

The Democratization of Political Clientelism in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Introduction

For students of the low-income world and in particular Sub Saharan African politics¹, the recent transitions to competitive electoral competition of the Third Wave of democratization initially led to much optimism about their effect on governance and the prevalence of political clientelism. During the long night of authoritarian rule, the various manifestations of malgovernance were linked to regime type; some scholars believed that the absence of political competition and participation were in large part to blame for the bad governance often observed. Other scholars went further to argue that pervasive clientelism constituted a functional pillar of these regimes, which relied on clientelism, in lieu of popular legitimacy to maintain political stability (Bayart, 1989; Callaghy, 1984). Both implicitly and explicitly, the literature (see Diamond, 1999; Widner, 1994) tended to argue that democratization, and the rise in both vertical and horizontal accountability would begin to limit the power abuses of authoritarian rule. Predatory rule, corruption and clientelistic practices would inevitably recede. This argument was, moreover, supported by the fact that anger about corruption in high places typically featured as a central motivation of pro-democracy forces before and during the transition (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997).

Inevitably, this optimism subsided somewhat when it became clear that corruption and clientelism did not in fact disappear with the advent and then routinization of competitive elections. In recent years, it has become more typical of scholars to argue either that democratization makes no difference to what are deeply ingrained political practices; or that political competition and the need to win electoral support in fact actually exacerbates clientelism. Chabal and Daloz (1999) offer an early and extreme version of this first argument: they appear to view formal political rules as essentially epiphenomenal and unable to alter the underlying structural dynamics in African politics (see also Schatzberg, 1993; Schaffer, 2000). The second argument is perhaps more common as a number of scholars argue in one way or another that the increase in political participation and competition intensifies the interactions between citizen and politician, whose social autonomy is reduced. The need to gain support exacerbates the incidence of clientelism, along with other negative side effects, such as ethnic conflict (Bates, 2008; Carothers, 2002). Thus, in a recent paper, Boone (2009) argues that democratization and the exigencies of mass politics has exacerbated conflicts over land in the region, as the clientelistic distribution of land rights has increased, particularly in the run up to elections. The public policy and economic literatures, which long had argued for the developmental superiority of authoritarian regimes, now contributes to the view that

¹ Through out this paper I will use the terms Africa and Sub Saharan Africa interchangeably.

electoral competition complicates decision-making, by increasing the political pressures on policy makers. Competitive elections shorten the time horizons of governments who are more likely to maximize their short term gains from office. Thus, a public policy literature has emerged arguing that political corruption has been rising in new democracies (for instance, Collier, 2007).

Objections can be raised to each of these views. The literature is too often based on anecdotes culled from a small number of cases, and there is too little reliable time series data on corruption to assert a trend with much confidence. Changes in clientelism ascribed to democratic rule are often in fact better viewed as resulting from the chaos that accompanied the transition from authoritarian rule. Many regimes in the region that have undergone regime change in the last two decades are, moreover, not fully democratic, but “electoral autocracies” (Levitsky and Way, 2002) or “hybrid regimes” (Diamond, 2004), combining features of both authoritarian and democratic rule. To blame their deficiencies on ‘democracy’ seems unfair and analytically skewed.

But a more profound objection also seems in order. The expectation that political clientelism might either sharply decline or rise following democratization seems ahistorical and inadequately comparative, since the term clientelism covers all sorts of political practices, and some forms of clientelism appear to exist in all political systems. Indeed, some such practices are very much present in the oldest and most stable democracies of the west. At the time of writing, a new president in the US is placing thousands of political supporters and democratic party stalwarts in the Federal bureaucracy (http://www.mlive.com/us-politics/index.ssf/2009/03/time_to_fix_the_appointment_sy.html). Canada’s last elections in 2007 were marked by another party finance scandal, the so-called “in and out” scandal, involving the highest levels of the Conservative Party. (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080805.winandout0805/BNStory/National/home>). The Berlusconi government in Italy has repeatedly been accused of various forms of political clientelism, including accusations of influence peddling, cronyistic relations with business, and the rewarding of political supporters with government contracts and jobs. Similar examples could be adduced from virtually every OECD country.

