



A F R I C A
E M E R G E S

R O B E R T I. R O T B E R G

Africa Emerges

Africa Emerges

Consummate Challenges, Abundant
Opportunities

ROBERT I. ROTBERG

polity

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In Memory of Great Leaders

Aleke K. Banda (1939–2010)

H. B. Masauko Chipembere (1930–1975)

Dunduzu K. Chisiza (1930–1962)

Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane (1920–1969)

Eddison J. M. Zvobgo (1935–2004)

and for Joanna H. H. Rotberg (1935–2008)

Who lived and experienced it all, and greatly led and inspired all with whom she interacted.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
Introduction: A Continent on the Move	1
1 Myriad Challenges and Opportunities	5
2 A Demographic Dividend or Just More People?	21
3 Tropical Dilemmas: Disease, Water, and More	35
4 Educating Future Generations	55
5 To War Rather than to Prosper	69
6 Accountability and the Wages of Corrupt Behavior	91
7 The Infrastructural Imperative	116
8 Harnessing Mobile Telephone Capabilities	134
9 China Drives Growth	151
10 Strengthening Governance	173
11 Creating Responsible Leadership	189
<i>Notes</i>	216
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	244
<i>Index</i>	252

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Many of the strands in this book were brought together and woven more tightly at a remarkably evocative dinner in Lusaka, presided over graciously by Ambassador Mark Storella, in 2012. Elias Chipimo Jr., Mark Chona, Lishomwa Lishomwa, and Sikota Wina were among the friends and participants who spanned the succession of sub-Saharan Africa's challenges and opportunities that all of us share. Their sometimes wry, sometimes trenchant, and always well-informed commentaries on past and present inform this book's message. Cornelia C. Johnson helped to enliven that dinner, just as she has helped magnificently to make this book as relevant and game-changing as possible.

Ottawa, Madison, and Cambridge, October 15, 2012

Introduction: A Continent on the Move

Africa no longer is the fabled, deeply troubled, dark continent. Most of its constituent countries are growing economically, delivering significant social enhancements to their inhabitants, and progressing politically. A number of the region's nation-states are increasing their per-capita Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) more rapidly than their Asian counterparts. Poverty is diminishing. Trade between sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world has tripled since 2000 and attracted more private foreign investment than official aid handouts since 2005. Its share of global foreign direct investment has quadrupled since 2000. Almost everywhere in the sub-continent there is the exciting bustle of improvement and take-off. Its much-lamented infrastructural deficits are being erased, thanks to China. Furthermore, Africans are much healthier than they were, with startling improvements in child mortality being recorded across half of the sub-continent; dictators are fewer, democrats more common; the intrastate wars of the sub-continent are claiming fewer lives; and almost everywhere in sub-Saharan Africa there is hope for the future and an upwelling of pride. Sub-Saharan Africa is no longer the "basket-case" of yore, about whose future the rest of the world once despaired. Africa is ready at last to play an increasingly important role in the affairs of the world. Major positive changes, in sum, have already transformed what once was a chilling outlook for most of the sub-continent into a future potentially much more warm and uplifting.

Many, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), various consultancies, and experienced analysts, strongly believe that sub-Saharan Africa has turned the corner: "Something deep is at work. These countries are on a different path from the one they were on in the past. . . ." This "turnaround is neither cyclical nor temporary. It is not just a blip on the screen. . . ." Nor, Radelet assures us, is this resurgence of Africa a result merely of high commodity prices. It has been long in the making, at least in the 17 successful-country cases that he examined thoroughly, and results in part from fundamental shifts in governance and leadership.¹

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia echoes this analytical optimism. What is going well in Liberia, she writes, is similar to a transformation occurring across a number of other sub-Saharan African countries: "Dictators are being replaced by democracy. Authoritarianism is giving way to

accountability. Economic stagnation is turning to resurgence. And . . . despair is being replaced by hope – hope that people can live in peace . . . that parents can provide for their families, that children can go to school and receive decent health care, and that people can speak their minds without fear.”²

A rapidly swelling, ambitious, and globally conscious middle class is among the key drivers of this new momentum almost everywhere south of the Sahara, as it was a few decades ago in Asia. Twenty years ago, Africa’s middle class was much smaller, and powerless. Now there is a coterie of entrepreneurs and executives that is much less dependent than before on governments for favors, beneficial regulations and permits, and contracts. The rise of middle-class independence and an independent mind-set are signs of an Africa – as Radelet and Johnson Sirleaf proclaim – very much on the rise.

