The Role of Trade Unions in Sub-Saharan Africa in Defending and Promoting Democracy

Johann Maree
Emeritus Professor of Sociology
University of Cape Town
Cape Town, Western Cape
South Africa

johann.maree@uct.ac.za
July 2012

The Role of Trade Unions in Sub-Saharan Africa in Defending and Promoting Democracy

Johann Maree

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa has thus far not achieved a good track record at establishing and consolidating democratic regimes. A typical phenomenon has been for the liberation movements that led the struggle for independence against former colonial rulers during the 1960s became the ruling parties in the newly independent countries. These countries usually started off with democratic constitutions and institutions. However, in many cases the ruling parties and their presidents undermined and dispensed with the democratic institutions and practices in order to entrench themselves as autocratic, even dictatorial regimes.

This has led Michael Bratton, a leading scholar on democracy in Africa, to say:
> 'It may seem odd to couple the words "democracy" and "Africa" in the same sentence. After all, the international news media portray the Sub-Saharan sub-continent as a terrain of autocratic government and failed states.' (Bratton, 2009:339)

However, there has been a turnabout in African politics over the past 20 odd years:
> 'Since 1990 the rate of democratization has been faster in Sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region of the world except the communist bloc. … The 1990s were a decade of democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa.' (Bratton, 2009:340)

Bratton advances two major reasons for the wave of democratization in many African countries. The principal one is 'because ordinary Africans began to demand greater accountability from their political leaders.' The second encapsulates a wide variety of 'other factors': 'There were rare historical conjunctures in which international and economic conditions converged to create the conditions in which protest could momentarily succeed.' (Bratton, 2009:341)

These explanations by Bratton make no specific mention of trade unions and other social forces within the countries that contributed to the democratisation process. As Kraus (2007b:256) has pointed out:
> 'The existing literature on the causes of democratization in Africa and assessments of democratic life under the new regimes tend to ignore entirely the significance of trade unions and other collective actors. … Scholars have tended to focus on their statistical studies of election outcomes, levels of political liberties, and whether voting was "free and fair" as the key determinants of the state of democracy in Africa – that is, the procedural elements of democracy. Obviously, these are crucial, but … the measure of democracy includes the relative responsiveness of governments to claims upon public resources and

access to rule-making institutions by various groups, interest, and collective actors in society. … The real significance of trade unions for democratic life in Africa is that they are virtually the only group representing the popular classes that has continuing organizational influence at the national level and poses challenging question about rights of mass access to public resources.'

In this paper I shall argue that trade unions have played an important role in the transition to democracy as well as the consolidation of democracy in a few African countries. But the fact that there are still countries that remain obstinately autocratic where trade unions have been working hard at achieving a transition to democracy, indicates that trade unions on their own do not ensure the existence of, or transition to, democracy in a country. The reality is more complex than that: there are other forces and conditions that have to be in place for a country to democratize and consolidate its democracy.

The aim of this paper is to to establish what it is that enables unions to become forces for democracy in some countries and what prevents them from playing that role in other countries. In endeavouring to do so it examines eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa in which trade union movements have played quite different roles in contributing to the establishment and maintenance of democracy. In one (Ghana) the trade union movement played a significant role in contributing to the consolidation of democracy; in two countries (South Africa and Zambia) they contributed to the democratization of the regimes, and in two others (Zimbabwe and Swaziland) they have been major players in the struggle to try to put an end to autocratic regimes. In addition three countries (Nigeria, Kenya and Namibia) are examined where trade unions have not managed to play significant roles in the democratisation process.

Before proceeding with this task the paper first clarifies what is meant by certain key concepts. The concepts that are briefly discussed are democracy, democratisation, transition to democracy and consolidation of democracy. Thereupon the paper examines the extent of democracy existent in Africa and adds an additional requirement for the consolidation of democracy in an African context. Having prepared the ground, the paper then proceeds with the eight case studies before drawing its final conclusions.

Clarification of Concepts

Democracy
The literal meaning of democracy is 'rule by the people', but that is not a feasible proposition in any country in the world today. Thus it is necessary to develop a set of criteria to classify a country as democratic or not. First of all it is necessary to bring the state into the concept since it is the way that a country is governed that determines whether it is democratic or not. Two necessary but not sufficient prerequisites for a state to be democratic are the rule of law and free and fair elections. The rule of law ensures that the rulers are held in check by the constitution and courts of law while free and fair elections ensure that the rulers are representative and accountable to the citizenry. (Rose, 2009:12-13)

However, these are minimal requirements for a country to be regarded as democratic and more criteria are considered when discussing transition to and consolidation of democracy below.

Democratisation
By democratisation is meant providing greater space for autonomous working-class and civil society organisation, allowing freedom of expression and protest, the process of acquiring legal safeguards for individuals, as well as open contestation to win control of the government by means of free competitive elections. (Linz and Stepan, 1996:3) This process is reversible, i.e. countries where democratisation has taken place could revert back to authoritarian rule.

Transition to democracy
Transition to democracy refers to completion of the procedures and election of a government that is the direct result of a free and universal vote and has the authority to generate new policies. In addition, there is a separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers. (Linz and Stepan, 1996:3) As with democratisation, this process is reversible, i.e. countries where transition to democracy has taken place could revert back to authoritarian rule again.

Consolidation of Democracy
Consolidation of democracy is different from democratisation and transition to democracy. Linz (1990) has provided a valuable definition of a consolidated democracy. It is

> One in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and that no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers. This does not mean that there are no minorities ready to challenge and question the legitimacy of the democratic process by non-democratic means. It means, however, that the major actors do not turn to them and that they remain politically isolated. To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the "only game in town". (Linz, 1990:158, as cited by de Villiers and Anstey, 2000:35)

Linz and Stepan (1996) have added additional requirements for democracy to be consolidated. Fundamentally, they say, there must be a functioning state. In addition 'five other interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions must also exist or be crafted for a democracy to be consolidated'. These are:

> First, the conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society. Second, there must be a relatively autonomous and valued political society. Third, there must be a rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms and independent associational life. Fourth, there must be a state

bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government. Fifth, there must an institutionalized economic society. (Linz and Stepan, 1996:7)

Even though a consolidation of democracy has been achieved, it does not mean that a regime cannot slide back into less democratic, even authoritarian, rule again.

While this conceptualization of a consolidated democracy and the requirements for it to be achieved are insightful and valid, they have omitted an important criterion that is highly relevant for Africa. In order to arrive at this criterion it is necessary first to examine the extent to which democracy exists in African countries.

Extent of Democracy in Africa

Diamond has pointed out that many regimes in the world can be classified as neither fully democratic nor as totally authoritarian. He calls these hybrid regimes. (Diamond, 2002:21-23) although there has been a surge of democratization in Africa over the past twenty years, it still has a large number of hybrid regimes. Diamond (2002:31, Table 2) classified 48 Sub-Saharan African countries into six categories ranging from fully democratic to completely authoritarian. The classification applied for the end of 2001. In order to bring the information up to date and to show the progress in democratization and transition to democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa the situation at the end of 2011 is also presented in Table 1.[1]

Table 1. Classification of Sub-Saharan African Regimes in 2001 and 2011

Type of Regime	Number of Countries	
	2001	2011
Full Democracy	5	8
Flawed Democracy	9	12
Hybrid	6	2
Competitive Authoritarian	11	9
Hegemonic Authoritarian	10	8
Politically Closed Authoritarian	7	9

Sources: Diamond, 2002:31, Table 2; Bratton et al, 2005:17, Table 1.1; Freedom House, 2012:14-18.

