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ANTECEDENTS OF THE THIRD WAVE DEMOCRATIZATION: A REVIEW OF AFRICA'S EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

A number of explanations have been advanced for the democratization of the late twentieth century. In Africa, the democratization which began in the 1990s has severally been presented as a product of factors from within or without; rather than as an intricate combination of both factors. This paper is a review of the literature on the "third wave democratization". The paper examines how internal and external factors combined to create the conditions for Africa's democratization. The paper particularly demonstrates how the regime of structural adjustments in Africa served as a unifying factor of the internal and external antecedents of Africa's democratization.

INTRODUCTION

In the last quarter of the 20th century, democracy became "the Post-Cold War's new standard of civilization". From the mid -1970s through to the 1990s an unprecedented number of countries made the transition from autocratic to some form of "democratic rule" (Pinto, 2000: 3). Accordingly, scholars became preoccupied with the factors accounting for these transitions (Huntington, 1991; Jagers and Gurr, 1995; Linz and Stephan, 1996) as well as the conditions for the sustainability of these regimes (Bratton, 1997; Ibrahim, 2010; Moveh, 2012). The democratization of the late twentieth century did not just become a global phenomenon; indeed, democracy also became a major criterion for membership of the international society.

Since 1989, the "winds of democratization" hit the shores of Africa; leading to what has variously been referred to as the "second independence," or the "Springtime of Africa." After three decades of authoritarian one- (or no) party rule characterized by political repression, human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, nepotism and corruption, transitions to democracy became wide spread throughout Africa. In a study by Englebert and Boduszynski (2005) it was noted that in the decade of the 1990s, at least 45 out of Africa's 56 countries had made efforts towards democratization. Similarly, In 1992, an evaluation of the Carter Center's African Governance Program, noted that 9 African countries may be described as "democratic," 4 were under a "directed democracy"

regime, and 31 were in transition to democracy, with various degrees of commitment. While various explanations have been advanced for the democratization process in general, these explanations are rarely put in a proper context; especially with regards to Africa's experience. Indeed, Africa's democratization has largely been presented as a product of factors from within or without; rather than as an intricate combination of both factors. This paper is a review of the literature on the "third wave of democratization". The paper examines how internal and external factors combined to create the condition for Africa's democratization. The paper is divided into four sections. Following this introduction is a review of the literature on the democratization. The third section explicates how the regime of structural adjustments in Africa serves as a key factor which harmonizes the external and internal factors of African democratization, and the fourth section is the conclusion.

A REVIEW OF THE DEBATE ON THE GLOBAL DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

Democracy is an old ideology dating back to the middle of the 5th-4th century BC. Yet; it is only in the last quarter of the 20th century that it became a global phenomenon; particularly in its liberal form. Indeed, all major regions of the world have experienced a significant number of transitions to some sort of liberal democratic regimes in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The debate on the global democratization has generally centered on what factors are more influential in the

collapse of authoritarian regimes and the transitions to democracy. While some have emphasized external or international factors, others emphasize internal influences for the transitions to democracy. In his popular treatise on the globalization of democracy, Huntington (1991), for example identified a number of international factors accounting for the spread of democracy. According to Huntington (1991) democracy develops in successive waves; with the third wave beginning with Portugal's "Carnation Revolution" in 1974. He further emphasizes the significance of a third wave of democratization to describe the global trend that saw more than 60 countries throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa undergo some form of democratic transitions between 1974-1990.

