Passive revolutions and the trajectories of democratic revolutions in Africa: The Second Liberation Movement and the Arab Spring

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Abstract

Successful democratic revolutions create new ruling groups, transform the order of political rule and extend a regime of citizenship rights as well as vest the agency of the same democracy on the citizens. This pathway of revolutionary success can also be deflected through a conscious resistance to the gains of a democratic revolution. Studies of two important moments of democratic revolutionary ruptures in Africa namely Second Liberation Movement and the Arab Spring render independent accounts of institutional effects of the revolutions without a conscious effort to provide a theoretically grounded analysis of democracy's trajectories in national experiences. In this paper, I apply Antonio Gramsci's concept of passive revolution to study the democratic trajectories of states that underwent the second liberation movement and the Arab Spring. I argue that in these two revolutions, the initial successes in change of regimes and the constitutional order could not be sustained and the politics of the affected states relapsed to pre-revolutionary practices. Using the cases of Benin Republic and Congo Democratic Republic for the Second Liberation Movement, Tunisia and Egypt for the Arab Spring, I analyse the recapturing of the machinery of the state by old guards and reverse movements on the rights of citizenship in the entire cases as passive revolution.

Key words: Arab Spring, Democratic citizenship, Passive revolution, Second liberation movement, Sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

Mass movements for democratization in Europe resulted in the widespread adoption and institutionalization of liberal democracy while those of Africa merely stop at the creation of mostly unstable formal institutions of democracy and continues to disregard the embedding of the rights that translate to democratic citizenship. In exploring the above claim, I focus on the nature of social struggles or revolutions that underpin the development of democracy in each of the selected cases. According to Roper (2012), three revolutions – the English (1640-89), American (1776 – 90) and French (1789 – 95) played historic role in building democratic governance from the seventeenth century and have been important sources of intellectual and political influences on democratic revolutions.

In the case of African countries in which colonial modernization merely attempted to transplant liberal democracy, it has been largely unsuccessful (Ubi, 2019). While elective rule lays claim to democracy in most African states, the defining essence of democracy which are civil, political and social rights are still critically low. Frustrated with repressive politics and poor material conditions of the so-called democracy in various parts of the continent, there continues to occur episodic revolutionary ruptures.

The pressures for democratic transformation in Africa began during the anti-colonial struggles as a specificity of struggle for liberation from undemocratic rule. The independence that resulted from that struggle failed to meet the expectations of majority of the citizens (see Ade Ajayi, 1982; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997). Essentially, most African states came under elite capture. Beyond the anti-colonial struggles, two major ruptures have occurred and spread across several African state in the twentieth and twenty first century including the Second Liberation Movement (SLM) that took place in several states of Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s and the Arab Spring in North Africa which started in 2010. First, the Sub Saharan Africa underwent a period of citizen struggle against entrenched ruling elements that have captured the post-colonial state for their own interest. The states of North Africa erupted in a similarly very assertive mass uprising against the ruling groups. These two episodes are important moments of revolutionary pressures for democracy. However, the struggles did not yield a lot of progress around the rights that establish democratic citizenship. Besides, the state was recaptured by the old ruling group in each of the episodes of the two revolutionary ruptures.

I argue that the recapturing of the machinery of government by the old ruling elite, persistence of undemocratic regime of governance and non-embedding of the rights of democratic citizenship in spite of extensive mass agitations for democracy, constitutes a form of passive revolution. While revolutions throw old orders away, what has been happening in Africa in terms of these revolutionary ruptures fail to uproot the old order. If anything, each of the ruptures ended with a return and re-establishment of the interests of the old elite or system of rule which undermine democratic rights. Existing accounts of the revolts for democracy present independent analysis of revolutionary experiences without theoretically grounded analysis of their trajectories. In this essay, I explain the failed opportunities for democratic revolutions in the two cases of SLM and Arab Spring using Antonio Gramsci's conceptual framework of passive revolution which explains reverse movement after a sweeping action for change has gained some traction.

In the following sections, I engage passive revolution and justify the trans-historicity of the concept as an analytical framework for Africa's failed efforts at democratic revolutions. Also, I present democratic revolutions and their link with a rights-based perspective of democracy. This is followed by focused narratives on Benin Republic and Congo Democratic Republic for SLM as well as Egypt and Tunisia for Arab Spring regarding the post-revolutionary state of democracy indicators. Finally, I relate revolutionary ruptures that do not yield citizenship rights to passive revolution.

Passive Revolution as a theoretical lens for viewing Major Episodes of Democratic Ruptures in Africa and the Arab World

The revolutionary ferments in Sub-Saharan Africa largely failed to generalise the conditions of democratic citizenship. Also the short life of Arab Spring replicated the experience of post-second liberation movement in SSA. In view of how the character of the state was reproduced by the old ruling forces after the struggles Ndjio (2008) describes the SSA experiences as despotic adjustment, while Durac (2013) applies Heydeman's concept of 'authoritarian upgrading' to express the developments following the Arab Spring. Authoritarian upgrading denotes where political openings do not have real impacts in power holding. Instead, authoritarian governance is reconfigured to accommodate changing political and social conditions. Of course the post-revolutionary setting reflects a return of the old established elites who are reasserting their interests and are well placed to secure undemocratic advantages.

