1990 were neo-patrimonial, meaning that they were hyper-presidential, the principal political glue was clientelism, and clientelism was primarily about gaining access to state resources. Elites operated within the political system often using public office for private gain and for direct access to the resources of the state. The wave of elections from the early 1990s has produced optimists and pessimists for Africa’s democratic prospects: the optimists say that democracy can develop over time, that elites and political institutions will evolve to look more or less like in other places, that this process will be a gradual consolidation, and that clientelist relations will become more codified, less illegal (e.g. Schedler, Lindberg, van de Walle and others); the pessimists say

⁸ Such a definition, Bratton and van de Walle go on to say, does not depend on showing that contestants are ‘true’ democrats, nor does it presuppose the pre-existence of a political culture of democracy amongst elites or masses.

⁹ They classify each of 15 ‘species’ of party into its proper ‘genus’ on the basis of three criteria: (1) the nature of the party’s organization (thick/thin, elite-based or mass-based, etc.); (2) the programmatic orientation of the party (ideological, particularistic-clientele-oriented, etc.); and (3) tolerant and pluralistic (or democratic) versus proto-hegemonic (or anti-system) (Gunther and Diamond 2003).

that the political process in Africa, the behaviour of its elites and their use of and interaction with institutions is different from established liberal democracies and will remain so for a long time to come (Chabal and Daloz 1998; Schatzberg 2001; Carothers 2002).¹⁰ In reality these caricatures are not very useful, since there is some overlap of views between the two camps, particularly in the more sophisticated versions. However, it is important to be aware of them since they have an important bearing on research, especially policy-oriented research.

A number of key points about democracy and elites emerge from the democracy literature. These include:

- Electoral politics should not be conflated with democracy; they can be seen as a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy. There are significant differences in the quality of democratic practice, in the level of economic activity, and in the quality of economic performance across the region in the last 20 years;
- The democratic experience in Africa since 1990 is characterised by huge variation and diversity;
- Ethnic variation, in particular, is a key variable in understanding politics, elite behaviour and democratisation;
- The alternation of power through elections is a useful proxy measure of levels of democratisation and the behaviour of elites.

Elections

Multi-party elections are now ubiquitous in the region. Democracy is not. Most of Africa has practiced electoral politics since the mid 1990s. Only a handful of states have really introduced meaningful systems of democratic competition and participation. The others are doing what Diamond (Diamond 2002) and Schedler (Schedler 2002a; Schedler 2002b) call “electoral authoritarianism” or “electoral autocracy”. The wave of elections in the 1990s seemed to signal a significant change in Africa’s political landscape, but it is increasingly evident that some countries “have made substantial democratic progress, while others have not” (van de Walle 2002).

Table 1 shows indicators of political rights and civil liberties as calculated by Freedom House as well as those African countries considered as ‘electoral democracies’ in 2006. This contrasts with the situation 30 years ago. In 1976, three countries were considered ‘free’, compared to 11 in 2006. A further 16 were considered ‘partly free’ in 1976, compared to 23 in 2006. The number of countries considered ‘not free’ has declined from 25 to 14 in the same period.¹¹ It is significant that the flurry of electoral activities in the period 1990-95 was the high point in this partial improvement in the Freedom House indicators.¹²

The final column in the table shows the direction of change for 2006 in comparison to the country scores in 1990. All but three of the 38 ‘free’ and ‘partly free’ countries have improved on their Freedom House political rights and civil liberties scores – albeit some only marginally so. Only two of the ‘not free’ countries scored minor improvement in the same period, whilst scores for the remaining 11 (excluding Eritrea) were unchanged or declined. The message is clear. The non-performers are in a deep hole. The majority, however (and despite variations), are moving in one and the same direction. For many of these countries, including several of those considered ‘free’, reversals are quite likely. Indeed in these 15 years several countries have swung quite significantly from the trend (for example Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zambia). Nonetheless, the trend remains.

¹⁰ Also see (Joseph 2003) as an example of the pessimistic strand of this camp.

¹¹ Put the other way, nearly 30 per cent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa are ‘not free’ in 2006.

¹² Freedom House, 2006, ‘Freedom in Africa Today’.
http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/36.pdf#search=%22freedom%20in%20Africa%20today%22
Accessed 5.10.06.

Table 1: Indicators of Political Rights and Civil Liberties in Africa - 2006¹³

Country	Political Rights	Civil Liberties	Status	Change from 1990
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	+
Mauritius*	1	1	Free	+
South Africa*	1	2	Free	+
Ghana*	1	2	Free	+
Benin*	2	2	Free	+
Botswana*	2	2	Free	-
Mali*	2	2	Free	+
São Tomé & Príncipe*	2	2	Free	+
Namibia*	2	2	Free	+
Lesotho*	2	3	Free	+
Senegal*	2	3	Free	+
Kenya*	3	3	Partly Free	+
Madagascar*	3	3	Partly Free	+
Niger*	3	3	Partly Free	+
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	+
Mozambique*	3	4	Partly Free	+
Guinea-Bissau	3	4	Partly Free	+
Burundi*	3	5	Partly Free	+
Sierra Leone*	4	3	Partly Free	+
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	+
Comoros*	4	4	Partly Free	+
Malawi*	4	4	Partly Free	+
Nigeria*	4	4	Partly Free	+
Zambia	4	4	Partly Free	+
Liberia*	4	4	Partly Free	+
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	+
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	+
Central African Rep.*	5	4	Partly Free	+
The Gambia	5	4	Partly Free	-
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	+
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	+
Congo-Brazzaville	5	5	Partly Free	+
Mauritania	6	4	Partly Free	+
Gabon	6	4	Partly Free	No change
Angola	6	5	Not Free	+
Chad	6	5	Not Free	+
Guinea	6	5	Not Free	No change
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	No change
Togo	6	5	Not Free	No change
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	No change

¹³ Countries marked with * are designated as "Electoral Democracies" by Freedom House. **Criteria for designation as an Electoral Democracy:** **1.** A competitive, multiparty political system; **2.** Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (with exceptions for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens as sanctions for criminal offences); **3.** Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and the absence of massive voter fraud that yields results that are unrepresentative of the public will; **4.** Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning

Congo-Kinshasa	6	6	Not Free	No change
Côte d'Ivoire	6	6	Not Free	No change
Somalia	6	7	Not Free	-
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	-
Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Not Free	-
Eritrea	7	6	Not Free	
Zimbabwe	7	6	Not Free	-
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	No change

Source: (Freedom House 2006)

Table 1 shows the preponderance of 'partly free' countries in Africa. What does this mean? It is a confirmation that the democratic process in Africa is not at a point recognised in the orthodox sense. However, the situation can be interpreted in a number of ways.

By the mid-1990s, there was a growing scepticism that the wave of democratisation was not all that it had been expected to be. One World Bank observer identified eight causes for this scepticism: the weakness of political parties; manipulation of the electoral process; a narrow political field; a constrained civil society; a controlled press; the absence of "civility"; privatised violence and politicised armies; and international support for dictatorship (particularly in Francophone Africa) (Monga 1997). Is that the whole story? A decade later the jury is still out.

Some studies give us a better picture of the routes that democratisation is taking. The literature takes us in two directions:

One side of this argument is that it is no longer useful to talk about transition to democracy; the optimism of the early 1990s was misplaced. Carothers' (Carothers 2002) work is important here because of its research and policy implications. He argues against the simple optimism of agencies such as USAID that assume: 1) a move away from authoritarianism naturally means a move toward democracy, 2) democratisation happens in stages – of opening, breakthrough, and consolidation – in some inevitable way, 3) whilst elections are not equal to democracy, they are deemed to be most significant in and of themselves, 4) underlying conditions will not be major factors at the onset or the outcome of the transition process,¹⁴ and 5) democratic transitions are built on coherent functioning states (Carothers 2002). The 'partly free' and arguably some of the 'free' countries listed by Freedom House above fall into what Carothers calls a 'grey zone'¹⁵ where there are some democratic attributes but "they suffer from serious democratic deficits."¹⁶ Those countries in the middle two columns of Table 2, for example, would fall in the grey zone.

Table 2. Categorization of African Political Regimes in 2006

Consolidating Democracies	Democratises	Semi-Authoritarians	Autocratic
Benin	Comoros	Angola	Cameroon
Botswana	Kenya	Burkina Faso	Chad
Cape Verde	Lesotho	Burundi	Dem. Rep. of Congo
Ghana	Liberia	Central African Rep.	Equatorial Guinea
Mali	Madagascar	Congo	Eritrea
Mauritius	Malawi	Cote d'Ivoire	Gabon
Namibia	Mozambique	Djibouti	Guinea
Sao Tome & Principe	Niger	Ethiopia	Mauritania
Senegal	Nigeria	Gambia	Somalia*
South Africa	Seychelles	Guinea Bissau	Sudan
	Sierra Leone	Rwanda	Swaziland
	Tanzania	Togo	Zimbabwe
	Uganda		
	Zambia		

Source: (Siegle 2006) * Somalia is still largely ungoverned, though best classified as autocratic.

¹⁴ "All that seemed to be necessary for democratisation was a decision by a country's political elites to move toward democracy and an ability on the part of those elites to fend off the contrary actions of remaining antidemocratic forces" (Carothers 2002)

¹⁵ Or what Shedler (Shedler 2002) calls 'the foggy zone' of which more below.

¹⁶ Including poor representation of citizen interests, low levels of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of law by officials, and so on.

Trying to get to grips with what these kinds of democracies could be labelled led to what has been described “democracy with adjectives” (Collier and Levitsky 1997). Carothers, in an attempt to simplify the plethora of democratic descriptors, identifies two strands of political syndrome: ‘feckless pluralism’ where participation remains shallow and troubled and political elites (from all parties) are perceived as being corrupt, self-interested and ineffective¹⁷ and ‘dominant power politics’ where there may be ‘limited but still real political space, “yet one political grouping ... dominates the system in such a way as there appears to be little prospect of alternation in power in the foreseeable future” (Carothers 2002). A major political problem in this situation is “the blurring of the line between the state and the ruling party ... [where] ... the state’s main assets ... are gradually put in the direct service of the ruling party” (p.12). This situation was prevalent (at the time the article was published) in many countries in Africa, for example, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Gabon, Kenya and Mauritania.¹⁸

The other side of the argument is that whilst incomplete and compromised, some positive democratic outcomes or trends can be identified in some of the electoral experiences of Africa. Staffan Lindberg has published widely on this. He has argued that elections in Africa have had positive impacts on democracy (as measured by improvements in civil liberties) (Lindberg 2006) and that the very process of holding elections has been self-reinforcing of democracy (Lindberg 2004).¹⁹ The regimes falling in the ‘partly free’ Freedom House category have been identified as falling somewhere in the range of electoral democracy and electoral autocracy identified by Schedler (Schedler 2002b; Schedler 2002a).²⁰ Pessimists might argue that such a distinction is splitting hairs and both types of electoral system are proof that democracy is blocked in Africa. A more optimistic approach argues that ‘alternation of power’ shows a move towards electoral democracy.²¹ Alternation of power can be defined as a ‘tipping game’ (van de Walle 2005) – whereby the ‘growing probability’ of alternation of power (due to a number of interrelated factors) causes cohesion amongst opposition parties. But little by little (and with frequent backward steps) alternation of power can fortify democratic expectations. Such a ‘tipping’ process is more likely to take place in situations where it is difficult to distinguish between political platforms – typically the case in African countries – such that relationships between parties are very fluid. Another source of fluidity is from electoral fraud and elite deal making that incumbents frequently employ (van de Walle 2005).

Schedler’s concept of “nested democratisation” is useful here. His argument is that in electoral autocracies, electoral competition is “nested” within a broader competition to redefine the rules. The broader game is a progressive process of democratisation. Autocrats can win in the short run, but with every election they are legitimating the mechanisms to push themselves out of power. Even so, it is very important to distinguish these electoral autocracies from democracies. One key way to do this, as noted above, is to focus on alternation. Where alternation has occurred there is likely to be both more democracy and a greater likelihood that new elites are emerging (Schedler 2002b).

Another trend, finally, indicates the relationship between GDP per capita and political regime in Africa from 1960 to 1997 (with the categories based on the situation in 1988). In aggregate, it is countries with multi party systems (5 countries) that have a higher and growing GDP per capita. Those with one-party systems (23 countries) and military oligarchies (9 countries) have shown a much smaller rise in income in the period. Causality cannot be established from the graph, only the correlation.