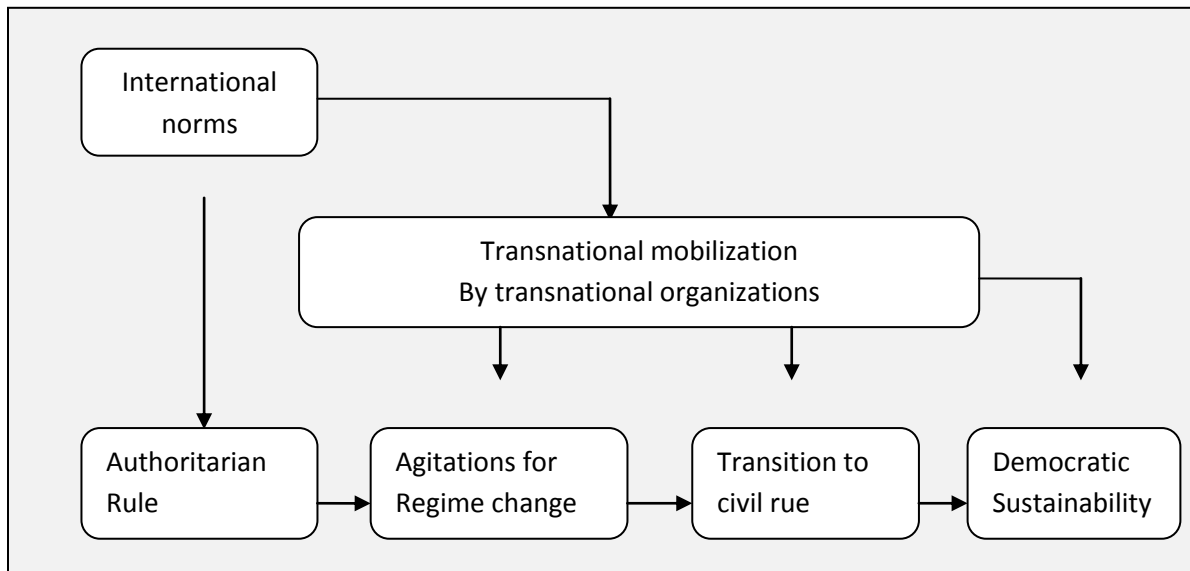
A wave of democratization according to Huntington (1991) is a group of democratic transitions within a certain time frame that significantly outnumbers autocratic transitions during the same time period. Huntington's major contention is that the third and "largest" wave, running from 1974-90, was caused by five factors. First, growing legitimacy problems experienced by several authoritarian regimes during the 1960s and 1970s were exasperated by military defeats and economic failures. Second, rapid economic growth helped destabilize authoritarian regimes in power in many countries, while simultaneously opening developing countries to international trade and the prevailing Western embracement of democracy. Huntington (1991) also attributed much of the democratization in the third wave to drastic changes in the Catholic Church. Catholic doctrine according to Huntington

underwent a fundamental shift in its principles when it began to tolerate, embrace, and eventually strive for democracy in developing nations. The Vatican Huntington (1991) also notes, was not the only external actor to aid in ushering in the third wave. The expanding European Community in the 1960s, the U.S. promotion of human rights and democracy, and Gorbachev's dramatic change in Soviet policy toward maintaining the Soviet empire in the 1980s played roles in either spreading or promoting existing democratic initiatives (Huntington, 1991). Underlying all these influences was Huntington's fifth and most significant factor behind the third wave-the 'snowballing' effect. This effect suggests that once a nation democratizes, the trend will encourage other nations to follow suit by spreading democratic values to other countries. Advances in communications technology substantially aided in this diffusion of democracy across borders, allowing for activist and leaders in different nations to communicate and share ideas more easily (Huntington, 1991). Further, one democratic transition provides a template for subsequent transitioning nations to abide by. In short, waves of democratization, once begun, perpetuate themselves into non-democratic countries. Based on this argument, Huntington (1991) suggests that the expected relationship between the proportion of democracies in the world and the chance of democratic transition taking place would be positive. In essence, the higher the number of democracies in the world, the higher the prospects for a democratic transition.

Jagers and Gurr (1995) have attempted to test Huntington's hypothesis. The authors

separate the globe into regions and find that international influences are essential in democratic transitions. Linz and Stepan (1996) conducted a study in a similar fashion. They assessed the impact of international factors in post-communist Eastern Europe. In line with Huntington's findings, the authors found that international factors were more influential than domestic influences in bringing about democratic transitions. The most significant of these international effects according to Linz and Stepan (1996) was the sudden disappearance of Soviet influence and the corresponding openness to Western European democracy. The authors contend that in Europe, transitioning nations often looked to states that had previously democratized to "learn" how to conduct their own transition. Lessons gained from observing transitions before initiating their own are said to have benefited the democratization in several subsequent European transitions (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). Such a finding lends further credence to Huntington's (1991) snowballing effect. Gleditsch (2002) have also emphasized international factors in the spread of democracy within the past three decades. Approaching international politics as a set of linkages between interdependent states, Gleditsch (2002) contends that this interdependence is not only economic in nature, but social and political as well. These social and political linkages transcend state boundaries and spread from country to country. Gleditsch (2002) further assumes that international factors matter, but they matter most at the regional level, where strong influences can be felt by neighboring nations.