This is the new Africa that has begun to banish the miseries (and the miserable public relations) of the past. Whereas many observers in times past despaired of sub-Saharan Africa, and murmured that bad news seemed to overwhelm anything else coming out of Africa, now there are true success stories, demonstrable improvements in governance and democracy, and a brighter outlook all around. Twenty-five years ago, only Botswana and Mauritius were full democracies. Today there are elected democracies in a large proportion of the sub-continent’s states. Additionally, in many sub-Saharan African countries, formal rules are better respected and political institutions are taking hold.

Propelled to some important extent by significant drivers of economic uplift such as the dramatic spread of mobile telephone capabilities and China’s pulsating appetite for African resources, sub-Saharan Africa, almost for the first time in more than 60 years, has a golden interlude in which it and its peoples can take advantage of abundant new opportunities. The African renaissance could be at hand, propelled as it will be by a new generation of gifted leaders, by a new emphasis on strengthened governance, by a new willingness and desire to play a central role in the global commons, and by a determination to overcome the ethnic and acquisitive challenges that have for too long held back its states from becoming nations.

But, as we rightly emphasize the new positives, the road ahead for sub-Saharan Africa is not obstacle-free. The challenges are many, and serious. There are long-standing and several surprising, even alarming, new barriers that could derail this long-overdue great leap forward.

Sub-Saharan countries are about to expand their populations exponentially. Many small and weak states will double or triple their inhabitant numbers in the next 30 years. Several of the sub-continent’s now more populous nations will take their places among the largest countries on the planet. Cities will mushroom. Youth numbers will surge and dominate country after country.

As one sub-Saharan African state after another becomes much larger than could hitherto have been imagined or envisaged, so existing challenges will

be neither erased nor avoided. Sub-Saharan Africans will still have to contend with the scourge of disease and reduced life expectancies and productivities, with massive educational deficits at secondary and tertiary levels, with an absence of potable water, with energy shortfalls, with being landlocked, and with weak road and rail infrastructures. Together with its burgeoning population, these are sub-Saharan Africa's key natural, physical, and geographical challenges.

There are man-made challenges, too: the remaining civil conflicts and simmering wars in some parts of the sub-continent detract from development as well as creating worsening outcomes for the civilian populations directly affected. Everywhere, in nearly all countries, corruption prevails and hinders developmental progress. Weak rule of law regimes, internal insecurities, inhibited political participation, limited transparency and accountability, and a widespread disrespect for fundamental human rights all contribute to poor governance and its counterpart, slower economic growth. A legacy of irresponsible leadership (military coups and despotic adventurism) has brought about this lack of good governance and a deepening of the policy challenges that the sub-continent must now overcome if its future is going to remain strong.

This book is squarely about the onrush of positive change south of the Sahara amid consummate challenges and abundant opportunities for growth. It focuses on the heady, new emergence of the sub-continent and its countries, on the remaining obstacles and possible stumbling points of its coming decades.

This book sets out the chief challenges in some robust detail. After a pithy elaboration of these challenges in the first chapter, together with a discussion of economic prospects and the exercising of political voice, the second sets out the major, unanticipated, demographical hurdles over which much of the sub-continent must jump. The third chapter discusses the sub-continent's tropical and geographical legacies, its health and disease challenges, and how those deficits are being overcome. The fourth chapter focuses on the region's educational weaknesses, especially its paucity of university-trained personnel, its shortages of artisans, and the consequences for Africa of its "brain drain." The fifth chapter sets out the sub-continent's formidable need for peace, explaining the great extent to which war has mortgaged development and destroyed productive livelihoods. The sixth examines those factors of weak accountability and transparency which plague most of the countries of the region and hinder their progress. The seventh shows how sub-Saharan Africa is beginning to cope with its vast under-served need for electrical energy, and how it must start to build and maintain arteries of commerce – roads, rails, and harbors.

