

Democracy Promotion in Africa: addressing the institutional gap

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Abstract

Democracy is seen as a viable means to rebuild the legitimacy of African states. However, African democracy is often based on a particular set of institutions which tend to concentrate power in the executive. A powerful president operates in a context of low separation of powers and few possibilities to restrain the executive. The party-political landscape is highly majoritarian.

Democratic reforms and democracy assistance policies were first directed primarily at multiparty elections and political parties. Later donors have shifted to a broader approach of good governance and human rights. Both the narrow electoral and the broader approaches do not address sufficiently the institutional context of multi-party competition, such as presidential versus parliamentary government, power concentration and executive dominance. This is a serious flaw which also limits the impact of democracy promotion and the extent to which legitimacy and accountability has been increased in Africa's weak democracies.

This contribution deals with the institutional means through which accountability in Africa might be increased, in particular in the executive-legislative relationship, i.e. limiting presidential power and increasing separation of powers. The author argues that current approaches in democracy promotion should address the institutional gap and table such broader institutional issues on the agenda for democratic reform.

Introduction

Democracy promotion has become a ‘booming industry’ in the post cold war period. At the same time it is very difficult to identify the core goals and components of the policy field. Democracy assistance is provided under the umbrella of human rights, rule of law, ‘good governance’ and post-conflict peace-building programs. It is provided by governments, by multi-lateral agencies, by (international) NGOs and political parties or party affiliated foundations. The fragmented nature of democracy assistance implies that it is difficult to identify the overall and core goals, strategies and implementation modes, let alone to assess their results. Several authors note that it is near impossible to assess quantitatively the financial input of donors in this area (see f.e. Youngs 2008). Moreover, the field has developed and changed over the past two decades and donors differ in their focus.

Strategies for the promotion of democracy can be largely categorized under two headings. One kind of strategy implies the use of conditionality, that is, the attachment of political conditions to the provision of development assistance. This strategy, which has also been used earlier in the context of broader human rights policies, has been coined as a ‘negative linkage’ approach by former Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Jan Pronk. Another strategy is to actively assist in democratic reform, that is, to support financially or otherwise the introduction and strengthening of democracy. The latter approach may be called a positive linkage strategy (van Cranenburgh 1999) and will be addressed in this contribution.

During the early 1990s, the wave of new ‘founding’ multi-party elections in Africa constituted the primary target of democracy promotion. Where necessary, donors pushed for these elections through conditionality and where desired, donors provided financial and technical assistance and observation for such elections. Subsequent criticisms that western democracy assistance was narrowly focused on multi-party elections (as made by the present author in 1999) were probably justified, and partially reflected ‘infant diseases’ of the policy field. Now donors have shifted to broader issues

such as good governance, accountability, participation and human rights. Under those headings, donors now direct programs at strengthening the police, civilian control of the military, prosecutors, auditors, parliaments and political parties. These improvements show that donors recognize the vital importance of a whole range of institutions in liberal democracy. Accordingly targets of democracy promotion are, besides political parties, increasingly organizations in civil society and the media.

However, explicit attention to the political-institutional context of multi-party competition remains largely absent in democracy promotion policies. I am referring to the basic design of the political systems, such as the choice for presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary government, the scope of presidential power and the extent of separation or fusion of power in the political system. In the academic literature such institutional choices have been widely discussed by comparativists, for example by Elgie (1998), Linz (for example, 1990), Lijphart (recently, 2004), O'Donnell (1998), and Shugart and Carey (1992), because they matter not just for the survival of democracy, but also for the quality and performance of democracy. For example, presidentialism may present risks for the survival of democracy (Linz 1990), a hypothesis nuanced by Shugart and Carey (1992) who identify high levels of presidential power as such a risk. Lijphart also disfavors presidentialism because it inherently limits possibilities for power sharing in his broader argument that systems with power division and power sharing are 'kindler and gentler' in terms of the quality of democracy and social policies (Lijphart 1999). For the case of Africa, Reynolds (1999) showed in a comparable cases study that the choice of institutions influenced the 'democratic trajectories' of five countries in southern Africa, and the present author showed that high presidential power was linked to lower freedom rates in Africa (van Cranenburgh 2008).

The absence of the institutional focus in democracy promotion policies may be partly explained by their relative complexity and by the idea that institutions may be very specific to regional and historic circumstances. Moreover, donors are disinclined to promote what may be perceived as a narrow and very specific institutional form of democracy and wish to refrain from political interference. But the question may be asked whether, in nearly completely avoiding these issues, donors have perhaps lost sight of

some of the core institutional factors which ultimately determine whether and how democracy actually works. In other words, in avoiding western- bias or political interference, donors tend to skirt around some rather essential institutional issues in democracy and democratization.

