



**State,  
Governance  
And Regional  
Integration  
In Africa**

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## **An Assessment of Political Governance in Africa: The Democratic Imperative**

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### **Abstract**

*The work offers a theoretical review that takes into consideration the interplay between liberal democracy as a legitimizing factor and authoritarian monolithism which is gradually becoming a norm in Africa. The interplay explains lessons drawn from the non-competitive one party and one-man rule which has suffered a loss of popular and intellectual legitimacy as a result of the unrelenting social, economic and political cost of decades of authoritarianism and democratic governance which appears to be in crisis in most African states as political struggle in Africa remains very much a contest between the rule of law and autocratic rule of imperial leaders. Using secondary sources of data, the emerging analysis observed that while competitive multiparty democracy has been enthroned in many African states, contemporary political governance is strewn with democratic deficit. There seems to be a gradual re-institutionalization of autocratic and authoritarian regimes in democratic wave of some states in Africa. African leaders accepted the western style of liberal democracy without its corresponding obligations. Instead of institutionalizing democratic ethos civil liberties are constrained and elections turned into a state-regulated non-competitive contestation. The work concludes that solutions to the challenges of democratic governance in Africa will depend on strengthening the various institutions that underpin democracy and good governance.*

**Keywords:** Political governance, liberal democracy, Institution, Africa

### **Introduction**

African states have experienced profound, dramatic and sometimes baffling political changes which have become a major feature of its development during the past decades. These changes have been driven by the struggle for the control of state power. Authoritative model of politics underpinned most African states in the 1960s and the dramatic political turbulence in Africa since 1990 has led many to talk of a second liberation of African states from the sit tight syndrome of its leaders. By the beginning of 1990, eleven heads of states in Africa has been replaced. Four of them; the then president of Benin, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Zambia were voted out of office in competitive multiparty elections, others heads of state such as Siad Barre in Somalia and Mengistu Halie Mariam in Ethiopia had to flee their countries when successful secessionist and often ethnically based liberation movements took power. The autocratic president Samuel Doe was murdered in the Liberian civil war. Similarly most authoritarian regimes in Africa held multiparty elections in 1990s, despite wide spread opposition, a number of them including Daniel Arap Moi of

Kenya, Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo and Paul Biya of Cameroon have won these elections and some have continue to rule their country (Brown 2001) These events, illustrate the problems facing states on the road to stable democratic rule.

The pressure for multiparty politics became extremely strong in 1980. Some of the authoritarian regimes bowed to pluralist pressure, often at the behest of aid donors and creditors who have developed a remarkable consensus on the need for democracy, less corruption, greater respect for human right and good governance in Africa. There was also the demonstration effect which led to the emergence of multiparty politics. Thus, in the 1980's Africa continent witnessed emergence of more of democratic forms of government that could be described as patchy across the continent (Riley 1994:174). The culture of political authoritarianism manifested in military dictatorships and one-party systems dominant in many African countries gradually gave way to competitive party democratic systems. And most countries embarked on constitutional reviews to promote a culture of adherence to rule of law, due process and political accountability.

Furthermore, in the last two decades democratic politics and practices have also taken a significant leap in Africa. Competitive multiparty democracy has continually been enthroned in many African countries. The political space has been gradually liberalised but despite these advances, challenges to political governance remain in many African countries. The democratic process is often fragile, uneven, and tenuous and remains weak and barely institutionalized (ECA Report 2005:23). In recent years democratic governments in Africa face a daunting array of challenges as authoritarian monolithism is gradually becoming a norm in Africa. Most Africa state began to witness the rebirth of the authoritarian model of politics. This model has taken several forms, some more repressive than others. Its civilian form has been shaky, often economically inefficient one party state with an ageing nationalist figure at the helm. Political changes have yet to be consolidated and some democratic regimes legitimized. Democratic pressures are having an uneven impact, as some political leaders resist or deflect the demand of democratic ethos. The flawed electoral process has produced unpopular rulers and subsequently crisis, violence, political assassinations, ethnic and religious conflicts.