The concluding four chapters of the book are about the abundant opportunities which are available – if policy makers and their voters wish – to help to resolve challenges and enhance the progress of the countries of the

sub-continent. Chapter 8 analyzes the communications revolution that promises, through the harnessing of mobile telephone capabilities, to vault sub-Saharan Africa over many of its developmental hurdles. Chapter 9 looks at the compelling Chinese contribution to the sub-Saharan African renaissance now and over the next decade. The tenth chapter sets out the benchmarks that will turn sub-Saharan Africa's weak existing modes of governance into a strong, deeply rooted pattern of governance of the kind that the new middle classes desire and demand. The eleventh chapter is about leadership, and how the countries of the sub-continent can nurture the kinds of effective, modern leaders that they have largely long lacked.

Sub-Saharan Africa is emerging from its chrysalis of despondent, conflicted, corrupted, and ill-led decades. Tyranny and despotism are largely scourges of the past. This book celebrates the meeting of challenges and the triumph of human will and ingenuity over both natural and man-given adversity.

* * * * *

This book is intended to be an intensely analytical, dispassionate, examination of the African condition. It is thoroughly grounded in empirical reality. Little is meant to depend upon conjecture or hope. At the same time, readers should understand that this book also represents an intensely personal attempt to come to terms with Africa's future from the perspective of someone whose adult life has been involved intimately in the politics, the political and economic development, the governance, and the leadership of Africa and Africans.

In my public and private life I have attempted to support beneficial outcomes over the denigration of their peoples by African despots and dictators. I have tried to employ the power of the pen to right wrongs done to Africans by their own kind and by post-colonial outsiders. Having devoted an academic and public policy lifetime to Africa, having lived (and researched and taught) for long periods in Africa, having an abiding affection for all things African, and having a fervent desire to observe the uplifting of the peoples of Africa, in the writing of this book I have tried to employ the strongest possible scholarly skills of objectivity and data-mining. But the writing has also drawn on a deep well of compassion for the disparate peoples of the sub-continent.

The peoples of sub-Saharan Africa have much about which to rejoice. But they also have much about which to worry. The future of their region and the respective countries in which they live is fraught with the innumerable challenges discussed in this book. Unless they and their leaders recognize their abundant opportunities, and seize them appropriately, they may prove unable to claim what is rightly theirs. This book, and my effort, is meant to set out the obstacles ahead clearly so that sub-Saharan Africans can overcome them, and so that they may emerge triumphant as modern Africa achieves goals that until now have proved mostly unattainable.

1

Myriad Challenges and Opportunities

Africa, especially the 49 countries south of the Sahara that belong to the African Union, is poised to grow and mature – to begin rapidly catching up with progress and modernity in the rest of the developing world and, soon, with advances everywhere. Its 900 million people, much more urbanized and urbane than before, and much more driven than in past decades by middle-class aspirations similar to those voiced everywhere around the globe, seek to transform the missed opportunities of the era from 1960 to 2000 into the sustainable successes of an Africa newly emergent and newly ready to triumph over the myriad geographical, material, and human vicissitudes that have for far too long prevented Africa from meeting the lofty expectations of its peoples and its more responsible rulers. Africans now seek to reclaim the promise of their independence years. They not only wish to assume their rightful place in the corridors of world diplomatic and political power but also want gradually to achieve parity of opportunity and prosperity with Asia and Latin America.

Africa has lagged the rest of the world for decades, failing overall to deliver to its numerous peoples the improved incomes and life chances to which they have long aspired. Compared to East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, Africans today remain under-educated; more afflicted with deadly tropical and other diseases; deficient in preventive and curative health care and facilities; particularly susceptible to the periodic stresses and strains of global warming and climate change; prone to low crop yields; desperately poor; malnourished; bereft of water; short of power; under-served by road and rail; and limited by flimsy Internet connections. Yet Africa is rich in potential, with vast supplies underground of critical industrial minerals, gems, and gold. Off or near its coasts there are substantial quantities of newly discovered deposits of oil and gas, many already productive and others awaiting exploitation. Only a few countries are now densely populated on the land, although those densities are about to increase exponentially. For the most part, Africa's countries enjoy abundant sunshine to compensate for deficient soils and erratic rainfalls, and their indigenous farmers are endlessly inventive, conservative, and hard-working. Moreover, and significantly, in 2013, Africa is much better led and much better governed than it was during the first post-colonial period. Overcoming its deficits and bringing all of the positive attributes and possibilities together is the challenge of Africa's next era

of growth and development. Yet, policy makers must lead responsibly if Africa is to emerge healthy and strong in 30, and then 50, years' time.