Gramsci's (1971) metanarrative on passive revolution offers a useful explanatory framework for understanding the contours of the waves of democratisation in SSA and Arab countries. Before applying this explanatory resource, it is needful to express the caution of Callinicos (2010) about over-stretching the limits of the concept of passive revolution. This caution draws from Lakatos idea of 'concept stretching' which means extending the scope of a concept beyond what was originally intended for it. In a sense, Callinicos is being wary of trans-historical validity of Gramsci's concept of passive revolution. However, this worry is well addressed by Morton (2010) who observed that Gramsci's work is a modification and enrichment of other sources including Vincenzo Cuoco and Edgar Quinet who did earlier works on passive revolution. Hence Morton holds that the concept can be refined and applied for accounting for various aspects of passive revolution including the economic political and ideological aspects. Thus, Gramsci's project of interpreting the political economy of capitalist restructuring using passive revolution and other resources does not preclude the use of the underlying logic of the concept as done in this paper, to explicate the reproduction of domination by old ruling forces after contestations by contrasting forces. This particular application of passive revolution is aware that Gramsci applied it to explain transition to capitalism that does not involve revolutionary ruptures. In this paper I use passive revolution to focus on the effects of the second independence movement and Arab Spring on citizenship rights and democratisation.

Passive revolution originated with Vincenzo Cuoco who used it to describe lack of mass participation in the Neapolitan revolution of 1799 and the external origins of the revolution. He later advocated it as preferable to violent ones involving popular masses like the French model. Gramsci later used the expression in two distinct ways, first as a revolution without mass participation and as a molecular social transformation which takes place beneath the surface of society in situations where the progressive forces cannot advance openly (Gramsci, 1971). Also, Gramsci expressed passive revolution as a transitional compromise. Such compromise is understood in terms of concessions made by the ruling group to create an impression of change but does not necessarily alter their position in the structure of domination. In applying passive revolution to the analysis of Italian Risorgimento Gramsci sees the country's road to modernity as molecular and

gradual instead of consisting of explosive ruptures. It involved small reforms and concessions that deflected far-reaching structural transformations. Indeed, at some points in Gramsci's analysis passive revolution is conflated with reformism (De Smet, 2014).

The sense in which passive revolution is adapted and applied to the explication of the outcomes of the democratic struggles of the second independence movement and Arab Spring is one which focuses the end of the ferments that failed to give rise to the substantive aim of the revolutions which is normally to remove the existing dominant group in order to establish popular sovereignty. A true revolution according to Trotsky must end in "the forcible entrance of the masses in the realm of rulership over their own destiny"(cited in De Smet, 2014, p. 12). It is doubtful that this *Trotskyian* thesis was the case with SLM and Arab Spring.

The Republic of Benin, Niger, Togo, Congo DR and other countries where SLM happened in Africa witnessed initial popular determination by way of agitations and in some cases it included the framing of constitutions that would lead to overall democratic development of society. Benin had made initial progress during the sovereign national conference by conducting a free deliberation and an election that led to a regime change. Niger Republic initially had a trajectory similar to Benin. However, it suffered a setback with a military coup in 2010 and more recently an attempted return of the military to politics in 2021. Three main issues of poor economy, ethnic divisions and divisions in the country's military have been constant sources of challenge to democracy in Niger Republic (Ajala, 2021). Nzongola-Ntalaja's (1997) account of Congo DR also indicates similar poor outcomes for democracy. This is because the ownership and control of the state has not shifted to forces that are committed to the democratic rights of the citizens. Political power in most of the post-second liberation movement states continue to be applied to protect the interests of elites with questionable commitment to democracy.

In the case of Arab Spring, the post liberation politics points to tactical re-emergence of the old ruling forces to reclaim political domination. Indeed an Egyptian senior official is quoted to have qualified the removal of Mubarak as a consensus (De Smet, 2014). Such a consensus had less to do with the crowd that agitated in Tahir square and more with the ruling forces in the country who were no longer satisfied with his rule. Durac's (2013) analysis sees Hosni Mubarak's resignation as a move orchestrated by the politicized Egyptian military leadership to assume the control of government and oversee the transition to a new civilian regime. Thus, the electoral victory of Mohammed Morsi and his short term presidency were strategically allowed to unfold that way by the old dominant forces. His regime failed to address the fundamental reasons for the revolution like poverty and unemployment, lack of political freedoms and drift towards autocracy. Besides, Morsi's act of granting himself absolute executive and legislative powers in 2012 (Spencer, 2012) revived the disengagement between state and citizen. These pitfalls and the connection of Morsi with radical Islamism together with distrust by the Egyptian army laid the background for his removal. Thus when a mass demonstration against him took place in June 2013, the military promptly removed Morsi. In all, while the revolution momentarily stopped the strictures of entry and exit into political competition, it was a mere short-term disruption of the powers of the old guards which they were quick to recover through the military coup led by General Al-Sisi.

In Tunisia, Ben Ali lost power, but the three elements of the machinery of repression of the Ali regime survives in the post-revolutionary period. They include the secret police, the old guard of the former ruling party and businessmen corrupted by working with the regime (Chrisafis, Viner and Gardiner, 2011). Morocco effectively captured the mass action by taking quick measures such as constitutional reforms and wage increase (see Zemni et al., 2013) to deflect the revolution.

The crux of the argument here is that SLM and Arab Spring represent the specificities of passive revolution which has to do with adjustment of the dominant forces to absorb major upheavals without altering their fundamental interests or reclaiming such interests after a period of brief concession. Compromises in terms of formal institutional or regime changes reflect strategic relational nature of the state (cf Jessop, 2008). In SLM and Arab Spring states, we can understand the ruptures between oppositional forces that demand transformation and the ruling forces that continually reinvent their power on the state through the lens of Gramsci's idea that:

> a crisis cannot give the attacking forces the ability to organise with lightning speed in time and space; still less can it endow them with fighting spirit. Similarly, the defenders are not demoralized, nor do they abandon their positions, even among the ruins, nor do they lose their faith in their own strength or their own future.(Gramsci, 1971, p. 235)

Generalized democratic movement in SSA and the Middle East represented crises for the ruling groups. The emerging patterns regarding the rescue of the high stakes of the old ruling groups via momentary compromise towards electoral democracy and the embedding of their dominance in the new institutions point to a recomposition of domination in a classic *Bonapartist* style.