Full democracies are regimes where not only free and fair elections are held regularly, but where civil and political liberties also exist along with a free press even though political leaders do not usually encourage or embrace criticisms. (Bratton et al, 2005:16)

---

[1] The classification for 2011 was derived with the aid of Bratton et al (2005:17, Table 1.1) and Freedom House (2012:14-18). Bratton et al duplicated Diamond's Table 2, but included the Freedom House political rights and civil liberties scores for each country for 2001. Freedom House 2012 was then used to classify countries into Diamond's six categories based on the Freedom House scores allotted to each country. Diamond's terminology has also been changed slightly, but each category still retains much the same meaning.

There also exist independent and relatively effective legislative and judicial institutions that uphold the rule of law. South Africa has led the way with a Constitutional Court that reigns supreme and ensures that all legislation upholds the Constitution and the rights embodied in it. Only five countries were classified as full democracies in 2001, but the number has increased to eight by 2011.

Flawed democracies are regimes that meet minimal democratic standards by holding elections that are usually deemed free and fair, but where civil and political liberties are not secure, especially between elections. Political minorities are often sidelined and complain of neglect and even repression. 'Most importantly,' say Bratton et al (2005:16), 'political power remains concentrated in the hands of executive presidents to the point that significant arenas of decision making lie beyond the control of other elected officials.' Nine countries were included in this category in 2001, but this number has also increased to 12 by 2011.

A large majority of countries were classified as authoritarian of one type or another. Diamond also refers to them as pseudo-democracies in that they use the trappings of formal democratic institutions such as multiparty elections in order to mask the reality of authoritarian domination. (Diamond, 2002:24) Hence countries can hold elections without democracy actually being practiced. The competitive authoritarian regimes have multiparty electoral competitions of some sort, but in the hegemonic ones the democratic institutions are largely facades. (Diamond, 2002:25-26) Twenty one regimes fell into either the competitive or hegemonic authoritarian category in 2001, but this has decreased to 17 by 2011. The politically closed authoritarian regimes are ones where the governments do not even make any pretense at being democratic. They either hold sham elections or come to power through heredity, military coups or armed insurgency. (Bratton et al, 2005:18) The number of completely authoritarian regimes had increased from 7 to 9 between 2001 and 2011, indicating that there has also political deterioration in a couple of countries.

The residual countries, six in 2001 and two in 2011, classified as hybrid could not be placed in either the democratic or the autocratic camp and were truly hybrid regimes.

In summary, out of the 48 regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa the number of countries classified as democratic has increased from 14 to 20 from 2001 to 2011while the number of authoritarian countries decreased from 28 to 26.

Table 2 contains the classification of the regimes of eight Sub-Saharan countries that are discussed later in the paper, The classification is for 2001 and 2011 and shows that some of the regimes became more democratic, others remained the same, while one (Zimbabwe) deteriorated.

Table 2. Classification of Regimes of Eight Countries in 2001 and 2011

Country	Classification of Regime	
	2001	**2011**
Ghana	Flawed democracy	Full democracy
Kenya	Competitive authoritarian	Flawed democracy
Namibia	Flawed democracy	Full democracy
Nigeria	Hybrid	Hybrid
South Africa	Full democracy	Full democracy
Swaziland	Closed authoritarian	Closed authoritarian
Zambia	Hybrid	Flawed democracy
Zimbabwe	Competitive authoritarian	Hegemonic authoritarian

Sources: Bratton et al 2005:17, Table 1.1;   Freedom House, 2012:14-18

In a paper on the democratization process in Sub-Saharan Africa Bratton and Mattes developed a table that classified countries in the sub-continent on their track records as electoral democracies and the fairness of their elections over the period 1996 -2008. They classified eight countries as consistently democratic with free and fair elections, twelve as unreformed autocratic state, and 28 in the "grey zone" between these two extremes. (Bratton and Mattes, 2009:4-9)

The way they classify the eight countries that are examined in this paper is more or less, but not quite the same as the classification based on Freedom House data (Table 3).

Table 3 Classification of Regimes over the period 1996-2008

Classification	Countries
Full democracy	Ghana, Namibia, South Africa
Flawed democracy	Kenya, Zambia
Hegemonic authoritarian	Nigeria
Politically closed authoritarian	Swaziland, Zimbabwe

Source: Bratton and Mattes, 2009:8, Table 3.

Table 3 will be referred to later in the paper.

One-party dominance in Africa
The question arises why so few African countries are truly democratic. While there are numerous reasons for it, one particular reason is being highlighted here because of its preponderance in Africa and relevance to this paper. That reason is the dominance of a single party in a large proportion of African countries so that they effectively are one-party regimes. Frequently these parties are former liberation movements that came to power after their countries achieved independence from colonial rule. Table 4 provides an overview of this phenomenon.

**Table 4. African Legislative-Election Results,
by Ordinal Number of Election, 1989-2006**

Election	Number of Countries	Winning Party % of Seats	2nd Party % of Seats
First	41	62	19
Second	38	68	16
Third	34	65	21
Fourth	21	62	28

Source: Rakner and van de Walle, 2009:110, Table.

It shows that, since 1989, 41 African countries had held at least one legislative election and 21 of these had already conducted a fourth election by the end of 2006. The winning party has consistently enjoyed a comfortable victory, never falling below 62% and even rising above two-thirds of the seats (68%) in the second round of elections. The winning parties are usually the incumbent parties, that is, the parties that are already in power. The Table also shows the weakness of opposition parties in terms of the small proportion of seats held in the legislature by the second largest party. There has, however, been an increase from 19% of the seats in the first election up to 28% in the fourth election. Even so, the low percentage 'illustrates the pervasive weakness of electoral opposition in Africa'. (Rakner and van de Waller, 2009:110)

It is interesting to note that South African electoral results display an even more dominant political party with weaker electoral opposition than for Africa as a whole, as Table 5 demonstrates. In two of the four elections the ruling ANC obtained 66% of the votes and, in one election, 70%, well over two-thirds majority in Parliament. Opposition parties have struggled to gain electoral support with the largest opposition party never achieving above 20% of the seats and falling as low as 10% in the second election.

Table 5. South African post-transformation Election Results

Election	Year	ANC % of seats	2nd Party % of seats	2nd Party
First	1994	63	20	NP
Second	1999	66	10	DP
Third	2004	70	12	DA
Fourth	2009	66	17	DA

Source: http://electionresources.org/za

Consolidation of democracy in an African context
Bearing these facts in mind for Sub-Saharan Africa, it is now possible to arrive at another criterion for the consolidation of democracy in the sub-continent. Mattes specifies three conditions crucial for democratic consolidation. They are a supportive political culture; a growing economy that steadily reduces inequality; and stable and predictable political institutions. (Mattes, 2002:22)

An additional criterion for the consolidation of democracy that can be derived from the foregoing exposition is that an opposition party must actually win a free and fair election and power be transferred peacefully to the new ruling party. A softer version of this condition is that it must be highly feasible and completely possible for the ruling party to lose a free and fair election and transfer power peacefully to an opposition party that won the election. However, it does not mean that once democracy has been consolidated in this way, that it will always remain democratic. The regime has to ensure that democracy remains "the only game in town" and that the institutions and practices that sustain a democracy remain in tact.