The continuing salience of political clientelism in the west has been noticed in academia, where it is enjoying a renaissance of sorts among comparative scholars of the mature democracies (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007 and Piattoni, 2001) for good introductions). Curiously, whereas much of the older theoretical literature on clientelism in Africa assumed the absence of democracy, or at least focused on regimes in which the informal norms of clientelism and patrimonialism dominated the formal rules of the political system, much of the new literature on clientelism on the contrary assumes a context of meaningful formal electoral democratic rules. For example, Susan Stokes’s recent authoritative survey of political clientelism is based primarily on European and recent Latin American political science literatures and barely mentions the Africanist literature, or the anthropological and sociological sources which have been so influential for the understanding of the concept in the low-income world (Stokes, 2008). Focusing on the

impact of formal electoral rules on these practices, Stokes defines clientelism as “the proffering of material goods in return for *electoral* support” (p. 605), while Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, p. 10) define it as “a patronage-based, *voter-party linkage*”. (emphasis added) This discrepancy should tip us off that Stokes, and Kitschelt and Wilkinson are not referring to exactly the same set of phenomena that were studied by the older literature. Even a rudimentary analysis confirms that key terms like patronage or clientelism are not used in the same manner across areas in comparative politics.

The analysis in this paper starts with the assumption that clientelism is a ubiquitous feature of modern politics and is likely to remain a significant feature of politics in low-income countries. In sum, the right question is not whether democratization will increase or decrease political clientelism, but rather, how will democratization change these practices, which inevitably will remain in some form or another. This paper is divided into 6 sections, including this introduction. The next section provides some working definitions of the paper’s key concepts, and advances the paper’s key theoretical propositions, regarding the relationship between regime type, economic structure and political clientelism. A third section then characterizes the main patterns in political clientelism in post-colonial authoritarian before a fourth section discusses the impact of democratization on these patterns. A fifth section offers some caveats to the thesis, and suggests reasons for which any transformation of political clientelism in the region will be slow and fitful. A final section concludes.

2. Understanding Political Clientelism

I start by, first, distinguishing political clientelism as a subset of the broader set of phenomena known as clientelism. In the classic anthropological definition, clientelism is defined quite broadly as a voluntary exchange relationship between social unequals, typically embedded in a complex social relationship. (Gellner and Waterbury, 1977; Schmidt et al, 1977; Eisenstadt and Lemarchand, 1981). Classically, these relationships are pervasive in rural, low-income societies, because economic markets are poorly developed, in particular insurance and credit markets, and patronage is widely viewed as a mechanism to reduce risk and smooth consumption over time. I define political clientelism, more narrowly, as the web of clientelistic relationships that structure the relationship between state and citizen. Some will object, and I would not disagree, that ultimately all social relationships are political, and that the land owner’s patronage of peasants out in the hinterlands contributes to the political stability of national regimes. Nonetheless, for the purposes of the arguments advanced below, and given the limited ambitions of this paper, political clientelism will be defined as relationships with a direct link to national state politics.

The relationship between the traditional, village level clientelism and the post colonial political clientelism of the modern African state is admittedly complex. Much of the modernization literature tended to view the latter as the anachronistic relic of the former, which would inevitably disappear with urbanization, greater education and the development of a middle class. To be sure, African politicians have often adopted the rhetoric and cultural repertoires of traditional forms of tribute to legitimate the clientelist practices they want to pursue, but their clientelism is fundamentally different, and indeed

the reference to specific cultural traditions are not necessarily historically accurate, but are often 'invented' in Ranger's sense (1993). In other words, there is no reason to believe that the level or manner of political clientelism in an African country today is causally related to cultural traditions that may or may not exist in that country's past. As I argue below, other structural factors explain the incidence and form of political clientelism much more compellingly.