Democratic Revolution as the Foundation of the Rights-Based notion of Democracy (Democratic Citizenship)

There are two typical ways to view democratic revolutions. The dominant perspective is the successful change of the political regime. The sense behind this notion of democratic revolution is that when a former repressive power or system comes to an end and a new one which purports to resonate the will of people is in place and offers an opportunity for movement towards democracy. Thompson (2004, P1) represents this school of thought in his conception of democratic revolution as "spontaneous popular uprisings – peaceful, urban-based and cross-class in composition – which topple unyielding dictators and begin a transition process which leads to the consolidation of democracy." This rendering of the concept represents some of the more recent mass explosions in demand of democratic freedom. It narrowly focuses on regime change and gradual institutional transitions towards liberal democracy. This approach is certainly correct to the extent that the upheavals of great revolutions of the past are frightening to contemplate. However, it does not enable the reader to see democracy in terms of a broad system of rights and duties between citizen and state and even how those rights came about.

The second approach which is a view of democratic revolution from a historical perspective is far broader that secondary mass agitations presented in the above conception. Great historical revolutions for democracy like the English, French and American Revolutions. were important boiling over of conflicts between emerging bourgeois forces and old monarchical traditions. At the very core, they were demands for political rights of participation, civil rights and rights of property protection. Such rights cut across the great revolutions mentioned above.

Later revolutions after the English, American and French ones like the 1905 Russian Revolution, 1910 Portuguese Revolution, 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia among others also converge at the point of demand for political and economic inclusion of the ordinary citizen. The core of agitations in the revolutions is a society in which the voices of ordinary people and their welfare not only matter in governance but are made central concerns of the institutions and practice of democracy. The centrality of citizen interest has been the concern of democratic theory.

Mindful of the essential guarantees of rights to citizens in democracy, Dahl expressed the agentive status of citizens in a democracy with the five features of 1. equal and adequate opportunity to set the agenda and express policy preferences 2. Voting equality at the decisive state of decision making 3. Equal and adequate opportunities to develop an enlightened understanding of policy options 4. Control of its own political agenda; 5. Inclusiveness (Gastil, 1994). Although these elements of the democratic citizen are well illuminated by Dahl, they are expressed as though the qualities are attributes that could be acquired by mere desires. On the contrary, certain institutional conditions are necessary to enable the political system to imbue the citizens with the skills of approaching political objects. In this regard, education of the citizen is an irreducible minimum for enabling him/her primarily to make a decent living, understand policy options, engage in enlightened democratic deliberation and ipso facto, achieve the confidence of controlling the political agenda. Besides, the skills of citizenship, the health of body and mind is useful for the meaningful exercise of this citizenship agency.

In all, a regime of rights is necessary to support educational opportunities and maintain conditions for democratic citizenship. Ventriss (2012) pulled together the views of several writers to achieve a broader conception of democratic citizenship and summarizes its features as: (a) Involvement of citizens in the determination of the conditions of their association (involving an assumption of respect for the authentic and reasoned culture of individual judgements); (b) expansion of economic opportunity to maximize the availability of resources (involving an assumption that when individuals are free from the burdens of unmet physical needs they are best able to realise their ends); (c) an emphasis on public spaces where the citizenry can deliberate, act, judge and choose. The above elements provide scope for the achievement of democratic citizenship and actually comes close to T.H Marshal who definitively constituted them as rights to be extended to citizens of a political community.

Marshal's thesis on citizenship argues that it consist of political, civil and social elements (Marshall, 1997). The civil element of citizenship is made up of rights necessary for individual freedom including the liberty of person, free speech, thought and faith, right to own property and conclude valid agreements and the right to justice. The political

element encompasses the right to vote and also aspire to and contest for political positions. The social element which translates to social justice is expressed by Marshall as the whole range of right to economic welfare and security and the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standard prevailing in the society. Marshal's thesis embodies the duties and guarantees of the political community to the citizen and also represents a pact upon which the political community draws legitimation and loyalty of its members and also a basis of demands by such members upon the community (Nwosu, 2021). Revolutionary pressures across history have been driven by aspirations for these range of rights.

An emerging trend on democracy assessment is beginning to reckon with these elements as being foundational to democracy. For instance, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) has evolved a democracy evaluation template that also assess the components of Marshall's democratic citizenship. Their Global State of Democracy (GSoD) indices are aggregated from 116 individual indicators drawn from 12 different data sources. All scoring runs from 0 to 1. 0 represents the lowest achievement while 1 is the highest. The basis of the GSoD indices is that democracy is based on popular control and political equality. The five core pillars of democracy which the GSoD gives thrust are: 1. fundamental rights (access to justice, civil liberties social rights and equality). 2. Representative government (clean elections, inclusive suffrage, free political parties, elected government. 3. Checks on government (Media integrity, judicial independence, effective parliament. 4. Participatory engagement (civil society participation, electoral participation, direct democracy, local democracy. 5. Impartial administration (Predictable enforcement, absence of corruption) (IDEA, 2022). It is interesting that this framework integrates both institutional dimensions of democracy and its effects on citizens (rights) which are the focus of Marshall.