Pulling the above discussion on democracy the conditions for the establishment and consolidation of full democracy in an African context is summarized as follows. Some of the conditions could be implicitly contained in other conditions, but in the African context it is worth making them explicit:
- There needs to be regular free and fair elections;
- An opposition party must be able to win an election and take power peacefully;
- There has to be political rights and civil liberties;
- There must be freedom of the press and media;
- There must be freedom of association and the right to protest peacefully;
- There must be separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary;
- There must be rule of law and an independent judiciary;
- There must be a clear separation between the ruling party and the state;
- There must be an effective and functional state able to deliver services, execute the government' policies, and provide the necessary infrastructure for the economy.

Having discussed democracy and derived conditions for the establishment and consolidation of democracy in Africa, the next section considers the extent of democracy in eight Sub-Saharan African countries and the role that trade unions played (or did not play) in enabling, protecting or retarding democratization and the consolidation of democracy.

Democracy in Africa: Role of Trade Unions

Consolidation of democracy where trade unions contributed to democratization
There are very few countries in Africa where the consolidation of democracy has actually taken place according to the above criteria. According to *The Economist* (2012) Mauritius is the only country that is fully democratic in Africa. However, by this paper's criteria Ghana qualifies as a consolidated and full democracy. Furthermore, the trade union movement contributed to this achievement. Although South Africa is classified as a fully democratic country it has not yet achieved the consolidation of democracy by this paper's criteria. On the other hand, in Zambia an opposing political party has removed a former

liberation movement from power in a free election, but it has remained a flawed democracy.

Ghana
In the case of Ghana the Trade Union Congress (TUC) fought for its independence and worker rights for over 40 years. The unions were influential politically at the time of independence of Ghana in 1957. They were in alliance with Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) and managed to get the pro-union Industrial Relations Act passed in 1957 that granted TUC a monopoly role. It had the power to certificate unions that had to affiliate to it. By the end of Nkrumah's rule there were tensions between the TUC and CPP with the government controlling the trade union movement.

In 1966 there followed a series of military coups interspersed with brief democratic rules in-between. During this time the TUC experienced fluctuating fortunes, falling in and out of favour with regimes. (Akwetey and Dorkenoo, 2010:39,43) The military coup that lasted longest and had the most severe impact on unions was the one in 1981 by Jerry Rawlings and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). It set up Workers' Defence Committees (WDCs) that challenged unions and management in the workplace. Throughout the period that Rawlings and the PNDC ruled the unions had to fight hard to maintain their leadership role in the workplace and their autonomy and independence as organisations.

In 1992 there was a return to civilian rule with the passage of a democratic constitution that ensured freedom of association for workers and trade unions. This ended the monopoly TUC had over the certification and affiliation of unions.

In 2003 the Labour Act (Act 651) was passed that replaced the IR Act of 1965. The Act ensured freedom of association, met business' requirement to clarify labour relations laws, and set up the National Labour Commission to resolve disputes. (Frazer, 2007:194)

Ghanaian trade union leaders learned from this period that trade union independence was very important and that a democratic political regime enabled them to become independent. (Kraus, 2007a:89-92). They also learned that democracy gave them freedom to pursue their interests and that dictatorships did not. (Kraus, 2007a:117)

The real test whether Ghana had managed to consolidate democracy politically came in the election of December 2008 and the subsequent run-off in January 2009. The first round of presidential election did not produce a clear winner. President Nana Akufo-Addo of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) received just over 49% of the vote. His opponent, John Atta Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), obtained slightly less (nearly 48%). The NDC had however gained more seats and became the single largest party. Since neither presidential candidate received more than 50% of the vote, a run-off election had to be held. On this occasion the result was reversed and Mills won by the thinnest of margins. He obtained 50.2% of the vote while Akufo-Addo received only

49.8% of the vote. Far more important is what happened next. President Akufo-Addo conceded defeat and power was transferred peacefully to the new President. (The Economist, 2008 & 2009) The crucial test for the consolidation of democracy had thus been passed in Ghana.

Kraus sums up the important role of the trade union movement in protecting and advancing democracy in Ghana by saying that

> 'They could and did create political space that ultimately enabled other, more political, actors to organize for democratic rights. The union movement in Ghana, unlike those in South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, has not sought to play a direct role in organizing political power since the disastrous experience in 1960-66 under the Nkrumah regime.' (Kraus, 2007a:117)

Major role in Transition to Democracy and Maintaining Full Democracy

South Africa

South Africa came into existence as a colonial but autonomous state in 1910. White political and economic domination was firmly entrenched right from the outset. White craft and industrial unions existed with legislation that granted them industrial relations rights and privileges. Coloured and Indian workers were granted the same industrial relations rights. Although there was no legislation that prohibited Black African trade unions, they were deliberately excluded from the industrial relations legislation with the state and employers generally being hostile towards them.

Nevertheless, by the 1960s Black trade unions with significant power had risen and declined three times in South Africa. The first was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) founded in 1919; the second was the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) that exercised considerable economic muscle through strikes during the Second World War; and the third was the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) established in 1955. It immediately adopted a political orientation with the conviction that there would be no economic emancipation without political liberation. It entered into an alliance with the African National Congress (ANC), the leading Black liberation movement, as well as the Communist Party of South Africa. The state however viciously repressed SACTU and by the early 1960s it ceased to be an effective force with its leaders either underground or in exile. (Friedman, 1987:11-36)

Then, in 1973 extensive strikes in Durban gave an immense impetus to unionisation of Black workers. The Black unions that emerged were militant, but restricted their action to workplace issues to avoid state repression. They were independent of the state, employers White unions, political parties and liberation movements. As a result of the emergence of these unions and international pressure the state conceded the same workplace rights to Black workers as to White, Coloured and Indian workers in 1979. As a result Black unions experienced explosive growth in the 1980s. (Friedman, 1987:37-474)

In November 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was established. It was a predominantly Black African trade union centre and was overtly

political from the outset. It supported the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) which were both operating underground at the time. After the unbanning of these liberation movements in 1990 COSATU entered into a Tripartite Alliance with both of them. Thereupon COSATU as the major Black trade union centre – along with other trade union centres and social movements, played a major role in compelling the apartheid state to reach a negotiated agreement with the liberation movements and other political parties to create the new South Africa. It did so through concerted mass action. (Adler & Webster, 1995:93-94) These parties negotiated a new Constitution with a strong Bill of Rights that enshrined equality, political rights, freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike.

In the first election after the political transformation of South Africa in 1994 the victorious ANC adopted the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) initially conceptualised by COSATU. Then, in 1996 the ANC unilaterally replaced RDP with GEAR, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy, and declared it non-negotiable to its Alliance partners. GEAR was perceived as a neo-liberal macro-economic policy and heralded the start of a growing ideological schism between COSATU and the ruling party. (Adler & Webster, 2001:251-254)

COSATU continued to act independently in pursuit of its goals. After an initial period of silence and apparent acquiescence, it started opposing GEAR openly. COSATU – along with the SACP - also criticised the growing centralisation of power into the hands of President Mbeki which had the effect of weakening parliamentary democracy. They also made their intention clear to play a more significant role in the Tripartite Alliance and started mobilizing towards that end.