Second, I argue that political clientelism is an inevitable and omnipresent feature of the modern state. The modern state structure's fiscal and regulatory capacity will always generate discretionary resources, which the agents which control the state will always have an incentive to manipulate in order to gain political advantage (see Clapham, 1982). Fiscal capacity provides state agents with resources to redistribute, while the ability to regulate the provision of goods and services in the economy will provide them with discretion over the allocation of those goods and services. In sum, political clientelism is inherent to the modern state.

Third, though ubiquitous, the manifestations and precise function of political clientelism vary enormously because it is endogenous to the type of state, economic structure and the nature of state-society relations. Political clientelism exists in all modern states in one form or another, but just as clearly, its precise manifestations vary enormously. More specifically, this essay argues that the form that political clientelism takes varies as a function of economic structure and the nature of the political regime and its capacities. This endogeneity of clientelism has long been recognized (see Kettering, 1988 for a good review with French historical examples), but students of clientelism have more typically linked clientelistic practices to specific economic and social structures, and have devoted much less attention on the impact of changes in these structures on clientelism, the main ambition of this paper.

This leads to four hypotheses about the factors that determine the form and function of clientelism:

- i) *The nature of the political regime*, and the extent of political competition and participation shapes the nature of political clientelism. I hypothesize that the more democratic a political system, the larger the number of people who benefit from it and the more redistributive it becomes;
- ii) *The locus of decision making conditions the nature of clientelist practices*. I hypothesize that the emergence of competitive elections will shift the locus of clientelism away from the executive branch towards political parties and the legislature;
- iii) *The nature of the economy and the fiscal resources available to the state conditions the nature of clientelism*. Poor and incapable states simply can not afford the same kinds of widespread patronage observed in rich and effective states, at least not in a sustainable manner.
- iv) *Social structure, and the nature of cultural identities, while themselves largely endogenous, also condition the nature and volume of clientelism*. I hypothesize that ethnic heterogeneity and clientelism are positively correlated,

though will have little to say about this relationship in this paper, since it chronicles the impact of relatively rapid change, and ethnic identity, in the short term is unlikely to change.

3. Clientelism in Post-Colonial Africa

At the risk of excessive generalization, several regime characteristics can be claimed to have powerfully affected the nature of clientelism in most African states following independence. First, as I have argued elsewhere (van de Walle, 2001), these regimes are marked by extreme *presidentialism*. Though many African states inherited parliamentary rule at independence, power was soon concentrated in a relatively powerful presidency, whose considerable formal powers as defined by the constitution were in fact often dwarfed by their even greater informal and *de facto* ones. Powers of appointment, control of the national budget, and discretion over policy implementation with little oversight was not only concentrated in the office of the presidency, it was often actually controlled by the president himself and a tiny cadre of top politicians, who were often above the law for all intents and purposes. Similarly, the executive branch dominated the other branches of government, with a subservient and pliant legislature and a weak, unprofessional and politicized judiciary.

Second, Africa's post-colonial regimes were authoritarian. With the notable exceptions of Botswana and Mauritius, the countries in the region held very few elections, and civil and political rights were rarely observed, as is attested to by the very low democracy ratings for these countries in regime databases such as Freedom House or Polity. To be sure, significant differences existed between, say, the personal tyranny of a President Macías Nguema in Equatorial Guinea, and, say, the rule of Julius Nyerere and his successors in Tanzania. In the former, virtually no political competition existed even within the narrow confines of the presidency, whereas in the latter, lively contestation was evident under the umbrella of the single party, whose primary elections were quite competitive. Still, the weakness of formal political competition is one of the hallmarks of Africa before 1989.

