Session 2: Democracy and Governance in Post-Authoritarian Transitions

Dr. Gilbert M. Khadiagala

Outline of Presentation

- Introductory Themes

- Typologies of Transitions: Electoral Democracies

- Typologies of Transitions: Developmental Dictatorships

- The Problems of a Rough Regional Neighborhood

AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

Introductory Themes: Three Pillars of Ethnicity

- **Post-Authoritarianism or Post-Civil Wars?** East Africa is barely post-authoritarian, but most countries have made steady progress toward post-civil war reconstruction; in fact, authoritarian regimes and leaderships have done a fairly good job of reconstructing formerly failed states; How far have these states overcome the dilemma of strong men and weak institutions?

- **Electoral Democracies:** Most countries have been holding elections since the early 1990s, but we need to probe whether there is a new crop of men and women emerging out of these processes; have elections produced better leaders responsive to people's needs? Are parliaments peopled with legislators who can legislate? Has the quality of representation improved or declined with electoral democracy? Are things getting better or worse?

Introductory Themes

- **The Sturdiness of Constitutional norms:** Democratization has occurred against the backdrop of constitutional reforms across the region; how much of these changes have enshrined broad civil liberties, minority protection clauses, and meaningful participation? there is a new phase of constitutional revisions to abolish presidential term limits, re-centralize power, and promote dynastic successions; what are the implications of these recent trends on the weakly-instituted democratic transitions?

- **Governance as State Capacity:** Increasing political participation has not resolved questions of the capacities of states to deliver goods and services, and furnish the environment for efficient economic production; does democratization hinder or promote state capacity? how are states in the region managing the dilemmas of sequencing between participation and development?

Introductory Themes

Age Old Questions: All the above questions have dominated discussions about the building of democracy on the basis of largely peasant societies, in the absence of genuine middle classes, on the infrastructure of ethnic and regional fragmentation, and in the face of ongoing conflicts and instabilities in the regional neighborhoods; questions of quality of governance are the centre of discussions about whether most of these states with large populations and in some cases, uncaptured pastoralist communities, can build "national stakeholders" that would beneficiaries of public goods; these questions are the core of the widespread pessimism about the possibilities of democratic governance in East Africa;

AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

Typologies of Transitions: Electoral Democracies

- **Third Wave Democracies:** Kenya and Tanzania inaugurated East Africa's democratic transitions from the 1990s that have led to elections, rotation of power, and generational change; these elections reversed the authoritarian legacies of strong post-colonial leaders who perceived democratic competition as too divisive and 'expensive;'

- **Weak political parties:** The broadening of participation has not led to improvements in the institutions of participation--parties--thus, in Tanzania, the dominant party, CCM, has won all the elections since the 1990s; opposition parties cannot compete given CCM's social and economic power; in Kenya, political parties have remained ethnic or individualistic machines without wider support outside these constituencies;

Electoral Democracies

- **Coalition Politics:** In the absence of strong participatory institutions, Kenyan politics has revolved around the coalescence of ethnic parties to forge 'winning coalitions'; but coalitions have not been effective mechanisms to tame ethnic conflicts or reduce electoral violence (2007/2017); electoral violence in Zanzibar was contained by coalition politics, until the last elections when the opposition boycotted them, leading to the current stalemate between the mainland and Zanzibar;

- **Feeble Legislative and Oversight Institutions:** Political competition has not enhanced the quality of parliaments in Kenya and Tanzania; polarized parliaments often cannot govern, deepening mass apathy about the effectiveness of pluralism; the increase in corruption underscores the inability of oversight bodies to work; corruption is a cancer that is undermining participation and impeding development;

Typologies of Transitions: Development Dictatorships

Development First, Democracy Second: Post-civil war leaders in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda have sought to emulate the East Asian success stories of building strong developmental states (Lee Kuan Yew, Mahatiar Mohammed) while diminishing political competition; Eritrea and Rwanda have variously called themselves the "Singapore" of Africa;

Militarism and Party-States: As largely products of rebel-cum-liberation movements, these leaders have remained essentially militaristic; the political parties they created in the post-war period are still beholden to their militaries; these leaders have been successful state-builders, restoring a semblance of stability and confidence in national institutions, but they are anchored in the past authoritarian practices;

Patterns of Ethnic Management

Elections in developmental Dictatorships: These regimes do not countenance political competition even though they occasionally permit opposition parties to win some seats in parliaments; in Rwanda, major opposition leaders are in jail; in Uganda, opposition parties can hardly organize; in Ethiopia, as Meles told an American envoy, "the opposition can vegetate in jail;" in Eritrea, there is no opposition;

Permanent Conditions? Will developmental dictatorships persist in perpetuity or will they transition to electoral democracies? Where measurable levels of development have occurred, these leaders have bought sufficient legitimacy that has inured them from divisive mass pressures; in Rwanda, Kagame's developmental record has been touted as a key achievement, in addition to ending genocide in 1994;

Developmental Dictatorships

Dangerous Trajectories: Where there are no development outcomes captured in growing poverty and inequality levels, these leaders cannot postpone questions of political reforms; the riots and demonstrations in Ethiopia last year reveal the limits of 'developmentalism;' they also signal profound future political uncertainty in the absence of sustained authoritarianism; the last elections in Uganda were some of the most violent, indicating that society is increasing getting fed up with Museveni (in power since 1986 and parliament last week abolished presidential age limits to allow him to run again when he gets to 75);

Constitutional reversals: No wonder, Rwanda and Uganda have led efforts to change their constitutions to abolish presidential term limits (Uganda in 2005, Rwanda in 2016), trends that are infecting their neighbors (Burundi, DRC); these reversals show that 'developmental dictatorships' are getting weaker and not stronger; over the years, these leaders may be creating circumstances for the resurgence of civil wars;

The Problems of a Rough Regional Neighborhood

Contagion, Contiguity, and Conflict: Real post-authoritarian and democratic transitions cannot occur without the end of regional conflicts in the larger Eastern Africa (Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur) because these conflicts are costly to the region and distract the neighbors; this is the "island of peace and stability in the sea of instability" argument;

Forging Common Norms and Values: By the same token, the transitions will remain brittle without solid regional investments in convergent political values; the IGAD and EAC have not done as well in articulation of common political values as ECOWAS has done in West Africa; in this respect, regional actors have yet to come up with a consensus on post-authoritarianism.

QUESTIONS/ COMMENTS?

AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

www.africacenter.org