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Author(s): Robert Fatton, Jr.

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The Democratization of Senegal (1976-1983):

“Passive Revolution” and the Democratic Limits of Liberal Democracy*

Robert Fatton, Jr.

Under the powerful leadership and guidance of then President Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal adopted in 1976 a new constitution that transformed the de facto one-party state into a tripartite political system. Initially engineered by Senghor, this system inaugurated a process of peaceful democratization that Abdou Diouf, Senghor's constitutional successor, brought to conclusion in 1981. Indeed, the government would recognize and legalize all political parties, provided that such parties would reject affiliation to “race, ethnic group, sex, religion, sect, language or region.” In addition, parties were bound to respect “the Constitution, the principles of national sovereignty and democracy” (*West Africa*, 1981c: 1142). Thus in five

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years and under the leadership of Presidents Senghor and Diouf, Senegal transformed its authoritarian one-party state into a full-fledged bourgeois liberal democracy.¹

The significance of such a transformation derives from the fact that it crystallized in a dependent and materially backward society (R. O'Brien, 1979; Dos Santos, 1973) on the verge of economic collapse, and in the prevailing African and Third World contexts of developmental dictatorships and one-party states (Sklar, 1983). This is a study of the Senegalese process of liberalization. It seeks to analyze the political and social causes and consequences of this process. It also attempts to place the Senegalese experience in a theoretical perspective and to demonstrate the limitations of the dominant explanatory paradigms of the making and breakdown of bourgeois democracy. Furthermore, this study assesses critically the relevance for other dependent underdeveloped nations of the Senegalese *ouverture*. Finally, it explores the obdurate political and material constraints to the full flowering of Senegalese democracy and it examines the viability of that very democracy.

A brief descriptive analysis of the liberalization process is required, however, before situating Senegal's experiment in historical and theoretical perspectives.

Phase I: Senghorian Pluralism

In 1976 President Senghor proposed a series of constitutional revisions that ushered in a tripartite political system

1. In this analysis, I follow Juan Linz's description of liberal democracy whose criteria he defines in the following terms:

Legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to free association, free speech, and other basic freedoms of person; free and nonviolent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic process; and provision for the participation of all members of the political community, whatever their political preference. Practically, this means the freedom to create political parties and to conduct free and honest elections at regular intervals without excluding any effective political office from direct or indirect electoral accountability. Today "democracy" implies at least universal male suffrage (1978: 5).

(Fall, 1977: 22-24, 32-33; Zuccarelli, 1976). Indeed, the new constitution designated Senghor's ruling Union Progr essiste S en galaise (UPS), the de facto *parti-unique* of Senegal as "socialist and democratic," and provided for the crystallization of two parties of opposition. The Parti D emocratique S en galais (PDS) of Abdoulaye Wade was constitutionally forced to be on the right of the UPS and adhere to the "liberal and democratic" creed, while the Parti Africain de l'Ind ependance (PAI) of Mahjmout Diop had the constitutional obligation of espousing the "Marxist-Leninist or communist" ideology (Fall, 1977: 103-106; O'Brien, 1978; *West Africa*, 1978b).

Thus, the striking elements of the Senghorian constitution of 1976 were the rigid and binding political and ideological delineations imposed on the three recognized parties (Fall, 1977: 104), the amazing creation through constitutional fiat of a legal communist opposition, and the deliberate undoing of Senghor's own presidential authoritarian rule.

Senghor and the UPS were convinced that the limited pluralism embodied in tripartism reconciled the demands for liberty and democracy with the imperatives of political order and stability. In their opinion neither the single party nor the exercise of unlimited pluralism represented satisfactory answers to the Senegalese reality. On the one hand, the government argued, the single party violated the principles of democracy, or at least, negated the full expression of the different Senegalese political families; on the other hand, unlimited pluralism would "constitute a mortal danger to the proper workings of democracy itself" since it would lead to chaos and "*la chienlit*" (Fall, 1977: 101; *Jeune Afrique*, 1978: 31-33). Hence, the acceptance of tripartism rested on the conviction that it preserved the democratic ideal and prevented the decay of political institutions (Fall, 1977: 23, *Jeune Afrique*, 1978).

At first sight, however, it appears paradoxical that Senghor's government's efforts to usher in a liberal democracy and to maintain stability and order should have included the legalization of a communist party (D. O'Brien, 1978: 173). This paradox has a clearer Machiavellian logic than the simple

official explanation according to which the PAI was recognized because it represented a legitimate and fundamental *courant de pensée* in Senegal.

PAI's legalization in 1976 exacerbated the divisions of the left and suppressed its increasingly vocal clandestine organizations (D. O'Brien, 1978: 180). Indeed, PAI itself had fractured into several movements, and Majhmout Diop, its historical leader, spent more than a decade in exile divorced from the day-to-day reality of Senegal. Not surprisingly, upon his return to the country in 1975 Diop was a contested figure in the Marxist camp. His acceptance of legality and his recognition by the government as the symbol of Senegalese communism contributed further to the segmentation of the left (Biarnes, 1979). Thus, by legalizing communism, the Senghorian regime divided it and suppressed its potential effectiveness (D. O'Brien, 1978: 180).

Be that as it may, it is still remarkable in the political contexts of West Africa, Africa in general, and the Third World as a whole, that a one-party regime solidly in power should decide to legalize communism. That such a legalization should have been inspired by Senghor is all the more remarkable given his previous opposition to Marxism-Leninism and his decisive role in the banning of the PAI in 1960 (Markovitz, 1969: 119-93).

For our present purposes however, what needs to be emphasized is that the rise of tripartism created the conditions for the semicompetitive elections of 1978 (*West Africa*, 1978a, 1978b). These elections resulted in the overwhelming victories of both Senghor in the *Présidentielles*, in which he obtained 82% of the vote, and of his Parti Socialiste, the new name of the UPS, in the *Législatives*. Despite allegations of irregularities (*West Africa*, 1978b: 421) the elections marked the implantation of a real, if constrained, political pluralism.

