

RETHINKING AFRICA'S POLITICS OF TRANSITION IN POPPERIAN TERMS

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In this paper I would like to re-conceptualize the politics of transition in Africa in popperian terms. It is important to note that in many African countries periods (and processes) of political transition are very troubling and potential sources of political upheaval. This has led to times of political transition being taken as times of crisis.

I demonstrate that the crisis of political transition in sub-Saharan Africa results from failure to appreciate a simple (though fundamental) popperian lesson, i.e. acknowledgement of our fallibility and the possibility that this involves of learning from others. I employ an interesting 'prescription' (that flows from Popper's philosophy) to provide a way out of the crisis of political transition in Africa. This is the demand that we need not only to reconstruct ourselves, our culture and our institutions in order to thrive within a democratic society but also to partake of the unique local practices which make up our specific personalities.

To understand the full value of this phenomenal solution, one needs only to see the entrenched dogma of 'life president' in African politics reflected in the following claim: 'during presidential campaigns in some rural areas of Benin, the people asked why they had to elect a new president when the old one was still alive'.