



Chapter 1

The Need for Post-Third Wave Conversations

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Samuel Huntington's (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* set the tone for 'transition' studies (the study of democratisation) and 'consolidation' studies (the study of how to secure democracy as a form of government in states that had recently transitioned to democracy). A wave of democratisation is 'a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite directions during that period of time' (Huntington, 1991: 15). Huntington argued that there had been two such waves of democratisation in history, each followed by a reverse wave where some, but not all, states reverted back to non-democratic forms of government. He suggested that the overthrow of António Salazar in Portugal in 1974 and the resulting democratisation in that country started off a third wave of democratisation. In 1991, when *The Third Wave* was published, 35 countries had, according to Huntington, democratised, and a reverse wave was already on the cards.

Why is it necessary to revisit *The Third Wave* nearly 18 years after its publication? Like Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), an earlier work, and *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), a later work, *The Third Wave* is at face value an impeccably clear and logical work of analysis. Although Huntington (1991: 15) acknowledges that 'history is messy and political changes do not sort themselves out in neat historical boxes', his is a mammoth effort in typical Harvard style of exactly that—classification. Huntington sets out to sort the messy history of political change into 'waves' of democratic transitions and goes on to categorise and subcategorise its causes, processes and characteristics, and the problems and opportunities for democratic consolidation. Not only does Huntington use the 35 transitions making up his Third Wave to construct universal categories for future analyses of democratic transitions and consolidation, but he develops a set of 'guidelines for democratizers' along the way. As a lens through which to view democratisation (transitions and consolidation), Huntington's categories and prescriptions have formed a conscious or unconscious foundation of much work

on democracy in Africa. His influence is similarly recognisable in some of the chapters included in this volume. Although this framing chapter is not a genealogy of his influence, it revisits some key ideas in *The Third Wave* to create awareness of this almost encyclopaedic source of preconceptions about democratisation, so often taken for granted in scholarship on this subject. The aim of this volume is also to start conversations that move beyond *The Third Wave*'s preconceptions of democratisation and democracy.

Democratisation, according to Huntington, entails three phases, namely parting with authoritarianism, installing a democratic regime and consolidating this regime. One of the main reasons why states would part in a 'wave' with authoritarianism and install democratic regimes is simply that authoritarianism loses legitimacy, and democracy becomes widely perceived as a better form of governance. Democratic norms spread or diffuse, not least through the demonstration effect of the initial transitions, which are communicated through the media to other states, unleashing a snowball effect (Huntington, 1991: 46, 100). There may be other factors unique to a specific wave, such as the role of the Catholic Church in Latin America, the collapse of the Soviet Union and global economic growth, three causes specific to the Third Wave.

Measuring how many states have democratised and reversed back to non-democracy over a period of time requires as a first step a definition of democracy. In typical positivist fashion, Huntington opted for a definition of democracy that could easily be operationalised and quantified. He chose free and fair elections as the benchmark for democracy, discarding the 'fuzzy' norms of equality and community that constitute the second and third legs of democracy according to the French Revolution's dictum '*liberté, égalité, fraternité*' (1991: 9). A political system is democratic 'in so much as its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote' (Huntington 1991: 7). This definition corresponds with Robert Dahl's (1989) definition of polyarchy in its emphasis on contestation and participation, and presumes basic political and a minimum of civil freedoms that would allow for electoral campaigning, such as freedom of speech, assembly and organisation. Fareed Zakaria (1997: 25) later distinguished between liberal and illiberal democracy, noting that a liberal democracy is 'a political system marked not only by free and fair elections, but also by the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property'. These freedoms, he argues, are manifestations of constitutional liberalism, ie individual freedoms codified in a constitution. Although constitutional liberalism is interwoven with Western types of democracy, democracy can exist without it. A polity may freely and fairly elect a Hitler who overrides constitutional limits on



power and/or abuses civil liberties. Zakaria (1997: 25) goes further to note: ‘To have democracy mean, subjectively, “a good government” renders it analytically useless.’

Despite Huntington’s emphasis on certain freedoms, he too makes the point:

democracy does not mean that problems will be solved; it means that rulers can be removed; and the essence of democratic behaviour is doing the latter because it is impossible to do the former. Disillusionment and the lowered expectations it produces are the foundation of democratic stability. Democracy becomes consolidated when people learn that democracy is a solution to the problem of tyranny, but not necessarily anything else’ (Huntington, 1991: 263).

Huntington not only shies away from the ‘fuzzy’ *fraternité* norms, but even takes the replacement of democratic euphoria with disillusionment/lowered expectations as a positive step in a democracy’s maturation. Here Huntington harks back to the sentiments expressed in his earlier work, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, which warned that order would be impeded if political mobilisation levels exceed the level of institutionalisation within a society. In an essay written in 1973 entitled ‘Approaches to political decompression’, Huntington (cited in Skidmore, 1988: 165) warns against rapid liberalisation and proposes steps such as the development of strong parties to prevent disorder.

