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# The Limits of Clientism: Multi-Party Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa

Inge Amundsen

## *Africa's Third Wave*

Africa's third wave of democratisation has lasted for almost a decade,<sup>1</sup> and there seems to be much agreement among observers that its impact has been relatively meagre in political as well as in economic terms. There are many ways of addressing the question of the quality and achievements of the processes of democratisation in Africa, and Nicolas van de Walle attempts in his article 'The Impact of Multi-Party Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa' to employ some quantitative measurements. I will argue, however, that a qualitative approach can be more appropriate because of the many values of democracy, because of the few cases in question, and because of the characteristics of neopatrimonialism.

In his article, van de Walle sets out to evaluate how democratic Africa has in reality become, to assess the economic performances of African countries at different levels of democratisation, and to reconsider the impact of continued neopatrimonial patterns. Basically, his findings are that the *third wave* of democratisation that swept the African continent from the beginning of the 1990s has been a limited success in political terms. Very few 'liberal democracies' have ensued from the process, and the 'illiberal democracies' prevail. In economic terms, the success has also been limited. Nicolas van de Walle finds that economic performance, in terms of GDP growth and inflation, is largely uncorrelated to regime type.

Nicolas van de Walle also holds out neopatrimonialism as a key factor to explain the slowness and indecisiveness of Africa's demo-

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1 According to Samuel Huntington (1991), who introduced the concept of democratisation waves in his book *The Third Wave*, and numerous studies on African politics establishing its beginning in the early 1990s.

cratic and economic reconstruction. Neopatrimonialism is a characteristic of most of Africa's states that includes clientelist practices, patronage, various forms of rent-seeking and prebendalism. Furthermore, institutional factors such as presidentialism and international factors such as the aid regime tend to underpin Africa's neopatrimonial features, and one of van de Walle's conclusions is that 'the introduction of multi-party electoral politics does not by itself create democracy overnight, at least in its "liberal" variety'. However, he asserts, 'in the long run, neopatrimonial politics and democracy are almost certainly not compatible, insofar as the latter introduces institutions of horizontal and vertical accountability to the executive'.<sup>2</sup>

That democratisation is a slow process with many obstacles and possible setbacks is not surprising to anyone. The history of democratisation in Europe makes this obvious. The question is whether the process of democratisation will take a disproportionately long time in sub-Saharan Africa, and more importantly, whether it will be blocked or even reversed because of some particularly inhibiting 'African' factors.

In my opinion, a quantitative approach to these questions seems premature. Africa's *third wave* of democratisation is no more than 10 years old, and there are a large number of 'deviant' cases among the general findings. There are many unique country experiences, and the obstacles to quantifying core variables such as political and economic development, not to mention neopatrimonialism, are tremendous. Although a quantitative approach can give much insight, and although van de Walle's overall conclusions in all probability reflect the African reality, his strength is not in his exercises of quantification but in his discussion of the rather unquantifiable variables

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2 This might be called the *neopatrimonialism/democracy incompatibility thesis*. Its overall parallel is the *neopatrimonialism/economic growth incompatibility thesis*, which states that neopatrimonial countries are necessarily economically stagnant and possibly retarding. Nicolas van de Walle states in his article that 'neopatrimonialism results in a systematic fiscal crisis'. Catherine Boone has argued that in the long run the capacity of a neopatrimonial political system to generate patronage resources will be exhausted (Boone, 1990: 352–353). Together with the argument that neopatrimonialism inevitably leads to factional strife and instability of the political system as such, these two theses ultimately add up to the *neopatrimonial unsustainability thesis*. The trouble with these arguments is the fact that neopatrimonial African regimes have over the last 30 years demonstrated their flexibility and adaptability; they have endured economic liberalisations and recurring economic crises, and they have withstood the political pressures from below and from the outside. In sum, they have largely survived the third wave of democratisation.

of neopatrimonialism, presidentialism and clientelism. I will discuss this in further detail, add some comments on certain core concepts, and try to illustrate my points using Senegal as an example.