These development and others across the continent raise a number of questions about democratic governance in Africa. The state as developed in western tradition is a social artifact which is expected to be the embodiment of the nation. Such a state with the privilege of sovereignty has the responsibility to advance the common good rather than the good of some or a few. Hence the basic preoccupation of a state should be good governance that would serve the interest of all (Olowu, 1994 cited in Etemike 2012). With the world wide resurgence of democratization and democratic push African states, are expected to move into the path of western liberal democracy. Democracy in the liberal form is seen as the legitimating factor of modern governance (Goldsworthy 1981:55 cited in Etemike 2012). In the face of democratic failure, coupled with external and internal imperative, it is therefore pertinent to assess democratic governance in Africa with a view of bringing to the fore the democratic imperative. The study utilized secondary sources of data for its

information. The hermeneutical analysis method was used to understand and interpret written documents, events and human situation from a range of secondary sources. The study used triangulation procedure to present a valid analysis and interpretation of secondary data.

### **Governance and Democracy: Conceptual Discourse**

Governance is an increasingly important concept for integrating various desired outcome of governmental interactions with its society. The concept of governance has always been linked to democratic governance (Achanya 2012:95). The United Nations report 2018 defined governance as the exercise of political, economic and authoritative authority in the management of the affairs of a country. According to Hornby 2006 cited in Edetanlan and Ojeikere (2012) governance is the activity of governing a country or controlling a company or an organization; the way in which a country is governed or a company or institution is controlled. It confers the right or authority on a person or group of persons to control all the affairs of a country, institution or company. Furthermore governance also refers to the means which power is exercised in the management of a country's resources for development. Flowing from the United Nation's definition of governance, Edetanlan and Ojeikere (2012) emphasized that the common ground in the definition of governance is that it emphasize the manner in which power as authority is exercised in the management of the resources and affairs of a nation, and this power or authority is vested on some individuals in public authorities as the government, whose responsibility it is to ensure that resources and the affairs of the country are properly harnessed and managed to improve the people they represent. Good governance is a term that is often used to describe the desired objective of a nation-state political. In Akpa (2011:67 cited in Achanya 2012) view good governance basically is about integrity, efficiency, effectiveness and economy of government in the management of public affairs and meeting government expectations of a society. Edetanlan and Ojeikere (2012:59) list the following as the basic principles that features as characteristics of good governance; participation, decency, fairness and strict adherence to the rule of law; transparency, accountability, equity and efficiency.

### **Concept of Democracy**

According to Etemike and Efanodor (2009) the diversities of the theories and practice of democracy are so varied that to speak of an objective definition of democracy seems elusive. Also Dahl (1956), Raphael (1970), and Nwokeji(1994) all argued that there is no definition of democracy, hence no theory of democracy. Hence substantial literature and discourse on democracy and democratization is characterized by the meaning of democracy (Etemike 2005). Furthermore, it is common for people to dismiss certain explanations as being theoretical and unrelated to practical reality. This is the case with the concept of democracy. It has thus argued that democracy and democratic practice are two different things (Adebayo, 1994:13). Democratic practice it is claimed is real because it can be theorized while democracy is an abstraction for which a general acceptable explanation cannot be produced. This situation has thus

created a crisis and lack of consensus on the actualization of democracy (Etemike 2005).

Despite the views expressed by the authors mentioned above Burnell (2011) insist that democracy has a continuum in which democratic tenets are expressed in different societies. Democracy as a form of political organization dates back to more than 25 hundred years, and as a word or political noun it appeared for the first time in history in the 15<sup>th</sup> century following its coinage by Herodotus. Democracy could thus be said to have spanned across various ages and periods ranging from the period of antiquity, through the medieval period. In these periods various scholars, theorists and philosophers have in varying degrees of specificity defined democracy (Etemike 2004). Democracy encompasses a process with countless number of tenets in a given continuum. This is why perhaps several governments claim being democratic if the given polity only satisfies one or two of these democratic tenets. Democratic tenets which in Burnell's opinion are generally considered a more desirable version of democracy include, electoral democracy with respect for civil liberties, political right of groups and individuals, constitutionalism and the rule of law. The focus mostly is on an election that gives the people a chance to determine who should rule (Etemike, 2014).