Middle-class expectations

Sub-Saharan Africa's middle class has emerged as a critical driving force of positive change. Before this decade, Africa lacked a substantial middle class just as it had long lacked a meaningful hegemonic bourgeoisie. Now Africa's middle class (defined by the World Bank and the Asian and African Development Banks as persons earning between \$2 and \$20 a day) has grown since 1990 from 117 million to over 200 million (in 2012). Thus, of Africa's 900 million people, nearly a quarter are "middle-class" in wealth and, presumably, attitude and aspiration. About 60 million households now have yearly incomes equivalent to \$3,000. (Nevertheless, this is a new middle class that has much less disposable income than comparable middle classes elsewhere. Most are still very poor by the standards of industrialized countries. Few are able to afford the "white goods" – appliances – on which middle-class households elsewhere dote. They do not routinely carry credit cards.) A Pew Foundation poll of 13 emerging markets confirms anecdotal evidence that the new middle classes in Africa and the rest of the developing world are more politically engaged than the poor for whom popular politicians in African states have long catered. Members of the middle class "consistently" care about such values as free speech and free elections; the poor seek primarily to improve their incomes. As it grows, the middle class acts on abstract ideas about governance and thus demands improved political leadership and service delivery. The middle class mobilizes via the new social media and the Internet, and uses mobile telephones more innovatively than do others. Sub-Saharan Africa has about 500 million mobile telephone users, and more everyday.¹

The new urban middle-class Africans are members of the global village. They have largely thrown off traditional or "tribal" attitudinal shackles. They want jobs, but hardly ever on farms, and now try to hold their rulers to standards of responsible governance and transparency that are refreshingly novel for Africa. Too long in thrall, these middle classes are the driving forces of change and modernization in an Africa that has seen the rest of the world race far ahead across several dimensions; Africa's citizens, now more empowered than ever before, intend to catch up. These newly empowered citizens are what Ayittey calls the new "Cheetahs" – swift, assertive, accountable, and technologically sophisticated.² Active stakeholders, they demand enlightened and responsive policies from their ruling classes.

Africa's renaissance

This renaissance has been a long time coming. In the 1960s, when most of Africa cast off the chains of colonial domination, several West African and

East African nations boasted per-capita GDPs higher than similarly new former colonies in Asia, notably Singapore and Malaysia, but also Taiwan and South Korea. Those outposts became economic wonders – the Asian Tigers – while the economically leading countries of Africa slipped inexorably into decades of intense impoverishment. Most of the rest of post-colonial Africa joined them in perpetuating this immiserating condition. Some of the new African countries, forgetting fundamental economic rules, attempted to surge to prosperity through import substitution, protection of infant industries, and neglect of traditional agriculture. But grasping at grandiose panaceas gained them little. The experiments largely failed. Many countries forfeited their previous ability to feed themselves. Many went heavily into debt as they attempted massive uplifts of their educational and health services, created their own airlines, expanded their armies and purchased tanks and aircraft, opened diplomatic missions across the globe, and naturally attempted to become big players on the world scene.

These lost decades – modern Africa’s dark ages, corresponding in time to the era of the Cold War and reflecting many of its Manichaeian absolutes – were desperate ones for many of Africa’s peoples. They mostly lost the representative institutions that they had inherited from departing colonial rulers. Almost everywhere, democracy was replaced by Afro-socialism and single-party rule, or by a succession of military dictatorships. The “big man” – the ruling individual hegemon, rule giver, autocrat – became the norm. Rejecting democracy as a “Western” invention and a product of “imperialist dogma,” these new leaders “established Soviet-style one-party states and declared themselves ‘presidents for life.’”³ Citizens became objects rather than subjects and were preyed upon by rulers and ruling classes as their individual standards of living declined dramatically and those of the overweening potentates exploded exponentially. Even in those few countries governed by well-intentioned autocrats, benevolent dictatorship deprived most citizens of opportunities to achieve relatively higher levels of prosperity, improved educational attainments, and modern social advances. Almost everywhere, Africa fell backwards, missing opportunities to grow and progress with the rest of the developing world. For the most part lacking responsible leadership and good governance, and mired in a morass of spreading corruption, Africans also found themselves engaged in bitter, seemingly interminable, civil wars. Diseases spread, too, and large swathes of Africa suffered from periodic famines as the rains failed and the new national social safety nets proved nonexistent or inadequate. Whole generations lost hope while their leaders ostentatiously paraded around the world and grandly neglected their long-suffering subjects.

