Mohamed M.A. Salih, African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalisation and Governance, Pluto Press, London, 2003, PP. 372, ISBN 0 7453 2038 4.

Promoting sustainable development hinges on democratisation in which political parties have an immense role to play. Political parties in Africa have played this critical role since they emerged with struggles against colonialism and foundations of modern state system. The text articulates in a very exceptional way exposing issues surrounding political parties in Africa.

The introduction by M.A. Mohamed Salih puts the whole text into its rightful perspective through exploring and tracing the foundations of African political parties. He examined the factors that led to the emergence of these political parties citing the centrality of socio-economic standing of the African situation. A comparison with western political parties and African political parties clearly brings matters to the fore, offers very clear definitions, distinctions and role of political parties. The author examined the emergence of political parties from two-perspective vis, those from transformed liberation movements to political parties and those political parties created by military rulers.

The book is divided into three parts covering thematic issues in chronological way. The first part traces the evolution of political parties in five countries. Jotham C. Momba dwells on the Zambian case study analysing the factors that led to the transformation and weakening of United National Independence Party (UNIP) and how the a new party Movement for Multi-Party Democracy managed to capture the hearts of the electorate, subsequently capturing power. The also managed to examine how UNIP managed to transform itself into an opposition political party and the challenges that they met. Failure to succeed of UNIP, the author hinted is as a result of the failure 'to survive the crisis of succession'. p.64.

In the case of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party of Tanzania, Pascal B. Mihyo analysed the historical evolution of this revolutionary party and examining the characteristics and political strategies of the party. The author explored how the party had transformed to democratisation through demilitarisation, how it moved from a party of mobilisation to participation, from constitutional to parliamentary party, from charismatic to prismatic leadership and problems that were experienced in the process.

Abdel Ghaffar Mohamed Ahmed and Samia El Hadi El Nagar dwelling on the Sudan case study examined first, the concept of democracy from the early conceptions to the present that is dominated by the liberal model. The authors lament the failure of democracy in the Sudan and attributed this to both internal and external factors. They traced the origins of the problem from colonialism, which created a false start to the path towards political parties and democratisation. The authors examined how a fragmented political scene which contributed to the failure of political parties and elites. They went on to analyse how the current regime has been able to hold to power and how the civil society can play a critical role as it is doing now thereby creating 'a new leadership that is independent of the traditional dominant political parties'.p.113.

Kassahun Berhanu examined party politics and political culture in Ethiopia noting the emergence of party politics emerging with the demise of the ancient regime in 1974. Hope was lost with the coming of the military in the scene. The author analysed how multi party politics was ushered in and challenged that came with the demise of military dictatorship in 1991 to the extent that 79 political parties were in existence in 2002. The author examined the correlation between elections and democracy and analysing the state of the part politics. The author also provided a rich case study of national and regional elections for 1995 and 2000 and in the final analysing the sustainability of opposition political parties and the challenges that require remedy.

Political parties and democracy in independent Namibia as Tapera O Chirau examined has greatly been influenced by colonial history as well as its geographical location. For Namibia independence came with the proliferation of political organisations but SWAPO has largely remained the dominant political party and factors for its success were alluded to. The author went further to assess the quality of elections and governance Namibia.

Part two of the book addresses issues of institutionalism. Renske Doorenspleet dwelt on a survey of Sub Saharan Africa's political parties, party systems and democracy. Noting the 1990s as the era of widespread political transformation. Using example and case studies the author examined types of party systems in African democracies ranging from multi-party system, no party system, and two-party system, two-and-half-party to dominant one-party system. An explanation was alluded to as to the prevalence of dominant one-party system and analysing the potentialities of the different types of party systems noting that 'democracy is severely limited in a system with one dominant ruling party'.p.186.

Oda Van Cranenburgh examined political institutions within the framework of the established multi-party systems. For Africa the author characterises the political parties as 'suffer(ing) from

lack of institutionalization, personalistic politics and internal factionalism'.p.189. The author makes a comparison between the issue of the balance power between executive and the judiciary and executive dominance in presidential democracies. Cranenburg also compared coalition versus one party cabinets and majoritarian versus consensus systems, analysed mechanisms in place for horizontal accountability, examined concepts of electoral system and party system. For the author, 'while democracy may be enhanced by the presence of institutions for power sharing, the presence of strong and viable parties-and I emphasise the plural-is a sine qua non for both consensus and majoritarian countries'.p.206.

Kwame Boafo-Arthur dwelling on Ghana as a case study analysed the state of political parties make a replica and prolong themselves. The chapter made definition of political party clear, interesting historical overview of political parties in Ghana was offered. The author examined the role of political parties in governance and the organizational structures of the leading political parties and factors contributing to success were alluded to.

Nick G. Wanjoni analysing the sustainability of political parties and brought political parties in Kenya into perspective. He established a framework through which sustainability can be assessed. Further the author considered opportunities for the enhancement of sustainability. A brief comparison of political parties brings in historical dimension. The factors that contributed to their emergence were alluded to, sources of sustainability were analysed. The author also examined how political parties developed capacity to withstand challenges. For the author it remains ' the sustainability of political parties is a function of many factors…the possession of clear mission vision and mobilizing ideology, the capacity for adaptability, the impartiality of the state machinery in affairs involving the competitive political process, and a conducive constitutional, legal and administrative framework'.p.255.

Part three of the book is on governance of political parties. A contribution by Wil Hout examines the role of political parties in good governance. The author provided a comprehensive analysis of the interpretation of good governance. He went further to analyse the relationship between political parties, aid and good governance as well as political parties and global governance.

Petr Kopecky and Peter Mair examine the relationship between political parties and government beginning by examining the historical and theoretical perspective of political parties, government and the state in comparative terms, i.e. Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Sub Saharan Africa. For Africa they noted 'political power…may no longer come out of the barrel of a gun, but it does often derive from the machinery of the state. Here, winning is everything.'p.291.

Mpho G. Molomo analysed the linkage between political parties and democratic governance in Botswana where ruling party with a fragmented opposition dominates the political landscape. The author provided a detailed analysis of dominating issue in political parties vis ideology, manifestos, political campaign, succession, institutional development, accountability, internal democracy, women's representation, ethnicity, and funding. Issues of political system civil society and electoral system were alluded to. The author recommended '… the deepening democracy requires popular control of decision making on the basis of political equality, and that requires constant construction of countervailing institutions within political and civil societies.'p.317.

Dwelling on the Southern African Region Denis Venter analysed the realities and imageries of multi-party politics and elections, specifically, addressing the case studies of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho.

For anyone who wants to understand political parties in Africa the book is obligatory, for it covers issues of political parties in a comprehensive way.

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