In this paper I will address institutional features of African political systems which go at the heart of a fundamental concern in liberal democracy, i.e. how to avoid personalization and concentration of power. Although some aspects of current policies for democracy touch upon these issues, they do not confront them in any direct or coherent manner. As an unintended effect, I put forward the admittedly overstated argument that donors thus help to bring about a system in which Africans can now elect their near-dictators. Three examples should clarify this point. The goal to strengthen parliaments is laudable, but if donors attempt to do this merely by training of MPs and their staff in the context of a system where executive and legislative powers are nearly completely fused, the systemic constraints to strengthen parliament are not addressed. Or, when programs aim at strengthening the auditor or prosecutor's offices, but do not address the often unlimited presidential power of nomination to these offices, a fundamental and systemic constraint in increasing their independence is neglected. Lastly, if party assistance is directed at inter-party dialogue, but several features of the electoral system are directed at one-party majority rule and capturing the prize of the presidency, such efforts will have limited effect.

Formal institutions matter, also in Africa!

It is standard in studies of African politics to emphasize the importance of personal or neo-patrimonial rule, which is sometimes referred to as 'informal institutions'. It is less standard to assess the role of formal political institutions in enabling and reinforcing informal patterns of power concentration and personal rule. In the analysis of personal rule in Africa, formal institutions enter the analysis to point to the importance of the system of presidential government to enable personal rule (see the

work of Bratton and van de Walle 1997, van de Walle 2003, Hyden 2006). However, with some notable exceptions, the precise institutional aspects of presidential power and the wider institutional context are hardly ever examined systematically.

In an attempt to redress this imbalance, Bratton examined the relation between formal and informal institutions in Africa, subsuming under the former the constitutional rules and relations between state institutions and under the latter clientelism, corruption and 'Big Man' presidentialism. He argues that the formal and informal structures in reality 'thoroughly interpenetrate one another' (Bratton 2007: 98). Based on Afrobarometer survey data, Bratton showed that formal institutions notably institutions that check the executive are not performing well. The survey data at the same time show that formal rules have gained an important place in African perceptions and evaluations of democracy. This analysis agrees with the view of Posner and Young (2007) that institutional rules are beginning to matter more in Africa, as evidenced in patterns of succession and observance of presidential term limits (see also Prempeh 2008). Where incumbents attempt to by-pass such rules, populations increasingly mobilize in protest.

These studies show that formal institutional rules are beginning to put limits on presidential power, but it is only a beginning. Term limits are an important means to check presidential power, but they concern the requirement to leave of office after a number of terms. Term limits and elections create vertical accountability, i.e. the possibility for citizens to get rid of an executive after his/her term has ended. Vertical accountability is an important element of electoral democracy, but it can be exercised only intermittently, after the ending of a term.

This contribution focuses on other institutional means to limit executive power which operate while a president is in office. O'Donnel (1998) refers to horizontal accountability, which creates checks and balances between government institutions. Contrary to vertical accountability, these mechanisms operate more continuously and limit the power of the executive during a term of office. Such checks on government may be exercised when powers between the executive and the legislature are separated or when parliament has been granted sufficient powers. These issues are rarely addressed

systematically for African countries, with a notable exception of Barkan (2008). Another way to address executive dominance is to limit presidential power, or as formulated by Prempeh, to tame African 'imperial presidents' (Prempeh 2008). In order to address these mechanisms more systematically it is necessary to examine the ways in which executive power is constituted and executive legislative relations are structured in African countries.

The hybrid nature of African regimes

African political systems represent a hybrid regime type, a term I use here not in the sense of being semi-democratic or semi-authoritarian, but in the sense of combining elements of presidential and parliamentary systems of government. To avoid the rather technical aspect of regime classification I here simply follow the approaches of Elgie (1998,2005 and 2007) and Siaroff (2003) which both – in a somewhat different way - rely on dispositional rather than relational features (for a discussion see van Cranenburgh 2008). In both classifications schemes the important variables concern the presence of a premier next to a president and the – for each office - question whether there is direct election and a fixed term (which implies the absence of accountability to parliament).