Third, African states were characterized by their weak fiscality. African states were small in size, relative to their GDP, and chronically underfunded (Goldsmith, 2000). Again, there is considerable variation, but African government consumption typically consumed less than 20% of national GDP, and in the poorer, more rural states, this proportion might go down below 10%, compared to 30-50% that is common in the OECD countries. The causes of these low rates of government consumption are complex. Poverty, economic structure, and the difficulty of taxing peasant agriculture are part of the story, as is the low extractive capacity of most states, and in some states, the very high rates of tax evasion. One consequence was a small state that provided relatively few of its citizens with social services and or entitlements. On average, state personnel in the region amounted to under 2% of the total population, compared to almost 8% of the population in the OECD countries. Access to social services, public infrastructure was similarly comparatively quite limited in most countries.

These political and economic characteristics conditioned the clientelism that emerged in the years following independence in the region. In particular, three stylized facts can be articulated:

First, *political clientelism in the post colonial era was dominated by the executive branch of government*. In part, this reflects the personal nature of political power in that era. President Ahidjo of Cameroon personally stamped every single exit visa granted by the Cameroonian government. President Moi built a presidency of 20,000 employees that effectively constituted a parallel government, and took power away from the regular bureaucracy. Presidents routinely squirreled away a substantial proportion of the export revenues coming from commodity exports, for their personal use and for clientelistic purposes. In part, this state of affairs reflects the dominance of the executive branch in post-colonial Africa and the lack of an effective balance of powers and of institutional checks on presidential power. The political and financial resources accruing to the legislative branch were typically few and highly dependent on the good will of the Presidency. Legislators might be rewarded for their support with access to state resources, but they enjoyed little autonomous access to these resources, and indeed, a position in the legislature was clearly less lucrative and prestigious than a cabinet position, less alone a position in the higher reaches of the Presidency itself, which typically came with considerably more financial and political resources.

Second, *political clientelism overwhelmingly favored a highly circumscribed socio-political elite and was rarely economically redistributive in a meaningful sense*. As suggested in the previous section, African states could both not afford extensive political patronage in the form of jobs and services to political clienteles, and were not predisposed to it, given the nature of political competition. Instead, political clientelism overwhelmingly favored a relatively small number of people, who were critical to maintain regime stability. Clientelistic resources did not descend the social pyramid very far, despite much legitimating rhetoric to the contrary. Instead, it served the purposes of cross-ethnic elite accommodation, in which the presidency sought to build a national elite coalition on behalf of his rule, by including key elites from different regions, ethnic groups, clans and so on in the presidential coalition (Bayart, 1989). A clear ethnic calculus has often been obvious in the construction of government cabinets, in which different groups would be assured a number of seats (Arriola, 2009). The ethnic elites thus brought into the presidential fold were expected to play a kind of "brokerage" role between specific communities and the regime: the nomination by the president propelled them to a visible leadership position, in exchange for which they were supposed to ensure their group's support for the regime. In the independence era, at least some nationalist parties had built up considerable mobilizational capacity in much of the national territory. But as the regimes became more authoritarian and elections less competitive, these parties were often marginalized. The brokerage model made sense to national leaders, to reach out and build legitimacy for their rule away from the capital.

In theory, brokers brought state resources from the capital back to their communities. Certainly, the social imagery and rhetoric around ethnicity often promoted the illusion of broad redistribution. A Losi minister in the Zambian government was said to defend Losi

interests at the table of government, which in turn would provide substantial benefits to the Losi community. On the other hand, politicians who opposed the president were accused of ensuring that their communities would suffer irreparable harm in terms of jobs and services.

Nonetheless, the evidence actually suggests that the social benefits of this broad clientelistic alliance around African presidents were rarely substantial. We know this because we see that the large number of elite offices in the capital did not translate into a large number of lower level patronage positions, or extensive services in the hinterlands. Finally, evidence of the lack of clientelistic redistribution can be gleaned from the region's very high and persistent levels of social inequality (van de Walle, 2009).