Most of the writings on SLM and Arab Spring point to demands for the rights of citizenship and the nature of institutions that ought to protect those rights. These rights are variously expressed as political freedoms and social justice (Alia, 2011; Dixon, 2011; Durac, 2013; Mansfield and Snyder, 2012; Tessler et al., 2012; Volpi, 2013; Winckler, 2013; Zemni et al., 2013). Both the second independence movements in Africa and the Arab Spring were democratic struggles expressing the position of the citizen as "the centrepiece of the democratic ideal and efforts at democratic reform" (Gastil, 1994, p. 3). In that connection, the directions of these struggles can be best assessed around the convergence of political practice with these elements of democratic citizenship.

**The Second Independence Movement in Sub-Saharan Africa**

In analysing democracy movement in Africa, Ake (2003) held that it rose in the colonial times as a result of demands of indigenous elite for political incorporation. This need of the elite achieved a nexus with the mass demand for economic incorporation and led to a synergy of class forces against colonialism with an expectation that the victory would result in democracy. At the achievement of independence, the political elite not only abandoned the expectations of the masses but engaged in perverse political practices such as personalization of power and perpetuation of their political rule. A number of African leaders established one party states and justified it with a mix of Marxist rhetoric and the

flawed cultural logic of cohesiveness of African society that is at variance with pluralism and competition for leadership. It was common to reinforce the personalisation of power with a systematic control of the armed services. Another common tendency among such autocratic incumbents was to share power with a small circle of loyalists. A state of disjuncture between political practice and democracy that prevailed under these conditions created an uneasy encounter between the state and citizens in most of post-colonial Africa, thus laying a background for revolutionary pressures. The eventual explosion of the liberation impulses elicited two strategies of response from African political leaders. Ake (2003) expressed these response strategies as accommodationist and preventive ones. With accommodationist strategy, some African leaders indicated willingness in varying degrees to accommodate democratic changes while preventive strategy was applied by leaders desperate to repel pressures for democratisation.

Republic of Benin led by Matthew Kerekou was one of the cases of response to democratic struggles by accommodation. In the 1980s the country suffered severe economic depression to the point that the one party state could not pay workers' salaries. President Kerekou resorted to external sources of funding and was advised by the would-be funders to adopt pluralism and liberal economic policies. Unwilling to accept such conditions, Kerekou, convened a national conference that was to discuss the major aspects of the country's political and economic life. The radical step taken by Kerekou produced even a more radical outcome because when the conference convened in February 1990, the delegates declared the conference a sovereign one, a status which implies that it had become the ultimate power to make public decisions. The national conference therefore became Benin National Assembly, annulled the old constitution and elected a Prime Minister, Nicephore Soglo to head a transitional government. After the conference, a multi-party election was held in March 1991, in which Soglo defeated Kerekou in a presidential election. It was due to the maturity of President Kerekou and his accomodationist disposition to the popular forces that he refused the pressure from his military loyalists to end the conference with force (Ake, 2003).

In the five criteria of GSoD democracy assessment, Benin had shown promise since the SLM of the 1990. However, it is recently rolling back on the GSoD indices, particularly since the current leader started meddling with the electoral institutions by altering the regulatory framework to narrow the participatory space of the opposition, limiting the media reportage and co-opting the judicial arm of the government (Duerkson, 2021). With the systematic weakening of institutions, impartial administration and checks on government also became challenged. Until the regime of Patrice Talon since 2016, Benin was one of the few African countries ranked free for many years by Freedom House assessment of civil and political rights. Progress on social rights is also limited due to weak resource base and widespread poverty.

Fig1. Benin Republic Scores on Global State of Democracy Indicators 2013 to 2022.
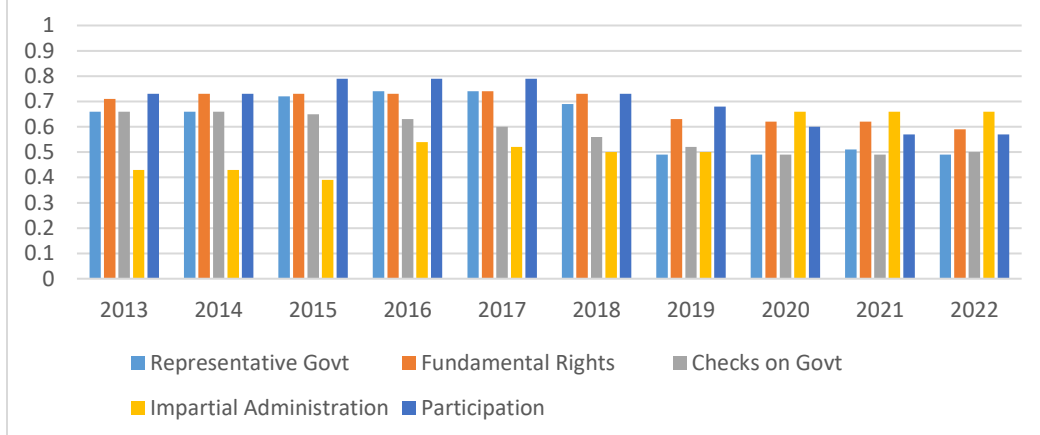
The experiences of Congo DR, in the effort to reconstitute the state like Benin Republic was unsuccessful. This failure is connected with the preventive strategies of the political leadership of the country. In the case of Congo DR, a Sovereign National Conference took place between July 1991 and December 1992. The conference which was chaired by Archbishop Laurent Mosengwo comprised 2842 delegates representing all the relevant sociopolitical forces in the country. Some of the outcomes of the conference represent peaceful but revolutionary effort at democratic recomposition of the state. For instance, in August 1992, the conference stripped the President of the country at the time, the late Mobutu Sese Seko of all executive powers. Also, it gave itself a legislative mandate, elected a prime minister and systematically began the process of removing the discredited regime of Mobutu by setting up a power-sharing institutional framework for a two-year transition to democracy (see Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997). However, Mobutu took a pre-emptive step against his removal by creating a rival government with its own Prime Minister. A compromise government which still had Mobutu as Head of State was later created out of the two groups to serve as a transitional regime. Ultimately, the Presidential and Parliamentary elections that were repeatedly scheduled over the next two years did not take place. The continuing preventive posture by President Mobutu against democratisation over the next five years deepened mass disenchantment and gave further impetus to anti-regime forces to stage a successful military campaign that removed Mobutu from power and pave way for the emergence of Laurent Kabila (now deceased) as the leader of Congo DR. Democratic institutions were not established under Laurent Kabila. When he was assassinated on January 16, 2001, Kabila's succession by Joseph Kabila, his son, became a twenty first century precedent on hereditary succession in a republic (Nwosu, 2012).