A relaxation of this constrained pluralism occurred in 1979 with the legalization of a fourth political party, the Mouvement Republicain Sénégalais (MRS) of Boubacar Gueye, which became the conservative opposition. Thus, by 1979 the Sene-

galese political system consisted of four legal parties embodying respectively the conservative, liberal, socialist, and communist alternatives.

This system, however, was contested by several unrecognized movements that criticized the constitutional limitations to party-formation and the nature and scope of the official opposition. Indeed, they portrayed the legalization of the four *courants de pensée* as a departure of form but not of substance from the earlier authoritarianism. Moreover, they characterized the official opposition as ineffective and opportunist and ultimately loyal to the foundations of the Senghorian regime (*West Africa*, 1978a). Finally, these movements depicted the Senghorian liberalization as a means of diffusing the social malaise generated by the general crisis in agriculture and the virtual collapse of the economy (Dumont, 1980: 190-233; D. O'Brien, 1979).

Still, the implantation of the Constitution of 1976 and its consolidation during the elections of 1978 embodied a new pattern of governance that significantly differed from the earlier authoritarianism and presidential absolutism. Moreover, that the massive social and economic problems plaguing the Senegalese form of dependent capitalism engendered liberalization and tolerance instead of further repression and intransigence indicates on the one hand "*la bonne volonté*" of the ruling class and Senghor in particular, and on the other hand both the strength and weakness of the ruling class itself. Indeed, confronted with legal and illegal pressures and with a social and economic crisis, the ruling class opted for democratization instead of dictatorship. Yet, that it did so and still remained firmly in control was a symbol of its enduring power and its new found hegemony over the Senegalese state.

It is in this context of hegemonic dominance that Senghor decided to resign the presidency on January 1, 1981 (*Afrique Contemporaine*, 1981a). Senghor's deliberate and unforced departure demonstrated the solidity of the new Senegalese constitution and the efficacy of its politics. Indeed, the transition of power was smooth and peaceful, and the army

rejected calls for a military coup to be followed by supervised elections (Gellar, 1982: 38, 118). The Prime Minister, Abdou Diouf, became the new President of Senegal, as provided by the constitution.

Phase II: The Emergence of Unlimited Pluralism

Upon assuming the presidency on January 1, 1981, Abdou Diouf was an unknown quantity (*Afrique Contemporaine*, 1981b). He was *l'homme de Senghor* who had been living in Senghor's shadow for a decade as his Prime Minister. Reputed to be a technocrat rather than a politician, Diouf had a limited base of support within the Parti Socialiste itself, and his legitimacy as president was questioned and even challenged by the opposition. Indeed, Diouf had come to power only because Senghor had determined so and without the benefit of a popular mandate. Moreover, he inherited from his mentor a worsening economic and social situation, and a political system that had yet to be fully consolidated (*West Africa*, 1981a).

Diouf's task was therefore multiple. He had to gain popular acceptance, solidify his standing within his own Parti Socialiste, free the country from Senghor's catastrophic economic legacy, and determine the parameters and scope of democratization. To fulfill this multiple task Diouf decided to neutralize the opposition by acceding to its political demands for unlimited pluralism. Not only was unlimited pluralism a means of conquering the terrain of the opposition as well as the hearts and minds of the Senegalese people, but it indicated also a departure from Senghorism and its "guided democracy." Moreover, unlimited pluralism represented a fertile soil in which Diouf could implant and grow his own independent base of support. Indeed, unlimited pluralism implied that the Socialist Party had to develop a more coherent, disciplined, and honest organization purged of its most unpopular

“Barons” if it were to compete successfully in democratic elections.

Thus, Diouf consolidated the process of democratization begun under Senghor and brought it to its logical conclusion. In April 1981, under Diouf’s leadership, the National Assembly legalized and recognized all political parties and transformed Senegal into a full liberal democracy.

The coming of liberal democracy in Senegal was also marked by the implementation of a new electoral code. The code modified the previous electoral system by eliminating the most glaring electoral advantages of the Parti Socialiste without endangering the Parti’s supremacy (Fall, 1977: 72-77; *West Africa*, 1982a, 1982b, 1983a; *Jeune Afrique*, 1983). This supremacy was further reinforced by the overwhelming support given by the Muslim brotherhoods to the PS and Diouf in particular.

In a country where Moslems comprise 85% to 90% of the 5.5 million population, the role of Islam and specifically of the heads or Marabouts of the major brotherhoods can be decisive (D. O’Brien, 1971, 1975; Coulon, 1979; Behrman, 1970). Moreover, the economic dominance of the Marabouts over peanut cultivation has inextricably forced the Senegalese state to furnish the religious authorities with the necessary productive and marketing infrastructure. Simultaneously, however, the Marabouts’ hold on their peasant clients is decisively dependent on the state’s material largesses (Foltz, 1977; Lemarchand, 1977). Indeed, the Marabouts’ power has traditionally been associated with their capacity to attract the recognition and contributions of the established political order without becoming its subservient instrument. The more the Marabout is effective at reconciling these two conflicting objectives, the more he can project his *baraka* into patronage and influence. Accordingly, the state and the Marabouts are involved in mutually supportive and beneficial relations.

The Marabouts represent, therefore, a transmissive belt between the “urban center” and the “agricultural periphery”; they help the state penetrate the countryside, but in return they

mold that penetration and actually manipulate it to their own advantages. To this extent the Marabouts possess a certain autonomy from the state. Indeed, to be effective political intermediaries the Marabouts must continuously act or at least pretend to act independently from the state. The Marabouts cannot afford to be identified as the mere instruments and representatives of the ruling political class. Their legitimacy as spiritual and moral patrons of the peasant *taalibe* relies on their being perceived as the sacred symbol of protection from and opposition to the state. This opposition, however, embodies a form of accommodationism and not a determined resistance and challenge to the state and its rulers. Therefore, to use Coulon's apt phraseology, the Marabouts embody a class of *courtiers politiques* engaged in permanent negotiations of dependence and authority with their patron-state and peasant-clientele (Coulon, 1979: 20, 37).