The chapters in this volume loosely follow the structure of the above discussion. As such, the book engages in three broad conversations that have their roots in the preconceptions of *The Third Wave*, but in some ways also go beyond them. Chapters 2 through 5 speak to factors that have inspired or may inspire democratisation or its reverse in Africa. Freedom House lists 21 African states as electoral democracies in 2007, compared to Diamond (1997: 2), who argues that there were between 9 and 18 (depending on how you count) in 1996. It thus seems as if electoral democracies in Africa have increased since Huntington first identified the Third Wave. External factors played no small role in inspiring this democratisation on the continent. With the Cold War and the need to win over allegiance to ideological blocs at an end, international aid and political support were redrafted to encourage democratisation. The collapse of the Soviet Union also meant that the narrative of a total (communist) onslaught sustaining apartheid in South Africa had dissolved. Democratisation in South Africa relieved the continent of a regional destabiliser, but perhaps more importantly it added to Africa’s future a South African leadership high on its own successful democratisation and international renown. Keen to reverse Africa’s marginalisation, post-apartheid South African governments have committed rhetorically and materially to African narratives of Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance and African solutions. The injection of South African resources and energy on the continent and other



international forums on behalf of Africa revived institution-building in line with regional integration elsewhere in the world. These institutions contribute to the spread of international norms, such as democracy.

Khabele Matlosa's chapter should be read with these remarks as background. Commissioned by the African Union, on behalf of the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, to develop the African Democracy Charter, he is ideally positioned to explore the necessity of a dialectic between regional integration and democratisation, and the steps to facilitate such a dialectic. Matlosa takes us through the efforts of African integration since independence and their failure to pay sufficient regard to the political dimension of integration. Instead, he argues that Cold War alignment and guarding of sovereignty limited regional integration to economic programmes. Current political integration aimed at an eventual Union Government and even a United States of Africa could benefit democratisation on the continent by institutionalising mechanisms and initiatives to socialise member states to adhere to democratic norms and good governance.

South Africa's post-apartheid role on the continent exerted not such subtle pressure on the other major continental power, Nigeria, to reflect an image of a responsible African state. The competition for a permanent seat on a reformed United Nations (UN) Security Council between South Africa and Nigeria is only one manifestation of this pressure. The relationship between the two states is in many ways similar to that of Germany and France in Europe. Laura Neack (2003: 155) asserts: 'For both countries [Germany and France], European integration or union was a means by which great power status could be achieved collectively when individual great power status was unachievable.' Similarly, the South African and Nigerian governments seem to see the value of African integration for their own great power aspirations, as well as checking the aspirations of one another. In the case of competition for a UN permanent seat, the two states have supported reform measures to allow two permanent seats for Africa and each other's bids to take up these seats. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his predecessor have, however, linked the taking up of new permanent seats on a reformed UN Security Council to a state's status as a democracy and a promoter of democratic norms.

In chapter 3 Shola Omotola critically evaluates Nigeria's metamorphosis from an importer to exporter of democratic norms. In line with South Africa's focus on Africa, Nigeria developed the African centrepiece policy and former President Obasanjo, like President Mbeki, engaged with other African leaders to promote democracy to other African countries. The contradictions to democracy and good governance in Nigeria's domestic politics and economy may expose the externalisation of democratic norms as hypocrisy and invalidate the country's efforts to bring about sustainable democracy in Africa.



The above trends in regional institution-building and state behaviour are, however, what Huntington (1991: 107) would call general factors that create favourable conditions for democratisation. They do not, however, ensure democratisation. Instead, he notes: 'A democratic regime is installed not by trends but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but by causers. Political leaders and publics have to act' (Huntington, 1991: 107). By the same token, democratisation can be derailed by people, despite favourable conditions. In chapter 4, looking back to South Africa's democratisation, Annette Knecht explores the role of a secret Afrikaner nationalist organisation, the Afrikaner Broederbond, in the transformation process. The Broederbond came to permeate Afrikaner society, and although seeing itself as a cultural organisation, constructed the narratives of Christian Nationalism and 'black danger' (*'swartgevaar'* in Afrikaans) that ensured electoral victory for consecutive apartheid governments. Although acknowledging the historical baggage of the Afrikaner Broederbond's role in constructing apartheid, Knecht concludes that the organisation played an important role in liberalising Afrikaner society in the run-up to democratic transition. In any event, the Afrikaner Broederbond did not contest the transition. By studying a cultural organisation as a variable in the process of South Africa's democratisation, the chapter contributes to our understanding of the interaction between politics and culture in instances of intense political change.

In chapter 5, Kondwani Chirambo explores another variable impacting on democratic consolidation that African states have to contend with, namely HIV/AIDS. Thought of as one of the pertinent factors that may come to inhibit and even reverse democratisation and democratic consolidation on the continent, Chirambo argues that HIV/AIDS has not led to the type of state collapse that many Western scholars have predicted. Nevertheless, the disease has impacted on several indicators of democracy, most notably electoral systems, voter participation, election management and political parties. By identifying these indicators of democracy, Chirambo's definition of democracy seems to be aligned with Huntington's emphasis on elections and institutions (eg parties and electoral commissions). It is at this point that the book turns to the second conversation in African politics that aims to go beyond the Third Wave, namely the definition of democracy.