In an analysis of African political regimes I classified 14 countries as presidential, 14 as semi-presidential and three as parliamentary. In a parliamentary system legislative and executive power are by definition fused, in the sense that the executive depends on the legislature for its origin and survival. In a pure presidential system, the directly elected executive cannot be voted out of office by the legislature; the population can only vote the executive out of office after completion of the term (except the possibility of impeachment in constitutionally prescribed limited circumstances). The pure presidential system separates the executive and the legislature.

Most African systems combine these features of parliamentary and presidential regimes. There is a popularly elected executive president and a cabinet that needs the confidence of the assembly. Part of the executive – the president - conforms to the

presidential model; another part – the cabinet - to the parliamentary model. In roughly half the cases the cabinet is headed by a premier (predominantly in Francophone countries); in the other half cabinet lacks a premier (in most Anglophone countries). The former category is here classified as semi-presidential, the latter as presidential. The important point for this analysis is that both types of African systems are characterized by (a) substantial fusion of powers between (part of) the executive and the legislature, evident in the possibility of the legislature to censure ministers or the entire cabinet and of the president to dissolve the legislature, and (b) high levels of presidential power. Such features led Elgie to classify many African semi-presidential systems as ‘presidentialized’ rather than ‘dual executive’ systems.

The (parliamentary) rule of cabinet needing the confidence of the assembly may appear to be a means by which parliament can control the executive, but most analyses of the actual working of such systems show that it tends to create executive dominance (particularly in the case of one party cabinets, see f.e. Budge 1996). Thus executive dominance resulting from fused power between the legislature and the cabinet is coupled to the presence of a directly elected president with substantial executive powers, each reinforcing the other (see also Prempeh 2008). My argument is that African hybrid systems thus combine the power concentrating features of both the parliamentary and the presidential systems, while the power sharing and power dividing potential in both systems is not realized in the African hybrid systems.

Besides the fusion of powers in terms of origin and survival of cabinet and the assembly, Anglophone countries possess the additional feature of fusion of offices (see also Nijzink 2006, Barkan 2008). Ministers are recruited from among MPs and remain MPs while serving on the government. In many Anglophone African countries, around 30 percent of MPs are actually members of the government, and in one case –Namibia - almost 60 percent (see van Cranenburgh 2009). The result is, as Barkan noted, that ‘few MPs pursued a legislative career with an eye on policy making for the good of the nation. Rather, becoming a member of the legislature was seem as an avenue for lucrative patronage jobs, a ministerial appointment being the most alluring among them’(Barkan 2008: 127). These features severely limit the possibility to strengthen parliament *vis à vis*

the executive and he argued that a change of incentive structure is needed to strengthen African parliaments. Only where coalitions for change emerged to alter the formal balance of power between the executive and the legislature can MPs become more effective in legislation and oversight of the executive.

The institutional features determining the balance of power between the executive and legislature listed by Barkan are: separating the legislature as an independent branch of government; a fixed term (no possibility of dissolution); no executive power to suspend the legislature; the possibility of passing legislation without assent of the president or overruling a presidential veto; powers to require testimony by the executive; whether the legislature can set its own budget, can recruit and maintain its own staff; its role in preparing the national budget; the management of constituency development funds and the manner of election (Barkan 2008: 128-129). As I will elaborate below, many of these possible sources of parliamentary power are absent in African countries. The change to electoral democracy since the early 1990s did not entail a more comprehensive reassessment of such systemic features.

Besides the lack of separation between the legislature and the executive discussed above, African constitutions nearly universally grant presidents the power to veto legislation, with a more than regular majority requirement for parliament to overrule it (see van Cranenburgh 2008 for an overview of 30 countries). Thus, most African presidents have what is considered a strong, rather than a weak veto power. In addition my overview of 30 African constitutions showed that in nearly all countries, the role of parliament in the national budget is limited to accepting or rejecting the budget prepared by the government, with a possibility to amend the budget only if such amendments serve to decrease expenditures. In other words, it is impossible in such cases for parliament to amend the budget with items requiring expenditure, which in fact limits the possibility to initiate policies. The provision implies complete agenda power for the executive, with only a veto possibility for parliament. As Barkan notes, African governments have starved their countries' legislatures of cash and only a handful of African legislatures have succeeded in securing adequate funding (South African and Kenya stand out).

In sum, the balance of power between the executive and the legislature is strongly in favor of the executive and the systemic features lead to fusion rather than separation of power. The adoption of multi-party elections has not fundamentally affected this institutional context, which inherently limits the possibility for parliament to play a significant role in legislation, policy development and oversight of the executive.