It is in light of these facts that one must understand the malaise that characterized the relationship between the Marabouts and the state during the last years of the Senghorian regime. Indeed, the massive economic crisis plaguing agriculture and peanut cultivation in particular strained the Senghor-Marabout axis (D. O'Brien, 1979: 219-20, 222). There was also the Muslim dissatisfaction with both the Senghor-inspired Code de la Famille adopted in 1972 and the increasingly secular behavior of the urban ruling class. On the one hand, the Code was a direct challenge to the Marabouts' control over legal matters in the "periphery" since it suppressed the diversity of customary law with a single national legal structure (Coulon, 1979: 40). On the other hand, the Marabouts condemned the secularization and westernization of the governmental ruling class, which represented in their eyes a proof of corruption and a threat to Islam. Not surprisingly, Mbacke, the Khalifa general of the Mourides, declared: "We Mourides are in a compound, our lives governed by the teachings of [the founder] Amadu Bamba, by work and by prayer. Outside our compound we see nothing but Satan and all his works" (D. O'Brien, 1979: 222).

This context explains the Marabouts' less than overwhelming support for Senghor and his Parti Socialiste during the general elections of 1978 (Coulon, 1979: 38). The alliance between state and brotherhoods, however, reemerged with the coming to power of Diouf. The Marabouts' support for Diouf not only symbolized their allegiance to the first Moslem President of Senegal, it reflected also their faith in Diouf's victory and subsequent capacity to deliver the material resources so badly needed in the rural "periphery." Hence, supporting Diouf symbolized two mutually reinforcing strategies, one based on the fervor of Islamic religiosity, and the other on the prudence of worldly politics.

The opposition consisted of fourteen parties (*Le Soleil*, 1983a, 1983b; *West Africa*, 1982a), eight of which competed in the *Législatives* and four in the *présidentielles*, and represented the center and Marxist left; as such, it confronted Maraboutic charges of atheism and materialistic corruption (*West Africa*, 1983d). Resenting these charges and Maraboutic support for Diouf, the opposition condemned the Islamic leaders' "lack of integrity and corrupt spirit" (*West Africa*, 1983d: 644). Moreover, it decried the partisan intrusion of Islam into politics and called for the neutrality of the brotherhoods during the elections. This, however, did not prevent the opposition from using Islamic symbols for its own purposes (*West Africa*, 1983d). The point here then is the significance of Moslem religion in Senegalese politics even if the confrontation between Marabouts and the parties of the opposition contributed to the relative demystification of Sainly power. Indeed, an important segment of the Mourides rejected their Khalifa's *ndiggal* or religiously invoked command to vote for Diouf (D. O'Brien, 1983b: 11-12).

Be that as it may, the elections of 1983 represented an overwhelming triumph for Diouf and his Parti Socialiste in spite of the opposition's justified charges of widespread irregularities (*Takusaan*, 1983: 6, 11, 3; *Le Soleil*, 1983d: 2). Diouf was elected President with more than 83% of the vote, while his Parti Socialiste—with close to 80%—gained 111

Parliamentary seats out of a possible 120 (D. O'Brien, 1983b; *West Africa*, 1983c; *Le Soleil*, 1983e). Only the PDS of Abdoulaye Wade and the Rassemblement National Démocratique (RND) of Cheikh Anta Diop won parliamentary representation with 8 and 1 deputies, respectively.

Poorly organized, lacking resources, and divided into the PAI, the Ligue Démocratique—Mouvement pour le Parti du Travail (LD-MPT), the Parti Populaire Sénégalais (PPS), and the Ligue Communiste des Travailleurs (LTC), the Marxist left obtained a disastrous 2.17% of the vote (*Takusaan*, 1983: 15). As Donal O'Brien remarked, "*l'extrême gauche s'est ainsi vu offrir la corde électorale pour se pendre*" (1983b: 8).

The catastrophic score of the opposition and the left in particular reflected a combination of factors. In the first place, widespread irregularities and fraud deprived the opposition of a much better performance. Secondly, having monopolized the governmental apparatus since independence, and having become identified with the state, the PS enjoyed an authority few voters would dare defy. Indeed, in a depressed economy of limited employment opportunities, only the brave could openly challenge the "Patron-State" that represented the main supplier of jobs and security. Thirdly, President Diouf's indisputable popularity and charisma contributed significantly to the high score of the PS. Nevertheless, it is clear that flagrant fraud was decisive in the making of the overwhelming PS victory (D. O'Brien, 1983a: 714).

Yet, in spite of the gross irregularities of the 1983 elections, the opposition was free to campaign, and through its partisan—if organizationally weak—media it criticized the government without restrictions. In this sense, the Senegalese democratic experience is noteworthy and indeed quite unique in the African context of military rule, single-party state, and developmental dictatorship. The obvious question, then, is: "Why has democracy been implanted in Senegal?" In answering this question, I will appeal to the main theoretical paradigms explaining the rise and breakdown of democracy as they might be used to understand Senegal's political history.

The Senegalese “Passive Revolution”

In theory, the rise and breakdown of liberal democracy has been explained in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this analysis, it is only necessary to distinguish three main schools of thought: the liberal-developmental, the Princely, and the dependent-Marxist. A brief description of their fundamental assumptions will show their obdurate limitations in explaining the Senegalese road to liberal democracy. As a result, I will offer a different paradigm, one based on Gramsci's conception of “passive revolution.”

Liberal-Developmentalist

The liberal developmentalist theory claims that there is a positive association between capitalist industrialization and democracy, and that the latter is a necessary consequence of the former. In other words, capitalist industrialization destroys the archaic subsistence economy as well as the immemorial practices and superstitions of traditional society, and pushes to the fore the impersonal and secular cash nexus of the market and the rational spirit of scientific bourgeois culture. In these circumstances the population becomes educated and well off, and as such it demands and obtains democratic rule. Bluntly put, for the liberal developmentalist school democracy equals capitalist industrialization and modernity (Lipset, 1981: 27-63; Schumpeter, 1975; Rostow, 1960). The assumption then is based on the conviction that the expansive capacities of industrial capitalism not only generate the popular demand for democracy, but make democracy itself possible.