### Quantitative versus Qualitative Approaches

At the outset, I am somewhat sceptical about any quantitative analyses of ‘democracy’ in Africa. Quantitative analyses will largely reflect the indicators one decides to single out in the first place, and the relative weight one chooses to give to them. Besides, in Africa statistics are at the best ‘guesstimates’ for several important variables. Finally, with a limited number of cases and a large number of variables each (deviant) case is not only likely to heavily influence the results but will also tend to stand out as a category of its own.

Take for instance van de Walle’s two economic performance indicators, real GDP growth and inflation. For one thing, African GDP growth indicators are indeed uncertain. Besides, they are possibly unrelated to the question of democratisation. They do not measure informal economy changes although we know that political liberalisations might lead to a sharp increase in informal economic activities that may benefit people’s living conditions more than a registered increase in GDP.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, GDP growth indicators are averages that say nothing about the distribution of resources. Increases in GDP might be caused by increased exports of minerals, for example, which do not contribute positively to people’s living standards when the mechanisms of redistribution are lacking. Therefore, redistribution policies, which are usually more prominent in democracies, may be more relevant for people’s living standards than GDP growth.

Nicolas van de Walle admits that the particularities of the Franc Zone (with its fixed parity of the CFA franc to the French franc) and the devaluation of the CFA franc had a large impact on inflation and growth, cutting across political regimes. Controlling for both the currency factor and for ‘politically irrelevant’ factors such as drought, epidemics and oil finds, and taking into account the very brief history of Africa’s democratisation and the very mixed political and economic backgrounds and outcome, all result in too small

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3 In many cases, political liberalisation means less bureaucratic regulation, which can open up for more black/parallel market activities, cross-border trade, etc. One specific example is Tanzania’s lifting of its previous ideologically motivated ban on private transport companies.

a number of units in each sub-category for a meaningful statistical analysis.

Nicolas van de Walle's classification of regimes is also problematic. In assessing the degree of freedom allowed in a regime (Table 1), he makes use of a typology that combines *transition* (whether there has been a transition, an ousting of incumbents) and *time* (whether the multi-party system has been in place for an extensive period of time, excluding countries without multi-party regimes and multi-party elections). In testing the hypothesis of economic performance, on the other hand, he makes use of another typology, *new*, *non-*, *old* and *liberal* democracies. In other words, van de Walle is employing different typologies when assessing the various aspects of democracy's performance. Besides, in this latter typology several countries figure in more than one category. This is a diversion from elementary statistical techniques and becomes almost meaningless, in particular given this rather small number of countries.<sup>4</sup>

It remains unclear what van de Walle means by democracy, and it is unclear according to which criteria or characteristics regimes are to be classified. I believe this is partly a problem of identifying what minimum criteria are employable (and at what cost) when the purpose is to distinguish between 'democratic' and 'non-democratic' countries. It is also partly a problem of a variable (regime type or level of democracy) that cannot be measured directly in numerical terms because it embraces so many different elements at the same time. Sometimes indicators are working in opposite directions, and quite often an indicator is qualitatively different (more meaningful, perhaps decisive) at one stage in one country than at another stage or in another country.

There are several possibilities for selecting criteria that can distinguish between 'democracies' and 'non-democracies'. Take for instance the debate on what is a 'consolidated democracy'. According to the strictest 'electoral' definition<sup>5</sup> there must be *two* electoral turnovers according to the popular will: one constituent election in which the president of the pre-democratic period transfers power to an opposition candidate in free and fair elections (a transition-validating election), and a second (confirming) election in which this new president steps down. In other words, the new democratically elected president will also have to prove his willingness to put demo-

4 A simpler and intuitively easier categorisation would have been to make only two mutually exclusive categories: democratic and non-democratic, or try the same exercise using the free/partly free/not free categorisation.