Thus in Schumpeter's (1947: 256) view, democracy is simply a political method through which politicians are elected by means of a competitive vote. It is an arrangement for reaching political decisions (Hoffman and Graham 2006:112). The concept of democracy apprehends a system of government under which the people exercise power either directly or through representatives elected for that purpose periodically. A democratic state is thus that which provides institutions for the expression of the popular will on basic questions of social direction and policy (Mimiko, 1994:236 cited in Etemike and Efanodor 2009).

The concept of electoral democracy however has a strenuous critic in Rousseau's idea of democracy. According to Rousseau(1913) democracy was the means through which human being could achieve freedom or autonomy in the sense of obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself ( Heywood, 2004). Heywood (2004: 74) explains Rousseau's (1913) position of freedom or autonomy as when citizens participate directly and continuously in shaping the life of community. This idea in Heywood's (2004) view moves well beyond the conventional notion of electoral democracy and offers support for the more radical idea of direct democracy.

In Rousseau's view therefore such a democracy require not only political equality but a relatively high level of economic equality. Hence he proposed that no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself (Heywood, 2004: 75). The concept of liberal democracy has nonetheless, in the contemporary era gained variety of meanings. For instance, Gauba (2004:424) represent democracy as a combination of free-market economy with universal adult franchise. In his view this is distinct from other forms of political system by certain principles and characteristics, such as its procedural institutional arrangements. Gauba (2004:425) listed government by consent, public accountability, majority rule,

recognition of minority rights and constitutional government as the broad principles of liberal democracy.

It could be said that the process of attaining these tenets could be referred to as democratization process. Magbadelo (1994) explains democratization process thus – democratization as an all-encompassing process must be seen in essence and substance, as an autochthonous and autocentric process of social restructuring in consonance with the prevailing societal values, ethic, norms and nuances of the generality of the society, in which this process of political and social changes are taking place (Etemike 2004). Burnell (2011) aptly explain it thus, that democratization means far more than the introduction of free and fair elections, especially in societies where institutional development in the party system and civil society has been repressed. He pointed out that democratization usually involve processes of cultural and social change involving attitude, norms and values as well as institutional building Etemike (2012).

Consequently, democratization and the promotion of democracy refer to a range of different strategies, forms, and modalities directed at supporting movement towards (Liberal) democracy. Despite the varied forms of democracy examined the basic discussion is to place this as a template in assessing political governance in Africa.

### **Democracy and Political Governance in Africa: An Assessment**

The democratic revival in Africa is a product of several development. Since the early 1980's democratic pressures have grown both from within and outside. From within, the crisis of the African states in the late 1970's beset by economic decline and unable to meet popular expectations, led many to criticize their own corrupt leaders and to argue for a more democratic polity. From outside, the growing external debts of many African states, their status client of major powers, and the geopolitics of global power have increasingly undermined the notional, juridical sovereignty of many African state at the same time, the external pressure from western government and international institution became more overt and insistent. From the 1980's African problems were seen as political in character (Reliy 1994: 175)

The democratic movement which emerged in many African states in the late 1980's in some respect resembles nationalist coalitions which gained power in the late 1950's and early 1960's. However, democratic movement in Africa has not been successful in every case. Few African states may be regarded as liberal democratic, and at least handful of some other states are moving in a liberal, pluralist direction. Assessment of political governance shows that countries now have a multiparty democracy with varying degrees of stability, acceptance and legitimacy. According to Economic Commission for Africa Report (2005:21) there are three patterns of party democracy being practiced (see table 1):

- Countries with two or more competing and relatively strong political parties (for example, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa);

- Countries with two or more parties, one of which is dominant (for example, Ethiopia, Namibia and Tanzania); and
- Three countries with one or no parties (for example, Swaziland and Uganda).

**Table 1. Democratic Pluralism Based on party regimes in Africa.**

<p><b>Multiparty democracy with two or more independent parties competing for political power</b> Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria</p>
<p><b>Multiparty democracy with two or more independent parties one of which is dominant</b> Botsawana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Garbon, The Gambia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanazania, Zambia and Zimbabwe</p>
<p><b>Countries with one or no parties</b> Swaziland and Uganda</p>

**Source:** National Country Report cited in ECA 2005:21

It is pertinent to note that from the three patterns of party democracy being practiced in Africa, the possibility of alternating political power is higher in countries with two or more parties of relative strength competing in the electoral process. Countries with a strong dominant party and weak opposition have less possibility of alternating power among parties. Countries with one or no parties have almost no possibility of alternating power except when the leader dies or when intense internal pressure or rupture forces the leader to relinquish political power (ECA 2005).