¹⁷ Feckless pluralism is prevalent in Latin America, Carothers argues, but instances in Africa are also found. Carothers includes Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

¹⁸ This leads us again to the notion of neo-patrimonialism amply described and analysed in (Bratton and Van de Walle 1994).

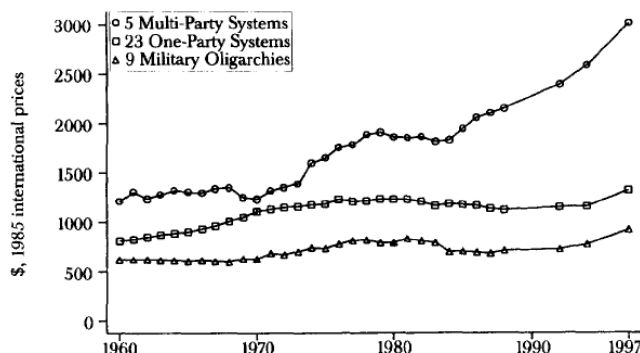
¹⁹ Such findings do not imply that clientelistic behaviours are not still common as illustrated in his study of Ghana (Lindberg 2003).

²⁰ And following (Diamond 2002).

²¹ In Zambia, for example, there was alternation. It is more democratic than Cameroon where there has been no alternation of power. Where a dictator is still in power there is no democracy, e.g. Togo, Ivory Coast, Chad, CAR (Ghana under Rawlings was an exception to this).

Figure 1

Real GDP per Capita by Political Regime



Source: (Ndulu and O'Connell 1999) based on data from (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997)

Elites and elections

The following questions arise with the onset of Multi-party elections evoke questions about how elites are changing or adapting: Are new elites emerging? Is there a deepening of elites (to include, for example, other ethnic groups, or women, or the private sector, etc)? What impact does ethnic heterogeneity have on elites? Are there elite linkages across institutions?

Orthodox political science says that liberal democracy works best with a strong middle class that plays its part in keeping the state and its political elites accountable. This is frequently through associational activity in civil society. Another literature identifies elites as the lynchpin in fostering a developmental state. For instance, Leftwich argues that:

"first and foremost, all developmental states have been led by determined developmental elites, which have been relatively incorrupt... and fiercely nationalistic... no developmental state has exhibited the one-man 'sultanism' of many African states. On the contrary, they have often been run by shifting coalitions of diverse interests and, as socio-economic change has occurred, all such states have experienced (sometimes severe) intra-elite poetical and policy conflict, often intensifying over time." (Leftwich 2000).

The elites to which Leftwich refers also had a relative degree of autonomy (along with the institutions that they commanded). A key point for African elites is that to date they have exhibited little autonomy from presidential 'big men' - a single point from where political and economic power emanates and therefore around which elites assemble. As has already been argued, in many African countries the state itself has been the locus of class formation and elite activity, thus reducing the ability of society to hold the state in check. In what Chandra (Chandra 2006) calls patronage democracies,²² this "produces an overwhelming preoccupation with politics on the part of both elites and voters seeking both material and psychic goods ... in patronage democracies, obtaining control of the state is the principal means of obtaining both a better livelihood and higher status" (p. 9).²³

The degree of ethnic variation is critical in determining the strategies deployed by elites. As Posner points out:

" African voters seek to maximize the amount of resources they can secure from the state and that politicians, knowing this, seek to attract and maintain their political followings by promising resources to those who support them...voters believe that having a member of their own ethnic group in a position of power will increase their access to such resources. They discount the election promises made by candidates who are not their ethnic kin and find credible only those promises made by candidates who share their ethnic

²² "... democracies in which the state has a relative monopoly on jobs and services, and in which elected officials enjoy significant discretion in the implementation of laws allocating the jobs and services at the disposal of the state" (Chandra 2006)

²³ "...in sub-Saharan Africa it is always a question of exchange – a universe where gifts and counter-gifts, accumulation and redistribution are the spinal column of mechanisms of political legitimation. Even if there are some elite groups in Africa who organise themselves in a horizontal logic, these tend to be fragile, and the force of vertical links between "unequals" along familial, ethnic-regional, religious and clientelist lines are much stronger." (Daloz 1999).

background. Both of these rather uncontroversial claims are supported by the vast literature on neo-patrimonialism in Africa “ (Posner 2001).

Such a situation has served political elites well in the past, as van de Walle argues:

“it is more useful to think of clientelistic politics in Africa as constituting primarily a mechanism for accommodation and integration of a fairly narrow political elite rather than the logic of mass party patronage. Most of the material gains from clientelism are limited to this elite. The stronger link between political elites and the citizenry is through the less tangible bonds of ethnic identity. Even in the absence of tangible benefits, citizens will choose to vote for individuals of their own ethnic group, particularly in ethnically divided societies. Less than the expectation that they will benefit directly from the vote, citizens may feel that only a member of their own ethnic group may end up defending the interests of the ethnic group as a whole, and that voting for a member of another ethnic group will certainly not do so” (van de Walle 2006).

Elite politics are therefore different when ethno-regional differences are very politically salient (Cameroon or Nigeria) than in countries which may be ethnically diverse but in which ethnicity is not polarized (Tanzania or Senegal), let alone when there is ethnic homogeneity (Lesotho or Botswana). The political process tends to be unstable with ethnic heterogeneity. Elites make claims on ethnic identity as a way of securing votes. As a result there continues to be an absence of programmatic debate around policy in elections and campaigns are conducted almost entirely on the basis of personal and ethno-regional support (van de Walle 2006). But this is not a straightforward process with predictable outcomes. The work of Posner for example, examines multiple possible ethnic “cleavages” and how they may be different in one-party and multi-party systems:²⁴

“Although ordinarily lumped under the umbrella term ‘ethnic’, communal conflict can take many forms. Sometimes competition takes place along religious lines. At other times, competing groups are distinguished from one another by language. At still other times in-group/out-group distinctions are made on the basis of tribal affiliation, clan membership, geographic region of origin, or race. Within a single country, each of these distinctions may serve, in different situations, as a potential axis of social differentiation and conflict” (Posner 2001).

There is much evidence that however Africa’s political elites have divided along ethnic lines, they have been predatory, unproductive and misusing surpluses (Douma 1999; Mbeki 2005)²⁵ and have continued to do so within a context of electoral politics. Even in situations hailed as successful, such as Uganda in the 1990s, political elites continued to misuse public resources (Mwenda and Tangri 2005). But there is variation. For example, the richer the country, the bigger the middle class - a bourgeoisie (more autonomous than elites) putting pressure on the system (for better roads, an end to the predatory state, and so on). A good example is Ghana, where the middle class has had some success in putting pressure on political elites (Luckham et al. 2005). Mali is a contrary example, where there is no such pressure.

Less attention has been given to the potential for elites to play a part in changing old practices. The work of Houssain, Moore and associates (Hossain and Moore 2002; Reis and Moore 2005) on elite perceptions of poverty is interesting in this respect and there are important indications in their research for any future work on elites. Their cautious optimism about the potential for elites to want to engage in poverty reduction is refreshing in contrast to the widespread cynicism found in the literature. Their research is based on the work of Abram de Swaan, who explores the emergence of welfarism in Europe and the United States (Swaan 1988). The research questions generated by Swaan’s work included: would persisting poverty and inequality in less developed countries point to the absence of a social consciousness among elites? Would Southern elites exhibit the proto-sociological wisdom that earlier led their counterparts to support social policies? How do Southern elites position themselves vis-à-vis collective initiatives for social inclusion?

²⁴ His argument is that “under conditions of multi-party competition, ethnic cleavages that define large blocks of people tend to emerge as the axis of political conflict, coalition-building and voting, whereas under conditions of one-party political competition, ethnic cleavages that define smaller, more localized groups of people tend to play this role. The salience of ethnicity *per se* may not change, but the salience of the particular dimension of ethnic cleavage that structures politics is transformed by the shift in regime type” (Posner 2001).

²⁵ Country examples of this line of arguing are, for example: Ethiopia (Abbink 2006), Madagascar (Marcus and Ratsimbaharison 2005), Uganda (Mwenda and Tangri 2005)

There is no hard evidence on whether Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are having any impact on the stronghold of political elites of Africa. Some research indicates there is limited but widening participation in political processes. A comparative study of South Africa, Ghana and Uganda, found that that CSOs themselves reflect wider society cleavages, and are represented on the whole by elites. Robinson and Friedman argue that, “a small number of urban-based intermediaries led by middle class elites command a disproportionate share of foreign aid resources. Many of these organisations exert a limited influence on public policy and do not make an enduring contribution to democracy through their activities” (Robinson and Friedman 2005). Some argue that this concentration of foreign aid around a relatively small number of elite intermediaries reflects a deliberate strategy of fostering a vision of democracy that is restricted to elite competition and representation (Hearn 1999; Robinson and Friedman 2005). They suggest that aid donors seek to fund CSOs to promote support for economic liberalism and counter more radical visions of democracy based on popular participation and redistribution.

An alternative hypothesis is that democratisation tends to divide elites by pitching them in competitions for electoral support, and by changing the political logic from assembling as large a majority as possible (the logic of the old single party regimes), to legitimating rule by the smallest possible winning coalition. Crook (Crook 1997), for example, explores this argument in Cote d'Ivoire. One consequence may be that elites appeal to lower levels of ethnic identity in electoral competitions than they do in single party regimes, which can lead to an exacerbation of ethnic polarisation in new democracies (Posner 2005). This hypothesis requires further research.

An important source of new elite participation in African politics is the rapid growth of women's election to legislatures. For example, in Rwanda's 2003 elections 39 women were elected to the Chamber of Deputies (out of a total of 80 members). In South Africa and Mozambique in 2004, there was 32 percent representation by women in national legislatures. In 2005, the Seychelles, Namibia and Uganda had women in 24 percent of seats in parliament (Bauer and Britton 2006). Other countries in Africa have followed suit, often through a system of voluntary or mandatory quotas (Kethusegile-Juru 2003).²⁶ Quotas have been introduced for a number of reasons, including pressure from domestic and international women's movements, a diffusion of ideas across parties (if one adopts them so too do others to maintain a chance at the female vote), and to create new lines of patronage politics (as is argued for Uganda under Museveni) (Tripp 2003). Female political representation has happened in such a significant way due to specific conditions. The most significant advances for women have taken place where prolonged conflict has severely disrupted patterns of gender relations. Conflict appears to have acted as a training ground for a strong cadre of women. Women's movements have also exerted direct pressure for change (Bauer and Britton 2006).²⁷ However, just as elections do not automatically correlate with democracy, the election of greater numbers of women to parliaments is not an automatic formula for new elites to exert influence. In the case of Uganda, for example, the political value of specially created new seats for women “has been eroded by their exploitation as currency for the NRM's patronage system, undermining women's effectiveness as representatives of women's interests once in office. This is because the gate-keepers of access to reserved political space are not the women's movement, or even women voters, but Movement elites” (Goetz 2002).

Some of the above literature on women parliamentarians alludes to outcomes rather to electoral processes, for example in the formulation of legislation that directly addresses women's issues like reproductive health, violence against women, women's economic status, and so on. However, there is surprisingly little literature in general that examines measurable outcomes of democratisation in general in Africa. An exception is the work of Stasavage (Stasavage 2005). He makes the hypothesis – and then goes on to confirm it statistically²⁸ –

²⁶ Curiously, it appears that those countries that use proportional representation have a higher proportion of female representatives than those using majority systems. It is not clear whether this or quotas is the strongest determinant of how many women will be found in a legislature (Yoon 2001).

²⁷ A case study of how such factors were important in Namibia can be found in (Bauer 2004).

²⁸ Using a dataset on education spending for 40 countries from 1980-96.

that “contested elections may have prompted African governments to be more responsive to the demands of the rural groups that form the majority of citizens of nearly all African countries. Under authoritarian regimes, in contrast, rulers will need to be more responsive to urban groups” (p.344). Through examining spending on education, and in particular primary education, he shows that multiparty electoral competition has been associated with greater government spending on primary education. Whilst he indicates the need for further research, he speculates that electoral competition will have a bigger effect on education spending where electors do not vote primarily on ethno-regional lines (Stasavage 2005).

4. Political parties

Political parties are quite a new phenomenon in a continent that has a long tradition of one-party states. There is an interesting body of research on the ways that party systems have or have not become institutionalised. We will not discuss this set of literature in detail, but it is noted here for reference.²⁹

The status of political parties at the end of the 1990s is well summed up thus:

“Parties that won founding elections are almost invariably still in power. Secondly, the typical emerging party system has consisted of a dominant party surrounded by a large number of small, unstable parties. Thirdly, party cleavages have been overwhelmingly ethno-linguistic in nature, while ideological and programmatic debates have been muted and rare” (van de Walle 2003).