5 See for instance Huntington (1991).

cratic principles into practice. This very strict condition seems particularly relevant for Africa's presidential systems, where the president's organisational advantages and superior access to political and economic resources make it tempting and possible to hold on to power once in position. Applying these strictest criteria, the African members of the democratic club are reduced to only one – Benin – with the transfer of power from Kérékou to Soglo in 1991 and from Soglo to Kérékou in 1996.

However, we can apply some slightly less strict criteria for distinguishing between 'democracies' and 'non-democracies'. We can for example accept that the constituent (first democratic) presidential elections can be democratic even when won by the candidate of the ruling party or junta of the pre-democratic period, if there is a later turnover. In other words, we can accept the democratic credentials of one or another possibly constituent (first democratic) election if its democratic *Gehalt* is proved beyond doubt through a transfer of power to the opposition in some later elections. By this, we can invite two more members to the club: Senegal and Ghana. Senegal held the first democratic elections in 1983 (with several presidential candidates) and confirming elections in December 2000 that transferred power from Diouf to Wade. Ghana held the constituent elections in 1993 and confirming elections in December 2000, transferring power from Rawlings to Kufuor.

If we are also to invite into the club any African country in which a pre-democratic regime has been replaced in democratic elections by presidents representing an opposition party, but without applying the strict conditions of a previous democratisation or two democratic shifts (i.e., *simple* first wave democratisers without confirmation), we have to welcome Cape Verde, Zambia, Congo (Brazzaville), Madagascar, Mali, Niger, the Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, South Africa and Namibia.<sup>6</sup> The problem with these countries is that they have not proven their democratic consolidation. With strong presidential systems, the new presidents in these countries are frequently reinforcing their personal power rather than accepting checks and balances, participation and transparency. Some have fallen back into the 'semi-democracy' category where a presidential shift according to the popular vote is not an established norm, and seems unlikely to take place again.

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6 The list concerns countries with a 'democratic' regime shift during the 1990s. The list has been adapted from Bratton and van de Walle (1997), *Africa South of the Sahara* (yearbook 1999), and *Africa Confidential*.

However, some African regimes are relatively well-established democracies without ever having passed the litmus test of a presidential and ruling party succession (regime shift), for instance Botswana. And more importantly, some ‘democratisers’ have moved back from an initially prospective political liberalisation to a marked illiberalism, for instance Zimbabwe. Any democratic/non-democratic categorisation will therefore have to consider each country over a rather long time span.

Finally, the question of a country’s status in the process of democratisation rests in part upon factors such as the political will and character of the core players in the political game, and on the strengths and weaknesses of both the incumbent regime and the opposition. In order to assess a possibly democratically productive balance of forces, for instance, and whether this or that organisation or institution might take a lead and bring a polity another round the upward spiral of democratisation, it will be necessary to develop quite different typologies and analytical tools.

In sum, the more variables we bring in, the more each African country will stand out as a category of its own. Given the limited number of African democratising countries, lessons from individual countries may be more revealing than a search for patterns employing poor data sets. Consequently, in-depth case-studies of a few well-chosen countries, their recent political and economic history, and a careful comparison between these, are probably in order to establish whether politically liberalised and democratised African countries are performing better than the non-democracies in economic terms.

## Democracy’s Economic Performance

Nicolas van de Walle finds that the economic performance of African regimes, in terms of GDP growth and inflation, is largely uncorrelated to regime type. His interpretation of this is twofold. His conclusion, that ‘no single pattern emerges from these estimates’, is first of all interpreted in somewhat positive terms because one might fear a more disruptive economic effect from political transitions. Second, van de Walle suggests that political transitions having no clear economic effect ‘may reflect the superficial nature of democratisation’, although the lack of significant economic development is in fact influenced by many factors in addition to the actions of governments.