The opportunity came with the ANC's Congress in Polokwane during December 2007. The Mbeki faction of the ANC was thoroughly defeated by the Zuma faction that included COSATU and the SACP. This placed the largest trade union federation in South Africa at its most powerful position ever in the country's history. Initially it strongly supported the Zuma-led ANC, but managed to retain an independent power-base at the same time through its ability to mobilize thousands of workers in support of economic and political demands. (Southall and Webster, 2010:145-157)

On the negative side, COSATU and its Alliance partners started to display a disdain for the courts and rule of law whenever judgments went against its interests and strategies. There are indications that COSATU is placing less emphasis on workplace organization. Nonetheless, COSATU has managed to keep open a democratic space that neither the state nor the ruling party has been able to narrow or close down.

Although South Africa has been classified as one of the fully democratic countries, democracy has not yet been consolidated in post-liberation South Africa. This is because one of the criteria in an African context, the peaceful and legitimate transfer of political power to another party or the real possibility thereof, has not been achieved yet.

It is within this context that the question is being posed whether Cosatu is facilitating or impeding the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. Cosatu has certainly facilitated the process of democratisation in South Africa as has been pointed out above.

But Cosatu is also inhibiting the process of consolidation of democracy in South Africa. It does so by being in the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and SACP and canvassing support for the ruling party in every election. By so doing, it is reinforcing the trend of one-party dominance in South Africa with all the dangers it holds for democracy in the long run for the country.

In addition COSATU is compromising its autonomy by being in the Alliance. There have been strong criticisms from the Left that COSATU has compromised its independence by being in the Tripartite Alliance. (Freund, 2007:216-221; McKinley, 2003:48-51, 56-60) Webster and Buhlungu's position is more nuanced and closer to reality. They have referred to Cosatu's relationship with the ANC and SACP as one of 'flexible independence'. (Masondo, 2010:27) This is because Cosatu displays both independence and subordination towards the ANC and SACP.

However, this does not detract from the fact that COSATU played a significant role in transition to democracy and the democratization of South Africa by keeping open political space for freedom of speech, association and the right to protest.

Regime change owing to trade union movement, but still a flawed democracy

Zambia
Zambia provides an example of a country that did manage to consolidate its democracy even though it is only partially consolidated as yet. It became independent in 1964 under the leadership of President Kaunda of the United National Independent Party (UNIP). In the same year the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) was established as the sole trade union centre. Trade unions were expected to play a developmental rather than representative role. That is, the unions were expected to focus on worker productivity and restrain wage demands and industrial action. There were close union-government ties and the ZCTU appeared to the government to have acquiesced to this role. In 1973 UNIP under Kaunda formally declared Zambia a one-party state under a new constitution.

Kaunda also nationalized the copper mines, but from 1974 to 1989 the price of copper fell. As it accounted for 90 to 95% of Zambian exports the economy declined. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided loans, but imposed austerity measures and structural adjustment programs (SAPs). Wage freezes were imposed and workers' standard of living dropped. Consequently ZCTU resistance to government policies increased and protest strikes were launched. (Gostner, 1997:56)

In 1990 the ZCTU called for the restoration of multi-party democracy and took the initiative to campaign for its restoration. (Adler and Buhlungu, 1997:48) The campaign grew into a mass movement with the support of a range of community-based organizations, disaffected UNIP members, university lecturers, business, clergymen and

traditional rulers. In July 1990 the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) was launched. The ZCTU provided the mass mobilization while business provided the funds for the MMD to defeat UNIP in general election in October 1991. Frederick Chiluba, former leader of ZCTU, immediately took over as president from Kaunda. The ZCTU had thus played a major role in replacing the autocratic one-party rule of UNIP with a democratic regime based on multiparty elections and the peaceful transfer of political power to the MMD. (Kraus, 2007a:125-135) This was the first time in African history that a trade union movement had facilitated the formation of a political party that won an election against a former liberation movement and instated multiparty democracy. (Kraus, 2007a:152)

But Chiluba started implementing the austerity measures advocated by the IMF and, as a result the initial close relationship that existed between the ZCTU and the MMD came to an end after 1991 as the trade union movement had to take up the cudgels on behalf of their worker members once again. (Tshoaedi, 2000:86; Kraus, 2007a:135-146) Chiluba was elected for a second term of office, but became corrupted by power and tried to amend the constitution to give him a third term of office. There was sufficient popular mobilization against him to back off and Levy Mwanamasa became president as leader of the MMD in2002. The MMD again won the 2006 election, but without an absolute majority in Parliament. (Wikipedia, 2010)

In the 2011 elections there was a second change of political parties in a free election in Zambia. The Patriotic received the largest proportion of votes and Michael Sata became president. (Bloomberg.com, 2011) Sata, who is known as 'King Cobra' struck back rapidly. In a fairly short period he had dismissed the country's police chief, the central bank governor, and scores of public servants. (Guardian, 2011) He made such rapid changes that legal requirements were most likely sidestepped. Not surprisingly, Zambia has not yet attained the status of a fully democratic country although it has proved its ability to change political parties in relatively free elections.

Trade union movement at the forefront of struggle for transition from autocracy to democracy

There are still countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that remain obdurately authoritarian. Zimbabwe and Swaziland are two of them. Their trade unions have played a leading role in the struggle against authoritarian rule for a transition to democracy. They are still doing so.

Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe was founded in 1980 after the overthrow of the White-dominated Rhodesia in which the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) played the leading role. ZANU won the founding election and its leader, Robert Mugabe, became premier and later president of Zimbabwe.

Although Mugabe called for reconciliation of all warring factions in his inaugural speech, his party soon demonstrated a complete disregard for it. Instead, it opted for brutal

violence against its main opposition party (ZAPU) as divisions, suspicion and mistrust developed between the cadres of their guerilla armies (Zanla and Zipra). Although the ZAPU-affiliated cadres (Zipra) committed acts of violence including murders, by far the greatest acts of atrocities – in excess of 90 per cent - were committed by the 5th Brigade comprised almost entirely of Zanla cadres. Within the first few weeks of being deployed in Matabeleland North and the Midlands in January 1983, the 5th Brigade's soldiers 'had massacred thousands of civilians, and tortured thousands more'. (Eppel, 2004:45) The 5th Brigade told the people they were being punished because they were Ndebele and all Ndebeles supported ZAPU. Mugabe named the 5th Brigade the 'Gukurahundi' Brigade at their passing out parade in December 1982. "Gukurahundi' means the first rain of summer that washes away the chaff. (Eppel, 2004:59, n.1)

At the time Zimbabwe came into existence the labour movement was weak and divided. It had played no significant role in in the negotiation over transition to majority rule. In 1981 the state played a major role in establishing a central labour federation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), which it dominated up to the mid-1980s. In 1987-88 a leadership struggle emerged in the ZCTU. A substantially new leadership emerged and a new secretary-general, Morgan Tsvangirai, was appointed.