This is not the place to criticize the developmentalist school; suffice it to say, however, that it is simplistic and Anglocentric (Therborn, 1983; Collier, 1979; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; O'Donnell, 1979). Moreover, it is clearly contradicted by the Senegalese case. Indeed, the rise of democracy in Senegal has corresponded with a profound economic crisis and has taken place in a nonindustrialized peasant society. Neither the

absence of material abundance nor the presence of Islam as a pervasive “unscientific” ethos has prevented the ushering in of liberal democracy. Thus, the developmentalist paradigm is of little use in explaining the making of the Senegalese bourgeois-liberal regime.

It is also clear that Huntington’s model (1968) of political decay, which reversed the analytical sequences of the developmentalist school fails to elucidate the Senegalese phenomenon. Indeed, for Huntington the accelerated pace of modernization in the Third World leads to chaos and instability instead of democratic practice. In other words, in the non-Western world there is a general crisis of governance expressed in the rise of “praetorianism” and authoritarianism because the “problems of the centralization of authority, national integration, social mobilization, economic development, political participation, social welfare have arisen not sequentially but simultaneously” (Huntington, 1968: 46). Thus, for Huntington, democracy is unlikely to crystallize in the modernizing Third World. Such a conclusion clearly defies the Senegalese experience, in the process of which democratization was a direct response to the massive pressures of modernization itself.

Political Leadership and Princely Rule

In an attempt to explain the theoretical discrepancies of the developmentalist school, Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg (1982) have revived the old personalist paradigm according to which leadership rather than socioeconomic structures and processes determines politics (Linz, 1978). Their adaptation of this old paradigm to the African specificity can be called the “Princely” explanation of democracy.

According to this explanation the absence of clear institutional frameworks of universally accepted rules of political conduct has contributed to the rise of personal rule throughout Africa. In other words, it is leadership and the quality of this leadership that determine the nature of African politics. In Jackson and Rosberg’s words:

It is apparent from the historical evidence that Africa rulers and other leaders are not captives of their environments. . . . In the provision or the destruction of such "political goods" as peace, order, stability, and non-material security, the actions of Africa's rulers and other leaders have been more important than anything else [1982: 3].

Therefore, the character of personal rule is decisive in the making of African politics. Jackson and Rosberg distinguish four main types of personal rule: Princely, Autocratic, Prophetic, and Tyrannical (1982: 73-82). While all four reflect a "dynamic world of political will and action that is ordered less by institutions than by personal authorities and power" (1983: 12), they differ in the scope and severity of their rule, and the vision and nature of their ideologies. For our purposes, however, the discussion will be limited to Princely rule because Jackson and Rosberg claimed with justification that President Senghor was the African Prince par excellence (1982: 77-78, 89-96). In other words, Senghor had mastered the art of what he himself termed "politician politics" (Schumacher, 1975: 5). This politics is the "race for preferments," and it is the essence of Princely rule. Indeed, "to rule as a Prince is to preside over the struggle for preferments, to encourage it, to recognize that it is a source of the ruler's and the regime's legitimacy, but not to allow it to get out of hand, nor to let any leader emerge as a serious challenger" (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982: 78).

Thus, Senghor's mastery of Princely rule was the determining factor of Senegalese politics. In fact, the rise of Senghorian-guided democracy was an expression of its partial institutionalization and thus of its success in creating universally accepted rules of political conduct. Paradoxically, then, the mastery of Princely rule may ultimately imply the institutionalization of politics and consequently the abolition of Princely rule itself. This paradox describes well the Senegalese experiment in building democracy. Indeed, the peaceful departure of the Prince (Senghor) was possible precisely because he had sufficiently institutionalized the framework of Senegalese politics. That such institutionalization was ultimately completed under Diouf is a tribute to the Princely qualities of Diouf himself.

Thus, Jackson and Rosberg's concept of personal rule is a useful heuristic guide in elucidating the rise of Senegalese democracy. Yet the primacy that it attributes to personality and individual talent in masterminding the political process is exaggerated and simplistic. Indeed, it underestimates the significance of broader economic and social structures in the making of social change. In short, it fails to take notice of Marx's injunction that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past" (1972: 437).

These circumstances, which form the existing structures of society, represent the explanatory basis of the dependent-Marxist paradigm to which we now turn our attention.

The Dependent-Marxist Paradigm

For the dependent-Marxist school, the Third World or the "periphery" of the international capitalist system cannot create liberal forms of bourgeois democracy similar to those of the industrialized "center" (Ake, 1978, 1981; Frank, 1979, 1981; Amin, 1974; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Evans, 1979). Indeed, the dependent nature of "peripheral capitalism" imposes obdurate limits to democratic rule. In fact, it requires the institutionalization of dictatorship and repression. In other words, the insertion of the periphery in the world capitalist system implies its exploitation by the center and its incapacity to generate a sustaining self-reliant economy (Amin, 1969, 1973, 1974, 1981; Frank, 1979, 1981; Wallerstein, 1979; Rodney, 1972). This incapacity is embedded in the nature of peripheral capitalism, the external orientation of which creates massive contradictions between domestic needs and domestic production (Thomas, 1974).

Production, indeed, is geared toward exports and the privileged and limited market of the domestic ruling class. The

requirements of such production imply therefore the “super-exploitation” of “peripheral labor” (Emmanuel, 1972) and the repressive means that this “super-exploitation” entails (Frank, 1981: 230-79). In short, “peripheral capitalism” is incapable of creating mass markets because its very survival hinges upon the persistence of cheap wages. This reality in turn creates the terrain for repressive political regimes rather than liberal forms of bourgeois democracy.

Moreover, the “peripheral state” (Carnoy, 1984: 172-207) represents more the interests of the bourgeoisies of the “center” than those of the dependent and weak “peripheral” ruling classes (Frank, 1981: 231). Thus, for some advocates of the dependent-Marxist school (Frank, 1979, 1981; Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 1979) it is the unequal international division of labor and the requirements of capitalist accumulation that are the decisive determinants of the “peripheral state.” As Frank put it,

In the dependent economies of the Third World the dependent state is . . . an essential instrument for the administration of the dependent role of the Third World economies in the international division of labor and the capitalist world process of capital accumulation. Increasingly also, the Third World state mediates between its national capital—and labor—and international capital; and as a dependent state it does so substantially to the benefit of international capital at the relative cost to national capital and at the absolute sacrifice of local labor (1981: 230-31).