Two more hypotheses are then forwarded and tested in qualitative terms: that democratisation will introduce a participatory explo-



sion, and that it will result in weakening executive authority. Van de Walle argues that political participation is on the decline in Africa's new democracies. This is confirmed by other studies, and there is probably a cyclical pattern of high (but anarchic) popular participation in manifestations prior to elections (and sometimes immediately after) and during certain upheavals, and then a drastic reduction in the participation level as politics are 'normalised' and channelled back into the political institutions and the clientelist and corporatist channels of a restricted political elite.

Nicolas van de Walle argues that Africa's executives are weakened only in a few cases by the process of democratisation. A few parliaments are able to check on presidents, but as most African multi-party systems have been moving into a system with a dominant ruling party, parliamentary controls are symbolic and executive dominance continues. The advantages of incumbency in Africa's presidential systems are still immense. It is indeed a 'winner takes all' system.

Nicolas van de Walle notes that not a single democratising African state has chosen to move to a parliamentary form of government. However, Namibia and South Africa are at least semi-parliamentarian, and some former British colonies have not entirely abolished the principles of the Westminster model. In Kenya, parliament has the formal right to issue a vote of no confidence to the government, and has also threatened to do so, but with a dominant party and a large number of MPs in government positions (an example of the large so-called *extended* African governments that include ministers, vice ministers, deputy ministers, etc.), this threat is more formal than real.

Notwithstanding the weak status of parliaments in Africa (and the common practice of ignoring formal regulations), the possible future effect of existing institutions and regulations should be recognised. Take for instance the hypothesis that the multi-party system was probably more easily reintroduced in countries where opposition parties were never formally banned (such as Cameroon), than in countries where they were explicitly outlawed (such as the Côte d'Ivoire). Any institutional legacy has a possible bearing, because to some extent the formal and legal characteristics of institutions will shape individual behaviour and might shape power relations. This is entirely in line with Bratton and van de Walle's politico-institutional approach suggested in their seminal book *Democratic Experiments in Africa* (1997).

## Multi-partyism

Nicolas van de Walle uses the concept ‘multi-party politics’ as shorthand for officially multi-party electoral democracies, in other words formally liberal democracies. His ambition is not to investigate multi-partyism or political parties in terms of *institutionalisation*, despite the title; it is to evaluate how democratic Africa has become, and to consider the economic performances of African countries at different levels of democratisation and the continuation of long-standing neopatrimonial patterns.<sup>7</sup>

I would nevertheless like to make a comment on multi-partyism in itself. What is important to observe is that multi-partyism is but one element in a broader democratic process. Several parties, and preferably internally democratic parties that offer real policy alternatives and perform certain functions, are necessary but not sufficient in a democratic system. Democracy also requires free and fair elections, the rule of law (functioning judiciaries, a constitution, judicial review), and transparency and accountability (horizontal control of the executive branch by parliament and other core players such as auditors, control committees, ombudsmen, etc., in addition to vertical control through elections, media and civil society organisations).

In certain phases in a given process of democratic transition, some of these elements might be stronger than others. The lack of competence, institutionalisation and influence in one instance might well be compensated for by a more substantial legitimacy and persistent activism in another. The problem is that a given country moves along several dimensions of political development at the same time, and possibly in opposing directions. Senegal can illustrate this point, and also demonstrate how general trends can be confirmed and possibly also qualified and challenged.

## The Senegalese Example

When Abdoulaye Wade won the presidential elections in March 2000, Senegal entered the very exclusive club of African countries to fulfil the strictest formal conditions of democratic consolidation. It demonstrated not only that democratisation takes time, but also that this time-consuming, institutional step-by-step process can be rewarding.

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7 In another article by the same author, the emerging party systems and the characteristics of the political parties are analysed in more detail (van de Walle and Butler, 1999). This article argues that some of the core functions of African parties are neglected, like interest aggregation and representation, and that the logics of clientelistic politics militate against the institutionalisation of parties.