Banning-Lower and Purvis (2005) noted that there are four regime types being practiced in Africa (see table 2 below): These are Authoritarian/Nominal democracy, Full democracy, Flawed democracy and Hybrid. The authoritarian/Nominal democracy is a type of regime where political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed. Many countries in this category are outright dictatorships though some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance. Elections, if they do occur, are mostly not free and fair. Countries with full democracy respect basic political freedoms and civil liberties, and tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. Countries with flawed democratic regimes adjudge elections to free and fair even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties will be respected. While in countries with hybrid regimes elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being both free and fair. Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies Banning-Lower and Purvis (2005).

**Table 2. Regime Types in Africa**

<p><b>Hybrid</b> Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and</p>
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Mozambique
<b>Authoritarian/nominal democracy</b> Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Algeria, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Guinea, Sudan, Chad, Gabon, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Zimbabwe,
<b>Flawed Democracy</b> Ghana, Senegal, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana and Zambia
<b>Full democracy</b> Mauritius

Compiled from: Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2014  
get the data embed in Banning-Lower and Purvis (2005).

Furthermore, the structure of government as a mechanism of political representation determines how the executive is constituted, how the legislature is composed and the scope of separation of powers. Notably in Africa there are three types of governmental structure: presidential, parliamentary and hybrid (see table 3). Of these three the hybrid system is the most common.

**Table 3. Structure of Government in Africa**

Presidential	Hybrid	Parliamentary
Benin	Botswana	Ethiopia
Malawi	Namibia	Lesotho
Burkina Faso	Chad	Mauritius
Mozambique	Niger	
Cameroon	Egypt	
Nigeria	Ghana	
Gabon	Kenya	
The Gambia	Mali	
Uganda	Senegal	
Zimbabwe	South Africa	
	Tanzania	
	Zambia	

Source: National Country Report cited in ECA 2005:21

The presidential system has a single executive, the president, who is usually directly elected by the people and who, as the fulcrum of power, appoints a cabinet. The principle of separation of powers is usually enunciated in a presidential system. While the hallmark of the parliamentary system is a fusion of legislative and executive powers. Under the parliamentary system, the president has mostly ceremonial functions as head of state. According to Economic Commission for Africa Report (2005:21) many African countries have a hybrid governmental structure that combines elements of the parliamentary and presidential systems. Under the hybrid governmental structure, the president who is directly elected is the locus of executive power and appoints ministers mainly from parliament. In Tanzania the president who

is elected is the head of state and government. He appoints the prime minister from the parliament. In Senegal the president is elected and appoints the prime minister and the cabinet. Thus, the nature of parliament in these hybrid systems, how they are composed and their tenure also differs. For instance, some countries have bicameral legislature, others a unicameral one. Some countries all members of the legislature are directly elected. In others not all are, some are nominated by the president to represent special interest. As the case in Kenya where the parliament has 210 elected members and 12 members nominated by the president, for a total of 222 members (ECA Report 2005:23)

Electoral competition is conducted in most countries through political parties, which are a pillar of representative democracy. The procedures and guiding principles for registering political parties differ by country. Some countries have administratively flexible party registration procedures for example Mauritius. Some regimes have some registration restrictions for example Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Senegal and South Africa. And others have tough registration procedures or rules for example Nigeria and Tanzania (ECA Report 2005:23).