Not surprisingly this “absolute sacrifice of local labor” engenders a general social crisis that can only be “resolved” through the “institutionalization of political repression and often the militarization of society” (Frank, 1981: 230). But what is crucial to some dependent-Marxist scholars is not so much the internal dimensions of the crisis but rather its externality and alien causes.

This unilateral stress on the external aspects of “peripheral capitalism” has provoked an analytical reaction that has reasserted the primacy or equality of domestic factors in determining the politics of dependent societies (Ake, 1978,

1981; Cardoso, 1979; Collier, 1979; O'Donnell, 1979; Saul, 1979: 350-66). Indeed, while this new analysis acknowledges the significance of dependence it does so only in the context of the domestic class struggle. In other words, imperialism imposes the domination of foreign interests on the Third World not necessarily because they are foreign but rather because these interests just happen to correspond to those of the ruling peripheral bourgeoisies (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979: XVI). These bourgeoisies have a relative autonomy from the structural requirements of international capitalism even if they are constrained by these powerful structures. Such relative autonomy, however, does not abolish the necessity for repression. In fact, the domestic class struggle and the necessity of capitalist accumulation find their ultimate expression in the rise of "bureaucratic authoritarianism." The "bureaucratic authoritarian state" in the words of O'Donnell represents "first and foremost, [the] guarantor and organizer of the domination exercised through a class structure subordinated to the upper fractions of a highly oligopolized and transnationalized bourgeoisie" (1979: 292).

Thus, "bureaucratic authoritarianism" is a coercive, exclusionary, "depoliticizing," and antipopular system responding almost exclusively to the interests of the transnationalized upper bourgeoisie. The emergence of the "bureaucratic authoritarian state" reflects not merely the political crisis whereby the demands and the threat posed by proletarian and peasant classes are suppressed by the privileged groups (Stepan, 1978), it also symbolizes the coercive resolution of a particular "stage" in the history of capital accumulation in the "periphery" (O'Donnell, 1979). In other words, the exit from the impasse created by the import-substitution process leads to the adoption of a strategy bent on "deepening" industrialization through an "open door" policy toward foreign capital and on reducing popular consumption and wages (Collier, 1979). This inevitably involves the denationalization of the peripheral economy and the imposition of austerity on an already destitute working class. Both processes require in turn the institutionalization of authoritarianism and the depoliticization of the masses.

Thus, whether dependent-Marxist scholars emphasize the primacy of the world capitalist system or that of the domestic class struggle in determining the nature of the “peripheral state,” they all agree that this state can only be authoritarian. In short, the “peripheral state” depoliticizes the masses and renders them politically impotent. Moreover, depoliticization expresses the ascendancy of the repressive apparatus of the state and thus the rule of the “specialists of coercion.” In the African context it has entailed the consolidation of what Ake has called “political monoliths” whereby “every regime assumes its exclusive right to rule and prohibits organized opposition” (1978: 78). Furthermore, adds Ake, “depoliticization has made . . . African politics particularly brutal” (1978: 78).

Now, while it is clear that the periphery in general and Africa in particular conform to the overall diagnostic of the dependent-Marxist school, Senegal departs from it in significant and fundamental ways. Indeed, Senegal is a dependent mono-crop society whose economy is profoundly shaped by the vagaries of the international market and the process of capitalist accumulation on a world scale (Amin, 1973; Gellar, 1982: 45-66; Ly, 1981). As such it has faced the familiar problems associated with the vicissitudes of industrialization through import-substitution (D. O’Brien, 1979; R. O’Brien, 1979a; Mackintosh, 1979). Moreover, the Senegalese bourgeoisie is extremely weak and it has had to coexist with a financially powerful expatriate community of French and Lebanese entrepreneurs (R. O’Brien, 1979b; Amin, 1969, 1981: 320). Yet, the economic crisis generated by these patterns of dependence has led to liberalization and politicization rather than brutal repression and massive alienation. Clearly then, a modified version of the dependent-Marxist paradigm is needed to elucidate Senegalese “exceptionalism.”

The Senegalese “Passive Revolution”

The democratization of Senegal represented the means by which the ruling class sought to reassert its declining “hegem-

ony” over political society (D. O’Brien, 1978: 179). Also, it served to divide the opposition—specially the left—through its partial and then total legalization. Finally, after years of authoritarianism during which the structures of dependent capitalist (under)development had been firmly implanted (Amin, 1973; Fougeyrollas, 1970; Ly, 1981), force had become less necessary and indeed counterproductive. Unlimited pluralism symbolized the opposition’s integration into these powerful structures and the displacement of the politics of force by the politics of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971: 206-76). In other words, the consolidation of the structures of dependent capitalism effected during the 1960’s and mid-1970’s (Amin, 1973) made possible the relinquishment of authoritarianism and the rise of “guided democracy.” The social and economic crisis generated by these structures (Amin, 1973; Gellar, 1982: 45-66; R. O’Brien, 1979a: 100-25; Dumont, 1980; Mackintosh, 1979) required, however, a new “formative strategy” (Hall, 1981: 117) bent on creating a national “consensus” and a new class alignment. The Senghorian constitution of 1976 and its subsequent liberalization were the means to that end. They represented what Gramsci called a “passive revolution” (1971: 178-81; Sassoon, 1982b).

Thus, the democratization of Senegal should be interpreted as a ruling class project bent on reorganizing the state in an effort to diffuse an “organic crisis” and neutralize the threat from the left. In other words, this ruling-class project was a response to the crisis; it consisted in “preventing the development of a revolutionary adversary by ‘decapitating’ its revolutionary potential” (Sassoon, 1982b: 133). In fact, it expresses the hegemony of the Senegalese ruling class insofar as this class has relinquished force and authoritarianism as its method of governance for the politics of alliances and cooptation. Indeed, the Senegalese ruling class asserted its hegemony because it defended its interests by “universalizing” these, and ensuring that they could “become the interests of the . . . subordinate groups” (Gramsci, 1971: 181).