FIGURE 1: A TRANSNATIONAL VIEW OF DEMOCRATIZATION



Source: Moveh. D.O (2012), *The Impact of Election Administration on Nigerian Democracy: A Study of the Structure and Process of Nigerian General Elections (1999-2011)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

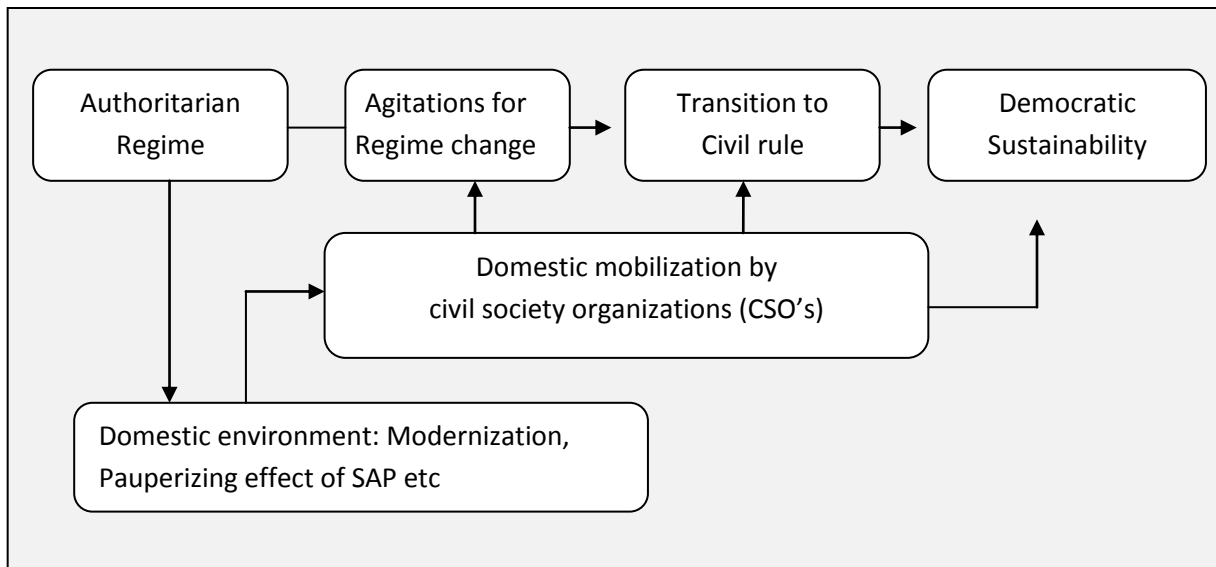
As depicted in figure 1, the transnational view of the democratization does not incorporate the internal influences which play a significant role in democratization. Instead, emphasis is laid on the prevailing international norms and mobilization by international organizations like the Breton woods institutions. Thus, a general critique of Huntington and other scholars of the international factors school is that the third wave theory is too broad and many intervening variables are omitted from this framework. Indeed, a general theory of democratization caused by external factors is not plausible due to the many factors at work in a democratizing state (Moore 1966; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Boix and Stokes 2003).

In order to account for the “global democratization”, a second category of scholars emphasized the need for the researcher’s focus to be shifted to domestic, internal influences as opposed to international, external influences. Through a simple correlation test between the annual number of democratic and autocratic transitions, Przeworski et al. (2000) find that the notion of waves of democratization is not supported by the historical record. If there is no discernable pattern of democratic transitions taking place within the same specific timeframe (there is no wave), it then becomes extremely unlikely that the same international factors are in fact the source of the (nonexistent) wave of democratization. Przeworski et al. (2000) again refute the wave hypothesis with the results of their

statistical analyses, arguing that international factors do not play a role in democratization. The impact of the international political climate, measured as the proportion of democracies in the world, is nonexistent. Further, Przeworski et al. (2000) found that, contrary to Huntington's (1991) hypothesis, neither Islam nor Confucianism is negatively correlated with the democratic transitions. Bratton and van de Walle (1997) add to this argument and suggest that domestic, internal factors are more significant in countries transitioning to democracy than are external factors. Their study of transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa from 1990-94 begins with the critique that Huntington's third wave theory is too "blunt" to discriminate the particular domestic factors crucial to the process of democratization. The authors claim that internal political factors are most important when studying regime transitions, while international factors play a secondary role (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Further, Bratton and van de Walle argue that democratic transitions unfold in a sequential pattern and require a homegrown demand for political reform in order to begin. Where do these demands for democratic reform come from? Inglehart and Welzel (2005) argue the modernization of society plays a large role in the origin and success of democratic transitions. Modernization theory posits that as societies become