According to ECA Report (2005:38) the organ that registers parties also differs by country. In some countries the electoral commission registers political parties such as Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa, while in others state departments do. In Kenya, where political parties are registered like other associations or clubs, the registrar general under the Societies Act does. In Senegal the Ministry of Internal Affairs registers political parties, while the National Elections Commission conducts elections. In Ethiopia the Office of Registration, under the National Elections Board, registers political parties and issues certificate of registration to them after fulfilling the necessary registration requirements (ECA Report 2005:38). Mauritius has a flexible rule on the formation of political parties. They can be freely formed without being registered as associations unless there is an election. In most African countries internal governance of political parties is weak. Although, the parties have constitutions, internal procedures and rules that on the surface are democratic, many of the parties display authoritarian tendencies. This is because most parties are left to determine their own organisation; electoral and party laws. Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi and Senegal have serious problems with internal governance of political parties, with undemocratic practises constituting the norm. And in South Africa there is no regulatory framework for the internal governance of political parties (ECA Report 2005:39).

Furthermore, African countries are in different stages of democratic practice. Some have held only one multiparty democratic election, and others have passed the "second election" test, with two consecutive multiparty democratic elections. Countries in the second group can be said to have moved into the realm of democratic consolidation, where democracy constitutes the "only game in town" and the legitimate framework for seeking and exercising political power (Diamond 1999). In Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria and Zambia incumbent regimes have been defeated in multiparty elections, a sign of political consolidation. Leadership succession and

change through the electoral process, especially on a multiparty basis, are significant steps towards democratic governance in Africa.

However, democratic governance appears to be in crisis in most African states as political struggle in Africa remains very much a contest between the rule of law and autocratic rule of imperial leaders. For instance, in some African countries the office of the president assumed a dynastic posture. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasago of Equatorial Guinea has ruled since 1979 when he ousted his uncle Francisco Macias Nguema in a military coup. Equatorial Guinea constitution provides Obiang the right to rule by decree effectively making his government a legal dictatorship. Jose Eduardo dos Santos served as president of Angola ruled from 1979 to 2017. Paul Biya of Cameroon has remained in power since he assumed office in 1982. In 1970's Biya introduced political reform in the context of one-party system. However, multiparty politics was later introduced in the early 1990's. President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda has ruled for 32 years since 1986. Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso ruled for 27 years from 1986 to 2014. He won elections in 1991, 2005 and 2010 in what were considered unfair circumstance; Mswati III of Swaziland has ruled for 32 years since 1986; Omar Bashir of Sudan ruled for 29 years since 1989 and Idrissu Deby of Chad has ruled for 28 years since 1990. Idrissu Deby won elections in 1996 and 2001 and after term limit was abolished, he won again in 2006, 2011 and 2016. He added "Itno" to his surname in 2006 (Ebenzer 2012:80 with update). Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo was previously president from 1979-1992 when he headed the single party regime of the Congolese party of labour. In 1992 presidential election he was defeated however, he won the 2002 presidential election and was reelected in the 2009 presidential elections. The introduction of a new constitution passed by referendum in 2015 enabled him stand for another term. Thus he was elected in the 2016 presidential election. President Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi has been President since 2005. He has sought for a third term in office and won (Umaru 2016).

New dictators in African politics are Paul Kagame of Rwanda, who has ruled for 18 years since 2000; Others are Mohammed VI of Morocco who has ruled for 19 years since 1999; Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti for 19 years since 1999; Pakalitha Mosisili of Lesotho was prime minister from 1998-2012 and from 2015 to 2017. He resigned in 2017 after he was defeated in a parliamentary; Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia has ruled for 16 years since 1995 until his death 2012; Yahaya Jammeh of Gambia ruled for 20 years from 1996 to 2016 and Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea has ruled for 25 years since 1993 (Ebenzer 2012:80 with update).

Many African presidents embarked on extending or abolishing term limits. Uganda's Yoweri Museveni did so in 2005, Algeria's Abdelaziz Bouteflike in 2008 and Nigeria's Obasanjo attempted a third term bid in 2009. Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso who ruled for 27 years from 1986 to 2014 attempted to amend the constitution to extend his 27 years term in 2014. Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Chad, South Sudan, Cameroon, Gabon, Mauritania and Guinea are countries without presidential term limits. Some African leaders have also refused to concede defeat when defeated in general elections. In Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe remained executive dictator for 37