The ZCTU set its sights on forming broad alliances. In February 1999 it stepped up its political campaign and facilitated a National Working People's Convention. It brought together people from urban, peri-urban and rural areas, representing unions, women's organisations, professional associations, development organization, churches, human right groups, the informal sector, communal farmers, industry, the unemployed and student organisations. The Convention gave the ZCTU a mandate to facilitate the formation of a political party. As a result the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was launched on 11 September 1999. (Raftopoulos, 2001:14-16)

In the campaign for the general election in June 2000, 30 people, mostly MDC members, were killed. Notwithstanding the pre-election violence, the MDC performed remarkably well for a newly formed party. It won 57 seats against ZANU-PF's 62. (Raftopoulos, 2001:18, 21)

From 2000 to 2003 ruling party violence increased with the aim of crushing the MDC. The violence did have a harmful effect on MDC party structures, but did not destroy the movement. In the June 2003 general election campaign the MDC participated, but 30 people, mostly MDC members, were killed. There were approximately 18 000 human rights violations including assaults, death threats, and interference with the right to campaign and vote freely. Most of the violence (91 per cent) was carried out by ZANU-PF supporters, and the majority (52 per cent) of victims were farm workers and civilians.

The party, by then divided into two 'formations', the Tsvangirai and the Mutambara formations, resolved to take part in the March 2008 election. The Tsvangirai formation decided to run in both the presidential and parliamentary elections. It had become clear to many of the voters that the collapse of the country's economy was due to the policies of ZANU-PF. In addition the ZCTU decided shortly before the election that it would

mobilize support for the MDC. The outcome was that the MDC achieved an historic victory at the polls. The two MDC formations combined won 109 seats in the 210 seat parliament whereas ZANU-PF gained only 97 seats. In the presidential election the official outcome gave Tsvangirai 47,8% of the votes cast and Mugabe only 43,2%.

Because neither presidential candidate had won more than 50% of the vote, a run-off election had to be held. However, unlike President Akufo-Addo of Ghana, Mugabe and his military supporters made it clear that he would not give up his presidency through the democratic process. Instead, they unleashed a violent and brutal assault on MDC and the ZCTU followers and leaders to the point that Tsvangirai had to withdraw from the race in order to try to secure the safety and security of his followers. The ILO Commission of Inquiry to examine whether freedom of association and the right to organize existed in Zimbabwe concluded that

>'The Commission sees a clear pattern of arrests, detentions, violence and torture by the security forces against trade unionists that coincided with ZCTU nationwide events, indicating that there had been some centralized direction to the security forces to take such action. ...

>'The Commission is particularly concerned by the fact that it appears that, in rural areas in particular, ZCTU officials and members were systematically targeted by vigilante mobs, based on a perception that ZCTU members were supporters of the MDC political party.' (ILO, 2009:159, paragraphs 594 and 595)

Not surprisingly, Mugabe secured 86% of the votes cast in the June 2008 run-off.

Thereupon a long and difficult period followed in which Mugabe was eventually and reluctantly persuaded by leaders of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to share power with Tsvangirai and the MDC. In September 2008 a power-sharing agreement, the Global Political Agreement, was finally signed between Mugabe and the MDC. It commenced in February 2009 when Tsvangirai was sworn in as prime minister. The most noticeable improvement since then has been in the economy. The astronomically high inflation rate has been curtailed and retailers' shelves filled up with food once again. However, it has become clear that neither Mugabe nor Zanu-PF are committed to power-sharing and are still doing their best to undermine the MDC.

Although representative democracy has not been restored in Zimbabwe yet, it is clear that the independent trade union movement has played a major role in helping to haul the country back from complete tyranny and economic collapse. The brunt of the struggle is being borne by the MDC and it would not exist if it were not for the active mobilisation and support of the Zimbabwean trade union movement in the first instance. Zimbabwe therefore also provides an important and powerful example of the contribution that an independent trade union movement can make towards the restoration and eventual consolidation of democracy.

Swaziland

Swaziland became independent from Britain in 1968 as a constitutional monarchy under King Sobhuzu II. The monarch had consolidated his support base amongst the Swazi populace through the royalist Imbokodvo National Movement (INM).

During the 1960s there had been a series of strikes spearheaded by the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). In the 1972 elections the opposition NNLC won three seats in the House of Assembly. The three seats were delivered by a strong working class constituency. However, in April 1973 the king issued a royal decree suspending the Constitution and banning all political parties. He then assumed the full legislative and executive capacity of the state.

In 1977 the parliamentary system was replaced through the imposition of the Tinkhundla system as a means to integrate traditional Swazi forms of government with modern systems. Under Tinkhundla the election of parliamentarians occurs outside of the political party system, with provision for the king to make 10 appointees to the 65 member National Assembly. The monarch also appoints the prime minister, who then appoints the cabinet, subject to the king's approval. The king could thus exercise power over the executive and the legislature.

The People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) emerged in 1983 with a central objective to "build and popularise working class consciousness and rally social forces for change behind this revolutionary form of consciousness." The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) was a major constituency of PUDEMO which also included youth groups, student organisations and other civil society groupings.

In 1994 an unprecedented national strike took place in which the SFTU lodged its "27 Demands" with the regime. The "27 Demands" included improvements in minimum wages, the right to strike and organise without intimidation or repression, and the unbanning of political parties.

In 1997 wide-scale strike action was met with government repression and trade unionists were harassed, tortured and jailed. An outcome of the strike was the consolidation by the SFTU and PUDEMO of opposition groups into the Swaziland Democratic Association (SDA). The SDA included youth, women, church and unemployed groups. Its aim was to map out a common strategy to overthrow the Swazi regime.

South Africa's Tripartite Alliance, particularly COSATU, supported the strike. In February 1997 it called on the Swaziland government to repeal all the legislation preventing the free exercise of trade union rights, and to revoke the 1973 decree outlawing democracy and opposition parties. In March 1997 COSATU, joined by Mozambique's trade union federation OTM, staged a one-day blockade of Swaziland.

In 2002 the draconian Internal Security Act was reintroduced. It specified severe penalties for the participation in political activities in addition to restricting trade union activity. As a result the Swaziland trade union movement became more docile and timid

on the political front. The movement had also been racked by a "cult of personality" and unaccountability of leaders to members.

In January 2006 a new constitution became law in Swaziland. The constitution offered nothing more than the status quo by protecting the monarchy and not allowing the space for other actors to define a democratic future for Swaziland. Hope for a full democracy is still strongly pinned on the trade union movement. When interviewed in November 2005, the president of PUDEMO said:

> "I don't see another way of getting democracy without the vehicle of the trade union movement. The trade union movement is at the means of production, they sustain the economy, they are still organised and make the country tick, and I believe, no matter how few there may be, they are still the vehicle for change."

Failure of unions to help maintain democracy

Finally, three countries are discussed where the trade union movement either failed to contribute towards the transition to democracy or to maintain democracy or both. They are Kenya, Namibia and Nigeria. Nonetheless, Namibia has been consistently classified as a fully democratic country by Bratton and Mattes (2009:8, Table 3).