Chapters 6 through 9, directly or indirectly, engage in an African context with Huntington's emphasis on free, fair and regular elections as the essence of democracy. In chapter 6, Collette Schulz-Herzenberg evaluates 10 years of voting behaviour in South Africa, noting that a silent revolution might be taking place. This revolution is not necessarily manifest in voters changing party allegiances, but rather in lower party identification across all parties. A 'floating' electorate could vote according to party performance, rather than historical, racial or



emotional identification with a party—making South Africa’s democracy more competitive. Arguably, increased voter volatility could improve responsiveness to voters, but in a context of a dominant party and weak and fragmented opposition parties, it could also result in voters not casting their ballots. The chapter indirectly poses a question to the idea that lowered expectations and disillusionment of citizens are signs of democratic consolidation. What if disillusionment with government performance in the absence of a credible opposition simply leads to disillusionment with democracy as such—manifesting in voter apathy?

Chapter 7, by Ralph Mathekga, continues the conversation about the definition of democracy by interweaving the themes of good governance, economic policy and political leadership to outline what Mathekga argues are the conditions for populism in South Africa. Although Huntington negates the values of *égalité* and *fraternité* in his definition of democracy, their absence (perceived or real) could trigger precisely the mobilisation that Huntington warns would turn young democracies into pressure cookers. Thabo Mbeki’s largely neoliberal macroeconomic programmes aligned well with the Washington consensus, but their implementation demanded a technocratic approach. In the case of South Africa, this approach also meant that the policy decision-making apparatus was concentrated closer to the Office of the President. The result is a perceived democratic deficit of power centralisation in favour of the capitalist class. It is in these circumstances that the poor and those who purport to speak on their behalf grab at forms of ‘real’ democracy imagined to bring government closer to the people. In this case, the charismatic Jacob Zuma represents ‘the other’ to Mbeki. Mathekga brings us closer to an understanding of why what started off as liberal democracy in this day and age would transform into populism, especially in so-called Third World contexts.

Schulz-Herzenberg’s and Mathekga’s chapters sketch two dimensions of what has come to be known as the democratic deficit in South Africa, namely voter apathy amid distrust of political parties and government institutions, and the failure to link citizens with the institutions and processes of state. In chapter 8, Imraan Buccus and Janine Hicks investigate a solution that assumes a definition of democracy that goes beyond the right to elect representatives. They argue for direct and active participation by civil society in policy-making at provincial level and investigate the challenges and tensions that creating these participatory spaces entails. They illustrate their ideas by elaborating on a participatory model emerging in one of South Africa’s provinces, KwaZulu-Natal.

John Williams continues this conversation in his chapter (chapter 9) on community participation in post-apartheid South Africa. He reviews literature that looks in particular at integrated development planning at local level and uses examples from Cape Town as illustrations. Again, contradicting Huntington’s minimal



definition of democracy as free and fair elections and lowered expectations as an indication of democratic maturity, the context of democracy for Williams is meaningful and sustainable social change. Informed by ‘the memory of community struggle—a radical form of participation—against the racist apartheid state’, Williams argues for the re-employment of a repertoire of radical strategies used against the apartheid state, to ensure that communities’ expectations of democracy are voiced and met.

Chapter 10, a comparative study of female terrorism in Uganda and Colombia, is to some extent an odd addition to this volume and its focus on democracy and democratisation in Africa. It is included here because it contributes an African view to the contemporary global discourse on terrorism, a discourse that Huntington in his *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) helped to delineate. As the next grand narrative employed to fabricate global order to particularly conservative American preferences with implications for African democracy, terrorism constitutes the beginnings of a third post-Third Wave conversation that this volume wants to highlight. Suzanne Graham contrasts the motivation, roles and status of female members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. Rooting this comparison in both terrorist and feminist literature, the chapter fills a blind spot in the ‘war on terror’ discourse, which equates terrorism with radical Islam. Manufacturing connotations with terrorism in the context of a clash of Western and Islamic civilisations, this discourse is narrowly directed at the political objectives of the United States. Graham’s focus on female and non-Islamic terrorism reminds us that terrorism is not confined to the 9/11 mould of Islamic suicide bombers directing a form of asymmetric (read: uncivilised) warfare at the West or Western sympathisers. By looking inside the FARC and LRA at the individual level of analysis, Graham pertinently exposes what US policy considerations with their preference for macro responses in dealing with terrorism seem to ignore, namely the personal motives and conditions of those labelled ‘terrorists’.

This chapter has served to frame the contributions to this volume in terms of three broad conversations that at times are rooted in Huntington’s ideas about democracy and democratisation and at times push the boundaries of or contest these ideas. Using this framework is not just a case of ‘again’ employing a Western lens (the Third Wave) to think about African politics. It is a deliberate effort to acknowledge the existence of this lens that unconsciously colours many (past and present) studies of African democratisation. However, it also highlights instances where alternative conversations that go beyond the Third Wave are taking place.



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