Presidential power

In the hybrid political regimes outlined above, the paramount political figure is the executive president. Besides the obvious central role of the president in informal 'Big Man' politics, it is important to assess the institutional power of presidents, which not only enables but also strengthens his informal power. I have used the comprehensive system of Alan Siaroff that examines not only constitutional powers, but also agenda power and power deriving from the ways presidents are elected. Agenda power is captured through the important role of presidents as the chair of cabinet and through his or her electoral position by direct popular election and concurrent elections. The variables are:

- whether the president is popularly elected, thus creating a strong democratic legitimacy (PE);
- whether there is a 'presidentialist' electoral formula (concurrent or 'honeymoon' elections), which tends to strengthen the president's support in the legislature (CE);
- whether the president can make appointments for key high offices, allowing him to appoint his supporters (AP);
- whether the president has the ability to chair formal cabinet meetings and thus engage in agenda setting (CM),
- whether the president has veto power, and can thus affect legislation (VP);
- whether a president has broad emergency or decree powers in case of crisis (EDP);

- whether the president has a central role in foreign policy (FP);
- whether the president has a central role in forming the government (GF); and
- whether the president may dissolve the legislature at will, allowing him to force a breakthrough when there is a legislative-executive dead-lock (DL) (Siaroff 2003).

In this scheme, the maximum score for presidential power is 9 points. My analysis of African presidents showed that with the exception of Mauritius, African countries show very high levels of presidential power. The mean score of 6.87 points is higher than countries world-wide (van Cranenburgh 2008). In addition to the common features of popular election and the president's dominant role in foreign policy, African countries show the near universal presidential power to chair cabinet, as well as extensive appointment powers and the president's power to form the government. In Anglophone countries, elections are concurrent, which assists the election of a parliament of the same party-political color as the executive, and in Francophone countries, the president nearly always may dissolve parliament.

Moreover, the counter-intuitive result was that presidents have most power in semi-presidential countries. This is related to the fact that in African semi-presidential systems, the president retains important powers such as chairing cabinet meetings, forming government and dissolving the legislature. African presidents possess other important powers which are not captured in this scheme, such as the power to call a referendum. In nearly all African Francophone countries the president may call a referendum, and in some African Anglophone countries this is also possible. Taken together, these institutional features make African presidents 'imperial' and indeed, 'Big Men'.

A source of presidential power requiring particular attention in view of the relation between the executive and the legislature is concurrent elections – simultaneous election of the president and parliament. This feature strengthens the majoritarian nature of African electoral and party systems. Presidentialism implies a majoritarian electoral formula for the executive and intrinsically tends to favor large parties and personality-based politics. Concurrent elections for parliament and the president exacerbate this

tendency because it tends to favor the party of the president in the parliamentary election (Shugart and Carey 1992).

These concurrent elections characterize all elected presidents in Anglophone countries. This ‘presidentialist’ electoral formula for the legislature implies that the president’s party is likely to control parliament - and thus the composition of the cabinet and a tendency towards unitary government. The result is a situation akin to parliamentary systems, where government is formed out of a newly elected parliament. As of 2007, there was a clear dominance of the president’s party over the legislature with an absolute majority in most of the countries I examined (van Cranenburgh 2009). The result is one-party cabinets and unitary government. Among Anglophone countries, only in Zambia and Malawi did the president’s party control merely a relative majority in parliament and in the latter country the presidential party had co-opted a number of independents to ensure a relative majority in the legislature. Proportional representation for legislative elections, present in three Anglophone countries, does not appear to prevent the general pattern of dominance by presidential parties in parliament. Namibia, Sierra Leone and South Africa elect their legislatures on a proportional representation basis, and all share high dominance by the ruling party, one party cabinets and unitary government.ⁱ

In Francophone countries, elections tend to be not concurrent, although there is a tendency toward concurrence through the synchronization of terms for the presidency and parliament (e.g. Senegal). Four Francophone countries have concurrent elections or ‘honeymoon’ elections, that is, parliamentary elections soon after presidential elections. Government parties more often command smaller (relative) majorities in parliament in this group of countries and, therefore, coalitions occur more frequently. Moreover, co-habitation, or the sharing of power between a president and a prime minister from different parties, occurs in two of these countries, although in one case the president is an independent. In sum, looking at all 30 African countries, the majority has a one party cabinet and unitary government in which the party of the president also forms the cabinet. This party-political constellation further bolsters executive dominance of parliament.