Subsequently, elections in Congo DR have been characterized by violence and vote rigging except in 2019 when it had the first transfer of power that was relatively peaceful (BTI Transformation Index, 2022). Even in that election, transparency was undermined by

the refusal to permit international bodies from observing the elections. Besides, there were severe logistic challenges in that election (BTI Transformation Index, 2022). Other markers of representative government like civil rights, social rights, political rights (fundamental rights) fall below critical line on the Global State of Democracy Indices (GSoD). Also, there is limited checks on government as the judiciary is largely controlled by power holders. In the entire five criteria of democracy, Congo DR is ranked quite low and none is up to 0.50 on a scale of zero to one. The country was not only embroiled in conflicts for many years, the post-conflict period is characterized by corruption in government which limits impartial administration, increases poverty and leaves basic services at dismal conditions. Religious organisations sometimes make limited intervention on such basic services. Overall, Congo DR lives far below the motivations of the SLM.

Fig 2. Congo Democratic Republic Scores on Global State of Democracy Indicators 2013 - 2022
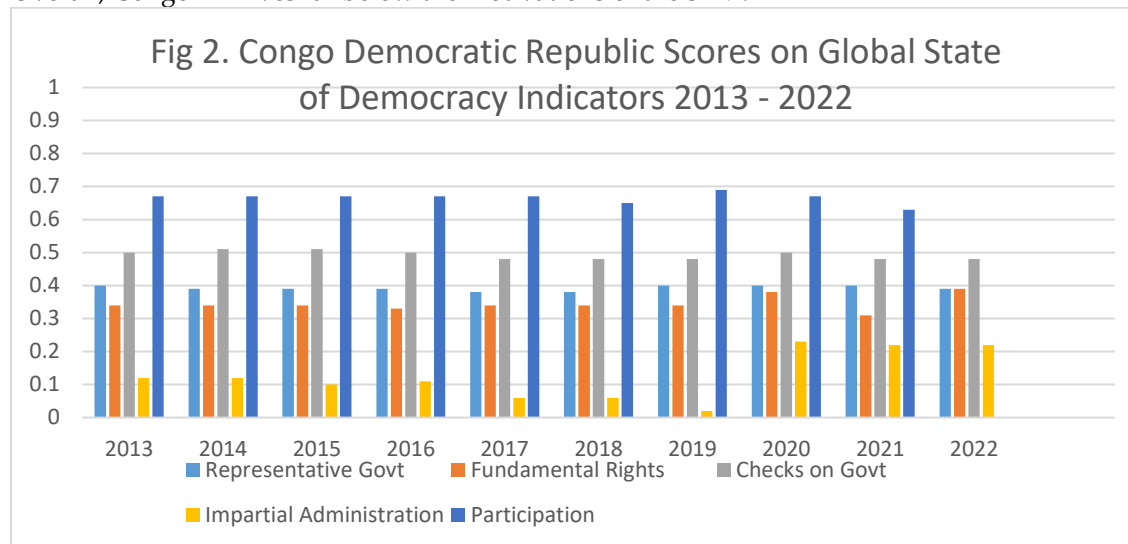
Enter the Arab Spring
Similar to the 1848 revolutions in Europe and North America, the Spring of the Arab world was a contagion that woke societies from many years of tyranny (Ishay, 2013). In Tunisia where the revolutions started, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali came to power via a coup by which he deposed President Habib Bourguiba in 1987 (Ware,1987). His initial years in power saw a number of changes in the country such as amnesty for political prisoners, abolition of state security courts and life presidency. His leadership also opened the space for political associations. Neo-Destour Party which had ruled Tunisia since 1956 was reformed into Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique (RCD). Through some design, RCD won all the parliamentary seats. Efforts by the opposition to challenge Ben Ali were too little to be of significance. After 1991, Ben Ali and his party RCD went largely unchallenged as he won large majorities in subsequent elections. In the later part of the regime, Ben Ali and his wife's family (Trabelsi family) treated the Tunisian economy as their personal property (Stepan and Linz, 2013). Increasingly, coercive force was projected against the opposition.

In the last ten years before the Arab Spring, socio-economic conditions have declined with a significant increase in unemployment amidst heavy corruption revolving around the Ben Ali – Trabelsi network. Also the dirty job of civilian suppression was done by the police (Stepan and Linz, 2013). The build-up of mass resentment found a vent in the encounter between public authorities and Mohammed Bouazzizi, a vegetable vendor who was denied the chance to ply his trade and in frustration set himself on fire. Bouazzizi became a symbol of the circumstance of the masses whose anger led to an extreme form of revolt. Democracy therefore became the rallying cry of the oppressed in Tunisia beginning with a successful ending of Ben Ali dictatorship through the revolution.