industrialized, dramatic shifts take place in the economy as well as in social life in general. This conception of democracy and demands for transition depends on domestic influences, with democracy being posed as a natural outcome of human development. Such an innate process of human progress can only be influenced by international factors at the margins (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) argument contradicts those of Huntington (1991) and Gleditsch, who see international factors as catalysts that can instigate democracy in one nation after another. To Huntington (1991) and Gleditsch, democracy is a virus that can spread like wildfire, while theorists such as Inglehart and Welzel (2005) see democracy more as a non-contagious syndrome specific to each polity acquiring it. Vanhanen has also conducted research (1990; 1997) which strove to identify the common factors that led to democratization across the globe. He finds a common theme: resources; which he argues must be distributed relatively evenly amongst the population in order for democracy to emerge. Vanhanen (1990) sees increases in wealth, education, and political equality as key prerequisites for democratization. In sum, the arguments of scholars' emphasizing domestic factors for the democratization process can be summarized as in figure 2.

FIGURE 2: A DOMESTIC VIEW OF DEMOCRATIZATION

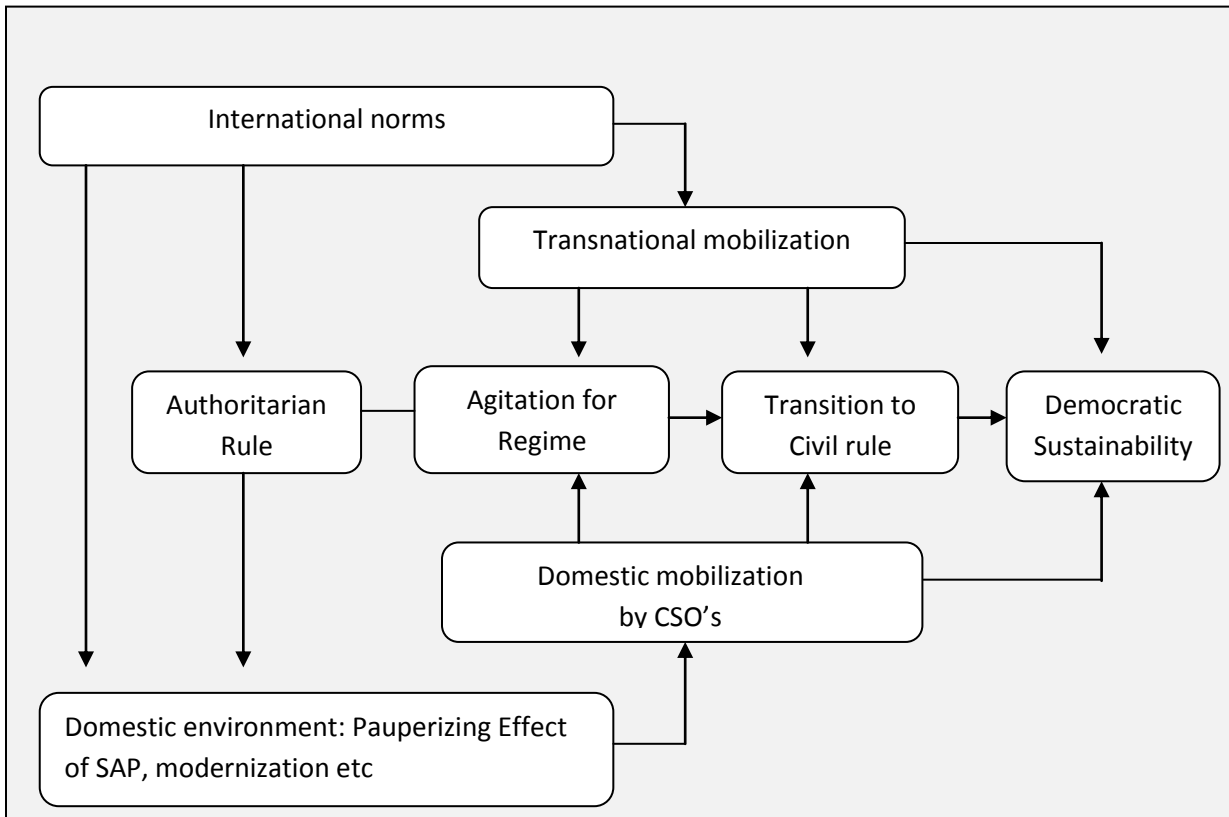


Source: Moveh. D.O (2012), *The Impact of Election Administration on Nigerian Democracy: A Study of the Structure and Process of Nigerian General Elections (1999-2011)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