Third, *political clientelism was often prebendal in nature, linked to illegal acts and undermined property rights*. Prebends refer to the selling of public offices for political gain, and can claim a long and distinguished historiography, mostly in its manifestation in the early modern state in Western Europe (Ardant, 1975). Officials of the state earn a low nominal official salary, but their position gives them discretionary access to resources because of the rules, regulations and policies of the state, from which they are expected to profit. The selective implementation and manipulation of their own policies can allow Customs officials to gain considerable revenues, ministerial officials can take a cut on state procurement contracts, or the officials of regulatory bodies can extract bribes from the companies they are supposed to regulate. In Africa, following independence, in the absence of adequate resources with which to build large states and substantial patronage, and given the absence of political motivations to do so, most of the political clientelism took the form of prebends for top state elites.

It should be made clear that these practices are unambiguously illegal, despite their pervasiveness in some regimes. Other clientelistic practices exist that are either legal or in a grey zone of semi-legality. In some cases, they have been codified in specific ways – for instance, the US federal spoils system. In post-colonial Africa, however, there was no question that ministers who appropriated a substantial proportion of their ministry's revenues, say, were engaged in illegal acts. Regulatory officials preying on successful businesses and thus undermining property rights was similarly unambiguously illegal. Indeed, its very illegality allowed the president to occasionally discipline his barons and assert his preeminence, by arresting them for acts of corruption he had himself encouraged them to undertake. This presidential assertion of power helps explain the number of occasional anti-corruption campaigns in the most corrupt countries of the region. The absence of democracy was thus an important factor allowing this system of clientelism. No free press or legislative inquiry could shed light on acts of corruption, no investigative magistrate charge a minister when it was inconvenient to the president.

4. The Impact of Democratization

Democratization has changed some of the key socio-political characteristics present in Africa, while leaving others unchanged. My central argument is that political clientelism will not disappear but that it will change in form and function as a result of these changes. At least three major transformations in political clientelism are presently underway. This

section describes the three transformations and in each case presents some evidence from the region to support my argument. The following section then tempers the argument with some caveats.

a. The emergence of legislative pork and electoral clientelism: Democratization and the convening of regular competitive elections is heralding both a relative diminution of presidential power relative to legislative power, and an increasing role for political parties. The first transformation that can already be observed in many countries in Africa is the movement of the locus of clientelism from the presidency and executive branch to the parties and legislature, particularly during elections.

Rather strikingly, in sharp contrast to the pattern in authoritarian low-income countries, in mature democracies, the biggest single cause of political corruption in mature democracies appears to be the gargantuan appetite of political parties for electoral campaign funding. Politicians across a wide variety of OECD countries regularly get caught with illicit schemes to finance their parties in rapidly escalating electoral campaigns. Rarely is individual gain the major motivation in these scandals. To be sure, occasionally a civil servant in the executive branch is caught in an influence peddling exercise, but this is much more rare. Party finance scandals are common in the West. For instance, in perhaps the biggest scandal in American politics in the last two decades, the Abramoff influence peddling scandal, involving a so called "K Street" lobbyist and his mostly Republican friends in Congress and the White House, virtually no career civil servants appear to have been involved. Instead, the scandal appeared to involve a conventional deal of party finance in exchange for policy influence. In sum, when African politicians go to jail on a regular basis for having steered illicit money to political parties in the months before elections, rather than to enrich themselves, we will know that Africa's democratic transition is complete.

That transition is far from complete, but the introduction of *Constituency Development Funds* in fledgling electoral democracies as varied as Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia constitute an interesting institutional innovation of the kind this paper's thesis would predict. In each of these countries, legislators have demanded and received allocations from the national treasury to allow them to make grants to their home districts. The amounts are not trivial. In Zambia, each constituency received 400 Million Kwacha in 2008, equivalent to US\$80,000, and the government has been considering doubling the amount. In Kenya, 210 parliamentary constituencies each received a little over US\$500,000 that same year, and parliament has passed a law mandating that CFD outlays be equivalent to 7.5% of government revenues. The official intention is to respond to constituency needs and to streamline the development process so that legislators directly address the developmental challenges at the grassroots, which they claim they understand best. In practice, the CDFs constitute an incumbency fund, increasing the visibility of the legislator in his/her district and presumably also their popularity and ability to win reelection, even when these funds are not misappropriated and or not used for developmental purposes.

