

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN THE 1990s CONTINENT IN TRANSITION

As it joins the rest of the world in adjusting to a new global order, Sub-Saharan Africa faces a unique set of challenges. News of a ground swell of political liberalization on the continent contrasts with the usual reports of civil war and economic deterioration. The demise of Central Europe's oligarchs and vanguard parties comes at a time when other factors are forcing Africans to question the utility of statist and socialist policies, and demonstrates that it is possible to curb authoritarian regimes.

By speaking with increasing frankness about tying economic assistance to African political reforms, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have added fuel to the controversy they began in the early 1980s when they made lending to Africa contingent on economic reforms. As Western and—more importantly—African governments enter the debate over “governance,” the lessons of nearly ten years of structural adjustment underline the increasing difficulty of separating economic from political reforms.

Another critical issue for Africa in the 1990s is its relationship with the rest of the world. If the Cold War merely politicized the peripheral role Africans played in the Eurocentric economy of the colonial period, it nonetheless kept Africa on the world's agenda. Many Africans fear that the new world order will mean only the further marginalization of what is already the most remote and rundown neighborhood in the global village.

For this issue of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, the Editorial Board has asked political scientists, economists, lawyers, and journalists to examine Sub-Saharan Africa in the light of recent regional and global changes, and discuss where Africa will fit into the emerging world order. Carol Lancaster presents the political and economic choices the countries of Africa face as they journey through uncharted territory. Millard Arnold suggests that Africa's marginalization could be a blessing if it leads to African solutions to African problems, and points to new economic relationships that could result from political liberalization. Gibson Kuria examines Africa's turn away from socialism toward democracy and human rights. Patrick O'Meara and N. Brian Winchester explore South Africa's domestic political scene and posit that evolution into a multiracial democracy could make the country an engine of growth for Africa's economy. Mark Gallagher evaluates the successes and failures of African countries' decade-long economic reform programs, and Merle Bowen suggests that, in Mozambique's case, the reforms have brought economic growth only at a very high cost. Finally, Tom Mshindi discusses encouraging signs of rising environmental consciousness on the continent.

Paul Eckert
Special Features Editor