Hence, in order to preserve its domination the Senegalese ruling class effected a “passive revolution” that went beyond

the promotion of its narrow and immediate corporate interests. Authoritarianism was displaced by the politics of hegemony, and yet the structures of power remained fundamentally unchanged. This is precisely why the democratization of Senegal should be viewed as a successful “passive revolution.”

Indeed, Gramsci’s notion of “passive revolution” derives from Burkean conservatism, which asserted that “society had to change in order to stay the same, i.e., to preserve its most essential features” (Sassoon, 1982a: 15). Accordingly, a “passive revolution” is a preemptive response from “on high” to the disorganized but potentially revolutionary demands of dominated classes. It is the specific peaceful means of survival of a ruling class in conditions of “organic crisis.” As Gramsci put it,

A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves . . . and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts . . . form the terrain of the “conjunctural,” and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise (1971: 178).

The terrain of the “conjunctural,” however, has “no far-reaching historical significance,” despite its being the arena of immediate political and economic struggles (Gramsci, 1971: 177). Of much greater significance is the “organic crisis” that relates to a crisis of total structures and engenders what Stuart Hall has called the “formative efforts” of the ruling class (1981). These “formative efforts,” to paraphrase Hall (1981: 117), are an attempt to forge a new balance of forces and propel the emergence of new elements. They seek to put together a new “historical bloc” as well as new political configurations and “philosophies.” “Formative efforts” thus involve a profound restructuring of the state and the ideological discourse that construct the crisis and represent it as it is “lived” as a practical reality. Consequently, new programs and policies pointing to a new result, a new sort of “settlement”—“within certain limits”—are required. “These do not ‘emerge’: they

have to be constructed. Political and ideological work is required to disarticulate old formations, and to rework their elements into new configurations" (Hall, 1981: 117). The democratization of Senegal embodied therefore the "formative efforts" of a ruling class confronting the "organic crisis" generated by the contradictions of "peripheral capitalism."

Hence, the explanatory framework provided by the "passive revolution" model, like the dependent-Marxist paradigm, takes into consideration the "organic crisis" of "peripheral capitalism," but it does so within the context of the "formative efforts" of the ruling class. As such, it preserves the autonomy of the political domain and the domestic class struggles without negating the impact of the processes of capitalist accumulation on a world scale. Thus, in the "passive revolution" model there is no "inevitability"; there are opportunities for "different histories" and political forms, but there are, however, powerful structures that constrain action to definite parameters. To construct a paradigm that would elucidate events otherwise would leave unexplained the fact that upon experiencing similar contradictions and processes "peripheral societies" respond differently and create different regimes and institutions.

Thus, the extent to which Senegal evolved into a liberal democracy is an indication that the requirements of the accumulation of capital in the periphery can be met without necessarily resorting to the barbarism of the "specialists of coercion." This also symbolizes the success of a politically talented ruling class. Indeed, this ruling class simultaneously preserved its domination over the "many" while displacing its entrenched authoritarianism with a liberal democracy. That the rise of liberal democracy in Senegal has not fundamentally altered the relations of power is an indication of the obdurate democratic limits of liberal democracy itself. But, it is also true that however obdurate these limits may be, they are more bearable to the working classes than the brutally repressive rule of the "specialists of coercion."

Conclusion: The Exportability and Limitations of Senegal's "Passive Revolution"*Senegalese Exceptionalism?*

The success of Senegal's "passive revolution" raises the question of its exportability to other "dependent nations." In other words, the question is whether these nations can effect a similar "passive revolution" in order to escape from the unmitigated evil of coercive authoritarianism stemming from the "organic crisis" of "peripheral capitalism." For a variety of historical and political reasons it appears that the Senegalese experience is rather unique and unlikely to be repeated in other parts of the "periphery."

Senegal's own colonial history—in contradistinction to that of the "periphery" in general—imparted to its politics a certain commitment to the values of liberal democracy. Unlike most colonies Senegal, and in particular its urban areas or the "Four Communes," enjoyed a relatively enlightened pattern of French imperial dominance. As Wesley Johnson put it, "The Senegalese case was probably unique . . . because in the Four Communes political activity was allowed rather than being proscribed" (1971: vii). In fact the Four Communes implanted in the Senegalese terrain a tradition of competitive and interracial electoral politics. It is true that it was a tradition of an elite, but it nonetheless contributed to the rise of African mass politics (Johnson, 1971: 139-219). Thus, unlike most "peripheral nations," Senegal experienced a rather "democratic" form of imperial domination, and this decisively impinged on its postcolonial politics.

Upon obtaining independence in 1960, Senegal was characterized by an intensely competitive political system, and this legacy continuously haunted Senghor's authoritarian ascendancy. Indeed, it took Senghor four years of ruthless "Princely rule" to establish his presidential absolutism, which he eventually undid in 1976. In this sense, the entrenched electoral

tradition of competitive politics imposed certain limitations to authoritarianism and contributed to the success of the “passive revolution.”

Such success was also a consequence of Senghor’s mastery of “Princely rule” itself. Indeed, as Jean Pierre Ndiaye has pointed out, Senghor’s political experience and intelligence had given him a weapon:

une méthode souple et efficace pour faire basculer des situations et des hommes dans l’orbite qui est la sienne, et pour les attirer dans le champ de son action, sans jamais en prendre le contrôle. Mais, c’est aussi un homme de culture et un poète: l’antithèse du politique. Sa personnalité est double, ambiguë complexe [Si] son âme était sincère, l’intelligence de son esprit était habitée, comme celle de tout lutteur, par l’agilité et la ruse (1976: 165).²

Senghor’s Machiavellian attributes were important in the making of Senegal’s “passive revolution.” In fact, they contributed to changing things so that they could remain the same. They helped integrate the opposition into the existing structures of power and rendered impotent the challenge of potentially revolutionary forces. That President Diouf inherited these same Machiavellian attributes of Princely rule could only reinforce and indeed consolidate the “passive revolution.” In this sense, the success of this “passive revolution” has greatly depended on the exceptional political talents of Senegal’s two Princes. As such, the democratization of Senegal is not easily duplicated elsewhere.

