



EADI Working Group on
Governance and Development



LUCAS

Centre for African Studies



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

POLIS, Politics and International Studies

Democratization in Africa: Retrospective and Future Prospects

**Conference at the University of Leeds
4-5 December 2009**

CALL FOR PAPERS

Almost two decades have passed since the ‘third wave’ of democratization began to roll across Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s, and while the holding of regular elections has become relatively well-established in many countries, perhaps most successfully in Ghana, electoral processes have also been deeply flawed in recent instances such as Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. It is also unclear how many African states are moving closer to ‘democratic consolidation’, or instead inhabit the ‘grey zone’ between democracy and autocracy as ‘defective democracies’ or ‘electoral authoritarianism’.

It is thus timely to reflect back on the relative successes and shortcomings experienced and to look forward to future prospects for democratization on the sub-continent. How does multi-party politics actually work on the sub-continent and how democratic are African ‘democracies’? Does a democratic façade merely conceal authoritarian leadership? Do results merely reflect an ethnic or religious census? Are ‘winner-takes-all’ elections and centralised governments the best frameworks for Africa, or do broad coalitions and/or federalism provide a better way forward? It is also appropriate to ask broader questions about the nature of democracy in Africa. Is democracy only seen in liberal and procedural terms and is this simply the ‘democracy of alienation’, as suggested by Claude Ake? Or are there prospects for more substantive forms of democracy that place participation and socio-economic inequalities at the centre of analysis? To what extent is democratic sovereignty a sham, with economic policy still dictated by international financial institutions and Western governments?

These questions will provide the basis of a two-day conference to be held at the University of Leeds in December 2009, organised by Dr Gabrielle Lynch and Prof Gordon Crawford of the School of Politics and International Studies and the Leeds University Centre for African Studies (LUCAS). Papers are invited that address any of the above questions, including country case-studies. Accepted papers will be organised into panels, with the following themes likely to be included:

- Voting, Parties and Identity: Africa's Curse?
- Multi-Party Elections and Violence: Solution or Cause?
- Decentralisation and Federalism: Effective or Failed Strategies?
- Democracy in Post-Conflict Societies: A Sensible Choice?
- Democracy & Traditional Authority: Compatible or Mutually Exclusive?
- External Agents: Facilitators or Obstructionists?
- Democracy as Second Liberation: Procedural or Substantive?

Abstracts (200-300 words) should be submitted to Dr Karen Cereso, LUCAS administrator, email: African-Studies@leeds.ac.uk

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 18 May 2009. Information on the acceptance of paper proposals will be communicated by early June 2009.

Submission of full papers (7000-9000 words) by 16 November 2009.

The conference organisers, Prof. Gordon Crawford and Dr. Gabrielle Lynch, intend that selected papers will be published in a journal special issue on the topic of *Democratization in Africa*.