Gunther and Diamond’s classification of political parties is a useful background for understanding types of political party.³⁰ They identify five broad kinds of political party: elite-based parties, mass-based parties, ethnicity-based parties, electoralist parties and movement parties (Gunther and Diamond 2003). Elite-based and ethnicity-based parties have continued to dominate Africa’s period of democratisation. Sometimes this has taken quite extreme forms, with democratic trappings such as Uganda’s ‘no-party democracy’ (Carbone 2003; Carbone 2005). There are virtually no examples of the emergence of political parties in Africa that have, for example, a Christian democratic or a labour movement origin. In short, there is a distinct lack of programmatic political parties on the continent. In parallel, there has been a persistence of single party rule in some countries (either literally or through the return to power of the party that was dominant before multi-party elections were introduced). As a result, “political parties are regularly perceived to be a weak link in the chain of elements that together make for a democratic state, or even to have helped undermine democracy through the irresponsible and self-interested actions of their leaders” (Randall and Svasand 2002b). Such clientelism in political parties is the mechanism for integrating and accommodating a narrow political elite (van de Walle 2003). Political parties are, traditionally, the recruitment ground for leaders and elites and, historically, the sources for such recruitment have been from single-parties, from the military, and from the civil service (particularly in Francophone Africa). Whether such practices will continue with the growth in multi-party elections or whether we will witness a broadening of recruitment of elites from other spheres is a matter for future research.³¹

(Randall and Svasand 2002b) suggest a number of factors contributing to current party weakness (particularly opposition parties) that include contextual factors (cultural and economic conditions), micro-level explanations (the role of political elites), and institutional explanations (the structure of the state and its institutions) (p.38). However, as already noted in the section on elections, some authors are observing gradual change coinciding with successive multi-party elections including the alternation of power and a gradual consolidation

²⁹ Recent output here includes: (Kuenzi and Lambricht 2001; Randall and Svasand 2002b; Randall and Svasand 2002a; Creevey, Ngomo and Vengroff 2005; Kuenzi and Lambricht 2005; Manning 2005; Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005; Riedl 2005).

³⁰ They classify each of 15 ‘species’ of party into its proper ‘genus’ on the basis of three criteria: (1) the nature of the party’s organization (thick/thin, elite-based or mass-based, etc.); (2) the programmatic orientation of the party (ideological, particularistic-clientele-oriented, etc.); and (3) tolerant and pluralistic (or democratic) versus proto-hegemonic (or anti-system) (Gunther and Diamond 2003).

³¹ Some small indications of change are evident. For example, Morgan Tsvangirai, opposition leader in Zimbabwe is from a trade union background, as was Zambia’s president from 1991-2002, Frederick Chiluba. Madagascar’s President Marc Ravalomanana has a very successful business background.

of democratic expectations on the part of voters (Schedler 2002b; van de Walle 2005; Lindberg 2006). Opposition parties are obviously important in such a process. Crook's (Crook 1997) analysis of the Cote d'Ivoire elections of 1990 and 1995 is an illustration of the difficulties that opposition parties face in new multi-party systems where the ruling party already enjoyed a distinct advantage of projecting its 'national image' whilst opposition parties disintegrated with accusations of ethno-regionalism and thereby lost any broader appeal. A similar story occurred in Kenya through the 1990s. Hence Lindberg's conclusion that political parties, especially in opposition, are set to remain very 'fluid' for a long time to come (Lindberg 2007).

Finally, one reason that political parties continue to be weak (whether incumbent or in opposition) is that people simply do not trust them. Corruption remains a widespread concern in Africa's political landscape. Transparency International's 2005 survey of corruption focused on political corruption. Eight African countries were included in the survey. Whilst the police were considered to be the most corrupt of national institutions, political parties and parliament came close behind. On a scale of one to five, Table 3 indicates people's perceptions of the gravity of political corruption in national political institutions in eight African countries.

Table 3 – National Institutions and Sectors, Corrupt or Clean?

<i>To what extent do you perceive the following sectors in this country/territory to be affected by corruption? (1: not at all corrupt, ... 5: extremely corrupt)</i>	Political parties	Parliament / Legislature	Police	Legal system / Judiciary	Tax revenue	Business / private sector	Customs	Medical services	Media	Education system	Utilities	Registry and permit services	The military	NGOs	Religious bodies
Cameroon	3.9	3.3	4.7	4.3	4	3.7	4.4	3.7	2.9	3.6	2.7	3.6	3.6	2.5	2
Ethiopia	3.6	3.2	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.2	2.7	3.6	2.5	2.4
Ghana	4.1	3.1	4.7	3.8	3.7	3.2	4.2	2.9	3.1	3.5	3.7	3.1	2.3	2.5	2.2
Kenya	3.7	3.8	4.1	3.6	3.4	2.9	3.7	3.2	2.3	2.5	3.2	3.7	2.5	2.3	2
Nigeria	4.5	4.1	4.7	3.8	3.6	3.2	4.2	3	2.8	3.8	3.6	3.1	3.8	2.5	2.3
Senegal	3.6	3.1	3.7	3.2	2.8	2.8	3.6	2.7	2.4	2.5	2	3.1	1.9	2.1	1.8
South Africa	4	3.7	4	3.3	2.7	3	2.9	3	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.8	2.7	2.7	2.3
Togo	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.9	3.4	3.3	4.2	3	3	2.9	3.1	3.6	3.5	2.2	2.1
AFRICA - average	4.2	3.8	4.4	3.7	3.5	3.1	4	3	2.7	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.2

Source: (Transparency International 2005)

5. Branches of government

In general, the more effective the states permanent institutions, the greater its capacity to discipline the patrimonial behaviour of its political elites and their efforts to alter the political rules to suit their own ends (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997). This section looks at some of the evidence concerning changes in the branches of government in African states in recent years.

The executive

Presidentialism is still strong and all the post-1990 regimes in Africa except Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius and South Africa. This is significant particularly in light of former British colonies that were nominally run on parliamentary systems. In the post-colonial period, the former colonies moved to presidential systems, and none have subsequently reverted. This is indicative of the endurance of neo-patrimonial rule and 'big man' politics, which leaves little room for debate amongst elites and few checks and balances on the executive.³²

³² And despite a popular perception amongst voters that parliamentary systems are preferable (Cho 2004).

"In Africa's illiberal and presidential regimes, the main drama is about control of the presidency. Legislative elections and party competition have to be understood in the context of this broader drama. The president has an incentive to ensure a friendly majority in the legislature, although he typically enjoys considerable decree powers and does not need a stable majority to rule effectively" (van de Walle 2003).

One important trend is however emerging: all of the electoral governments of Africa are moving toward placing a two term limit on executive office – significant on a continent that has seen some of the longest 'serving' presidents in the world. This one change has opened up the opportunity for legislatures to exercise increased checks and balances on autocratic presidents.

New constitutions may also be making a difference. There is some indication in the literature that constitutions framed in the 1990s are curbing some of the power enjoyed by African executives. The old post-independence constitutions - illiberal documents that proscribed opposition parties, conferred permanent tenure on presidents, and ignored *habeas corpus* - have been jettisoned. Some of the new constitutions have quite innovative features. The federalism and ethnicised political parties of Ethiopia represent an effort to confront society's ethnic problems within a multiparty framework.³³ The consultative "councils of traditional rulers" (as in South Africa and Namibia) and "councils of elder statesmen" (as in Ghana and Benin) attempt to institutionalise the participation of key social forces and fill something like the role of an upper house in a bicameral parliament. New constitutional courts in Benin and South Africa are proving useful in countering crude majoritarianism and claims of executive privilege (Gyimah-Boadi 1998).

In some cases (notably Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana), the processes of constitution-making or amending could not be sufficiently liberated from the grip of incumbent autocrats. In Zambia and Côte d'Ivoire most notoriously, the new constitutions featured special clauses designed to help incumbents retain power by keeping their opponents off the ballot. In the former case, the amendment was meant to bar former president Kenneth Kaunda (the strongest rival to President Frederick Chiluba), from contesting the next election. And in Côte d'Ivoire, Henri Konan-Bédié resorted to a similar manoeuvre to ward off a potential challenge from former premier Alassane Ouattara (Gyimah-Boadi 1998).

The legislature

Notwithstanding the enduring power of the executive in many African states, it is, for our purposes, important to look at the emerging influence of legislatures and judiciaries as sources of new elites and changing political practices. The role of the legislature, especially in presidential systems, is important in balancing executive power.³⁴ Bratton and de Walle note that African legislatures have historically been weak and either ravaged by ethnic fragmentation and personality driven factionalism (as in Congo), or stable but subservient - controlled by intimidation and clientelism (for example Mali, Niger, Malawi and Zambia).

In the early 1990s, most African legislatures were virtually powerless. This situation continued even after some countries began to experience a multi-party democratisation process. The long hiatus caused by one-party presidentialism has left legislatures poorly developed as institutions. Few of them have been around long enough to accumulate much democratic capital.

"They often lack the traditions of tolerance, give and take, respect for minority opinion, and the like that make it easier to deal with such perennial issues of representative government as how to reconcile loyalty to one's party with loyalty to one's constituents, nation, or conscience. Notwithstanding the resourcefulness of a few individual lawmakers, African parliaments are notoriously deficient in physical plant and equipment. MPs work out of cramped, poorly furnished offices (if they are lucky enough to *have* offices) with little or no secretarial support. Both the facilities and the skills necessary for public-policy research and analysis are

³³ They may also be intended, as critics charge, to entrench Tigrean hegemony.

³⁴ Characteristics of legislatures include: collective bodies which represent the public via constituency services; passing legislation; policymaking; executive oversight; and political recruitment. Weak legislatures emphasized constituent services and passing legislation. African legislators have emphasized their constituent services as a key aspect of their duties.

strictly limited. So is money--a reflection of both the parlous state of many African economies and the desire of many African presidents to keep legislatures weak and subordinate. Low pay and scanty perquisites expose MPs to grave moral and political hazards" (Gyimah-Boadi 1998).

As products of recent transitions, African parliaments have tended to be "negative coalitions" cobbled together to dislodge - or to entrench - incumbents. In many of Africa's liberalized autocracies, exercising parliament's oversight function, checking the executive and fostering transparency and accountability are daunting tasks indeed (Gyimah-Boadi 1998). But there are two things that indicate changes in some countries: greater strength and influence of opposition parties – discussed in Section 4 - and the potential (at least) for the emergence of new elites with 'sharpened teeth' in legislatures.

Whilst there is relatively little written on contemporary legislatures in Africa,³⁵ an exception is the work of Barkan and colleagues (Barkan et al. 2004; Barkan 2005). Their research took place in four countries (Benin, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal)³⁶ in 2002. The countries were chosen on the assumption that the legislature would have more authority than in other African countries.³⁷ This assumption proved to be only partially correct. The study found a range of authority, from very weak (Senegal) to growing in strength (Kenya) with Benin and Ghana sitting somewhere between. They conclude that the legislature's authority is largely about the incentive structure facing individual legislature members. This has three components: clientelist practices and weak political parties with no programmatic content; the formal rules of the political system; and the internal structure of the legislature and the resources, including remuneration, available to its members. This study has (at least) two interesting findings. Whilst the nature of clientelist politics is only likely to change slowly (a view echoed in other parts of this survey), the rules and the resources components are more changeable on a shorter timescale. However, this will only happen, it is argued, when there is a critical mass of reformers (as opposed to patronage seekers) (Barkan et al. 2004). The second finding concerns the individuals who comprise this emerging elite of reformers. They argue that the emergence of a stronger, urban civil society in the mid-1980s brought with it a new and younger political cohort demanding the end of authoritarian rule. This was particularly the case in those countries with larger cities and which supported a flow of educated elites to and from the West.³⁸ With the decline of complete authoritarian rule during the 1990s, there emerged a struggle between patronage seekers and a small number of reformers (Barkan et al. 2004).³⁹ The balance between them is a matter for research.⁴⁰ As is the relationship between them and a growing civil society. Finally, Barkan identifies seven variables that need to be taken into account the extent to which legislatures become institutions of countervailing power. This is useful checklist for any research on legislatures. They are (Barkan et al. 2004; Barkan 2005):

- The pressures of patron/client politics
- The formal rules of the legislature
- The level of salaries
- The collective resources and capacities of the legislature
- The degree of near parity of seats between government and opposition

³⁵ A book that was unavailable at the time of writing looks well worth consulting is (Salih 2006). Case studies of African legislatures include: (Baker 2000; Barkan 2005; O'Brien 2005; Wang 2005)

³⁶ The author is currently writing a book called 'Emerging Legislatures in Africa's Emerging Democracies' that covers legislatures in 6 countries.