The introduction of electoral democracy in Africa since the early 1990s did not entail a reassessment of these sources of presidential power. Indeed, ‘a notable feature of the *ancien regime* survives. This is the phenomenon of the imperial presidency.’ (Prempeh 2008: 110). Moreover, as noted by Prempeh, a more fundamental reform of the political system has been kept off the agenda both by incumbents and regime opponents (Prempeh 2008: 112). As I will argue below, the institutional design has been so thoroughly internalized by all political actors, which have been shaped by the incentives inherent in the system, that it is unlikely that democracy promoters will find allies in political parties to table such issues on the agenda for political reform.

Promoting democracy in the context of systemic power concentration

Given the institutional context outlined above, promoting democracy in Africa through multi-party elections, which remains at the core of such policies, creates the dubious result to grant Africans the right to elect a near-dictator as president and a parliament completely subservient to the executive. Democracy promoters have also developed broader policies, for example to support NGOs and civil society actors, the media, political parties and parliament. But none of these policies address the context of the systemic limitations influencing the functioning of these institutions. Clearly, to further develop and deepen democracy, constitutional/institutional reforms which go at the heart of the political system should be addressed: i.e. diminishing the concentration of power in the executive and creating effective countervailing power, first and foremost by strengthening parliament through the reform of legislative-executive relations.

The following examples illustrate the limitations inherent in current policies which either neglect or skirt around core institutional problems, even if they go beyond support for multi-party elections. Democracy promotion initiatives directed at the role of parliament have limited impact as a result of systemic features. Efforts to strengthen parliament are obstructed by fusion of power between the executive and parliament. When the president, with his substantial executive and agenda power is assisted in policy

making by a cabinet with majority support in parliament, the latter body can scarcely exercise its control function effectively. With the presidential party controlling parliament, the actual use of parliamentary powers to amend bills or to censure ministers becomes in effect a mere theoretical option. This is even more so in the case of Anglophone countries which also fuse offices. MPs in Anglophone countries could certainly benefit from increased training, support by a qualified staff and an increased capacity for policy analysis, but when large numbers of MPs are either members or aspiring members of the government they will not act independently to check the government. The sheer size of the cabinet, moreover, implies a highly diffuse and uncontrollable executive. For example, in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, cabinet consists of more than 60 members.

Programs directed at strengthening political parties have limited impact if they are not based on any assessment of the limitations and incentives inherent in the institutional context. Majoritarian electoral formula's and concurrent elections, such as present in the majority of African countries, have enabled former single parties to remain dominant after the introduction of multiparty elections (e.g. Tanzania) or opposition parties to become dominant after gaining power (e.g. Zambia during the 1990s). Presidentialism and concurrent elections for the president and the assembly create systemic incentives toward one party dominance, unitary government and the concentration of power in one person. Thus, political party assistance may aim at stimulating inter-party dialogue and cooperation, but if the systemic incentives toward personalism and one party rule inherent in presidentialism are not addressed, these efforts will not have great impact. It would be a better strategy to address the wider institutional context that influences the party system as a whole, so that it can become more inclusive and competitive, as suggested by Burnell (2006: 23).

Where political aid is directed to creating or strengthening other institutions for horizontal accountability, they are unlikely to have great impact unless the great powers of the executive president are circumscribed. Policies to assist the creation of an Ombudsman or strengthening the Auditor or the courts need to address the way the executive can interfere in the daily operation of such institutions. In many African

countries, presidential powers of appointment are so extensive as to enable the executive to pack such institutions with his followers. Moreover, executive discretion in limiting the budgets of such institutions can be used to cripple potentially threatening sources of countervailing power. These examples illustrate that strategies for the promotion of democracy will have limited impact if they do not incorporate institutional issues which are in fact at the heart of the liberal democratic idea: that is, how to limit and divide power in the political system.

Bridging the gap: bringing institutional reform in

Besides support for elections – the narrow focus - policy approaches for the promotion of democracy have broadened during the last 15 years. The EU approach, for example, combines a focus on elections with a broader approach of social and human rights and ‘good governance’. In a peer review of the EU’S role in democracy promotion, however, partner organizations criticize the EU’s ‘narrow understanding of democracy’ and a disproportionate focus on civil society, elections and human rights. Democracy, in the view of these partners, ‘must not simply be equated with human rights but must also deliver in the broader sense’ (IDEA 2009: 29-30). Partner perceptions thus see EU policies as overly focused on procedural democracy, i.e. elections and the freedoms required by it. In my view, however, the EU’s emphasis on political and civil rights actually attests to a broader approach of liberal, not just electoral democracy, and the concept of governance also entails a concern for good development policies. At the same time, the approach may be seen as narrow in the sense that it does not address core institutional issues in liberal democracy. European democracy promotion, which is overwhelmingly targeted to Africa, is not directed at broad systemic-level political change, as argued in the overview by Youngs (2007).