Namibia
Namibia was a German colony until 1920 when the League of Nations put in under South Africa's trusteeship. In 1948 South Africa imposed its apartheid laws on the country. This led to uprisings and resistance by its African citizens and the formation of a liberation movement, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in 1960. It soon became the dominant resistance movement in the territory.

In 1989 SWAPO re-established the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) as a federation of trade unions, but completely dominated it at that stage. SWAPO's Department of Labour and the NUNW were effectively a singly body and the trade union federation's constitution stipulated that its main objective was 'the total liberation of Namibia'. (Ranchod, 2007:85) The NUNW also affiliated to SWAPO thereby presenting it with a conflict of interests in years to come: whether its main aim was to support SWAPO's political objectives or to represent workers.

In 1990 Namibia became independent with SWAPO as the ruling party. The NUNW's affiliation to SWAPO remained a controversial issue. In 1995, after a meeting with SWAPO, it compromised on workers' rights in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), agreeing to outlaw strikes in EPZs for five years.

Namibia has begun to exhibit characteristic patterns of neo-colonialist states elsewhere in Africa: the arrogation of power by a newly emergent elite, the drift towards a de-facto one-party state, and the slow but progressive erosion of civil liberties.

Namibian trade unions have been ill-equipped to temper the rise of authoritarian tendencies within the ruling party and government. In fact, they seem to have bought into the government's ideological discourse. In 2005 the president of NUNW stated:

> "What is taking place currently in the world is the arrangements by imperialists to destabilise Southern Africa and Africa in general by turning labour movements into political parties. We have seen Zambia where the labour movement was turned into a political party which put President Chiluba in power and then messed up the country drastically. … Civil society in Africa, in Southern Africa specifically is serving as the mouthpiece of Western, so-called civilisation. They are purely representing Western interests." (Interview by Ranchod, 2007:90)

In 2005 the Namibian president argued for the need to resist Western imperialism. He stated,

> "Today it is Zimbabwe, tomorrow it is Namibia or any other country. We must unite and support Zimbabwe. We cannot allow imperialism to take over our continent again."

There are other disturbing indications of the backward slide as well. Rivalry broke out in the NUNW in 2006 over a leadership struggle in SWAPO. For many months the battle for political control overshadowed social and economic issues raised by members of its affiliated unions.

In spite of the relative weakness and lack of independence of the NUNW Namibia has been able to hold free and fair elections since its independence in 1990. Although there have also been authoritarian tendencies on the part of government Namibia has continued to be considered to have sufficient political rights and civil freedom to be regarded as a democratic by Freedom House and other observers. Namibia thus demonstrates that an African country can maintain what is regarded as a democracy even when the trade union movement is weak and played no or little part in the country.

Trade unions fail to grow influential due to military or authoritarian regimes

Nigeria experienced almost continuous military rule for 33 years since independence while Kenya had autocratic rulers for the first 38 years of its independence. This did not afford the trade unions in either country the opportunity to grow in strength and autonomy.

Nigeria
Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of 158 million in 2010. Trade unions emerged during the period of colonialism as politically conscious institutions. (Fajana, 2007:147) The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) was established in 1950, but factionalism preceded and followed its birth. By the early 1970s no less than four trade union centres and 751 registered trade unions existed with a combined membership of 700 000. (Fajana, 2007:154)

In 1960 Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom and experienced civilian rule during its first six years of independence. From 1966 up to 1999, a period of 33 years, Nigeria was under military rule except for a brief interregnum from 1979-1983. (Otobe, 2007:164)

Otobe has argued that the intention of the military regime was to control the labour movement by incorporating it into the state. (Fajana, 2007:156) The military regime certainly continued to intervene and dominate the trade union movement. In 1978 it re-established the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and dissolved other existing labour federations. All existing unions were also dissolved and reorganized into industrial unions with compulsory deductions of union dues by employers. (Beckman and Lukman, 2010:60) The number of unions declined from over a 1000 to 70. (Fajana, 2007:150-51)

The number of unions continued to decline over the next two decades. By 1990 there were only 41 unions and in 1996 the state enabled the amalgamation of overlapping industrial unions, reducing the number from 41 to 29. (Fajana, 2007:152)

The regime also consistently limited the right of Nigerian workers to strike. Some of the legislation was contained in the Trades Dispute Acts. Strikes in essential services were forbidden. The 1976 Act listed the economic sectors falling within essential services as 'the supply of electricity, power, water, and fuel of any kind'. In addition any trade union activities that constituted 'wrongful politically motivated activities' was declared illegal. (Fajana, 2007:157) Under these conditions it has been extremely hard for the unions to develop their strength and build an independent platform.

Oil has come to dominate the Nigerian economy. According to Fajana (2007:160) 'industrial relations in Nigeria since the turn of the (21st) century has been characterised by the politics of petroleum pricing,' In June 2003 the government announced 'yet another plan' to increase oil prices by 50%. In the ensuing general strike 19 trade unionists were killed by police. A further six were arrested and beaten up in prison. (Fajana, 2007:158)

The 2004 Trade Union Act allowed granted greater freedom to trade unions and allowed the registration of multiple trade union centres. (Fajana, 2007:155). However, in both the public and private sectors there are very inadequate industrial relations practices with employers in both sectors getting away with extremely poor treatment of employees and the trade unions apparently incapable of preventing infringements of human rights. (Otobe, 2007:168-172)

The weakness of the trade union movement in Nigeria can be ascribed to the militarisation of civil society politics in Nigeria which has 'tended to increase unilateralism, to the detriment of tripartism or social dialogue, in policy-making.' There has thus been 'declining capacity among union leadership' and 'the rapid growth in the number of rival non-governmental organisations (NGOs) many of which concentrate on some traditional concerns of the labour movement (civil liberties, human rights, occupational hazards, inequity and corruption, etc) to deliberate anti-unionism tactics of

both private and public employers, especially sub-contracting of operations and labour.'
(Otobe, 2007:178 and 179)

The trade union movement in Nigeria was thus too weak to contribute to the return to
civilian rule in 1999. Since then it has not been able to grow into an independent force
with the capacity to enable the transition of the Nigerian regime to a democracy.

Kenya
Kenya achieved its independence from the United Kingdom on 31 Dec 1963. Jomo
Kenyatta became president and ruled for 15 years until his death in 1978. Thereupon
Daniel arap Moi became president and ruled with an iron rod for 24 years until he was
finally defeated at an election in 2002. Only then could democratisation commence in
Kenya.

In 1964 the Trades Dispute Act was amended. It established arbitration tribunals and an
Industrial Court. From the outset its judge regarded it as the guardian of the Kenyan
economy's competitiveness by means of low wages. In this the Court was aided and
abetted by an amendment to the Act in 1971 that enforced the Court to cap wage
increases to no higher than the rate of inflation. (Hagglund, 2007:33-34)

COTU, the Central Organisation of Trade Unions, was formed in 1965 at the insistence
of government because of feuding between two trade union centres. Gona (2009:136)
maintains that 'From its inception COTU was obliged to serve the government and not
the workers.'