In Senegal the process of democratisation started earlier than in the rest of Africa, with the authorisation of the PDS (*Parti Démocratique Sénégalais*) as a legal opposition party in 1974, the introduction of a restricted three-party system in 1976, and unrestricted multi-partyism in 1981. Then, almost 20 more years passed before the democratic institutions were made to work and the electorate chose not to re-elect the incumbent president.<sup>8</sup>

This can illustrate how ‘institutions matter’. Starting with a ‘canalised, dosed and progressive’ liberalisation initiated from above by President Senghor in 1974 to give new life to a state that was up against social, economic and political constraints it could hardly control,<sup>9</sup> Senegal embarked on a ‘two steps forward and one step back’ process that has not been completed, but by which democracy has become consolidated. Of decisive importance in this process was the establishment of multi-partyism, constitutional reforms and a new electoral code, and the independent election commission ONEL (*l’Observatoire national des élections du Sénégal*). The *ancien régime* delayed and tried to control the organisation and functioning of these institutions, but once they were established there was no way back.

Senegal also illustrates the point that African presidents and ruling parties are strong and therefore not easily overturned. With the formal democratisation of the *ancien régime*, rulers have often strengthened their democratic credentials through relatively free and fair elections. In Senegal, President Diouf was elected in 1983 and re-elected in 1988 and 1993, in three multi-candidate and increasingly free elections, until he had to step down in 2000.<sup>10</sup>

Senegal also contradicts the core hypothesis of modernisation theory that economic development is a precondition for political democratisation, and it is a ‘deviant case’ in the quantitative analy-

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8 Whether formal democratisation will lead to a change in Senegal’s economic policies and performances, including growth and redistribution, remains to be seen. There is not much room for optimism, given van de Walle’s conclusion in this article that the general impact of democratisation on economic performance is insignificant, and given that the Senegalese promise of ‘change’ is unrelated to fundamental policy changes (*Sopi*, the Wade/PDS slogan, primarily referred to a change in personnel, and Wade said at one point he wanted the same policies but wanted them to be executed better). The background of Abdoulaye Wade and his team in the old political-administrative establishment in Dakar also points to a continuation of policies.

9 According to Coulon (1988:506).

10 The 1988 elections were rather ‘irregular’ and their fairness contested, though most observers agree that incumbent President Diouf would still have won even if the elections had been fully free and fair.

ses in which the single best predictor for democratisation is found to be economic growth. In Senegal the process of democratisation has followed its course largely unrelated to economic cycles. Democratisation has progressed despite a chronic economic crisis, it gained momentum after the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, and the presidential turnover took place without any new or strengthened Senegalese *bourgeoisie* to carry it through.

## Institutionalisation and Consolidation

Is Senegal now a consolidated democracy? Democratic consolidation and democratic institutionalisation are two aspects of the same process, but consolidation is a broader and more time-consuming process. *Institutionalisation* means building institutions and making them efficient. Thus, both authoritarianism and neopatrimonialism can be well-institutionalised regime types. *Democratic institutionalisation* implies that core state institutions (the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, including the ministries) as well as political parties, media, and civil society organisations are well organised and operating efficiently in a rational-bureaucratic sense. It also implies that all major players accept the democratic rules of the political game, so that political competition takes place within, but is not about, the institutions of democratic government.

In other words, democratic institutionalisation takes place for instance when someone who did not initiate or draft the constitution, who did not approve some legislation or initiate a particular institution in the first place, points to some clause in it, or calls upon some explicitly recognised principle or established procedure, with success. Malawi's constitution limits a president to two five-year terms, but President Bakili Muluzi has said he wants a third. Mali's constitution does likewise, and here some ADEMA ruling party bosses want President Alpha Oumar Konaré to go for a third. Democratic institutionalisation is the direct opposite; it is when the constitutional limitation is respected, preferably taken for granted, and neither the outgoing president nor his party bosses utter anything that can be interpreted as disrespect for this clause.