Democracy promotion policies by bilateral governments also tend to suffer from the somewhat contradictory combination of narrowness and breadth. On the one hand they generally tend to focus narrowly on multi-party elections and on the other hand they

tend to deploy a broad human rights and good governance approach. Institutional issues which go at the heart of making democracy work do not gain a place in either the narrow or in the broader approaches. In view of the recommendation made in the peer review of EU democracy promotion to ‘tap the EU’s internal experiences to inform external action’ (IDEA 2009: 37) experiences with different institutional models of democracy should gain a larger role in external democracy promotion.

Donor governments and NGOs may assume that such institutional issues cannot be addressed by external actors, because the choice of governmental system should be a matter of internal choice, to be made by the recipient country. ‘Interfering’ in such issues may be construed as interfering in state sovereignty. I do not think that argument is very strong. Democracy promotion in its current form is also quite clearly an example of international policies deeply affecting the political system of the recipient country and western governments accept this partly because they cannot justify to their tax-paying population to support non-democratic regimes. At the same time, donors have found partners in civil society in aid receiving countries who demand democratic reforms. Donors have been influential because of their considerable agenda power and their ability to support those groups in society pushing for multi-party elections and their role is widely considered as legitimate in the post cold war era.

A similar strategy for wider and systemic institutional reform would entail putting institutional issues on the agenda and linking up with actors in the political system that strive for institutional reforms. Such groups are likely to be professional bodies, academics, human rights agencies or NGOs that address the fundamental power concentration in the political system. It is not very likely that African political parties at present constitute a vanguard in the demand for such institutional reforms. The uncomfortable truth is that most African political parties tend not to challenge these fundamental institutional issues, because they are deeply shaped by the incentives in the political system and tend to go for the supreme prize of political power, i.e. the presidency. Where parties have pressed for institutional reforms, they often change position once they have captured the prize of political power themselves, i.e. the presidency. Political developments in Zambia during the early 1990s have shown how

opposition parties have quickly adopted the same political styles as their single party predecessors. The failure of institutional reform in Kenya, once pursued by the party now in government, also illustrates the point that parties will not challenge the system of power concentration once they benefit from it. Intergovernmental organizations such as the African Union (AU) will also not be likely advocates of fundamental institutional reform, as they constitute a forum for Africa governments in office.

When donor countries – whether bilaterally or through the EU - rethink their democracy promotion strategies and attempt to fill the gap between the narrow electoral approach and the broader human rights and governance approach, democracy promotion policies may become a catalyst for more fundamental and systemic change. But at present neither the narrow nor the broad approach grants a prominent place to the (formal) political institutions for democracy. These issues may be sensitive and complex but they deserve a central place in the debate on developing democracy beyond mere electoralism and improving the quality of democracy. This central position is merited in view of the academic literature that the survival and performance of democracy is influenced by the choice of institutions. In particular, electoralist approaches to democracy do not address the much more fundamental issues concerning the division and limitation of power.

The kind of institutional reforms that should form part of a new agenda for the promotion and improvement of democracy are:

- to limit the size of the cabinet and to separate the office of minister and MP (in Anglophone African countries) by a incompatibility provision in the constitution;
- Limiting the possibility for the president to dissolve the legislature;
- Limiting the extensive appointment powers of the president;
- Introducing mid-term elections for parliament in presidential and semi-presidential systems;
- Strengthening the role of the premier in semi-presidential countries (by making him exclusively accountable to parliament and chair of the cabinet).

Formal institutional change will certainly not be a panacea providing immediate cures for Africa's weak and ailing democracies. Obviously informal institutions and political culture will need change as well. But if informal and cultural practices are highly interdependent with formal political institutions, with the latter reinforcing the former as I have argued, breaking the vicious cycle implies finding a niche for political intervention. This niche is to table the need for reform of those political institutions which concentrate power in one person and fuse rather than separate power.

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ⁱ These findings may seem paradoxical in light of Lindberg's findings on the proliferation of parties in African party systems (particularly in proportional electoral systems). However, this fragmentation is predominantly visible among the opposition and is combined with one-party dominance.