Democratic Transitions in Africa: A Long and (Often) Winding Road

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September 11, 2019
Demand for Democracy Remains High
Overlapping Effects of Autocracy and Conflict in Africa

Freedom
- Green: Free
- Yellow: Partially Free
- Red: Not Free

Conflict
- Red: Intense
- Pink: Serious
- Pale Pink: Sporadic

Source: Data from Freedom House
Source: Data from Center for Systemic Peace
Why Democratic Transitions Matter: Stability

• 10 of 12 Africa countries in conflict have authoritarian-leaning governments
• 80 percent of 27 million forcibly displaced in African have repressive governments in their country of origin
• Leaders in countries without term limits have been in office for an average of 18 years vs. 4 years for those with term limits
• 1/3rd of countries where leaders have evaded terms limits are in conflict compared to less than 10 percent of those that uphold such limits
• 41 percent of security sector leaders in autocracies see the risk of political crisis as a serious threat vs. 11 percent with democracies
Why Democratic Transitions Matter: Development

- Africa’s democracies have per capita growth rates a third higher than autocracies even though more than half of latter are natural resource rich
- Life expectancies in African democracies are 9 years longer
- 40 percent lower infant mortality rates
- 40 percent greater chance of attending secondary school
- FDI in democracies is higher
  - Respect for civil liberties and rule of law
Sudan: Power Sharing
Algeria: Protests Continue
Ethiopia: Fragile Next Steps
Accountability is Stronger When it’s Overlapping
Dominant Role of Executive Branch in Contexts of Limited Accountability

- External Norms
- External Support

- Executive
  - Media
  - Security Sector
  - Private Sector

- legislature
- Local Gov’t
- Judiciary

- Civil Society

AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
Trends in Regime Categories in Africa
## Africa Regime Classification 2019

### Democracies
- Botswana
- Cape Verde
- Ghana
- Mauritius
- São Tomé & Príncipe
- Seychelles
- South Africa

### Democratizers
- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Ethiopia
- Gambia
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Tunisia
- Zambia

### Semi-Authoritarians
- Algeria
- Comoros
- D.R. Congo
- Djibouti
- Gabon
- Mauritania
- Morocco
- Togo
- Uganda
- Zimbabwe

### Autocracies
- Angola
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- CAR
- Chad
- Rep. of Congo
- Egypt
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Libya
- Rwanda
- South Sudan
- Swaziland
Challenges to Democratic Transitions in Africa

- Legacy of “Big Man” politics
- Building institutions of accountability with limited precedent
- Patronage
- Politicized security sector
- Government control of information platforms
- China, Russia, Gulf states upholding authoritarian norms
- Weak regional norms
- Weak states
Contributors to Democratic Transitions

- Active civil society, engaged across geography and sector
  - Enables sustaining push for reform
- Access to independent sources of information
- Strong social capital and norms of equity
- No previous conflict
- Diversified economy (not natural resource dependent)
- Higher expectations of youth
- International incentives
Takeaways for U.S. and International Engagement on Democratic Transitions

- Democracy matters

- Help strengthen institutions of accountability
  - This requires sustained engagement

- Independent media and access to information is key

- Uphold international norms, create incentives for reform

- Reinforce principles of an apolitical, professional security sector