The discussion of CDFs in the local press in these countries suggest in fact that they are routinely abused. Legislators in these countries complain of the costs of winning elections, thanks to the increasingly pervasive 'vote buying' practices, and the subtext in narratives about some of the recent CDF scandals, much described in the local press and publicized by various watchdog NGOs that have started to appear, suggest that at least some incumbents believe that the CDF funds provide a return to their electoral investments.

The implications of these CDFs for political stability, the patterns in their utilization, their actual impact on development, and even their impact on the reelection of incumbents (typically quite low in these countries) merit further investigation. This paper's point should be clear though: We are witnessing the evolution of political clientelism away from the presidency (to be sure, it still controls a lot of clientelistic resources, as I discuss below), and towards the legislative branch.

b. The emergence of a more redistributive clientelism. The data suggests that post-colonial Africa has been characterized by unusually high levels of social inequality (van de Walle, 2009). This seems to me inevitable, as the region's political and economic institutions have generated social and economic stratification. Again, despite some careless scholarship the contrary, the elite clientelism of post-colonial Africa has not been redistributive, but has rather been directed to an exceedingly narrow elite, which accumulates a disproportionate wealth. Moreover, the taxation, social programs and public spending patterns of most of the countries in the region have neither been progressive enough or comprehensive enough to lessen inequality (van de Walle, 2009).

By definition, democratic regimes are more responsive to their electorates, and empower a larger proportion of the population, since a broad electoral franchise does make decision-makers accountable to the adult population. As the clientelist networks expand down the social pyramid, thanks to an electoral logic, they are likely to result in greater economic redistribution. In sum, the more democratic a country, the more redistributive its clientelism will be, even if the logic of clientelism will always be to give a relatively privileged minority access to public goods. The size of this minority increases with competitive politics. Moreover, whether they are clientelist or not, democracies almost certainly engender greater public expenditure, notably in the social sectors, than do authoritarian states (see Ross, 2008 for good review).

What is the evidence for these propositions in Sub Saharan Africa? Admittedly, not much, though Stasavage (2005) provides cross-national data suggesting that democratization in Africa has resulted in increases in education spending. However, recent accounts from the region include widespread reports of vote buying (Banégas, 1998), the growing role of businessmen and their money in electoral politics (Pottie, 2003; Mayrargue, 2006), and the emergence of a political business cycle, in which governments increase funding for infrastructure and social services right around election time (Block, 2002). Opposition politicians complain of the ability of incumbents to use state resources to gain electoral support (Bierschenk, 2006), not least thanks to the CDFs described in the previous section. In addition, a new populism is seeping into African

politics, in which politicians are more prone to adopt demagogic posturing about foreign businesses making large profits and the insensitivity of politicians to the needs of poor people. For instance, Larmer and Fraser (2007) describe the emergence of the Patriotic Front in Zambia, a classic populist party which has won significant representation in Parliament and now controls the Mayorality of Lusaka, based on rhetoric that promises material benefits to voters and fans anti-elite and anti-foreign sentiment different various grievances to win elections.

Again, these developments may have negative economic and political consequences and they obviously do not suggest a growing virtuousness in African politics, but they do suggest another key transformation, in which clientelism is starting to favor more economic redistribution than in the past.

c. The codification of clientelism: in the most ambitious transformation, which is the least further along, finally, I hypothesize that the illegal and prebendal arrangements will progressively disappear; in their place will emerge the kind of patronage politics which we observe in mature democracies, usually focused around party politics, and having been the subject of formal agreements among the main political players in the system. These practices may be more or less significant, in much the way that variation is observed between, say, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark in the locus and scope of party patronage (see Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007), but on the whole they will fall far short of the egregious illegality that were characteristic of authoritarian Africa.