*Consolidation* includes institutionalisation.<sup>11</sup> A broad definition of democratic consolidation will nevertheless include two more elements. First of all, it means political stability and an unlikely return

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<sup>11</sup> According to Diamond (1994:15): 'most of all, and most urgently, [democratic consolidation] requires political institutionalisation.'

to authoritarianism through an expressed and efficient civil control of the military forces and the other services of the *ancien régime*. Second, consolidation requires legitimation. Legitimacy does not only imply that the political leadership adopts democratic values and practices, but also a widespread public adoption of and support for the same. One indicator is the percentage of voters who consider democracy as an indispensable way of life. It is in other words a *democratic culture*, where not only the elites but also the general public accept the basic interests of other constituent groups in society, and that they instead of violent dissident and intensified conflict will prefer moderation, accommodation and restrained partisanship.<sup>12</sup>

It is well known that democratic *transitions* and democratic *consolidations* are two distinct phases in the process of democratisation, with different characteristics, explanations and outcomes. Another not so well-established distinction is between the two separate paths of consolidation. On the one hand, there is the democratic consolidation that takes place in countries that have been through a *revolutionary* regime transition (revolutionary in terms of time and extent, implying a regime shift where the *ancien régime* – its president, government, ruling party and top military officials – is removed and replaced within months, a *tabula rasa* situation that requires a relatively wholesale restructuring of politics). On the other hand, there is the democratic consolidation that happens in countries going through the much slower, incremental and *evolutionary* process of regime transition. In the latter, the process of democratisation follows the salami tactics, one slice at a time, until the system has changed, without any watershed event that can be identified as *the* point of transition.

The difference can be illustrated for instance by the difference between Mali and Senegal (despite the probable shallowness of the revolution in Mali and the possible hollowness of the evolution in Senegal). One of the most inflexible and corrupt personal dictatorships in Africa was overthrown in Mali in 1991, and a fairly democratic regime was established within months. In Senegal, the

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<sup>12</sup> There is no consensus on the distinction between the two concepts institutionalisation and consolidation; they are used interchangeably. I would like to suggest, however, that the term *institutionalisation* narrows the focus down to the core institutions of government, the relationship between these institutions and between these and the immediate political environment, and to include the efficiency and rationality of these institutions in democratic and administrative terms. Likewise, I would like the term *consolidation* to include factors beyond formal institutions and elections, like popular legitimacy, civil–military relations, international aspects, etc.

incremental democratisation took at least 20 years until the president and the ruling party were finally defeated in free and fair elections, and nobody can tell exactly when Senegal passed the point of no return.

## The Limits of Clientelism

Nicolas van de Walle characterises African politics during the course of the last two decades (and more) as ‘neopatrimonial’, attributes the slowness of and the resistance to the process of democratisation largely to continuing patrimonial logics such as presidentialism and clientelism, and points to the systematic economic crisis that neopatrimonialism results in. Although his outline of neopatrimonialism is indeed too brief in this article,<sup>13</sup> there is much agreement on this point in the literature on African political economy.

However, given the rather vague and all-embracing character of the notion of ‘neopatrimonialism’, this agreement is unsurprising. Bluntly speaking, ‘neopatrimonialism’ has come to include everything that is not Weberian rational–legal and bureaucratic; it has come to replace the all-embracing traditional–modern dichotomy of the 1950s. But the degree and nature of neopatrimonialism vary enormously between African countries, and aspects of it are also found in other parts of the world. I believe the time is ripe for a far narrower and more precise delineation and evaluation of the core aspects of neopatrimonialism. It is important to delineate and describe what aspects are relevant in a given country at a given time.