In 1982 Moi made Kenya a de jure one-party state by amending the constitution and
banning opposition parties. Four years later he removed the security of tenure of the
attorney-general, comptroller, auditor general and High Court judges, making all these
positions personally beholden to the president. In the run-up to the 1987 election he jailed
opposition leaders and ruled in 'virtual autocracy' for the 15 years he continued to remain
in office. (Fitzpatrick et al, 2009:270)

The 1990s was a decade in which civil society and political organisations agitated for the
democratisation of politics and society and a return to multi-party politics. Gona
(2009:136-150) argues that the coercive policies of the state forced COTU into
subservience and it consequently played no role among civil society organisations in the
democratisation process of the 1990s. He concludes, 'The labour movement as part of the
organised spheres of civil society did not play a significant role in the democratisation
period of the 1990s.' (Gona, 2009:151) In addition, NGOs and CSOs (civil society
organisations) 'had entered the terrain traditionally reserved for the labour market actors,
and in some way operated in a destabilising manner.' (Fashoyin, 2007:45)

In 1994 the labour laws – and hence trade unions - were emasculated by the Minister of
Finance who 'took the extraordinary step' of introducing a Finance Bill to Parliament
that amended both the Regulation of Wages and Conditions of Employment Act and the
Trade Disputes Act. It moved the issue of redundancy from the latter to the former Act

thereby giving business a free hand to enterprises to restructure with the obligation only to *inform* but not to *report* the proposed measure to the labour ministry. (Fashoyin, 2007:42)

In spite of a deteriorating economy under his presidency and two elections where there were violent ethnic clashes President Moi hung onto power until 2002. (Hagglund, 2007:36-37) In a rare peaceful and fair election in December President Mwai Kibaki and the National Rainbow Coalition (Narc) won a landslide two-thirds victory. (Fitzpatrick et al, 2009:271)

With the exception of 2003 when the number of strikes peaked at 160 there was a downward trend in strike incidence between 1996 and 2005, yet another indication of a weakening trade union movement. The high incidence of strikes in 2003 was due to the ending of the Moi era and the 'democratic rapture that accompanied the election of President Kibaki.' (Fashoyin, 2007:47)

The presidential elections in December 2007 were marred by serious irregularities, but the Electoral Commission controversially declared Mwai Kibaki as the winner with Raila Odinga, leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), the loser. It triggered a wave of violence in the Rift Valley, Western Highlands, Nyanza Province and Mombasa, stemming from discontent and perceived ethnic rivalry. The violence left more than 1000 people dead and more than 600,000 homeless. After protracted negotiations mediated by UN Secretary Kofi Annan, a power-sharing agreement was signed in February 2008. The agreement provided for the establishment of a prime ministerial position filled by Raila Odinga. (Fitzpatrick et al, 2009: 271-72) Democracy with free and fair elections has therefore not yet been established in Kenya.

In all of this, the trade union movement played no role. According to Gona (2009:152), 'the political attitude of the leadership of the labour movement in Kenya was one of maintaining the status quo. ... The majority of trade union leaders in Kenya lacked a vision of what kind of world they wanted for their members and how they would achieve it.'

Conclusion

This paper has argued that, in an African context, an important additional requirement for the consolidation of democracy is the peaceful transfer of political power through a free and fair election to a party opposed to the former liberation movement (or a very feasible chance that this can happen).

It has also been argued that, in a few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa trade unions played an important role in the transition to democracy, in furthering the democratisation of the political regime, and in the consolidation of democracy. Furthermore, in a small number of countries trade unions have constituted the backbone in the struggle against authoritarian regimes and still continue to play a key role in the drive to establish democratic regimes.

In the paper it was found that in Ghana and Zambia the trade union movements started off in subservient positions to the state at the time of independence. The price they had to pay for their close relationship was their subordination to the ruling party. Both union movements learned quite early in the post-independence period that this emasculated them and that they needed to establish their own autonomous platforms from which to operate. Thus it came about that the TUC in Ghana managed to retain a strong independent base able to withstand the onslaught of even the populist military regime of Jerry Rawlings. It thereby opened up the political space for a liberal democracy to establish itself in Ghana. In Zambia the ZCTU challenged the one-party state set up by President Kaunda. It led numerous civil society organisations in the establishment of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) that not only contested the election, but defeated the ruling party and a former trade unionist, Frederick Chiluba, became president

In spite of the fact that trade unions played a prominent role in the democratization of Ghana and Zambia, Ghana has been classified as a fully democratic country whereas Zambia is viewed as a flawed democracy. This demonstrates that even when the trade union movement does play a prominent part in the peaceful removal of a ruling party it does not ensure that the country becomes a full democracy.

In South Africa an independent Black trade union emerged during the 1970s which ensured that it had sufficient economic strength to survive state repression before it entered the political terrain. The strategy worked and gave rise to COSATU, a trade union centre, playing the leading role in the mass democratic movement in the struggle against the apartheid regime during the 1980s and early 1990s. Its goal was the transition of South Africa from a race-based authoritarianism to democracy which was achieved in 1994. Subsequently COSATU, along with the SACP, entered into the Tripartite Alliance with the ruling party, the ANC. This step, it has been argued, undermined some of its autonomy and ability to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in South Africa.

In Zimbabwe and Swaziland the trade union movements have both played leading roles in creating social movements that challenge their countries' authoritarian regimes. In the case of Zimbabwe the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has contested elections and even won the election in 2007, but without an absolute majority. The highly authoritarian and oppressive ZANU-PF regime of Mugabe refused to cede power and engaged in ruthless suppression of the opposition party, thereby managing to keep itself and Robert Mugabe in power as president. In Swaziland the regime has become increasingly oppressive and has prevented the emergence of a powerful enough movement able to remove the country's autocratic monarch from power.

In the cases of Nigeria and Kenya the trade union movements were prevented from growing powerful and autonomous by the oppressive regimes in their countries. In Nigeria's case there was an almost uninterrupted 33-year period of military rule, while in Kenya the first two presidents entrenched their positions of power for a sum total of 39 years. One strategy they used was to keep the trade union movements weak. In Namibia

the trade union movement affiliated to the ruling party, SWAPO, and, as a result, was not able to establish itself as an independent and autonomous body forcefully representing the interests of its worker members and civil society.

Nevertheless, Namibia has been classified as a full democracy while Kenya has been classified a flawed democracy and Nigeria a hegemonic authoritarian state. These three countries serve to demonstrate that an African country can become a full democracy even when its trade union movement is relatively weak with little influence.

In this analytical overview of the extent of democracy and the role of trade unions played in eight African countries, one conclusion that emerges is that trade union movements need to establish a strong and autonomous power base for it to influence the transition to democracy and help maintain democracy in a country.

Another pro-democracy role that trade unions have played is to take the leading role in the establishment of social movements capable of challenging the ruling party in an election. In Zambia this successfully led to regime change and the re-establishment of multi-party democracy. In Zimbabwe the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) came extremely close in 2008 in taking over power peacefully, but the lack of a free and fair election and the ruthless repression of the MDC in the run-off election for president forestalled it. In Swaziland the trade union movement has similarly been at the forefront in establishing a social movement to restore democracy, but the repressive measures taken by the autocratic king has disempowered the movement.

Trade unions in the Sub-Saharan countries considered in this paper have thus contributed to the consolidation of democracy in cases where they managed to retain a strong and autonomous power base and where the state has not become completely authoritarian and oppressive.