As indicated in figure 2, the domestic view of democratization emphasizes domestic influences in the transition to democracy. Figure 2 particularly indicates that mobilization by domestic civil society organizations is a key factor in the transition to democracy. While much of

the extant literature tends to dichotomize international and domestic factors of democratization the potential interactions between internal and external influences could produce significant insights underlying the process of democratization.

FIGURE 3: TRANSNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC VIEW OF DEMOCRATIZATION



Source: Moveh. D.O (2012), *The Impact of Election Administration on Nigerian Democracy: A Study of the Structure and Process of Nigerian General Elections (1999-2011)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Within the context of figure three, the transition to democracy is more accurately explained by the harmonization of internal and external factors. Democratization in this context is seen as the outcome of transnational and domestic mobilization. In an important theoretical exercise, Schmitz (2004) for example, discusses domestic and transnational perspectives on democratization. According to Schmitz (2004) different theoretical frameworks may benefit from a sort of cross-pollination, with each camp borrowing insight from the

other. Schmitz (2004) laments the dearth of research designs incorporating domestic and international influences. Schmitz calls for theoretical models that not only account for both sets of effects, but also for those that can account for interactions between domestic and international factors. Similarly, Doorenspleet (2004) suggests that both internal and external factors have interacted with one another to play important roles in democratization since the end of the third wave.

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES (SAP): THE UNITY OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN AFRICA

Theories which independently emphasize internal or external factors of democratization as in the foregoing section do not sufficiently account for the democratization in Africa. Indeed, a plausible explanation of the democratization in Africa can only be made from a cross-pollination of external and internal factors. In this context, the period of structural adjustment (SAP) serves as a uniting factor between external and internal explanations for Africa's democratization.

In the 1960s when most African countries gained political independence from the colonialists, the nature of the states on the continent quickly degenerated to either one party or authoritarian military regimes. According to Nyong'o (1987:23):

The ruling elites who inherited state power insisted that Africa could not afford the luxury of democracy because of its potential for exacerbating ethnic pluralism and political conflict, which would be detrimental to the more pertinent projects of development, integration and nation building. The ideology of development and national integration in postcolonial Africa thus became the justification for one-party rule, autocracy, and military dictatorship.

However, by the 1970s and 1980s, it became obvious that African states were enmeshed in deep socioeconomic crises. The UNDP (1990) notes with regards to

Africa that by 1989 Social infrastructures in health, education, and transportation sectors were in shambles; basic social amenities such as potable water and electricity became scarce; rural-urban drift increased, and with it came crime and insecurity. In the case of Nigeria, the glut in the world oil market and the resultant fall in oil prices were reflected in the corresponding fall in revenue. Crude oil prices which rose rapidly from \$20.94 U.S.D per barrel in 1979 to \$36.94 U.S.D. in 1980, and \$40 U.S.D in 1981 fell to \$29 U.S.D in 1983 and to a low level of \$5.2 U.S.D in 1986 (Musa 1998). Consequently, the country's external reserves fell sharply and its foreign debts mounted (Musa 1998). In addition to this, the prevailing structure of policy incentives and control encouraged an import oriented consumption pattern (Musa 1998).