The story of Egypt comes within the purview of the summary of the chain of uprisings in the Arab world caused by "polarisation of incomes, rising food prices, lack of dwellings, massive unemployment of educated and uneducated"(Anderson, 2011, p. 10). The clout of the military in Egypt's politics has remained constant since the military coup of Nasser in 1952. Hosni Mubarak who comes from the military constituency is the second in succession to Nasser after Col. Anwar Sadat who was assassinated in 1981. The National Democratic Party founded by Sadat in 1976 had dominated the country's political life until the 1990s when the Islamists began to gain popularity especially by winning elections into the board of syndicates that governed various professions. Electoral fraud became common place in the 1990s with the ruling NDP winning questionable victories (Durac, 2013).

Beyond dominating the political decision-making processes, there was the more fundamental issue of the collapse of the social contract which had been governing state-society relations since Nasser's coup in the 1950s. The contract according Kandil (2011) involved a tacit exchange in which the regime provided free education, employment in an expanding public sector, affordable healthcare, cheap housing and other forms of social protection in return for obedience. The eroding of this elements which touch the lives of ordinary citizens as Kandil argues, was a function of neoliberalisation. At the same time, human rights abuses against opposition was intensified. Pockets of protest against human rights abuses had been taking place in Egypt in spite of state effort to supress rights groups. When an internet based opposition group called 'we are all Khaled Said' called for mass protests in January 25, 2011, there was a turnout of about 20,000. The massive response to the call and the fall of Ben Ali regime in Tunisia further emboldened the opposition in Egypt to make demands not only for the end of Mubarak rule, but also for democratic reforms.(Kandil, 2011)

In a bid to preserve the dominance of the ruling clique, the military oligarchy supported the end of Mubarak rule while the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), assumed power on February 11 2011, a day after the resignation of Mubarak. The democratic transition led to the emergence of Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood as the president in May 2012. He tried to meddle with the hierarchy of the military high command in SCAF by dismissing Field Marshall, Hussein Tantawi, the leader of SCAF who led Egypt's transition after the resignation of Mubarak. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was appointed the new head of the military (see Aftandilian, 2013). This particular interference with the affairs of the military was not well received by the military high command. Morsi had set his regime up for a grave consequence when he declared in November 2012 that his decisions were no longer subject to judicial reviews. The

declaration combined with the inability of his presidency to address the core issues of democratic governance like rights abuses, unemployment, energy problems and macro-economic deficits to spark off massive demonstrations. Simultaneously, pro-regime elements demonstrated in support of Morsi. This development created another alibi for direct military intervention in the political process.

During the protests in June 2013, the military gave Morsi an ultimatum to restore order within 48 hours. When the deadline expired, he was removed by the military while Adly Mansour, the head of the supreme constitutional court was appointed the interim president. During the preparation for the next election, General Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, former head of the armed forces who declared after the removal of Morsi that the military had no interest in running the country,(see Aftandilian, 2013) resigned from his position to contest the election in May 2014. Ultimately he won with more than 90 percent of the votes. The emergence of al-Sisi as Egypt's leader in the election that followed military removal of Morsi can be viewed as a strategic re-confiscation of the political space by old ruling forces that merely retreated at the peak of the Arab Spring ferment.

More than ten years after Arab Spring, Egypt is under the effective capture of an authoritarian government and ruling group. On a scale of 0 to 1, her average ten-year score on the Global State of Democracy indicators include 0.30 for representative government, 0.45 for fundamental rights, 0.45 for checks on government, 0.32 for impartial administration and 0.42 for participation. These ranking are not only bad, but suggests that Arab Spring has no visible short to medium term effects on the development of democracy. Egyptians who spoke to Sly (2021) suggest that the Arab Spring did not achieve anything and that the conditions that ignited the revolution still persist in Egypt. They believe that coercive dictatorship still define political relations in the country. Rising poverty amidst population growth, unemployment and general despair captures the live experience of young people in the country. Youth unemployment had risen from 32.9 percent in 2012 to 39. 5 percent in 2020. Apart from worsening economic indicators, people are cowed into silence (Sly, 2021).

Political representation in Egypt is a complex one because it is typical of the so-called competitive authoritarianism because General Al-Sisi who overthrew Morsi later contested a self-fulling prophesy kind of election and won. Participatory space is narrow and government is yet to deepen an impartial system of administration. From the figure below, the consistency of the pattern across the years on democracy referents indicates that no major change has taken place.