years through unmitigated repression and authoritarian rule. In 2002, in the run up to Zimbabwe presidential election, Mugabe enlisted the help of the army, and also his longtime ally Emmerson Mnangagwa to rig and win the elections. The same scenario played out in 2008 when he refused to concede defeat to Morgan Tsvangirira and 2013 presidential elections (Oreoluwa 2017). Ironically, the same apparatus of government that helped prop up Mugabe's dictatorship for more than three decades suddenly found the confidence to force Mugabe to step down. Eventually in 2017, Mugabe ended his rule in a letter addressed to Zimbabwe's parliament notifying them of his resignation as the president of the Republic of Zimbabwe (Oreoluwa 2017). Adama Barrow won the December 2016 election of Gambia to end the rule of Yahaya Jammeh of Gambia who ruled from 1996 to 2016. Jammeh initially conceded defeat, but later contested the polls result stating irregularities. Adama Barrow took the oath of office on January 19 2017 as troops from the West Africa regional bloc marched into the Gambia threatening military intervention in order to push Jammeh out.

The same situation played out in Kenya where president Kabaki refused to cede power to Odinga when Kakaki lost to Odinga. It was through brokered peace of president and prime minister that peace was restored after the death of thousands of Kenyans. In Cote d'Ivoire, the Ivorian resilience and United Nations support helped to push out Laurent Gbagbo who ruled for 11 years for Allasane Quattara to be sworn in as president of Cote d'Ivoire (Ebenzer 2012 :80).

Uganda presents a real challenge for political reform in Africa. It has a no-party system, dubbed the "Movement system". President Yoweri Moseveni created the system after assuming power in 1986, and it was recognised in the constitution in 1995. Under the system political parties are not allowed to operate; instead, the competition for political office takes place within the Movement system. By law all Ugandans are members of the Movement system, which has various layers and organs of political representation, including a parliament. The government of President Moseveni considers the Movement system all-inclusive, non-sectarian and designed to engender popular democracy devoid of the acrimony, dangerous divisions and bitterness that characterised the country's experience with multiparty democracy (ECA 2005).

Thus, while competitive multiparty democracy has been enthroned in many other African states, contemporary political governance is strewn with democratic deficit. There seems to be a gradual re-institutionalization of autocratic and authoritarian regimes in democratic wave of some states in Africa. African leaders accepted the western style of liberal democracy without corresponding obligations. Niger's experience aptly describes the process in Africa. Niger's President Tandja came into power through election. President Tandja grew more authoritarian as the end of his term approached. He dissolved parliament, conducted a referendum to change the constitution and tightened his grip on the press. When the soldiers seized power there was widespread jubilation and celebration. It is obvious that the African continent is suffering from democratic deficit through what Guy Hermet (1978) described as 'pluralist coercive elections' (Adejumobi, 2000:63). The actions of these leaders have encouraged distrust and lack of loyalty to the regimes. Instead of

institutionalizing democratic ethos civil liberties are constrained and elections turned into a state-regulated non-competitive contestation.

### **Conclusion**

The democratic process is not at the same stage of development among African countries, and it is still fragile in many of them. Multi-party sham elections and the existence of certain democratic structures and trappings do not necessarily constitute democracy or democratic practice. This valid view thus disqualifies most African states from the list of democratic states. This has apparently raised the question and problem of legitimacy. Much has been written about the social and economic conditions that are necessary for the appearance and survival of democratic forms of government. An educated population, with both political knowledge and the will to act, coupled with a modern industrial economy, a homogenous society and a long-established set of democratic political values, are all identified as important conditions that enable democratic institutions to emerge and persist. African states have few of these conditions. Many African states are socially heterogeneous, and political fissures follow social, religious and regional divisions. Their civic tradition as independent states goes back little more than a generation, and they did not inherit democratic traditions from the longer period of authoritarian colonial and military rule.

However, despite these deficiencies it would seem that Africa can nurture some forms of liberal democracy. Although there is ethnic discontent amongst various societies, yet across Africa more pluralist more of politics are appearing. There is thus ground for hope, despite the many challenges the few democracies face. But one major problem that African states confront is the simplistic approach adopted towards their difficulties, particularly from the continent. Political solutions are being insisted upon by external donor agencies. Therefore, sustained thinking about the implications of greater pluralism for African societies is rare. The study recommends that solutions to the challenges of democratic political governance in Africa will depend on strengthening the various institutions that underpin democracy and good governance.

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