Bibliography

Adler G and Buhlungu S. 1997. Labour and liberalisation in Zambia. *South African Labour Bulletin*, 21,3, 48-50.
Adler G and Webster E. 1995. Challenging transition theory: The labour movement, radical reform, and transition to democracy in South Africa. *Politics and Society* 23, 1, 75-106.
Adler G and Webster E. 2001. Unions, democracy, and economic liberalization: Lessons from South Africa. Ch.15 in J Coetzee, J Graaff, F Hendricks and G Wood, eds. *Development: Theory, Policy, and Practice*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
Akwetey E with Dorkenoo D. 2010. Disengagement from party politics: Achievements and challenges for the Ghana Trades Union Congress. Ch.3 in B Beckman, S Buhlungu and L Sachikonye, eds. *Trade Unions and Party Politics: Labour movements in Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 39-58.

Beckman B and Lukman S. 2010. The Failure of Nigeria's Labour Party. Ch4 in B
　　　　Beckman, S Buhlungy and L Sachikonye, eds. *Trade Unions and Party Politics:
　　　　Labour movements in Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 59-84.

Bloomberg.com. 2011. www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-09-23 Accessed 14 Apr 2012.

Bratton M, Mattes R, and Gyimah-Boadi E. Eds. 2005. *Public Opinion, Democracy and
　　　　Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bratton M. 2009. Sub-Saharan Africa. Ch.22 in C Haerpfer, P Bernhagen, R Inglehart
　　　　and C Welzel, eds. *Democratization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 339-
　　　　355.

Buhlungu S. 2006. *Trade Unions and Democracy: Cosatu workers' political attitudes in
　　　　South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Business Day. 2011a. Cosatu warns ANC to change information bill, 1 June.

Business Day. 2011b. Cracks deepen in tripartite alliance, 6 June.

City Press. 2009. Zuma: I'm the boss, 15 November, 1.

City Press. 2010. Why Vavi is angry with Jacob Zuma, 14 February, 2.

de Villiers D and Anstey M. 2000. Trade Unions in Transitions to Democracy in South
　　　　Africa, Spain and Brazil, ch.1 in G Adler and E Webster, eds *Trade Unions and
　　　　Democratization in South Africa, 1985-1997*. London: Macmillan Press, 20-41.

Diamond L. 2002. Elections without Democracy: Thinking about Hybrid Regimes.
　　　　Journal of Democracy, 13, 2, 21-35.

Economist The. 2008. 13 Dec.

Economist The. 2009. 8 Jan.

Economist The. 2012. African democracy: A glass half-full. *The Economist*, 31st March,
　　　　40.

Eppel S. 2004. 'Gukurahundi' The need for truth and reconciliation. Ch.3 in B
　　　　Raftopoulos and T Savage, eds. *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*.
　　　　Rondebosch: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 43-62.

Fajana S. 2007. The Development of Industrial Relations in Nigeria: 1900-2006. Ch.13 in
　　　　G Wood and C Brewster, eds. *Industrial Relations in Africa*. Houndmills:
　　　　Palgrave Macmillan, 147-161.

Fashoyin T. 2007. Industrial Relations and the Social Partners in Kenya. Ch.4 in G Wood
　　　　and C Brewster, eds, *Industrial Relations in Africa*. Houndmills: Palgrave
　　　　Macmillan, pp.39-52.

Fitzpatrick M, Bewer T and Firestone M. 2009. *East Africa*. Footscray: Lonely Planet

Frazer G. 2007. Industrial Relations in Ghana. Ch. 15 in G Wood and C Brewster,eds,
　　　　Industrial Relations in Africa. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 182-197.

Freedom House. 2012. Freedom in the World 2012: The Arab Uprisings and Their
　　　　Global Repercussions. www.freedomhouse.org

Friedman S. 2007. *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions 1970-
　　　　1984*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Gona G. 2009. The state of the labour movement in Kenya and its effect on the
　　　　consolidation of democracy. Ch.5 in R Ajulu, ed. *Two Countries One Dream: The
　　　　Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Kenya and South Africa*. Rosebank,
　　　　Johannesburg: KMM Review Publishing Co, 133-156.

Gostner K. 1997. Playing politics: labour's political role in Zambia. *South African
　　　　Labour Bulletin*, 21, 3, 55-60.

25

Hagglund G. 2007. The Development of Industrial Relations in Kenya. Ch.3 in GWood and C Brewster, eds, *Industrial Relations in Africa*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 28-38.

ILO (International Labour Organization) 2009. Truth, reconciliation and justice in Zimbabwe. Report of the Commision of Inquiry appointed under art.28 of the Constitution of the ILO to examine the observance by the Government of Zimbabwe of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No.87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining convention, 1949 (No.98). Geneva: International Labour Office.

Kraus J. 2007a. Trade Unions, Democratization, and Economic Crises in Ghana. Ch.4 in J Kraus, ed. *Trade unions and the coming of democracy in Africa*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 83-122.

Kraus J. 2007b. Conclusion: Trade Unions and Democratization in Africa. Ch.9 in J Kraus, ed. *Trade unions and the coming of democracy in Africa*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 255-286.

Linz J. 1990. Transitions to Democracy. *The Washington Quarterly* 13, 3, 143-164.

Linz J and Stepan. 1996.*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mail & Guardian. 2011. Cosatu meeting to focus on alliance summit, 18 Feb. 2011.

Maree J. 1986. An Analysis of the Independent Trade Unions in South Africa in the 1970s. PhD Thesis. University of Cape Town.

Maree J. 1996. Rebels with Causes: White Officials in Black Trade Unions in South Africa, 1973-94: A Response to Sakhela Buhlungu. *Current Sociology*, 54, 3, 453-467.

Mattes R. 2002. South Africa: Democracy without People? *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 1, 22-35.

Otobe D. 2007. Contemporary Industrial Relations in Nigeria. Ch.14 in Geoffrey Wood and Chris Brewster, eds. *Industrial Relations in Africa*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 162-181.

Raftopoulos B. 2001. The labour movement and the emergence of opposition politics in Zaimbabwe, ch.1 in B Raftopoulos and L Sachikonye, eds. *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe 1980-2000*. Avondale: Weaver Press, 1-24.

Rakner L and van de Walle N. 2009. Democratization by Elections? Opposition Weakness in Africa. *Journal of Democracy*, 20, 3, 108-121.

Ranchod R. 2007. Between Consolidation, Promotion and Restoration: Trade Unions and Democracy in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Dissertation: M Phil in African Studies, University of Cape Town.

Rose R. 2009. Democratic and Undemocratic States. Ch.2 in C Haerpfer, P Bernhagen, R Inglehart and C Welzel, eds. *Democratization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 10-23.

Southall R and Webster E. 2010. Unions and parties in South Africa: COSATU and the ANC in the wake of Polokwane, ch.7 in B Beckman, S Buhlungu and L Sachikonye, eds. *Trade Unions and Party Politics: Labour movements in Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 131-166.

Sunday Argus. 2009. Alliance in fierce power struggle. 27 September, 27.
Tshoaedi M. 2000. Trade Unions in Zambia. *South African Labour Bulletin*, 24, 3, 86-90.
Vavi Z. 2009. The alliance is the political centre, *City Press*, 22 November, 21.
Wikipedia. 2010. Politics of Zambia. Accessed 21 Feb 2010.