Fig 3. Egypt Scores on Global State of Democracy Indicators 2013 - 2022
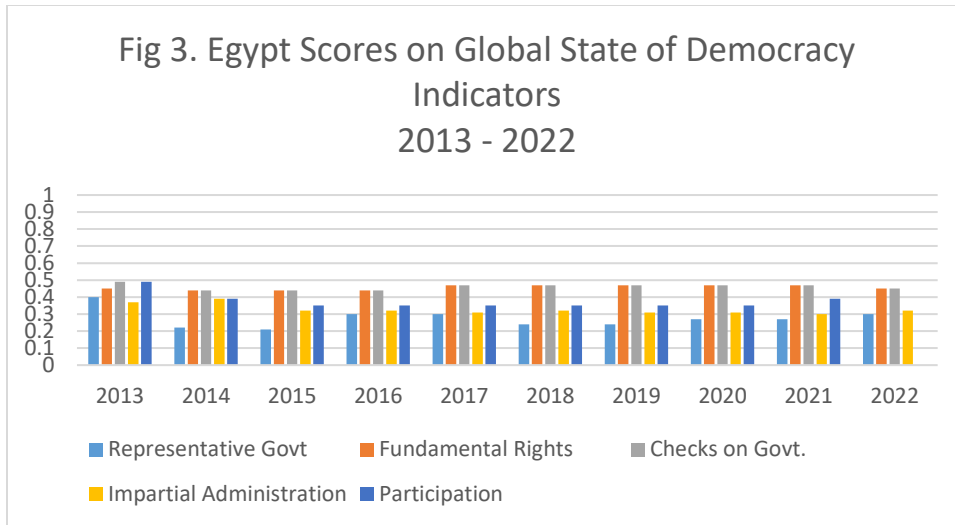
In the case of Tunisia, ten years after the revolution, three major areas are referred as consisting its achievement, firstly, the rewriting of the constitution, secondly, free speech and open criticism of the government and thirdly, peaceful democratic transitions (Yerkes and Mbarek, 2021). These three achievements align with progress in representative government, fundamental rights and participation. Another factor that is in sync with participation is the liberalized spaces for civic organising evidenced by the organisation of national dialogues by group of civil society leaders. This act earned the civic groups the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. In fact, strong civil society is an important referent for growing participation. However, the General Labour Union in the country is of the opinion that part of the goals of the revolution that are yet to be achieved include social justice, lower unemployment, and regional equality (Yerkes and Mbarek, 2021). Deficit in these elements are important setbacks to fundamental rights. Besides, impartial administration is not possible in the face of corruption about which 78 percent of Tunisians in a survey still suggest is a problem that negatively impacts their lives. Further blights to impartial administration include nepotism in public institutions, bribery in the police, hospitals and schools (see Yerkes and Mbarek, 2021). Corroborating this view, another perspective by Abderrahmane (2021) suggests that vestiges of the old regime still persists as Islamist Ennahda party and their religious views are disseminated with coercive methods like the Ben Ali regime. In any case, continuing struggles are helping to stop potential excesses of the party. For instance, Gouvy (2021) reports that in 2012, women parliamentarians defeated an attempt by members of Islamist party Ennahdha to enshrine women's "complementarity" to men, instead of "equality", in the country's new constitution. In 2020, there was a specific provision against preventing women from entering politics while women secured 47 percent of seats in local elections.

In spite of impressive indications of progress, Tunisia which was considered the only democratic success of Arab Spring started sliding back to autocracy in July 2021 when a nationwide protest against government's policy in COVID_19 made President Kais Saied

take over the running of the government by dismissing the Prime Minister and the Parliament as well as announcing the suspension of the 2014 Constitution. A new constitution which was later published in Tunisia's official gazette on June 2022 introduced forty-six amendments (Amara, 2022). A referendum was later organized to approve the constitution but about 70 percent of registered voters boycotted it. This development virtually returned Tunisia to the pre-Arab Spring days, undercuts GSoD's high rating of the country in participation and has frittered away important democratic gains of that revolution.

Fig 4. Tunisia Global State of Democracy Scores 2013 to 2022
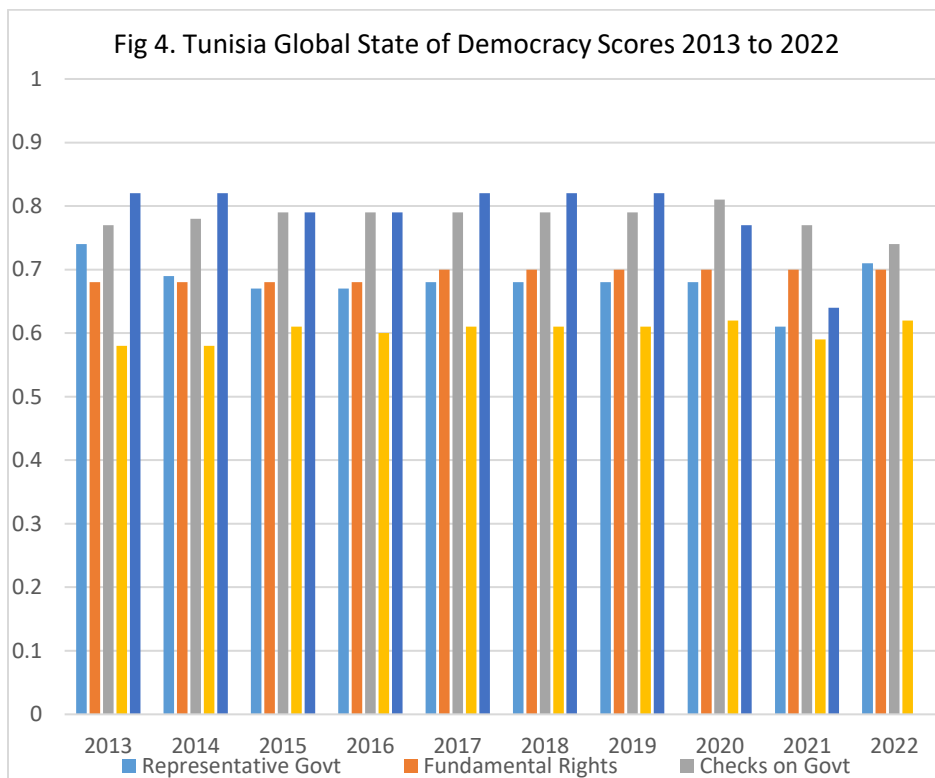
Passive Revolution and Democratisation in SLM and Arab Spring States
In the above examined instances, the main issue of initial success at the point of the revolution is the disposition of the military. The decision of the military to back a regime, stay neutral or support revolutionary agitators is crucial for successful removal of the regime in power. In a comparative case study of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, Barany (2011) found that in the pair of Tunisia and Egypt, the soldiers tacit backing of the revolution by refusing to intervene in rescue of the regime gave the revolutionaries initial success. The military in Libya and Yemen were divided and other variables like external intervention and strength of the revolutionary forces became decisive for the outcomes in those states. In Bahrain and Syria, the soldiers stuck with the regimes and fought down the revolution to retain the statusquo. Further studies of revolutionary survival by Degaut (2019) links military support to the success of five

revolutions in Portugal in 2010, Venezuela 1958, South Korea 1960, Czechoslovakia 1989 and Yugoslavia 2000. The study also reveals the absence of military support in the failed revolutions in Russia 1905, China 1989, and the failed coup in Turkey in 2016.