Nigeria, Africa’s largest nation and among its very wealthiest per capita in 1960, spent most of its first 40 years of independence in turmoil and tragedy. Military officers ousted the post-independence elected regime in 1966, and continued to plunge the country back into military dictatorship regularly

until 1999. There was a bitter civil war between the eastern third of the country and the rest for three years in the late 1960s, mostly fueled by discoveries of oil. Petroleum-derived revenues and rents have fueled internecine battles over spoils ever since, exacerbating the corrupt practices that had plagued Nigeria for centuries and depriving ordinary citizens of rightful services and entitlements normally expected from governments. Nigeria squandered its new oil-derived riches, failed even to refine sufficient petroleum to fuel its own automobiles and tractors or to power its electricity grid, made farming unprofitable, and drove many Nigerians into crime. (Aviation fuel was in short supply throughout the country, even in 2012.) Nigeria effectively lacked responsive governing bodies for decades, its millions having to suffer under and make do with a shifting array of greedy regimes unable to share spoils with the mass of its dependents. Nigerian generals, mostly from the Muslim north of the country, ate the land and left little that was edible for those unfortunates who tried to go to school, obtain medical services, or make their way economically.⁴

Africa had many Nigerias, if always on a smaller scale and not always based on rents from oil. But some tightly run satrapies had mountains of bauxite, warehouses of cocoa, vast reserves of copper, piles of uranium, or mines that yielded diamonds, gold, cobalt, cadmium, iron, and other precious minerals. Unhappily, the returns from such resources were usually deployed to benefit new ruling classes, not to uplift the women tilling maize or manioc or the men beating metal in an urban foundry. In places like Zaire (Congo), Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Togo, and the Central African Republic, rulers became the state, with each country's large or small resources existing mostly to serve the needs of the tyrant in charge and his entourage.⁵

Not all of Africa was so despotic during the Cold War, but even in places like Tanzania and Zambia, where the bosses were humanists at heart, people possessed little voice, there was hardly any transparency, and very few attempts were ever made to ascertain what the people preferred. Even in those relatively benign states, there were political prisoners, little freedom of speech or press, and more attention paid to what was deemed politically or socialistically/humanistically correct than to what might uplift and advance the lives of citizens. Conformity, even some attempts to collectivize agriculture, trumped individual initiative; the all-knowing state decided what was permissible.⁶

The result of all of these missed opportunities to join the global marketplace, embrace international trade, and float currencies was economic decline and social sclerosis. Africa's emergence was retarded throughout much of its first 30 or 40 years of independence by the greed and obstinacy of its rulers and ruling classes more than by any colonial legacies and hangovers. Leaders were concerned with enriching and advancing themselves and their families, clans, and lineages, not with strengthening the foundations of their states (most were not yet fully fledged nation-states) or uplifting and ennobling

their peoples. Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire/Congo purchased chateaux in Switzerland. He and other patrimonial despots obtained private jet aircraft with state money, distributed funds from the national treasuries to retainers and close followers, and created large and well-equipped armies and even air forces to cow their citizens and display their personal might. Rulers of less well-off or less extravagant African countries might have cried out against the opulence and oppression of their fellow African rulers, but few did. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) did nothing as a regional body to curb or even to complain about the excesses and depredations of some of its members.