By 1990 several African countries had already become heavily indebted. According to the World Bank (1992), the total debt stock of sub-Saharan Africa reached \$55.6 billion in 1980, \$98.1 billion in 1985, and \$171.4 billion in 1990. By 1991 it reached \$177 billion. As the debt burden continued to pile up, inflation also increased while the currencies of most African countries were crushed under the regime of SAP inspired by the Breton Wood institutions. In its prototype, SAP enjoined the governments of indebted countries to pursue economic policies which include the liberalization of foreign trade, currency devaluation, cut backs in social expenditures (particularly education, health and housing), removal of food and agricultural subsidies, tight control of the money supply, reduction in public employment, and privatization of state

owned enterprises- in short allowing market forces to regulate not just supply and demand, but all matters relating to prices, income and productivity (Adekanye, 2007:20). However, despite the introduction of SAP, Africa's debt burden continued to grow and the economy continued to deteriorate. The pauperizing effect of SAP spawned opposition to the state and gave rise to movement for transition to democracy. As Ake (1993:239) notes during the peak of the economic crisis in the era of SAP:

Africa's economic stagnation and the fiscal crisis of the state have not only intensified the collapse of social and physical infrastructures, but they have also created a great deal of stress, as well as the proliferation of violent conflicts leading to what Zartman aptly described as "collapsed states."

Accordingly, the 1990s saw widespread political turbulence across the African continent, which can be summarized with reference to a few key political trends. Transition away from one party and military regimes started with political protest, evolved through liberalization reforms, often culminated in competitive elections, and usually ended with the installation of a new form of regime. While not unfolding uniformly and to some extent everywhere, these movements and institutional rearrangements were evident to some degree in almost all African countries. Together, they amounted to the most far – reaching shifts in African political life since the time of political independence thirty years earlier (Bratton, 1997). Indeed, the

onset of domestic economic crises in most African states in the 1980s ignited revolts against the leadership, thereby galvanizing civil society into a movement for democratization and the search for a second liberation from the clutches of neo-colonialism. While the official view of SAP in Africa as a whole especially after the addition of a new political conditionality was that SAP was seen as the cause of Africa's "democratization wave" in the 1990's; especially given the assumption that the economic principle of "market forces" translates into the political idea of limited government, such an explanation has been proven to be facile. Adekanye (2007:23) for example notes:

In the majority of cases, SAP had a destabilizing effect on the governments concerned that the immediate reaction of most political leaders was to try to bolster their position through recourse to increased rather than reduced authoritarianism and militarization. The democratization process on the African continent that began in the 1990's can therefore be more accurately conceptualized as a continuation of the long standing democratic struggle against the authoritarian state which goes back to anti –colonial times or as a resistance to the new pauperizing conditions and problems generated by structural adjustments or most likely of all the result of both.

Similarly, Ake notes:

One of the greatest drawbacks of SAP is its politics, which is typically authoritarian. Perhaps that was inevitable in Africa. There the SAP regimes started before the wave of democratization; a basis hardly existed for subjecting SAP to a democratic mandate. The African leaders whose performance had contributed to the need for adjustment were neither in the habit of subjecting public policy to democratic determination nor willing to expose their governance record to public debate. In any case, by the time SAP became an issue, they had invariably run out of options. The international supporters of SAP were scarcely more inclined to the democratic legitimization of public policy. For one thing, they had near-absolute faith in the validity of their policy prescription; for another, they assumed that the austerity of SAP would not survive a public debate. As a result, the internal and external promoters of SAP were disposed to its authoritarian imposition. (Ake, 2003: 93)

In effect, the structural adjustment programs that African countries were obliged to adopt was not essentially, configured to engender democracy on the continent. SAP compounded the weakness of the state in Africa; owing to their one-sided emphasis on privatization, de-nationalization, and reliance on market forces (Ake, 2003: 94). These problems were so drastic and so severe in their impact that they engendered hostility to the state and undermined its limited legitimacy (Jega, 2000), thereby giving rise to

opposition and movement for democratization.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper is a re-examination of the antecedents of Africa's democratization which began in the 1990s. The success of popular struggles for democracy in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as the attendant wave of democratization across the globe gave rise to various arguments emphasizing international factors in the democratization. Indeed, the "snowballing effect" is generally seen as a factor for the development of democracy on a global scale. On the other hand, a second category of scholars counter the claims of the international factors theorists and identify factors like the state of economic development, modernization and the general particularities of the domestic environment as the basis for democratic development. While the latter and the former factors offer some insights on the development of democratization, none of these factors can independently explain the African experience. Many factors; ranging from within and without are usually at work in a period of transition to democracy. In the case of Africa the period of structural adjustment clearly unites these factors. The reality of SAP in Africa is that it pauperized the populace thereby establishing the internal opposition to the state and agitations for transition to democracy. Indeed, this reality is central in the understanding of Africa's democratization.

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