In the present study Benin's success in ending the regime of Matthew Kerekou was because the president had an accommodationist disposition towards democratic forces (see Ake, 2003). He could have successfully deployed his military supporters against the activists. Also in Congo DR, the military was hardly in support of the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko due to poor work conditions which was already a source of discontent in the army. So, they allowed the second liberation movement (SLM) to succeed in the first instance.

In the Arab Spring, Tunisia had a professional military which was not quick to be involved in politics. So they refused to be mobilized for any political role during the uprising. Egypt had a politically active army which supported the revolution not because they wanted it to succeed, but wanted an end to Mubarak's long rule and were tacitly unhappy about his hereditary succession plan.

In our four countries of focus, none has been able to have a record of sustained development of democracy. Two instances each from the two revolutionary moments (Benin and Tunisia) represented important promises for progress but have started backsliding. Benin Republic, though a very poor country made substantial progress on civil and political rights until they were recently undermined by the sitting President Talon who is alleged to be using the judiciary against political opposition. After making progress for a few years, Tunisia once again entered the trajectory of executive tyranny via the use of presidential powers to squelch other arms of government. Congo DR and Egypt continued to revolve around the conditions that led to the revolutions for democracy. In Egypt, authoritarian rule maintains reasonable stability while Congo DR continues with a fragile stability.

Beyond initial successes, the real reason for lack of democratic renewal is the non-transference of democratic agency on the citizens. Citizenship agency happens when the ruling elite accept and abide by the norms of the democratic practice. The difference between the citizenship that was engendered by SLM and Arab Spring on the one hand and the great revolutions like French, English and American Revolutions is that the leadership of the latter created an ideological framework for bourgeois democracy which serves the interest of the ruling group. However, in framing this ideological order, they made it appear like it is an order that serves everyone equally. In doing so and in creating a regime of equal political rights and encouragement of citizen participation, the citizen felt a sense of belonging and agency in the new democratic order. More importantly, the ruling group that is served by the new system also play a watchdog role for preventing it from backsliding either through forceful takeover of political power or accumulation of power by a single individual. Thus any attack on democracy is collectively seen as an attack on a common shared values. In response to such attacks, members of dominant and subaltern groups jointly repel such attacks.

It is under a condition of collective agency for democracy that democratic institutions show resilience. This is well articulated by Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) who argue that the two core conditions for the survival of democracy are mutual toleration and institutional

forbearance. For mutual toleration, those who wield political power are to learn the norms of not using it to the detriment of other actors in the political space. These two rules of democracy' are flouted in all the four cases of Benin, Congo DR, Egypt and Tunisia. The very core of the problem is that because citizens where relegated to the margins of power and elites share no consensus about the rule of the democratic game. Hence, when powerful political actors find opportunity, they engage in accretion of personal or oligarchic powers that undermine democracy and reverse the gains of revolutionary struggles. When such reversal happens after major revolutionary ruptures for democratisation, it is called passive revolution.

Conclusion

This paper sets out to apply Antonio Gramsci's concept of passive revolution to the explanation of reversals to massive action for democratic transformations in the second liberation movement of the 1990s in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab Spring in Middle East and North Africa. Passive revolution is an adjustment mechanism through political reforms to stave off sweeping changes from mass action or the successful return to power by the old ruling forces through strategic and tactical manoeuvres that undermine and supplant the gains of revolutionary forces after their initial success in regime change and political transformations. The latter notion of the concept is genre that is found to play out in the entire instances of Benin, Congo Democratic Republic that underwent the second liberation struggles as well and Tunisia and Egypt in the Arab Spring experience. Their initial revolutionary successes in the entire cases is tied to the unwillingness of the military to intervene on behalf of the government.

While there were efforts to set up formal democratic regimes in the specified countries, Benin was successful and made initial gains. However, these gains could not be sustained due to lack of democratic norms of toleration for the right of the citizens, rights of opposition and the misapplication of the institutions of democracy like the judiciary to serve a regime interest. Congo DR merely established regimes of elections that in most cases did not pass the scrutiny of free and fair elections. Egypt's democratic election was only a short stop gap between the revolution and forceful return to power by the military. The opportunity to return was presented by the Morsi regime by their inclination towards radical Islamism, continuing public unrest and Morsi's accretion of wide powers to himself. Thus, when the opportunity came, the soldiers were quick to remove Morsi and end the initial gain of Arab Spring in Egypt. Tunisia was the shining star of democratic gains of Arab Spring until ten years after when the President interfered with the constitution and demolished the democratic gains of the constitutional dialogue of 2014, thus returning the country to the form that led to the revolution. In the entire instances, the pre-revolutionary ruling styles re-emerged and diminished the referents of democracy ranging from quality of political representation, fundamental rights that includes social rights, checks on government, impartiality in governance and participation. Overall, they are classic cases of passive revolution.

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