The evolution of the CDFs suggests the possibility of this kind of path for the fledgling African democracies. Though often little more than a slush fund for the local party hierarchy and the elected incumbent, and though the private and corrupt appropriation of these funds appears to happen often, the CDFs are the subject of intense negotiation and discussion within the political system and civil society in countries like Kenya and Zambia. Civic associations have emerged that are making public arguments on behalf of greater public and apolitical control of the funds, and less incumbent discretion over them. Abuses of the funds are discussed in the press, as are suggestions for alternative projects than the ones chosen. Over two thirds of incumbent Parliamentarians were defeated in the 2008 Kenyan elections, and the perceived mismanagement of the CDFs appears to have been a factor in at least some of these defeats. Presumably, this gives the new parliamentarians an incentive to manage the funds differently. In sum, public debate is in the process of codifying and circumscribing the funds.

5. Factors Slowing Down the Transformation

This section is designed to temper the optimism informing the last section. A number of factors suggest that the predicted transformation of political clientelism will be slow and hard.

First, my argument is based on the supposition that the democratic transitions in Africa are complete. In fact, it is far from clear that democratic consolidation is taking place in more than a dozen or so states (see Lindberg, 2006 for recent comprehensive and fairly

optimistic survey), even if Michael Bratton is correct to surmise, from Afrobarometer data, that multi-party competitive elections have become entrenched enough in popular attitudes that they can now be “regarded as an institutionalized norm of African politics” (Bratton, 2007, p. 8).

In perhaps a quarter of the countries in the region, authoritarian incumbent presidents have adapted remarkably easily to the new rules of the game by instituting “façade democracies” (Joseph, 2003) or “electoral autocracies” (Schedler, 2007) that undermine neither their hold on power nor the main instruments that buttress their rule. It may be useful to remind ourselves that much of Africa is not democratizing, since so many observers are now willing, somewhat perversely, to point to electoral autocracies to highlight the alleged flaws of democracy (e.g. Carrothers, 2002).

Even in countries that have undergone significant democratic progress, the resulting regimes are often best characterized as “hybrid” (Diamond, 2002) or “illiberal democracies” (Zakaria, 1997), as authoritarian dynamics subsists side by side with the new democratic dispensations. The claims of this paper are dependent on the relative weakening of presidentialism in the region, and on the emergence of competitive elections. It is striking that none of Africa’s new multi-party regimes have abandoned presidential constitutions, for instance, for parliamentary rule, which is in force in just a handful of Africa’s 48 political systems. Though democratization has often included concerted efforts to curtail presidential power and empower mechanisms of vertical and horizontal accountability, more often than not, presidential prerogatives remain significant. Similarly, the extent to which elections have been competitive varies significantly across the countries of the region, and changes in the logic of clientelism will be smaller in countries in which effective competition is actually quite limited, because of presidential manipulation of the process, or of the weakness of opposition parties.

Even where the formal institutions of democratic rule appear to be taking hold, change may be slowed down by the absence of a concurrent change in political culture and practice. In Jonathan Fox’s felicitous phrase (1994), it takes time and effort to transform clients into citizens: civic organizations, the press, and the expectations of the citizenry will not immediately adjust to the new dispensation, but need to be nurtured and encouraged. For their part, many politicians and their followers were socialized in the *ancient regime* and bring certain expectations to the new one. The old kind of clientelism will remain a convenient solution to day to day problems for these politicians, particularly as long as the instruments of the new kind of politics, political parties, are weak and poorly organized. Schattsneider (1942) may be right that democracy is not conceivable without parties, but the building of strong party organizations takes time and skill, and requires the passage of time, if for no other reason than that elections are discrete events that only occur every once in a while. In the meantime, resorting to the tried and true methods of African politics will be tempting.

Moreover, as Helmke and Levitsky (2007) remind us, in consolidated democracies, a panoply of well-established informal institutions buttress the democratic order, and shape

both expectations and behaviors of political actors. These include norms and informal understandings regarding the relationship between political parties, mechanisms of accommodation and compromise between the branches of government, and broadly understood standards of not only what is legal, but also what constitutes acceptable behavior in the political game. Again, these rules do not immediately emerge in the aftermath of democratization, but require the passage of time, and the experience of repeated elections, budget cycles and legislative sessions. In the meantime, the old culture of neopatrimonialism will repeatedly be invoked by actors who find it useful to their ends, and it is far from clear that other actors will always be able to proscribe the resultant behavior.