Africa slipped farther and farther behind in the race for human advancement. That was the result of the forsaken opportunities, the civil war mayhems, the predatory oppressions, and the mismanagement of Africa by so many of its rulers and ruling classes during the dark decades.⁷ In Sierra Leone, for instance, a small but well-run ex-colony in West Africa was transformed by the perverted greed of its elected president into a kleptocratic stew of civil conflict and retaliation. Beginning in the late 1970s, President Siaka Stevens gained personal control of his country's diamond and agricultural wealth and thus systematically benefitted himself and his family at the expense of the nation and its people. "Over the course of one year in the mid-1980s," Stevens and his financial partners "gained a windfall . . . [of] . . . about 3 percent of recorded GDP. . . . Almost no aspect of the state escaped Stevens' mania for personal appropriation."⁸ Emasculating the state bureaucracy, willfully destroying the formal institutions of the state, and bankrupting the nation by stealing its revenues, Stevens militarized politics, sponsored armed gangs that enforced his predations, and consequently propelled Sierra Leone into a cauldron of conflict and, after his own death, into a civil war of unspeakable depravity. Blood diamonds were his legacy.

Fortunately, two small states in Africa resisted the common tendency to deprive citizens of their rightful deserts. Two leaders, Sir Seretse Khama in Botswana and Sir Sewoosagur Ramgoolam in Mauritius, believed in the responsibilities of leadership, in uplift, in stewardship, and in bucking the common single-party and Afro-socialist preferences of the very best of their peers in the OAU. Being hostile to dictatorship was natural and easy for leaders who were instinctive democrats. But it was harder to hew to a distinctive democratic path when even such well-meaning fellow leaders as Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia) believed that tight, authoritarian control delivered better results.

Khama inherited a dirt-poor land from Britain and, despite being surrounded by apartheid South Africa, transformed it into mainland Africa's most well-managed, most thoroughly democratic, and most prosperous land (diamonds were mined and exported only ten years after he had begun to run the new Botswana).⁹ He even accomplished something which few others have yet done. He built a nation from a collection of tribes and ethnic groups

united only in part by a (mostly) common language. He led in such a gifted and honest way, without the taint of corruption, that good governance (the delivery of quality services) is now taken for granted throughout Botswana, and solid institutions now hold its rulers in check and provide such luxuries – for Africa – as a consistent and independent rule of law, an energetic and committed civil service, a self-sufficient private sector, and strong educational and health services.

First forging a lonely, determined, course as a democracy distrusted by the autocracies and military dictatorships of Africa, the Botswanan model pioneered by Khama emphasized strict adherence to the rule of law, an independent judiciary, dedication to free speech, freedom of assembly and religion, widespread citizen participation, prudent management of human and financial resources, and a close attention to the needs of the nation and its people rather than to the demands of the ruling class and its families. Khama was modest and unostentatious – a rare combination in a Cold War Africa of “big men,” self-styled potentates who declared that they knew what was best for their subjects.¹⁰ Possibly as much because of Khama’s attention to incentives and honest management, and also because Botswana was strictly well governed, the country prospered (avoiding Dutch disease – overvalued currency and marginalization of all other enterprises) as supplies of gem diamonds were discovered and carefully exploited. In time, Botswana became the only country on the mainland with a non-stop history of good governance.¹¹ It therefore grew faster than any other African country throughout the 1980s and 1990s and into this century. Despite high HIV/AIDS numbers, Botswana consequently was able to deliver consistently more social services and better opportunities to its citizens. Aside from a small, autocratic, oil producer, Botswana in 2013 is the wealthiest country per capita in Africa and has been for several decades.

Mauritius is the third-wealthiest African country per capita. Although an Indian Ocean island sharing few cultural or historical affinities with mainland Africa, it now belongs to Africa and the African Union by political choice, its leadership and governance example remaining influential within any discussions of Africa. Part (27 percent) of its population is descended from slaves shipped from Africa to the successively Dutch-, French-, and British-controlled island during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A majority of Mauritians, however, are descended from Hindi-speakers who were brought to Mauritius from India to cut sugar cane under British rule. Others speak Creole, Chinese, French, and English as a mother tongue. Inter-marriage and broad waves of assimilation ever since have blurred the personal or family links to Africa, or even to nearby Indian Ocean island nations such as Madagascar, the Comoros, or the Seychelles. But this blurring has led to very successful post-independence experiments in ethnic and cultural pluralism and in democratic tolerance and free expression that provide a model for the rest of Africa.