³⁷ Based on the frequency of multi-party elections and an alternation of power or at least on intense electoral competition.

³⁸ For example Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa.

³⁹ Barkan says: "What is different between reformers and non-reformers is also *not* education. Rather it is attitude and worldview. Reformers are almost invariably Internet users. They understand what is going on beyond the borders of their countries. They are curious about this, and thus they are more likely to be supportive of universal norms of what constitutes best practices, especially with respect to the legislature." (Personal communication).

⁴⁰ Others argue much more for the continued recycling of elites. (Daloz 1999), for example, argues that there is a strong tendency for people to have been in power, if not since independence, then at least for a very long time. The 'new generation' seem to be exceptional cases.

- The presence of a coalition of reformers (and even opportunists) to overcome the disincentives for collective action in (1)

The rapid rise of female representation in some legislatures has had its own impact (for example Rwanda, South Africa, Seychelles, Uganda, and Tanzania that all have more than 20 percent female representation in their single or lower houses). This impact has been felt, for example, through forcing parliaments to include gender concerns in discussions of land rights in the context of customary law or to recognise women's economic role in poverty alleviation policies, or raising violence against women as a matter for public debate, and many other issues besides. Before women were represented in legislatures, such issues were not a matter for public policy (Bauer and Britton 2006). This is not automatic, however. In Uganda, despite the early promise of more female representatives, women's policy issues have been blocked by other parliamentarians (Goetz 2002; Tripp 2006).

The Judiciary

Alongside the legislature, the judiciary checks the power of the executive by upholding the rule of law and the ensuring public accountability and transparency. The type of legal system⁴¹ inherited at independence makes a difference. Through the use of proxy measures for rule of law based on Political Risk Services (ICRG) and Freedom House indicators, Joireman shows that "as a group, African common law systems have become more effective over time while the civil law systems have remained stagnant" (Joireman 2001). In addition, the common law countries show a distinct rise in rule of law indicators since the early 1990s - coinciding with the onset of electoral politics. Joireman also notes that this is an area requiring considerably more research before sophisticated conclusions can be reached.⁴²

The judiciary has played an important role in Malawi's electoral politics.⁴³ A paper by Gloppen and Kanyongolo (2004) shows how in the 2004 elections the judiciary was active in cases regarding; the electoral rules and framework for administration of the elections; the voter registration process; candidate selection; the electoral campaign; the polling process; the counting of votes and the integrity of the results, and cases regarding the distribution of positions and privileges on the basis of the election results. In this case, notwithstanding the many flaws in the election process, the judiciary acted in two important ways: firstly playing an accountability function (for example, by blocking self-serving changes in electoral rules); and secondly as a safety valve (for example, as arbiter in disputes over election results). However, the authors report that the judiciary itself became too political in the process - for example, acting as an internal arbiter for intra-party disputes or, more seriously, using its position to create political leverage for the parties and individual candidates (Gloppen and Kanyongolo 2004). In Kenya, the judiciary has been more seriously implicated in fraud. In 2005, five out of nine Court of Appeal justices, 18 out of 36 High Court justices and 82 out of 254 magistrates were implicated as corrupt in an investigation by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ 2005).⁴⁴

6. Decentralisation

The literature about elites, politics and decentralisation is sparse. This is despite a common understanding that decentralisation fosters democracy. It is argued that decentralisation brings government closer to the governed and, therefore, the government will be more responsive to its people. The World Bank exemplifies this view:

"Political decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making. It is often associated with pluralistic politics and representative government, but it can also support

⁴¹ Common law and civil law.

⁴² If ever there was a needful call for further research it is in this area of the effectiveness of legal institutions. We need more indigenous, scholarly assessments of the effectiveness of law and legal systems in Africa, and for that matter in the rest of the developing world, in order to determine which institutions and strategies work best in countries with low income levels. Moreover, it is essential that we develop more broadly comparative research in this area, rather than research targeted at either civil or common law countries with similar institutions. (Joireman 2001)

⁴³ Also a useful case of the struggle between executive and legislature can be found in (Donge 2006)

⁴⁴ Transparency International's Global Corruption Report 2007 will focus on corruption in judicial systems.

democratization by giving citizens, or their representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. Advocates of political decentralization assume that decisions made with greater participation will be better informed and more relevant to diverse interests in society than those made only by national political authorities. The concept implies that the selection of representatives from local electoral jurisdictions allows citizens to know better their political representatives and allows elected officials to know better the needs and desires of their constituents.” (Source: World Bank, Political Decentralisation website)⁴⁵

Whilst there is some evidence that this has been the case in other parts of the world (e.g. West Bengal, Kerala, and some Brazilian states), the evidence from Africa is at best anecdotal. Overall, “... finding systematic evidence for decentralisation outcomes in Africa ... is difficult” (Crook 2003).

Despite donor enthusiasm for decentralisation in recent years – and the corresponding financial aid – decentralisation initiatives appear to have made little or no impact on improving democratic practices at a local level. Local institutions can be captured by local elites, and therefore become less responsive to people’s needs (Platteau and Gaspart 2003; Platteau 2004). This could be explained as merely a replication of what happens in politics centrally, but Crook has a more nuanced argument. With evidence based on case material from Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya, he argues that the democratising effect of decentralisation depends on the politics of local-central relations and on the central regime’s ideological commitment to democracy (Crook 2003). In most cases, his study finds this commitment to be lacking; the difference being in degree. Instead;

“elite capture of local power structures has been facilitated by the desire of ruling elites to create and sustain power bases in the countryside... Even where the interests of underprivileged groups and of the rural poor have achieved some representation through democratic decentralisation [a case Crook makes for Ghana], accountability mechanisms are in general not strong enough to ensure that these interests are represented effectively in policy making.” (Crook 2003)

The recent work of Christian Lund and colleagues makes other interesting findings about local-level institutions in Africa. How such processes play out at a national / state level is not entirely clear and could be fruitfully researched. Whilst they recognise the lack of any simple patterns;

“... a central point can be distilled. When we approach the phenomenon of public authority and governance, it is useful not to see it as stemming from one single source, but rather to focus on how particular issues (security, justice, development, taxation and others) are governed and which actors are engaged in them. Many of the political actions in these spheres of life presuppose a state, but the state qualities of governance are not exclusively nested in government institutions. Consequently, there is an ongoing competition in society — perhaps most visibly so in African societies where governments are often under-funded, overstretched, in-capacitated and de-legitimized — to rearrange the boundaries of public authority between institutions so far unable to command enduring functional hegemony.” (Lund 2006a; Lund 2006b).⁴⁶

In sum, there is an emerging consensus that decentralisation enables elite capture rather than expanding the democratic horizons. This however is an area for further research, since there is no hard and fast evidence that the patronage politics of elite capture is either positive or negative for democracy. For example, whilst elite control of oil resources and revenue in Nigeria has negative consequences, the local patronage politics of Ghana or Zambia might actually be a stabilising influence on national politics.

7. Media

A free and independent media – both broadcast and print - is an essential component of democracy. A skilled independent media can provide citizens with essential political and economic information and analysis, encourage informed dialogue between policymakers and citizens, and demand accountability from political structures (Hudock 2003). The role of the

⁴⁵http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPUBLICSECTORANDGOVERNANCE/EXTDSRE/O_contentMDK:20246049~menuPK:2086199~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:390243_0.html. Accessed 6/10/06.

⁴⁶ We are not sure if this would be a fruitful avenue to explore but it looks promising.

media in Africa has received significant attention since the 1990s, particularly since the emergence of numerous private and independently owned media outlets. These were widely perceived to present opportunities to support democratic ideals, criticize ineffective or authoritarian governments and hold governing elites accountable by raising the costs of illegal practices (van de Walle, 2003a, Tettey 2001). While a free and independent media has, in some cases in Africa certainly made it more difficult for elites to operate outside of the formal system, a cursory scan of the literature also reveals that in many cases the media have become mouth pieces for the ruling elite (MISA 2004).

Whilst there is quite an extensive literature on the media in Africa - including specific country case studies⁴⁷ and regional comparisons⁴⁸ – the role of elites in the media in Africa (as well as the role that the media can play in holding elites accountable and reducing their illegal activities) has not been explored in great detail. Whilst there is no doubt that neopatrimonialism operates within the media, this has received little attention in studies to date.

Although the media environment in many parts of Africa has improved since the beginning of the democratisation process, the state of media freedom remains extremely varied and reflects the diversity of contexts and experience (Freedom House 2006, MISA 2004 and Reporters Without Borders 2006). Freedom House's annual Freedom of the Press studies assesses the press and media environment in 48 African countries, rating the state of freedom of the press in each country as either 'free', 'partly free' or 'not free'.⁴⁹ In 1990, the media in 7% of sub-Saharan Africa was ranked 'free', 19% 'partly free' and 74% 'not free' (Freedom House 1999). By 2005, the percentages had improved: 14.5% 'free', 39.5% 'partly free', and 46% 'not free' (Freedom House 2006). Mauritania and Kenya are among the countries that saw progress during the year and were upgraded from 'not free' to 'partly free'. This was largely a result of the decline in intimidation of journalists and an increase in the numbers of independent media in operation. Several West African countries (notably Guinea-Bissau and Liberia) also noted improvement, while simultaneous declines were witnessed in other parts of Africa. According to RSF's worldwide freedom of the press data (gathered in 2005), Benin and Namibia both ranked just under the United Kingdom and above France, Australia and the United States.⁵⁰ In 2004, MISA studied the state of the media in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, finding great variance between these countries – from Malawi which made significant steps towards improvement, to Zimbabwe which has seen a gradual but continuing increase in media oppression by the government (MISA 2004).

Although the state of the media in Africa varies from country to country, with some countries undeniably seeing the emergence of a talented and vibrant independent media, the situation

⁴⁷ For instance, Ghana (Alhassan 2005, Hasty 2005, Temin and Smith 2002), Uganda (Bengali 2005), South Africa (Jones 2001), Botswana (Taylor 2003), Kenya (Mwesige 2004, Ochilo 1993, Wanyande 1996) and Cameroon (Nyamnjoh, Wete and Fonchingong 1996)

⁴⁸ A number of interesting cross-country and regional comparative studies have been conducted (MISA 2004, Djankov et al. 2003, Afrobarometer 2004).

⁴⁹ Data is collected from overseas correspondents, staff and consultants, international visitors, human rights and press freedom organizations, specialists in geographic and geopolitical areas, governments and multilateral bodies' reports, and a variety of domestic and international news media. The diverse nature of the questions used in the study seeks to encompass the varied ways in which pressure can be placed upon the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based media to operate freely. More information about the methodology (including the specific questions within each category) can be found at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=56&year=2006>

⁵⁰ The index is based solely on events between September 2004 and September 2005. RSF compiled a questionnaire with 50 criteria for assessing the state of press freedom in each country – including all violations directly affecting journalists (murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment), registering the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for such violations. The questionnaire was sent to partner organisations of Reporters Without Borders (14 freedom of expression groups in five continents) and its 130 correspondents around the world, as well as to journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists. A scale devised by the organisation was then used to give a country-score to each questionnaire. The Statistics Institute of the University of Paris provided assistance and advice in processing the data reliably and thoroughly. The 167 countries ranked are those for which completed questionnaires from a number of independent sources were received. Others were not included because of a lack of credible data. More information about the methodology can be found at http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id_article=15338

on the whole remains rather bleak. Press conditions are particularly dire in Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea and Zimbabwe, where authoritarian governments frequently employ legal pressure, imprisonment and harassment to prevent independent domestic and foreign media outlets from reporting freely. Equatorial Guinea and Eritrea are two of the few African countries with virtually no independent media at all (Freedom House 2006). Not all countries that achieved a 'free' rating in the Freedom House surveys are completely out of the danger zone, as evinced by the downgrading of Botswana from 'free' to 'partly free'. Despite a number of independent weekly newspapers in the country, Radio Botswana and the only daily newspaper are both understood to be government-controlled (Taylor 2003). In Ethiopia and Uganda, the press was severely clamped down on in an attempt to curtail political opposition parties in the run up to and during elections.

