Not Yet Democracy
NOT YET DEMOCRACY

West Africa’s Slow Farewell to Authoritarianism

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Dedication

We dedicate this book to all Africans anywhere
who died fighting
who went to prison
who keep on fighting

for the advent of genuine democracy and respect for Human Rights
and dignity
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We will create the table of contents when editing is complete and we are sure pages will not change.
Not Yet Democracy: West Africa's Slow Farewell to Authoritarianism is the product of the collaborative work of three eyewitnesses to and stakeholders in West Africa’s checkered democratization experiments. It crystallizes the authors’ shared deep commitment to a symbiosis between, on the one hand, the inquisitive and evaluative look of the scholars and, on the other, the earnestness of believers in genuine democracy in seeing the total eradication of authoritarian practices in Africa. That others before us have attempted to provide similar interim assessments of the democratization process does not make the task of writing this book any easier. It still entails risks and is bound, as such studies usually do, to raise criticisms. On the one hand, it is often argued that, in light of the situation in the sub-region even in the most touted cases, ‘democratization process’ is a singularly generous characterization of the developments over the last decade or so. Others, on the other hand, charge that many analysts easily succumb to the a resurgent Afro-pessimism, and miss the immense progress recorded in this area in a short period compared to the three decades that preceded Africa’s rendition of Samuel Huntington’s so-called “third wave.” In addition to these ready no-win criticisms, the most significant challenges, from where we stand, has been the dizzying pace of developments in West Africa. The most inspired analysis seems to constantly try to catch up with the events and even our sober findings and predictions about the evolution seem to be overtaken by the rapidity with which change (for better or worse) is occurring.

These common criticisms and frustrating odds notwithstanding, it is crucial that a progress report be done, singularly about small (and mostly Francophone) states which tend to be left out of most analy-
ses, unlike more prominent countries such as Nigeria or Ghana. These countries’ experiments hold a wealth of lessons for others in the sub-region and Africa more generally. Moreover, the central role of the military in charting this historical phase of the evolution of West Africa’s political systems deserves special focus. It is another way to highlight the criticality of ‘getting right’ the civil-military relations equation as West-Africans think through and contrive new political dispensations. The ambition of Not Yet Democracy is to do all the above.

We have tapped our collective intimate understanding of the general political dynamics, and singularly the civil-military relations of the states studied to present an accurate, theoretically and empirically insightful accounts of the fits and starts of democratization, the hopes it aroused, its challenges, slow progress, and disconcerting setbacks. When feasible, we have made predictions or proffered recommendation to speed up this historical process of turning the page on a debilitating and onerous era of West African history. Even before the publication of the book, some of our predictions such as the likely retrogression of Togo toward a “presidential monarchy” of sorts, and the ineluctability of an attempt by Arab Nationalist groups within the Mauritanian military to overthrow Ould Taya’s regime came to pass. And, again, many other notable developments occurred in West Africa since the manuscript was completed. An epilogue was added to the conclusion to update West Africa’s Slow Farewell to Authoritarianism generally, and in the states studied more specifically.
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