The Senegalese “passive revolution,” however, is much more than mere talented political leadership; it is also a product of structural factors. Indeed, it was effected above all because the threat of the left was incoherent and diffuse, and as such, manageable (Ndiaye, 1976: 163–64). Neither the proletariat nor the peasantry was mobilized in a revolutionary

2. “. . . a supple and effective method that moves situations and men into his own orbit, and attracts them into his own terrain without his ever losing control. Yet, he is also a man of culture and a poet: the antithesis of homo politicus. His personality is therefore double, ambiguous, complex. . . . If his soul was sincere, the intelligence of his spirit was inhabited, like that of any fighter, by agility and cunning” (my translation).

party. The threat of the left was in fact nothing more than a general and systemic social malaise. Moreover, the Senegalese ruling class could afford itself a democratization because the latter was conducted within certain bounds that never went beyond the existing alignments of class power and inequalities. And, finally, if these alignments were to be challenged or threatened, they could always be reestablished by the “French praetorian guard” which was “encamped on the perimeter of Senegal’s only international airport” (D. O’Brien, 1978: 180-81).

To this extent the circumstances characterizing Senegal’s “passive revolution” seem to be exceptional. Not only did Senegal enjoy a different colonial history in the opportunities that it offered for liberal democratic practices, but it also came under the postcolonial presidentialism of two exceptional rulers who exercised their statecraft in the most Machiavellian sense. In addition, the period of Senghorian authoritarianism implanted the structures of dependent capitalism so deeply into the Senegalese terrain that nothing short of revolution could displace them. The “passive revolution” that crystallized in liberal democracy represented therefore the institutionalization and consolidation of these structures.

This raises the question whether other “peripheral societies” can after years of authoritarian implantation of “dependent capitalism” effect a “passive revolution” “à la Sénégalaise.” In other words, can they abandon dictatorial or military rule and usher in a liberal democratic framework? In short, is Senegal’s “passive revolution” announcing a generalized pattern of political “decompression” or is it an exceptional phenomenon?

On the one hand there seems to be a tendency toward liberalization in certain parts of the “periphery” and in Latin America in particular, although Africa appears to be unaffected. This tendency may reflect the increasing popular challenges to the brutality and austerity that a dependent capitalism based on export promotion entails. It may also stem from the ruling class’s renewed interest in a policy of import substitution whose reliance on the enlargement of the domestic

market would require a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. This in turn would necessitate a political realignment bent on creating more democratic and popular forms of governance. In this instance “passive revolutions” would be the means to that end (Frank, 1981: 323-26).

On the other hand such “passive revolutions” may not entail any restructuring of “dependent capitalism” but on the contrary the legitimation of this very type of (under)development. As Frank has pointed out

This apparent democratization is simply the institutionalization of the new model of economic growth based on export promotion. It was necessary to have very severe political repression as a midwife to institute this new model; but once the model is in place and more or less working, it is possible to ease off a bit on the political repression. Then, indeed, it is not only possible, but it becomes politically necessary and desirable to get a wider social base for the political regime and to institute a kind of limited political democracy by handing over the government from military to civilian rule. But these political modifications would not be made in order to overturn the present economic order and again to promote import substitution, let alone so-called noncapitalist growth or some variety of “socialism.” Instead, this supposed redemocratization would be to maintain and to institutionalize the new insertion of the Third World in the international division of labor as low-wage producers during the present world economic crisis (1981: 325-26).

This process of redemocratization, however, does not seem to represent the general political tendency of “peripheral societies.” Indeed, most “peripheral” ruling classes lack the maturity, security, and assurance required for ushering in “passive revolutions.” They fear that such revolutions might open up a Pandora’s box and be particularly hazardous. Structuring a strategy of economic growth around policies of export promotion while attempting to absorb new classes into a liberal system of dissent and opposition may ultimately unleash uncontrollable forces. Thus, instead of institutionalizing the existing patterns of wealth, privilege, and power, a “passive revolution” might well threaten their very roots.

To this extent, Senegal’s experience symbolizes the hegem-

onic capacities of its ruling class, and it is difficult to see—in spite of a few exceptions—how it can be extended throughout the “periphery” and Africa in particular. The external and domestic circumstances characterizing the crisis of “dependent capitalism” are more likely to further dictatorship, repression, and martial law than “passive revolutions” and liberal democracies. Indeed, power holders are generally apprehensive about “passive revolutions” because they fear that far from curbing discontent they might enhance opposition and further raise popular expectations.

Such apprehension, however, may be misguided since “passive revolutions” have historically been the sine qua non of the continued rule of the bourgeoisie. Although it would be wrong to see in “passive revolutions” nothing more than mere sham, it is safe to say that they have been inspired by the ruling circle’s commitment to preserve the existing mode of social reproduction. They have not drastically altered the ugly realities of poverty, exploitation, and inequality; in fact, they have contributed to their legitimation. It is in this perspective that the Senegalese process of democratization must be understood.

The Democratic Limitations of Liberal Democracy

The “passive revolution” of Senegal has therefore preserved the domination of the few over the many, and maintained the relative impotence of the masses over the means of production and the organs of state power. However, it has opened certain opportunities for the expansion of democracy and the assertion of greater popular control. Moreover, the acceptance of different political parties anchored in different social classes and accepting different class-discourses has exploded the old myth of classless Africa expounded by the ideologists of African Socialism (Zolberg, 1966; Nyerere, 1968; Markovitz, 1969: 119-93). In that perspective, Senegal has entered the era of genuine class politics and as such the question of “l’

alternance du pouvoir” has been squarely put forth. In other words, the question is whether the Senegalese ruling class would be prepared to accept electoral defeat and relinquish its hegemony without resorting to force or a “pre-emptive coup.” Would it tolerate the ascendancy of revolutionary forces and preserve its constitutional rectitude? If the history of Senegal—and for that matter of all class societies—is a guide, it would be absurd to expect a peaceful surrender of the ruling classes. In this sense, “l’alternance” is indeed an impossibility.