Freedom of the press and freedom of speech are constitutionally or legally guaranteed in most sub-Saharan countries, but in most cases these freedoms are not upheld in practice (notable exceptions are Benin, Ghana, Namibia and Cape Verde where the government generally adheres to constitutional and legal guarantees). Kenya rejected a draft constitution with specific provision for protection for the media in a 2005 referendum. In Swaziland, the King has the power to waive the limited freedom of speech enshrined in the constitution (Freedom House 2006). Many governments in Africa do not actively prioritise building capacity for a free and independent media as this is seen as a threat to their own power. In fact, in most countries, governments (and in some cases business elites) seek to control the media's freedom to investigate and report by ignoring or manipulating laws, or using repression and intimidation. Press freedom is often particularly bad in periods leading up to elections. In Togo, for example, election coverage by private broadcasters was forbidden and telephone networks and media broadcast transmissions were actually cut off on the last voting day (Freedom House 2006).

Governments have found various ways to stifle and control an independent media such as censorship, physical threat and harassment. The threat of withdrawal of state subsidies or advertising revenues (common in transition countries) is also an effective influencing tool. One of the most common ways that government and business elites exert pressure on the media is through defamation laws and libel suits (Djankov et al. 2003, Freedom House 2006). By 1998, for example, the Ghanaian independent media was embroiled in hundreds of libel suits brought by the government (Tettey 2001). In the Central African Republic, political leaders, state officials and influential business elites have also used criminal libel laws to prosecute journalists. In Kenya, a journalist with the East African Standard was charged with criminal defamation after publishing a report on the link between Kenya's economic elite and the government. In Sierra Leone, vendors, printers and publishers can also be held to account for libel. Unsurprisingly then, self-censorship is not an unusual practice among African journalists (Freedom House 2006).

Ethnic tension, or the threat of ethnic tension, is also used as an excuse to curtail freedom of the press in a number of countries. In Rwanda, where the media played a pivotal role in inciting violence during the genocide, the media is severely restricted by the government and inciting 'divisionism' is punishable by prison sentence. In the Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, incitement to ethnic hatred and violence is also considered a criminal offense and frequently used by the state as an excuse to arrest journalists. In Uganda, journalists have frequently been arrested on charges of inciting sectarianism. In Somalia, where ethnic fighting is ongoing, journalists are accused of bias in covering issues that span ethnic rivalries (Freedom House 2006). Frohardt and Temin point out that the media have largely been overlooked in conflict analysis, perhaps because the media may not be a direct cause of conflict. Frohardt and Temin's study of the role of media in 'vulnerable societies' (defined as societies highly susceptible to movement towards civil conflict and/or repressive rule) suggests there are 'clues to conflict' in the media, and have developed a number of structural and content indicators to provide these clues (Frohardt and Temin 2003).

Independent media outlets are not a guaranteed safeguard against abuse because more often than not they are located within 'a nexus of relations and find themselves dominated by more powerful partners' (Berger 1998 quoted in Tettey 2001). They may also have strong ties to the government. For example, MISA found that in Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia

both public and private media organizations gave proportionally greater coverage to the ruling party (MISA 2004). Sometimes links between influential members of particular groups and media outlets may be more subtle – for example, through the existence of discrete financial relationships (Frohardt and Temin 2003). Where the government controls the media, it can be particularly difficult to operate effectively and even to employ independent and skilled staff. Chabal and Daloz present the example of the head of the national radio of a major West African country, who confided that he was often pressured into hiring relatives of the political elites – to resist would mean losing his job (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Given the ethnic diversity of most African countries, and the divisions that often fall along ethnic lines, media outlets can also be biased towards particular ethnic groups. They are also often biased in favour of urban issues, excluding the poorest and most marginalized populations living in more remote areas. Media employees in many African countries lack the technical skills needed to effectively report on economic and sector-specific issues.

The question of ownership is key to analysing the independence and effectiveness of the media, and reveals how elites can manipulate it to their own advantage. In their study of 97 countries, including 21 in Africa, Djankov et al find that 'almost universally the largest media firms are owned by the government or by private families' (Djankov et al, 2003, p.363). Governments in Africa control 61% of the top five (in circulation) daily newspapers and reach 84% of the audience for the top five television stations. In 71% of African countries the state has a monopoly on television broadcasting (Djankov et al, 2003). One consequence of state ownership is that media tends to serve those in power (the political and financial elites). Djankov et al investigate whether or not government ownership of the media cures market failures or undermines political and economic freedom, finding indications that support the latter. They point out that it is important to make the distinction between 'state' and 'party' ownership – state owned stations will survive even if the party is voted out of power. State-owned media will often favour the government in its political coverage. In Botswana, for example, opposition activities are covered by the media, but the overall perception of the contents of media products is that the government has an inordinate amount of influence over the press compared with the opposition parties (Leepile 1996 quoted in Taylor 2003). Media owners generally control news content, so diversity of ownership, as well as media staff, generally determine the degree of bias with which news will be reported. If there is little diversity among journalists and owners of media outlets, the journalists and outlets are more vulnerable to abuse by members of the dominant group(s) in a particular society (e.g., the elites). Frohardt and Temin find that abuse of media is most likely when:

"all or a significant portion of media outlets are owned by one or a small number of people, particularly if those people are of the same ethnicity or religion, support the same political party, or are from the same region" (Frohardt and Temin, 2003, p.4).

The mass media enjoys (surprisingly) relatively large levels of public trust across Africa (42%) (Afrobarometer 2004). Government broadcasting media are generally perceived as more trustworthy than new independent broadcasters. In print media, private and public sources enjoy virtually equal levels of trust (36% and 37%, respectively). The only exception is Senegal, where newspaper readers (an urban, educated minority) awarded more trust to independent print media than government sources (Bratton et al 2004).

As with many other aspects of public life in African countries, women and gender issues generally assume a peripheral role in both print and television media. Morna and Mufune's study of 12 countries indicated that there is, by and large, a huge gap in the gender awareness of much African media. Women often do not get proportional representation in the media, and when they do stories about women are often told by male sources, portraying women in social (rather than political or economic) roles and reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. Because women are more active in television presenting than in print journalism, it has been argued that women have taken "soft" roles in the media (Morna and Mufune 2003).

It is useful to assess how the diversity of country contexts, ownership and institutional dynamics identified above affect the various news mediums: radio, television, print and Internet.

Radio

Radio is the chief source of news for the majority of the population in most African countries (Afrobarometer 2003, Freedom House 2006). Radio in most countries remains state-owned and heavily influenced by ruling party and opposition elites, often broadcasting pro-government views and propaganda. There are exceptions, of course, as in Guinea, where the state-owned media provides coverage that is mostly favourable to the government but also criticises local-level officials and reports on the activities of the opposition. In rare cases, radio staff have achieved small victories in the face of repressive environments. In 2005, for instance, members of Chad's Union of Private Radio Stations organized demonstrations and a week-long strike in protest against the number of arbitrary detentions of journalists. During the strike, all private print publications and radio broadcasts were replaced with bulletins on the state of press freedom in the country. In response to the protest, an appeals court overturned sentences on several jailed journalists (Freedom House 2006).

Some countries are seeing the increased emergence of private FM radio stations that are relatively free to engage in critical reporting and criticism of the government (for example in Ghana). In other cases (for example, Gabon), privately owned radio stations exist but their content is largely apolitical (Freedom House 2006). Private radio stations are however often confined by legal and financial restrictions and subject to intimidation by powerful political or financial elites (Freedom House 2006). They usually have to obtain licences from governments, who may use this as a way to control or prevent them from broadcasting. Whilst the law in Ethiopia permits private radio stations, the state has so far failed to issue any licenses (Freedom House 2006). Privately owned radio stations often have a limited reach, particularly in rural areas, as is the case in Angola, Botswana and Kenya. Again, there are exceptions, as in Benin (rated by Freedom House as 'free' in 2005), where Golfe FM broadcasts in three of the country's main languages (French, Fon and Yorouba) including in remote rural areas (Freedom House 2006).

Television

In many African countries, local television news is limited to state-owned channels (e.g. Botswana Television), making it easy for governments to control content. Private television stations do operate freely in some countries, including Benin, where 2 of the 5 television stations are private and Comoros, where private stations are funded by individuals and citizens living abroad. In Swaziland, the sole private television station is owned by a member of the royal family (Freedom House 2006). In other countries, (Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia) there are currently no privately owned television stations. Importantly though, television is not a widely accessed news medium in Africa, since it is mostly used in urban and affluent areas (Freedom House 2006). An Afrobarometer survey in 2003 found that half of the Africans interviewed never watch TV news, and that urban residents are five times more likely than their rural counterparts to watch television every day (Afrobarometer 2003).

Newspapers

The written press is generally more liberalised than either radio or television in Africa. In Malawi, for example, six of the major eight newspapers are privately owned and believed to be editorially independent (Freedom House 2006). Afrobarometer has identified the print press as 'central... in the cultivation of democratic attitudes and practices', reporting that African newspaper readers are more likely (71%) than African radio listeners (58%) to resist a government shut down of independent publications (Afrobarometer, 2003, p.6). In general, however, newspaper readership is not widespread. In many cases, newspapers are merely a source of news for urban, educated and wealthier elites. In Madagascar, for example, the six daily newspapers and numerous weeklies and monthlies are aimed at the French-educated urban elites (Freedom House 2006). Generally low literacy levels and the often-prohibitive costs of purchasing a newspaper, means that the majority of the population in African countries do not have the means to access news in the print media. In East Africa, for example, the cost of a magazine exceeds the daily wage of most urban workers (Adagala 1994 quoted in Tettey 2001). In many countries, the content of private newspapers is also dominated by elites. In Somalia, there are approximately 20 private newspapers, but most are

linked to the various fighting factions and rely on these factions for protection (Freedom House 2006). This is generally understood to influence content and coverage. In some countries, such as Equatorial Guinea, there is no independent media although private newspapers do exist - in essence these serve as 'opposition mouthpieces and are therefore tied to the political fortunes of their sponsors' (Freedom House 2006). Eritrea currently has no independent or privately owned print media and the importation of foreign newspapers is illegal.

Additionally, the private press often suffers from poor or irregular financing (including limited advertising revenue and low reader subscription levels). A majority of Gabonese private newspapers are printed in Cameroon due to high local printing costs – and newspapers printed abroad are subject to government review before distribution. In Ghana, journalists are poorly paid and believed to frequently engage in unprofessional conduct as a result, inventing sensationalist news stories (Freedom House 2006).

Internet

Since 2005, Freedom House has commented on Internet usage in its evaluation of freedom of the press in sub-Saharan Africa. In most countries, the Internet is not censored and could be a vehicle for expressing free and independent views. However, lack of access due to the high costs of technology and widespread poverty means that this form of media is for the time being accessible only to a small portion of the population. In most countries, Internet usage hovers on or below the 1% mark. In a handful of countries, the government actively monitors Internet usage and the content of emails. In Equatorial Guinea (one of the least free media countries in sub-Saharan Africa), it is believed that government operatives monitor citizens' email and Internet use. In Togo, owners of Internet cafes are required to present records of client activities if asked to do so by the state (Freedom House 2006).

8. Civil society

Given the perceived failure of many African states to institutionalise democratic politics and contribute to economic development, analysts increasingly argue for alternative approaches to governance and social development giving a broader set of actors – notably civil society – a heightened role (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Aili Mari Tripp argues that the 'exaggerated importance of electoral democracy' fails to acknowledge the valuable role that numerous social actors – media, women's movements, faith-based organisations, credit, human rights and environmental organisations – are playing in laying the foundations for democratic institutions in many African countries (Tripp 2000).

According to Gyimah-Boadi:

"Africa's civil societies are among the chief engines driving the continent's political development. With their increased sophistication and mounting capabilities, they are helping to drive the shift from unalloyed state hegemony to nascent pluralism. Their growing self-awareness and determination to defend their autonomy against all efforts at suppression or cooptation (especially those originating from the state) are signs that they are here to stay" (Gyimah-Boadi quoted in Tripp 2000).

While there is an infinitely large and diverse literature on the civil society's role in the democratisation process in countries in Africa, the issue of how elites function within and through civil society has been largely neglected.