Second, this transformation of political clientelism is likely to be slowed down by the fact that an array of structural factors were not changed by the regime changes of the early 1990s. Thus, poverty, economic stagnation and fiscal crisis will militate against attempts to move towards a broader, more democratic clientelism of the kind predicted in the previous section. Fiscality constitutes the Achilles heel of poor democracies. As emphasized above, the advantage of the kind of elite clientelism practiced in authoritarian Africa is its cheapness, and the more ambitious expenditures of a more democratic clientelism will bring with it huge economic risks, particularly in the absence of rapid economic growth. Indeed, the history of post World War II Latin America is in many respects a history of a failed transition of the kind predicted here from, as the populist regimes that emerged as the electoral franchise was extended in the 1960s and 1970s established political economies that relied on a populism their economies could not ultimately sustain (Huntington and Nelson, 1976; Remmer, 1986), leading directly to the economic crises of the 1980s. In Africa, a successful transition will include the ability to shepherd limited resources into productive public expenditures, notably in social sector investments, that both promote productivity growth and economic development, and accommodate political coalition building.

Thus, sustained economic growth is probably a requisite of the political regime transition I am hypothesizing can take place. It is probably more fundamentally necessary for the very survival of democracy. If Przeworski et al (1996) are correct to suggest that democracies are unlikely to survive in low-income countries unless they are able to generate rapid economic growth, at least some of these weakly institutionalized democracies will not survive. For a long time, the biggest danger facing them will be their inability to promote economic growth, which could lead to an anti-democratic backlash. Rapid economic growth, on the other hand, can help finance the growth of the state apparatus and the services it provides, which fuels both the growth of patronage opportunities and legitimacy for the regime.

Another structural factor helping to maintain the status quo is probably the international relations of most African countries. To be sure, since the end of the Cold War, the West has advocated democracy in the developing world with slightly more consistency and sincerity. But the 20 billion dollars in annual foreign aid that is mostly directed to the region's governments, and almost invariably controlled by the executive branch of government both on balance probably serves to buttress their hold on power and may

actually weaken the bureaucratic institutions needed to counterbalance neopatrimonialism (Moss et al, 2007). Indeed, some observers have suggested that the current modalities of aid distribution are easily and consistently instrumentalized in clientelistic fashion by African state elites (Olivier de Sardan, 1998; van de Walle, 2001).

A final caveat relates to the factors not discussed in this paper, but which are likely to continue to provide considerable sources of variation in political clientelism in the region. There is some evidence that ethnic heterogeneity and other social cleavages increases the incidence of clientelism. The degree of state capacity probably matters in significant ways, and varies quite a lot across the region. Electoral rules, and other institutional factors structure individual incentives in the political system and thus also condition the specific forms that clientelism will take (Haggard and MacCubbins, 2001).

6. Conclusions

This paper has argued that political clientelism in one form or another is likely to be an important dimension of any modern political system. The question, will democratization increase or decrease clientelism is fundamentally the wrong question. Instead, we must ask how democratization will *change* clientelism. That has been the central question on which this paper has focused. I have argued that a transformation of clientelism along three different axes will accompany the successful consolidation of democratic rule in Africa, and indeed in other low-income countries.

Churchill's famous dictum that democracy is the worst form of governance, except for all the others is apt here. The expectation that democracy in Africa or elsewhere might make people more virtuous, and political actors more altruistic is both unreasonable and naïve, but it is no more wrongheaded than the expectation that it would make people less so. If comparative politics teaches us anything, it is surely that human nature is remarkably similar across time and place. What changes are the incentives that individuals face and the political institutions that structure individual choices.

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