In most cases, it may be the clientelist networks that are the most prominent feature of neopatrimonialism. But *which* clientelist networks, between *whom* and in the interest of *which* groups? Are they, for instance, informal networks mainly between government and business, or between government and traditional elites, or between government and particular ethnic groups or between government and external forces? Where are the aspects of nepotism strong? And to what extent are these networks underpinned by the

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13 For a more extensive outline of neopatrimonialism, one can refer to Bratton and van de Walle (1997), and to the French academic tradition that brought the concept into the debate, like Bayart (1989), Bayart *et al.* (1992), and Médard (1990, 1991, 1992). For studies that make use of the concept in all its richness on Africa in general, see Chabal and Daloz (1999), and for some early studies applying the concept in the analysis of various African countries, see Boone (1990), Charlton (1990), and Crook (1989).

formal powers embedded in a presidential structure?<sup>14</sup> A focus on the lack of distinction between private and public interest, on corruption, abuse of power, extortion and misuse of funds for private enrichment will lead to other findings. Conversely, other aspects of neopatrimonialism, such as straddling, patronage, nepotism, ethnic manipulation and favouritism, and the criminalisation of politics may be more relevant at certain points and in certain cases.

Clientelism and democratic institutionalisation are opposing logics in analytical terms, but both can very well be found operating simultaneously in the political development of a given country. In Senegal, for instance, the new President Wade moved in very efficiently and replaced the chief of the armed forces, and promoted colonels to replace other generals, in order to prevent a military take-over *à la ivoirienne*. However, he also provided those military officers who were laid off with jobs in unprivatised parastatals!<sup>15</sup> Thus, the possibility of a military take-over is reduced, but the government's economic reforms received a blow and clientelist practices are reinforced.

It is not unreasonable to hypothesise that the single biggest hurdle to realising existing reform objectives is the prevalence of patrimonial behaviour in government circles, but scholars need to study this issue more closely and not merely assume that African political systems are in transition from some form of neopatrimonial rule. Neopatrimonial practices are still present, and the process of democratisation is largely hampered by it, but one cannot identify every obstacle to democratisation as neopatrimonialism. Other explanatory factors also exist. Nicolas van de Walle points to external factors such as the aid regime and terms of trade, and to institutional factors such as presidentialism. One can also add the socio-cultural factors of ethnic and religious divisions (the cleavage structure), and political culture. It is a complicated but necessary task to dis-

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14 Take for instance the largely unabated right of Africa's presidents to nominate and appoint (and of course rotate and dismiss) government ministers, officials in the presidency (*'la Présidence'* in Francophone Africa, a large body sometimes overshadowing the government), senior civil servants, military officials, judges, the diplomatic corps, regional governors, members of various state councils and boards, directors of state companies and parastatals, and in some cases even local chiefs and clergy. Sometimes it also includes the election candidates for the ruling party, because the president of the republic is usually also the president of the ruling part. And it has been noted that this adds up quite exactly to what some observers have called the 'ruling class' or the 'state-bureaucratic ruling elite' (see Amundsen, 1997).

15 According to *Africa Confidential*, 9 June 2000.

tinguish 'neopatrimonial' factors from other factors, and to analyse the relationship between these.

To find the limits of clientelism/neopatrimonialism as an analytical tool, as well as the analysis of the limits of clientelism as an explanatory factor in itself, in given countries, calls for further research. In other words, under what conditions are personalised and segmented primary networks forced into formal organisation and institutionalisation? Where is the turning point? Why are some ethno-professional groups reorganising themselves in 'modern' institutions, with written rules and procedures, and through this more able to compete on a modern market-place, while others are not? Why are some ruling elites still basing their power on clientelist structures and nepotistic practices while others are moving towards the adoption of democratic structures and meritocratic principles? Studies of such processes can perhaps be based on early development sociology, on Tönnies' *Gesellschaft–Gemeinschaft* dichotomy and Weber's analysis of the interrelations between capitalism, bureaucracy and democracy, including his notion of *rationalisation*; and on the largely forgotten parts of modernisation theory that addressed the *dynamics* and *processes* of institutionalisation.

Anyway, the 'neopatrimonial school', of which I understand Nicolas van de Walle is a proponent, can be interpreted as a moderate return to modernisation theory but without the excesses of the dichotomy and without ignoring the detrimental impact of world capitalism. With a comparative and politico-institutional approach, the basic analytical tools are also at hand for analysing the process of democratic institutionalisation and consolidation in Africa, and the possible impact of political developments on economic development.

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