Interest in civil society in Africa spans the past few decades, although the emphasis and activities have changed over time. During the 1980s, donors supported civil society organisations (CSOs) in assuming the service delivery role that the state often failed to fill. In some countries, for example Tanzania, government elites saw this as an opportunity to obtain a piece of the funding cake, setting up so-called 'independent' CSOs that were staffed by civil servants (Lange, Wallewik and Kiondo 2000, Brock 2004). In the 1990s donor emphasis – in Africa and elsewhere - shifted towards engaging CSOs as partners in the policy process. Civil society organisations in Africa serve many different functions, and the term 'civil society' has become somewhat of a broad umbrella to cover a range of activities in the non-governmental sector. Reflecting the broad use of the term, this section will look at CSOs more broadly, while subsequent sections will focus specifically on trade unions, business associations, women's

movements and faith-based organisations. Unions, professional associations and the churches typically played a prominent role in the democratisation of the early 1990s, but they quickly retreated from politics once multiparty rule was in place (van de Walle 2003b).

It is crucial to distinguish between membership and non-membership-based civil society organisations in Africa. Because there are so few membership-based organisations, where funding is derived from the members, most CSOs in Africa are dependent on their funders – often from within the international donor community. Within the donor-funded CSOs, it is also important to distinguish whether they are driven by a single donor or a group of donors. The most effective CSOs are those that are funded by groups of donors, as this makes it easier to maintain a degree of autonomy despite the dependence on funding.

Despite the changing emphasis on the role of civil society in international development, most CSOs remain engaged in service delivery activities rather than advocacy or policy-making. Several challenges face CSOs operating in Africa. A major one is the lack of genuine political space for participation. Even where participation takes place, the quality and impact depends on support from international development actors as well as power relationships between the state and civil society actors (Brock 2004). Even the more autonomous NGOs that emerged in Africa in the 1990s face continued pressures for cooptation by governments and main political parties who employ various strategies to limit their activities (Tripp 2000). Weak capacity is another problem that plagues the civil society sector and the increasing emphasis on general budget support brings with it the risk that CSOs will be forced into a new dependence on their governments (Lister and Nyamugasira 2003). Poor economic conditions, in particular a weak private sector, can galvanise collective action behind self-help efforts. This can also undermine the accountability and credibility of civil society organisation due to dependence on funding sources (Robinson and Friedman 2005).

Many CSOs have similar goals although interactions between them are limited and there is thus much inter-organisational rivalry. Moreover, while civil society strengthening is often considered a 'self-evident' good by the development world, many civil society actors are in fact driven by self-interest and dominated by elites. A key question is whether the emergence of countless CSOs in Africa over the past decade or so are really presenting an alternative to the elites that have historically dominated the NGO landscape (Lange, Wallewik and Kiondo 2000, Brock 2004, Aiyede 2003). Although CSOs are often seen as an important actor in developing local capacity (in the form of social capital) there is a danger that the social capital that is built up becomes exclusive, serving small portions of the population (elites) and excluding the poorest and most marginalised communities. For example, many CSOs are urban-based and focus on the urban communities' needs rather than the rural communities. In other cases, CSOs can be ethnically biased.

Several analysts have argued that the traditional state/ civil society dichotomy popular in the international development arena does not capture the reality of many African countries (Chabal and Daloz 1999, Lewis 2002, Brock 2004, Orji 2003). The arena of civil society often includes community-based organisations, which tend to be informal and formed from social configurations of kinship. This is the case in Tanzania and Uganda, for example. Nevertheless, despite the prominence of this type of organisation in many African countries, donors favour CSOs with formal modern structures that resemble Northern ideas of civil society (Brock 2004; Lange, Wallewik and Kiondo 2000). Civil society in Africa assumes a different character from that in most Western liberal democracies, reflecting differences in the underlying social and economic conditions and historical and political circumstances. Chabal and Daloz argue that, rather than institutionalising, much of Africa is moving towards 'greater informalisation'. Lewis explores different views of the relevance of CSOs for Africa, arguing that the version of civil society that has dominated development discourse agendas ignores the possibility for conflict between civil society and the state. It also ignores organisations that are based on ethnicity or kin or local traditions, and may miss groups that take on an unfamiliar form (Lewis 2002).

A number of studies have looked at whether civil society in particular African contexts is able to fulfil the role assigned to it by international donors, and many analysts argue that civil society has shown disappointing results (Brock 2004, Manor 2003). A number of analysts have expressed disappointment with civil society's record. Manor argues that this is an unfair

judgement and that perceived failures are largely due to unrealistic expectations of rapid political transformation.

The manifestation of civil society in different African contexts is incredibly diverse. A number of studies have been carried out on civil society in Nigeria, for example, highlighting that despite appearances of democracy (elections held in 1999 brought the current President Olusegun Obasanjo to power), the militarism of the previous dictatorship continues to pervade civil society (Agozino and Idem 2001, Abiodun 2000). In Nigeria, 'the military governments have shaped civil society more than civil society has shaped political events.' Democratic rule expanded the space for political expression but non-democratic actors have become very visible and power seekers have dominated the political space. The middle class or professional associations that were at the forefront of the democracy movement tend to be more and more divorced from the grassroots (Ayiede 2003).

Zimbabwe is another interesting example of the diverse nature of civil society in Africa. Hammar and Jensen highlight that one of the key paradoxes of the present crisis in Zimbabwe is the country's decline in official democratic spaces for political expression, while simultaneously experiencing a dynamic growth in political consciousness and activism within an increasingly vibrant civil society (Hammar and Jensen 2002). In Ghana and Uganda, civil society organisations contributed to independence, although the emergence of one-party or military regimes limited the autonomy of large membership organisations and some were co-opted into party machines (Robinson and Friedman 2005). A number of studies have also been carried out where civic organizations have been at the forefront of major social change, for example by contributing to the overthrow of the apartheid regime (Greenstein, Kola and Lopes 2004). Bond has written on elites in the transition from apartheid in South Africa, although his work is not very analytically rigorous and he fails to develop any sort of thesis on relationships and deals developed between economic and elites and the ruling party (Bond 2000).

The role of faith-based organisations within civil society is also receiving more attention in the research. Kuperus examines the role of Christian religious organisations in the regime change process in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Kuperus, 1999). Churches have traditionally been an active sector within civil society, attracting large membership. In Zambia, for example, a study by Bratton indicated that 75% of respondents were involved in the church as opposed to cooperatives (7%), sports clubs (3%), and trade unions and women's clubs (each 2%). Thus, churches in Zambia served as 'protected space within civil society for citizens to associate freely and for opposition political leaders to articulate a critique of the old regime'⁵¹ (Bratton 1999). Randall and Svasand observe that 'the link between strong civil society mobilization (including churches) and the electoral success of new parties challenging the incumbent government is regularly noted'. They cite the example of the opposition movement in Zimbabwe that included 'scores of civil society organizations like the influential and well respected Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and religious organizations like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches' (Randall and Svasand, 2002, p.40). Nevertheless, it is important to note that churches and faith-based CSOs can be exclusive – serving their own religious communities rather than communities as a whole.

There has also been significant research published on the role of CSOs in the budget process, for example by the International Budget Project. In 2003, Norad sponsored a study on the role of civil society in SWAPs in Zambia (Lexow 2003), and there has been work carried out on civil society responses to PRSPs (Possing 2003). Recent work has also addressed civil society and regionalism in Africa, arguing that CSOs need to develop innovative strategies to engage with Africa's new inter-state bodies. These can amplify the power of national associations and act as an alternative to national power. However, these networks can be captured by state elites (Karbo 2001).

Despite the extensive literature on civil society in general, a number of critical areas remain under-researched. Despite the often unquestioned assumption that civil society organisations

⁵¹ Interestingly, the study found that among churchgoers, Catholics were much more likely to be politically mobilized than Protestants (including Evangelicals) or adherents of independent African churches. (Bratton, 1999)

are able to play an important role in strengthening democracy, relatively little is known about their effectiveness and impact, particularly in the policy making sphere (Robinson and Friedman 2005, Chowdhury, Finlay-Notman and Hovland 2006, Court and Maxwell 2006). Further exploration of the role that elites play in civil society is also necessary. Does the emergence of an active civil society result in a renewal of voices – and a new way of thinking - in the policy process or is this simply another vehicle for elites to exercise their power? There is also little systematic work on the ways CSOs use (or abuse or ignore) evidence in attempts to influence policy processes (Pollard and Court 2005). More research could also be done on how changing trends in patterns and modalities of aid are affecting the roles of CSOs. Sector-wide approaches (SWAs) and their potential value notwithstanding, there is widespread concern that relationships between CSOs and government will change significantly as a result and that there has been little analysis of these changes (Lister and Nyamugasira 2003). There is the need for scholars and practitioners to reflect on the specific contexts as well as social and political environments within which civil organisations (Orji 2003). There is also a weak understanding of how to engage CSOs more effectively – more rigorous and systematic analysis would help inform more effective engagement. Lewis argues the need for more micro-studies of existing civil society – groups that are more broadly defined and cultural varied types of civil society. More up-close observation is necessary (Lewis 2002).

9. Women's movements

Although the third wave of democratisation has increased opportunities for women's mobilisation in Africa, research on women and politics on the continent (including the potential of women's movements to challenge neopatrimonial structures) is still nascent and marked by a general lack of in-depth investigations. The most common literature on women's movements to date appears to be case studies. Tripp and Geisler, for example, have explored women's movements in Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana (Geisler 1995, Geisler 1987, Tripp 2001a, Tripp 2001b). While women's movements are generally seen as one of the most active, and successful, groups within civil society in Africa, a key question remains: Does creating space for women's voices give rise to new women's voices, or does this space in turn become dominated by elites? This remains a critical gap in current research.

The important role that the women's movement has played in associational life in several African countries is widely acknowledged. In Tanzania, for example, 80% of all NGOs are women's organisations, and in Uganda the women's movement has been identified as the most organised sector of civil society (Tripp 2000).⁵² Women's organizations cover a broad spectrum of activities - local multipurpose and religiously based organisations, professional associations (female doctors, engineers, lawyers and media workers), women's rights groups, advocacy organizations (focusing on specific issues like reproductive rights or violence against women), and groups catering to particular sections of the population (disabled women, widows and second wives), legal aid associations, women's credit, finance and development associations, and other social and cultural associations (for example, the Uganda Women Football Association) (Tripp 2001).

Several reasons have been identified to account for the success of these types of women's movements in Africa. Firstly, the marginalisation of women in formal politics has in many cases enabled them to maintain relative autonomy in the civil society sphere. In most African countries, women do not have equal access to participation in formal political systems. Because of gendered divisions of labour, gendered organisational modes and the general

⁵² Tripp makes the case that the high level of interest group activity by women in Uganda has been tolerated because women as a group have proven to be among the staunchest supporters of Museveni's ruling party. Many women endorse Museveni's Movement because of its anti-sectarian stance, believing that sectarianism will lead to the return of civil conflict. They argue that in spite of all the Movement's shortcomings, the NRM has a better chance of ensuring peace and stability in Uganda than multipartyism, which is feared to lead Uganda back to the chaos of the past. It is a common perception in Uganda that the women's vote contributed significantly to Museveni's victory in the last presidential elections. This faith in the Movement system is slowly eroding as the system has become more centralised, and as limits on civil and political freedoms have become more apparent since the mid-1990s.

exclusion of women from political arenas, women have tended to have a different relationship to the state, power and patronage structures. Due to traditional perceptions of the role of women, they are often relegated to home and family matters, while men dominate the public sphere. Women are limited in their access to the benefits of the formal political sphere and clientelism through informal networks (Tripp 2001). Because of their exclusion from both formal and informal political and social networks, women have entered the civil society sphere in attempts to influence policy. While the exclusion of women from formal politics and clientelistic networks has disadvantaged women in some respects, Tripp argues that it has also had the unintended consequence of positioning them in a way that gives them the potential to challenge state-led clientelistic networks and practices (Tripp 2001b). This is due to their relative autonomy and lack of constraints that often result from dependence on the state and dominant political parties for funding and support (Tripp 2001).

Being autonomous allows more freedom to operate independently. In Uganda, many women's organizations are self-supporting, although urban-based NGOs tend to be more reliant on donor funding. Nevertheless, both urban and rural organisations generally do not depend on the traditional state patronage networks that have resulted in dependency relationships between state and society (Tripp 2001). The women's movement is seen as one of the most coordinated and active social movements in Uganda, and one of the most effective women's movements in Africa more generally – largely due to its relative autonomy from an otherwise dominant state. Despite enormous pressures for cooptation, it has taken advantage of the political space afforded by the semi-authoritarian Museveni government, which has promoted women's leadership to serve its own ends. Although leaders and organisations reflect varying degrees of autonomy and cooptation, the women's movement as a whole has had a visible impact on policy as a result of its capacity to set its own far-reaching agenda and freely select its own leaders (Tripp 2001).

