

become small fortresses, surrounded by high walls and guarded by night and often also by day. Crimes against property are high, but the undefended poor as always bear the brunt.

**Political decay**

Economic crisis, persistent poverty, marked inequality — this is not a socio-economic environment conducive to the flourishing of democratic institutions and political stability. Nor was the colonial history of autocratic rule followed by a brief period of internal self-government likely to foster the institutionalization of democratic norms by the time of independence. The authoritarianism and disorder that characterize the political life of much of Tropical Africa (see Table 2) is therefore not surprising.

Table 2 shows the extent and form of *authoritarianism* in mid-1982. A few points bear elaboration.

(1) Half of the regimes were either *military* or *quasi-military* in composition. In practice, it is often difficult to distinguish these since military-backed regimes strive to deck themselves out in civilian clothing. Military-dominated governments range from the relatively benign (as in Togo and Guinea-Bissau) to the relatively brutal (as in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zaire).

(2) Only one-seventh of the relevant polities constitute *competitive-party electoral systems*. Even in some of these states, the governing party's tolerance of the opposition is either untested or tenuous. Would Senegal's ruling Socialist Party actually accept its constitutional removal by a coalition of opposition parties? Will Zimbabwe's multi-party system survive the next election, given Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's commitment to a one-party state? Will Nigeria's multiparty system, installed only in 1979, succumb to another *coup d'état*? Instability in Nigeria, the world's fourth-largest democracy, stems not just from persistent poverty, but ironically also from the influx of oil revenues in the decade prior to 1980. Popular expectations are high, stoked by the state's sudden affluence, the creation of a conspicuously wealthy class of parvenu political insiders, and election promises as the various parties jostle for public support. But the *means* of satisfaction are wholly inadequate, because of the recent decline in Nigeria's oil income and limited governmental capacity. Moreover, the frustration of popular expectations occurs in a country with intense regional/ethnic rivalries. Whether the complex constitutional system (based on that of the United States) will be able to contain these strains is a moot point. Another coup in these circumstances cannot be ruled out.

(3) Almost a third of the countries are *one-party states* or *hereditary monarchies*. These are not equally authoritarian or oppressive. Tanzania, for instance, is led by a government sincerely committed to its citizens' welfare and by a governing party which permits some measure of popular participation in choosing party officials and parliamentarians. Some intra-party electoral competition also exists in Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, the Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. On the other hand, there exist other one-party states which brook little or no genuine participation. These include regimes of both the left (Guinea) and the right (Malawi).

(4) *Authoritarianism* more frequently assumes a conservative (or "pragmatic") guise than a leftist one. Only a third of the military, quasi-military and one-party regimes

espouse (and even fewer actually practice) Marxist or radical socialist doctrines. Other regimes refer to themselves as "African socialist," but this is generally accepted as a polite way of declaring a capitalist commitment. Of the competitive-party systems, five of the six governments are "pragmatic" in orientation. The proportion of Marxist-oriented governments in Africa will probably increase, as Soviet influence spreads.

**Foundering fathers and after**

*Political instability* is common in Subsaharan Africa. Politically-unstable states, defined as those which have ex-

Rulership Type	No.	*Degree of Stability		Ideological Orientation	
		Stable	Unstable	Right ("pragmatic")	Left
Military	14	3	11	8	6
**Quasi military	7	3	4	5	2
1-party state or hereditary monarch	15	13	2	10	5
Competitive party system	6	4	2	5	1
Total	42	23	19	28	14

Source: Author's files  
 \*\*Degree of stability: a politically unstable state which experiences two or more instances of political violence (revolution, rebellion, civil war, *coup d'état*, insurrection, assassination of principal leader) within a ten year period.  
 \*\*A "quasi-military regime" is one in which the chief leader is (theoretically) a civilian, yet rests his rule upon the military.

Table 2

perienced two or more reported episodes of political violence in a ten-year period, comprise almost half of the cases. But this is a conservative definition of political disorder: if it is more rigorously defined to include those states which have undergone at least one major episode of political violence in ten years, only a handful on countries would escape the label. Even such a paragon of stability as Kenya underwent, in August 1982, an attempted bloody coup against the government of President Daniel arap Moi. Perhaps, however, Kenya's vaunted stability has been exaggerated: three star politicians were, after all, assassinated in the first twelve years of independence.

The citizens of seventeen countries share the worst of all possible political worlds — instability combined with autocracy. Thus, many Ugandans, Zairois and Equatorial Guineans are essentially defenceless before the demands and deprivations of an undisciplined military or governing party. Indeed, military indiscipline is a constant problem for all regimes that rely principally on force to survive. The central government retains only a tenuous grip over certain military or paramilitary groups even in such countries as Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. Stories of brutality and extor-