Yet, the problematic of “l’alternance” may never be posed in those terms, since the implantation of liberal democracy has always been associated with the rise of reformist politics and the decline of revolutionary forces (Miliband, 1977: 162-63). In this perspective, the “passive revolution” in Senegal is to a large extent the guarantor of the established order, and the executioner of fundamental change. Indeed, it resulted not from an organized popular demand for massive structural changes in the political and economic repartition of power; on the contrary, it stemmed from the ruling class’s determined opposition to such repartition. It was not an effort from the peasantry and the proletariat to overthrow the Senghorian state; it was an effort from the ruling class to preempt the possible rise of an insurrectionary popular will and to moderate that very will into “passivity” by integrating it into an “expanded” state.

The concept of an “expanded” state derives from Gramsci’s idea that to exercise “hegemony” over subaltern classes a ruling class must relinquish some of its immediate interests and privileges. As Gramsci explained:

It is true that the State is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favourable conditions for the latter’s maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the “national” energies. In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of

unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups—equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interest (1971: 182).

Thus “hegemony” requires the “expansion” of the state whereby potential allies and even antagonistic elements are gradually absorbed into the institutions of that state. But precisely because the Senegalese “expansion” occurred as a “passive revolution” it imposed obdurate limitations to democratic practice; it could not transcend the parameters of liberal democracy. In other words, the democratic franchise and unlimited political pluralism came as late additions to the dependent capitalist society presided by Senghor and then Diouf. While they transformed the authoritarian state into a liberal state, they did not in any way threaten the fundamental structures of that society. In fact, they became the fulfillment of Senegalese dependent capitalism.

The implantation of liberal democracy in Senegal has indeed blunted the edge of potential class confrontations by moderating and smoothing over the opposition. It has facilitated the imposition of the material sacrifices required for the functioning of dependent capitalism by imparting to them the quality of absolute necessities for the survival and consolidation of liberal democracy itself. In other words, the fresh memory of authoritarianism has contributed to the development of a generalized political “pragmatism” and “gradualism” and thus subordinated the commitment to fundamental structural change to the preservation of the existing system of power and privilege. By absorbing revolutionary movements into its constitutional and legal political structure, liberal democracy imposes obdurate limitations to their mode of operation. Thus, liberal democracy in Senegal has paradoxically curbed the intensity of opposition, reduced the number of alternatives, and blurred the horizon of options. In this sense it is a successful liberal democracy. For, as Joseph Schumpeter emphasized, the maintenance and consolidation of a liberal

democracy presuppose that “the effective range of political decision should not be extended too far . . . democracy does not require that every function of the state be subject to its political method” (1975: 291-92).

Thus however limited and constrained the “passive revolution” may have been, it embodied nonetheless the essence of a liberal democracy. It granted to the citizenry the fundamental legal freedoms of speech, association, and participation, and it established a practice of competitive elections in a system of unlimited pluralism. These rights by themselves do not amount to the constitution of a truly “democratic society”; on the contrary they are quite compatible with the persistence of great material inequalities, massive poverty, and class exploitation. Therefore, as one of its defenders has honestly pointed out:

[Liberal] democracy does not necessarily assure even a reasonable approximation of what we would call a democratic society, a society with considerable equality of opportunity in all spheres, including social equality, as well as opportunity to formulate political alternatives and mobilize the electorate for them [Linz, 1978: 97].

Hence, Senegal’s democracy, like any other bourgeois liberal democracy, is “crippled by its class limitations and under constant threat of further and drastic impairment by conservative forces, never more so than in an epoch of permanent and severe crisis” (Miliband, 1977: 189). Indeed, if Senegal’s democratic experience is based on “hegemony,” it is the “armour of coercion” which ultimately preserves it (Gramsci, 1971: 263). In this sense, the element of consent is also a product of the structures of repression, even when these structures do not intrude directly into political society. This is particularly the case for Senegal where the weight of the authoritarianism of the past continuously haunts and shapes the opposition’s behavior. Indeed, to avoid a possible breakdown of liberal democracy and a return to authoritarianism, the opposition has accepted the “rules of the game” and moderated its demands for change. It is becoming a “loyal opposi-

tion” with a vested interest in the consolidation of liberal democracy.

In these circumstances, Senegal’s new liberal democracy seems to be anchored in safe waters. On the one hand, it legitimizes the rule of the power holders without endangering their continued supremacy; on the other hand, however narrow it may be, it represents a safe terrain for political dissent and participation. Moreover, the dictatorial and brutal context of African politics has enhanced the commitment of the country’s entire political class to the value of liberal democracy and to the social order that it entails (French, 1984: 11-12). Indeed, in spite of its obvious limitations and deficiencies, the coming of liberal democracy in Senegal has facilitated the organization of the popular sectors into power blocs capable of influencing the political agenda and altering their collective fate.

In this perspective, the “passive revolution” is a concession of the power holders since it curbs their authority and sets definite parameters to their policies. So while it was designed to mitigate the challenge of the masses, it offered them the possibility of taking the initiative and developing centers of relative political autonomy. Thus, as Miliband has remarked:

It is nonsense to say . . . that reform does not “really” affect the “ruling class.” The latter’s members squeal much more than is usually warranted. But the squealing is on the other hand rather more than mere sham: the sense of being adversely affected and constrained is real; and this is quite often an accurate reflection of the concrete impact of this or that measure and action of the state (1977: 88).

Thus, and to conclude, however crippled it may be, Senegal’s democracy represents an important advance over the vast majority of “peripheral” and in particular African regimes where corruption and privilege rule with brute and dictatorial force. Therefore, the civic freedoms that the Senegalese people have painfully won should neither be dismissed nor ignored; they constitute the terrain upon which will be waged the future struggles for the further expansion of democracy.

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