However, it is not uncommon for women's organisations to themselves be dominated by elites – often linked to the state. Historically, women's movements in many African countries were dominated by groups tied to the ruling parties – often as women's wings of ruling and main opposition parties. The 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana was affiliated with the National Democratic Congress, The Tanzania Women's Union with Chama Cha Mapinduzi, and the Women's League with the United National Independence Party in Zambia (Tripp 2001, Geisler 1987, Geiger 1997). With the emergence of electoral democracy in Africa, some leaders began to realise the value of the female vote and created women's wings of existing political parties. This happened for a number of reasons. In some cases, African leaders saw the appointment of women to official political positions as a way to woo female voters and win their votes and support, as in Uganda where Museveni has supported what has largely been acknowledged as one of the most successful women's movements in Africa (Tripp 2000). In more extreme cases, supporting or creating women's movements has been a way to control the political activities of women, by limiting their activities to more superficial moral and ethical issues rather than substantive political or economic activities. As a result, official women's wings of political parties have largely been ineffectual. They were often tasked with a narrow set of 'development' issues, such as family planning, nutrition, health, women's morality, childcare and homemaking skills (Tripp 2001; Geisler 1987). The women's wing of the ruling party in Botswana, for example, became a body concerned with fundraising and welfare issues, although it had originally been intended as a forum to discuss women's concerns and influence government policy (Geisler 1995).

As a result, leadership structures of these women's wings often mirror those of the political parties they are tied to, and tend to be dominated by the wives, sisters and daughters of leading politicians (Geisler 1995, Geisler 1987, Tripp 2001). As such, they too become elite-dominated. Members of women's associations are often rewarded for loyalty to the party rather than merit. This was characteristic of the Botswana Council of Women immediately after independence, and the Women's League in Zambia. Members of the Women's League in Zambia largely use the League to lobby for their own interests - they are preferentially supplied with scarce goods if they are properly connected, and expect UNIP to award those who are in long service (Geisler 1987).

Women's organisations that are linked to political parties are often led by older and less educated women (linked to the political elites) who are less likely to oppose the terms set by the traditional male elites. With the post-1990s political liberalisation, ruling party-affiliated organisations lost their appeal and no longer attracted as much donor support. As a result, the wives of politicians who had led women's wings often became patrons of so-called independent NGOs rather than of large state-affiliated umbrella women's organisations or national mass women's organisations (Tripp 2001). It is not uncommon, for example, for wives of African leaders to head up large NGOs. Frequently, younger educated and professional women are marginalised from arrangements that reward loyalty to the party over merit. For example, in Zambia, educated women stand little chance to gain and hold positions in the League against uneducated women who are supported by the rank and file of UNIP (Geisler 1987). They are therefore more likely to become involved in independent women's organisations. A larger pool of educated women facilitates leadership of women's organisations, but these educated women are also more likely to move out of the women's movements to take formal political office (Tripp 2001).

While it is often suggested that women's movements are able to unite divided women over common issues of interest, it is critical to acknowledge that women are not one homogenous group. Women in Africa – as in other countries – are often divided by urban/ rural, ethnic and class distinctions (Geisler 1987). The educated elites' knowledge of, and interest in, the day-to-day life and problems of rural women is often minimal. Rural women can also be disunited amongst themselves – as with competition between urban women, rural women can be divided by jealousy and competition for resources. For example, in her case studies on Zimbabwe and Botswana, Geisler found that married women, both within the women's league and outside, members of the elite and the proletariat, try to maintain their marriages and please their husbands, who in return are expected to provide social status and/ or economic security. Enmity between these women increases with economic dependency on men, and is especially pronounced amongst the urban elite (Geisler 1987).

Various organisations and individual leaders can exhibit different degrees of autonomy and cooptation (Tripp 2001). Issues of common concern - such as reproductive rights, women and politics, legal rights, environmental concerns and children's rights - can bridge social divisions between women, which may partially explain the success of women's movements relative to other types of civil society organisations. Women's mobilisation often defies neopatrimonial patterns of mobilisation that tend to build political bases through more narrowly-defined patronage networks along ethnic, religious, regional and other such lines. One societal cleavage that is not as easily overridden by gender interests, however, is that of class. In her study on Uganda, Tripp noted that Ugandan women's associations are for the most part crosscutting and inclusive, incorporating women regardless of ethnicity, religious or regional background, or political affiliation (Tripp 2001).

Other reasons that serve to strengthen the women's movement in Africa (Tripp uses the example of Uganda, but the factors are relevant to other countries as well) include growing cultural openness to women's activism and to advancing women's status in society, as well as support by donors and international women's movements.

Despite the progress made by women's movements in countries such as Uganda, the responsiveness of the state to women's movements (both state-affiliated and independent) in many other cases remains low. Paradoxically, as Tripp points out, 'Although (women's) organisations were subject to clientelistic manipulations to gain votes, funds and establish a popular base of support, they were largely kept apolitical' (Tripp, 2001, p.111). Women's wings often see their activities limited to social welfare work, fundraising for the party, campaigning on behalf of their husbands and 'teaching African women the art of being a good housewife' (Geisler, 1995, p. 550). State strategies for engaging/ dealing with women's organisations have ranged from: controlling women's organisations in order to tap into donor funding (in some cases by requiring participation in state-run umbrella organisations), co-opting existing women's organisations (by dangling patronage in front of organisation leaders), creating new quasi-independent or umbrella organisations that appear to be autonomous but are tasked with monitoring independent organisations and diluting their political activities, to more obvious harassment, repression and bans to existence (Tripp,

2001). Independent women's organisations and leaders have come under extraordinary pressures of cooptation. In Uganda, for example, this is true to the extent that allegations have been made that the women's movement was in fact a creation of the ruling party (Tripp 2001).

The impact of women's movements on politics in Africa in general is an under-researched area (Tripp 2001, Resnick n.d.). Tripp suggests that further empirical investigation and theoretical consideration can enhance understanding of how women might successfully challenge existing neopatrimonial structures. Specific areas she highlights for future research are: the differential impact of levels of civil and political liberties, donor and foreign influences, educational levels of women, elite divisions, regional variance and networks, and other factors that might result in differing levels of associational autonomy and challenges to clientelism (Tripp 2001b). As emphasised in the beginning of this section, it is also crucial to further investigate whether the emergence of women's movements are indeed presenting new opportunities for non-elites to articulate their issues and concerns (as the general assumption seems to be) or whether these spaces are being taken over by the elites.

10. Trade unions

Trade unions are membership organisations with a primary responsibility to protect and advance the interests of their own members, although they often extend their activities to broader social and political concerns (Spooner 2004). With a few exceptions (most notably Zambia and South Africa, but also Nigeria and Ghana) the literature on trade unions in Africa is rather scarce – and that which explores the linkages between elites and trade unions even scarcer. The studies that have been conducted seem to be predominantly case study-based. A relatively comprehensive recent work, for instance, outlines the legal, political and economic environment in which trade unions in six African countries (Zambia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Namibia, and South Africa) operate in order to outline the challenges they face. This set of case studies highlights the diverse environment and experiences of trade unions in different countries in Africa. One aspect of this is current unionization rates in the formal sector - approximately 50% in Zambia, Namibia, and Ghana; 13% in Zimbabwe; 33% in Nigeria; and 26% in South Africa. They also reveal the diverse conditions under which unions operate. In some countries workers enjoy basic labour and organisational rights and unions have relatively good relationships with the government, while in others workers are exposed to suppression and intimidation by employers and the state (Muneku et al, 2004).

The paucity of literature on trade unions and their effect on democracy in Africa is to some extent due to the predominantly agricultural economies of most African countries and the absence in many cases of real powerful labour unions. In Tanzania, for example, only a small portion of the labour force is engaged in the formal sector, and unionisation rates outside the formal sector are extremely low (Dasgupta 2002). In 1983 in The Gambia, potential membership of the labour union has been restricted by the fact that 74% of the population was employed in 'agriculture and related primary activities; most of these were independent small farmers who cultivated groundnuts for export' (Hughes and Perfect, 1989, p.549). In Ghana, agriculture, forestry and fishing represent approximately 60% of total employment (Anyemedu 2000).⁵³ In other countries, unions are founded by the government or main opposition parties, and as a result have limited autonomy and power. In Eritrea, for example, 'the only non-religious, membership-based organisations to operate... are those under the party's direct control' (Connell 2004). The National Confederation of Eritrean Workers is not permitted to organise any segment of the work force without state and party permission.

Trade unions have, however, successfully challenged incumbent rule in a few countries (Wood 2006, Harsch 1993, Gyimah-Boadi 1996, Iheduru 2002). In Mali, the media ran exposes and trade unions, popular organizations and opposition parties urged the removal of corrupt officials and the recovery of embezzled funds. In Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Gabon, trade unions responded to economic crisis and high levels of personal enrichment with calls for 'income redistribution' (Harsch 1993).

⁵³ 'Data on the labour market in Ghana has traditionally been characterised by its paucity and unreliability' (Anyemedu, 2000, p.2)

There is some evidence that the influence of trade unions in Africa – which in many countries was never high to begin with – is on the decline. This is partly due to declining union membership rates following economic crises and cut-downs in the formal sector. In Ghana, for example, total trade union membership went down to 572,598 in 1998, compared with 630,843 in 1985. Decline in employment was due to increased competition from imported goods and retrenchment of labour in the private sector (Anyemedu 2000). In Zambia, the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions played a leading role in the fight for democracy, but has weakened since then (Hedblom 2005, Burnell 2001). The current ruling party - the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) – which was founded by a range of actors including labour, business groups, churches and universities - has taken on many of the corrupt, clientelist characteristics of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) (the party in replaced in power in 1991). ‘The party’s upper echelons were subsequently hijacked by a narrower coterie of ex-UNIP politicians and businesspeople’ (Burnell, 2001, p.16). There are also accusations that President Chiluba (former Chairman-General of the ZCTU from 1974-1991) engages in neopatrimonial practices, by, among other things, making donations to local churches for their social work, often before elections (Burnell 2001).

Although initially influential, the labour movement in Nigeria was severely weakened by the time the democratisation movement started to gather momentum (Remi Ayiede 2004). The movement, already hurt by the economic crisis of the 1980s, underwent organisational restructuring, which ‘removed control of the unions from the rank and file’ (Remi Ayiede, 2004, p.226), and union leaders became co-opted by the state in order to weaken labour opposition to state action and policies.

“Unions... began to rely on government patronage for funding. This, more than anything else, is what weakened union organisational unity and independence, and thereby the influence and power of union leadership” (Remi Ayiede, 2004, p.227).

Trade unions in Botswana have been significantly weakened through formal state legislation (Maruatona 1999). Strikes are severely constrained and it is difficult to register new unions, although this is a legal requirement (Taylor 2003). Dlamini is optimistic about recent developments allowing union affiliates the independence to support political parties of their choice, arguing that this means labour will:

“play a more assertive and proactive role in politics. This coming out of the shell will strengthen the characteristically weak civil society in Botswana and rid the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU) of the stigma that it is an instrument of the ‘paternalistic’ state” (Dlamini 2002).

Perhaps one of the most-studied trade union movements in Africa is that of South Africa where, in the 1980s, trade unions played a major part in opposition to the apartheid government, together with various community and political organisations, including the African National Congress (ANC). This resulted in a close relationship with the current ruling regime in South Africa and, to some extent, the dilution of a completely independent identity (Wood 2006, Bezuidenhout 2000).

The strength of unions is dependent on their membership numbers and financial power (Dasgupta 2002). The harsh economic climate of the 1990s led employment in the formal sector to shrink in several countries, and many labour unions became ‘dog(s) that did not bark’ (Burnell 2001, p.17). A study on Kenya has argued that elite workers tend to abstain from union membership (Manda, Bigsten and Mwabu 2005). Nevertheless there is also evidence that membership in trade unions is most often limited to the formal sector. Consequently, the vast majority of the population employed in the informal sector are excluded from any victories achieved by unions (Muneku et al 2004).

In South Africa, the past 20 years has seen union membership becoming increasingly skilled. This has excluded temporary employees as well as young and rural workers, resulting in:

“allegations that the labour movement represents the interests of an elite grouping, who are selfishly pursuing their goals regardless of the long term consequences in terms of employment and economic growth” (Wood 2006).

Despite personal linkages between privileged and marginalised groups through the operation of extended and informal support networks, the South African labour market remains firmly

divided between 'haves' and 'have-nots' who often have competing interests (Wood 2006). In countries with large informal sectors characterised by an absence of union activity, it is therefore necessary to ask how representative unions really are. Women and other vulnerable sections of the labour force (for example, younger, less educated workers) often have limited representation (Dasgupta 2002). Other sources of labour disunity have been identified as 'ethnicity, disputes over money, personal enmity among labour leaders and political rivalry' (Hughes and Perfect, 1989, p.570).

Some research has been carried out on unions' wider relationships with other civic organizations – as in the literature on labour unions as social movements in Nigeria and South Africa (Remi Ayiede 2004). The issue of union relationships with civil society/ NGOs also arises when looking at trade union efforts to organize the informal sector.

"A relatively small but increasing number of unions... are successfully organizing informal economy workers. There is a considerable variety of organizational models in evidence, including new informal economy unions sponsored by national centers (Mozambique), direct recruitment of informal economy workers into individual unions (Ghana), alliance building with 'associations' of informal economy workers (Zambia) and new unions of women workers (South Africa)" (Spooner 2004).

Remi Ayiede explores interactions between labour unions and NGOs in the struggle against the military dictatorship in Nigeria. Despite weakening during the 1980s, by the 1990s labour unions had started to work with other civil society groups in the pursuit of common objectives, although these interactions remained informal (Remi Ayiede 2004). In her study on Zambia, Hedblom refers to unions in the context of 'modern civil society', arguing that this 'primarily concerns only the "bourgeois" labour, mostly with individualised and privatised interests' (Hedblom, 2005, p.51). Paraphrasing Tornquist, she goes on to make that point that 'deepening democracy' through a plurality of actors with competing interests may make it difficult for groups to promote their own interests – as the case of the Zambian labour movement illustrates. As the context in which many trade unions in Africa is evolving, and unions attempt to adjust to these changing environments (e.g., Ghana – see Anyemedu 2000), further research may be necessary to illuminate other key issues, challenges and potential opportunities for the labour movement in Africa.

11. Business associations

There are few studies that focus specifically on business associations (BAs) in Africa, and much existing evidence appears to be anecdotal and pessimistic regarding the potential for positive growth coalitions between business associations and government (Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor 2002). Early literature argued that business interest groups were dominated by short-term, rent seeking concerns, which made it difficult or impossible for businesses to act cohesively towards common goals (Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor 2002; Bates & Krueger 1993; Toye 1992). Losers often organised to resist reforms, and winners were tended to be more concerned with their own, rather than collective, interests. The weakness of the private sector, and pervasive dependence on the state, has made business communities in many parts of Africa subservient to the state and key social groups (i.e., the political and financial elites). Middle-class professionals and intellectuals who run key public institutions in this type of environment are often focussed on their own economic survival and reluctant to interfere with the state's policies (Gyimah-Boadi 1996). Some analysts have argued 'good, growth-enhancing relations between business and government elites are possible' (Maxfield and Schneider 1997; Lucas 1997). Jon Kraus has published some interesting research comparing the activity and influence of business associations in Nigeria (very active and relatively influential) and Ghana (less active and influential), arguing that the state-business relationship is the basic factor that determines how influential BAs will be (Kraus 2002).

With a few notable exceptions (including South Africa and Nigeria), the private sector in Africa tends to be weak (Goldstein 2000, Kraus 2002). Although business chambers for mining, commerce, and industry and employers' associations exist throughout Africa, some of them (particularly in Francophone Africa) are created and funded by the state. Moreover, BAs throughout Africa have been weakened over the past few decades due to economic and

political crises between the 1970s- late 1990's. These crippled the African middle classes and their business associations, negatively impacting their membership rates and organisational capacity (Gyimah-Boadi 1996). Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor outline challenges to developing a dynamic and effective private sector in Africa, highlighting that building a local industrial base takes many decades in the best of circumstances.

In Africa, few governments rely on local manufacturing as their political and social support base. Many economies are dominated by mining, petroleum, or other industrial commodity production. Others receive more income in foreign aid than in corporate or income taxes. The prolonged economic crisis and the resultant crises of governance have thwarted what might have been the slow but eventual development of an increasingly capable state and a growing business class. In many African countries (for example, Zambia) the private sector has remained a small part of the productive economy, which limits the lobbying effectiveness of business (Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor 2002). Business associations in Nigeria,⁵⁴ on the other hand, have had high levels of activity and been able to influence public policies. Kraus attributes this to relatively high levels of economic liberalization and private sector expansion in Nigeria's economy during the 1980s- 1990s, a pro-business ideology within the state, high degree of associational freedom, capable private press, legitimacy of representation accorded to BAs, large BA membership, and cooperation between different business associations in the country (Kraus 2002).

Democratisation has also had a mixed effect on business in Africa. Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor's study explores the prominence of business and relationships with government in three country case studies: Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mauritius. In Zambia, business-state relations did not improve despite a pro-democracy stance by business and the pro-business agenda of the democratic government coming to power in 1991. In Zimbabwe, the erosion of democracy reduced business access to state elites, breaking up a growth coalition that initially showed promise. In Mauritius, the strengthening of democracy has paralleled the deepening of the growth coalition, and both have been reinforced by a strong economy. The study argues that the key to growth coalitions in Africa lies in determining the conditions under which such coalitions can be sustained in Africa's fragile polities (Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor 2002). Kraus identifies key factors that determine the strength, activity levels and influence of business associations: levels of capitalist development; strength and autonomy of capitalist classes and institutions in relation to the state; strength of capitalist ideology in relation to statist or socialist ideologies; democratic or authoritarian characteristics of the political system; and influence of external actors such as the IMF, World Bank and western donor governments who are often catalysts for the development of business associations in Africa (Kraus 2002).

'Growth coalitions', involving business interest groups and governments, are largely non-existent in Africa (Brautigam, Rakner and Taylor, 2002). In some cases, businesses avoid confrontation with the state or involvement in politics. Afraid of damaging their 'cronyist relationship' with government, and concerned with their own basic survival, they engage in behind-the-scenes lobbying on behalf of their own narrowly defined interests. With the partial exception of Zambia, there is little evidence that the business elite in any African country has played a decisive role in democratisation. Although many middle-class professional bodies (including bar, medical, and university faculty associations) are cohesively organised and characterised by internal democracy, they have been weakened by the economic and political crises that have hit many African countries since the late 1970s (Gyimah-Boadi 1996). Given state dominance in so much of the formal sector of African economies - especially in the areas of investment and employment - the private sector is often dependent on government for employment, contracts, subsidised credit and protection from foreign competition. As a result, the basis for individual and associational autonomy is extremely weak and the private sector remains vulnerable to state pressure. In Ghana in the late 1970s, for example, associations of public servants, doctors, and lawyers were active in the popular movement demanding an end to military rule and authoritarianism until the ruling military council

⁵⁴ These include the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Manufacturing and Agriculture; the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria; and Nigerian Economic Summit.

threatened the government employees among them with dismissal and ordered them to vacate their government-provided homes. As a result, Ghanaian professional bodies were reluctant to actively participate in the pro-democracy movement of the early 1990s (Gyimah-Boadi 1996).

12. Gaps in the research

In the course of this literature review we have been able to identify what appear to be gaps in the body of knowledge about elites and institutions in Africa. Here, in summary form, we identify some of the more significant ones (in no particular order of importance):

- Lack of reliable data is a recurring theme in the literature (and a well known issue). This includes reliable time series data of all kinds, accurate and up to date government statistics (for example fiscal data), household or community survey data.⁵⁵
- On elites, there is one overriding question: Are the structural ties that link elites to their national populations consistently weaker in developing countries than in ‘historical Europe’? (Moore and Hossain 2005). Or are they better hidden, i.e. under-researched? (Bratton 2006)
- More generally, the questions about elites posed in the review merit further research attention, namely: Are new elites emerging? Is there a deepening of the elites (to include, for example, other ethnic groups, or women, or the private sector, etc)? What impact does ethnic heterogeneity have on elites? Are there elite linkages across institutions?
- Investigation into how ‘pro-poor’ developing country elites are could provide interesting and useful insights. There are very good reasons to believe that elites could play a greater role in framing and supporting policies that would be pro-poor if they were engaged in a more constructive and sympathetic way by aid donors or other external agents (Hossain and Moore 2002).
- What are the measurable outcomes (as opposed to the processes) of the last 15 years of democratisation in Africa? There is an almost exclusive focus on processes in the literature. For example, will electoral competition have a bigger effect on education spending where electors do not vote primarily on ethno-regional lines? (Stasavage 2005)
- What is the role of sub-national units? Little is known about local politics, local elections, local administrations, nor of the people that make up these institutions. And little is known about the impacts of decentralisation.
- The literature on non-state institutions in Africa – whether media, civil society, women’s movements, trades unions or business associations - invariably excludes any discussion of neopatrimonialism. This strikes us as a serious omission.
- What are the implications of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on elites and institutions in Africa? A key starting point for examining this question is the work of de Walle (2003).⁵⁶
- Whilst there is a substantial literature on the ‘brain drain’, little is known about the elite diaspora. Most African PhDs, medical doctors, lawyers, and so on are abroad. Little is known about their influence on politics and democratisation, or whether they will come back.

⁵⁵ The survey outputs of Afrobarometer are perhaps the only consistent data sets produced on the continent.

⁵⁶ He frames the problem thus: “The development of the pandemic defects the stability of the governing elite. All countries are run by a relatively small group of people who dominate government, party, army, business and civil society ... One of the challenges facing many African countries is how to ensure a smooth transition from a relatively closed elite ... to a more institutionalized and pluralistic system with wider access. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has several consequences. It erodes the institutionalization of the government and accelerates the need to replenish this elite. As noted, this affects patrimonial structures as well as rational-legal ones. Men and women who have decades of political experience, strong networks and respected judgment, are being lost, and younger cadres are being promoted to fill the posts, but cannot fill the structural gap ... the most probable scenario is that those in power rely more heavily on a smaller circle of loyal comrades, and use more ruthless or corrupt methods to co-opt or buy support.” (van de Walle 2003).

- What is the impact of international donor aid on elites and politics in Africa? This is not a neutral concern. What has been the result to date of aid flows to support legislatures or rule of law projects, of a reliance on foreign experts, and all the other inputs that donors make to Africa?
- There is, in fact, little direct research about the relationship of elites to political institutions (and how this is mediated by financial and business concerns) beyond the following 'knowns': 1) Political positions (whether MPs or civil servants) are invariably made up of professionals (lawyers, academics, higher civil servants – not direct wealth creators, though frequently involved in entrepreneurial activities on the side); 2) The entrepreneurial class is poorly represented in politics; 3) Rent seeking behaviour by business class is common; 4) The use of formal institutions (e.g. business associations) to lobby policy makers is part of this rent seeking. Does democratisation tend to divide elites, for example, by pitching them in competitions for electoral support, and by changing the political logic from assembling as large a majority as possible (the logic of the old single party regimes), to legitimating rule by the smallest possible winning coalition?
- Despite the overriding importance of ethnicity, little is known about “how ethnicity does what it does” (Milanovic 2005 p. 35). Whilst there are sets of measurable variables for, say, democracy,⁵⁷ none such exist for ethnicity.
- On civil society organisations, a number of critical areas remain under-researched. To identify a few: 1) Relatively little is known about their effectiveness and impact, particularly in the policy making sphere (Robinson and Friedman 2005, Chowdhury, Finlay-Notman and Hovland 2006, Court and Maxwell 2006). 2) Further exploration of the role that elites play in civil society is needed. Does the emergence of an active civil society result in a renewal of voices – and a new way of thinking - in the policy process or is this simply another vehicle for elites to exercise their power? 3) How do NGOs and CSOs use (or abuse or ignore) evidence in attempts to influence policy processes (Pollard and Court 2005)?
- Does creating space for women’s voices give rise to new women’s voices, or does this space in turn become dominated by elites?
- Other areas for research on gender relations include: the differential impact of levels of civil and political liberties, donor and foreign influences, educational levels of women, elite divisions, regional variance and networks (and other factors that might result in differing levels of associational autonomy and challenges to clientelism), and whether the emergence of women’s movements are indeed presenting new opportunities for non-elites to articulate their issues and concerns (as the general assumption seems to be) or whether these spaces are being taken over by the elites.

⁵⁷ Milanovic states “We have measures of media freedom, the way that the parliament or the chief executive are elected, whether the system is based on proportional representation or single-district majority; we have measures of social involvement in decision making, number of NGOs, extent of the power of the elite.” (p.36)

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