

## DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE POST-COLONIAL ERA: SHORTCOMINGS

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### Abstract

During colonialism, African countries were exposed to severe living circumstances and human rights abuses. African nations earned their independence and transitioned to democracy in the post-colonial period. Democracy was touted as a method of creating security, stability, and wealth in African countries, as well as demonstrating Africa's independence. The transition to democratic states was viewed as a necessary step for African countries in order to meet the needs of citizens who had previously been enslaved and whose rights had been violated by colonizers. This article examines the current position of democracy in African States post colonialization. This article argues that African leaders have failed to deliver on their promises of democracy, as evidenced by the fact that African countries are characterized by political instability, corruption, poverty, poor public service delivery, inequality, and low economic growth. Only the political elites in Africa have reaped the benefits of democracy, while the rest of the population has fared less favorably. The authors contend that the process of democratization has not afforded democratic African states the opportunity to acquire solutions. The authors acknowledge the progress, made by democratic states; nevertheless, in spite of this progress, a greater number of Africans continue to live below the poverty line. Those who are elected to positions of power have the appearance of being there to serve the people, but in reality, they only serve themselves and their own interests.

**Keywords:** Africa, colonialization, democracy, government, political, states, inequality, corruption, service delivery, political instability.

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### 1. Introduction

Democracy as a form of governance is a long-standing phenomenon that dates to ancient Greece. In the modern world, experience has shown that democratic administration is more popular than any other form of government, most likely because it focuses on the people and allows for the acceptance of basic human rights in its Constitution and the application of the rule of law Akpunonu and Eze [1, 2]. Oyekan [3] expounds that the current wave of democratization in Africa began some four or five decades ago, with the end of European domination and the start of political independence. In an era when public morality is becoming more Machiavellian and pragmatic, claiming democracy becomes smart. Mazadou [4] indicated that political leaders in post-colonial

Africa aspired to achieve national integration, unity, and progress for their people in the post-colonial period. Nevertheless, the experience remains painful and thought-provoking, even after many years of freedom. Nationalism has fallen short in most African nations, and democracy is still a work-in-progress, leading to the unfortunate perception that African governments are slow to pick up on democratic best practices from the West. According to Bonga and Mahuku [5], Africa's political, democratic, and economic progress continue to be poor, and the chances for improvement in parallel with the Africa Agenda 2063 are dim. Post-colonial Africa desperately needs demonstrable democratic and economic development, which can only be achieved via the implementation of sound policies. Herbst [6] pointed out that so few resources are available to individual citizens that the quest for power and money often culminates in governmental domination. This makes democracy difficult in Africa. It has been observed, that African leaders who took over the reins of power after the colonial rulers have not performed at their peak levels in the performance of their duties. However, rather than supplying the much-needed creative impetus that was required to move forward and put the national economy on a new footing, the emerging African leaders demonstrated that they were not interested in developing their own countries or freeing their people from imperialist shackles, but rather in plundering available resources for their own personal gain [7].

The aim of this paper is to determine if democracy in Africa has been effective in creating better African governments that are sensitive to people's demands, or whether African leaders have failed in creating a better Africa for everyone in the post-independence period. It seeks to investigate the post-colonial democratization of African states, as well as the obstacles to democracy on the African continent, and to further establish the role of African leaders in delaying the development of democratization in Africa.

## 2. Materials and Methods

A review of the literature was carried out in order to achieve this. The goal of this method was to extend awareness of the present condition of democracy in African nations and to critically examine the failure of democracy in African states as a result of African leaders who are more concerned with their own well-being than the well-being of African citizens. African governments are marked by corruption, nepotism, greed, and domination of power, which has driven African nations into severe poverty and hindered the development of democratization in Africa. For the purpose of data collection and reviewing existing literature, the paper utilized secondary resources, such as scholarly articles, periodical reports, institutional and organisational reports, and credible websites or databases of relevant institutions.

## 3. Result

### 3. 1. The African state Pre colonialism: Detrimental consequences of colonial rule

Ssenyonjo [8] indicated that with a population of over 1.2 billion, Africa is the world's second biggest and most populated continent. Slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and multidimensional poverty have all been prevalent in the area throughout history. Africa's people and material resources were "primarily exploited for the advantage of foreign powers" throughout colonialism. This has left Africa in poverty, which indicates a severe lack of the resources, capacities, choices, security, and power, required to enjoy an appropriate level of life. In terms of politics, colonization had a tremendous detrimental influence. African political states, whether large empires or minor polities, lost power, independence, and significance. Again, some ancient kings were held in power, and the formal framework of certain kingdoms was preserved, but the content of political life was completely different. Foreign rulers now wielded political power. Colonial authority meant the effective annihilation of African political power throughout the continent, and colonialism smashed all pre-existing African nations by force, while those that remained were puppet constructions.

Dada [9] expound that the African colonial government has a terrible record of human rights recognition and preservation. With the arrival of colonialists, African civilizations were inexorably subjected to the colonial power's political, economic, and social dominance and subjection. African women were not immune to the ills of colonialism. Nwanosike and Onyije [10] stated that under colonization, African women lost their social, religious, constitutional, and political advantages

and rights, while economic exploitation remained and was frequently worsened. It was exacerbated since the gendered division of labor was regularly interrupted. African males have traditionally done the hard labor of removing trees, clearing land, and constructing homes. The anti-colonial human rights movement, a campaign for political and economic self-determination, gave birth to post-colonial African governments. To defame and delegitimize the white-ruled governments of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Apartheid South Africa that were controlled by the majority white population, black African states used human rights issues [11]. The African Charter on Human Rights addresses the core causes of the cruel circumstances that violate the human rights of most Africans and other peoples in the so-called third world. It advocates human rights for everyone by stressing the rights of oppressed peoples in their battles against dehumanizing institutions, such as imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, apartheid, Zionism, and others [12].

Dlamini [13] stated that colonialism widened economic inequities. The disparities in living conditions that developed because of European authority provided a cause for ambitious African leaders to rally support behind. This meant that the main issue, following independence, “was a reslicing of the economic pie”. Nwanosike and Onyije [10] indicated that the colonization of Africa mirrored the economic needs of industrial capitalist Europe. European governments desire colonies in order to get access to raw materials, markets for manufactured goods, and a location to park surplus funds. Because of colonialism, African economies have been distorted to satisfy the requirements of the global market, which are not always compatible with the demands of African development, depriving African economies of the potential to self-sustain growth, which is a prerequisite for progress. The word colonialism refers to an international economic exploitation system, in which more strong countries oppress weaker ones [14].

By 1900, the colonial power in Africa had been completely entrenched via a series of treaties, signed by indigenous populations. The goal was for European countries to have complete control over Africa’s people and material resources. It is apparent, that colonial economic strategy in Africa was primarily aimed at the exploitation of African territories’ people and material resources for the profit of European powers [15]. In the endeavor to gain complete control over the African economy, the colonialists and African chiefs engaged in a bitter fight and conflict. The colonialists need raw materials for their industries, and because of the way African economies were structured at the time, they could not be certain of a consistent supply of the requisite raw materials. This position demanded the pursuit of direct takeover and control of the African enclaves and governments’ economies and administrations [16]. When examining the colonial consequences on the continent, one of the most prominent legacies of colonialism is the ethnic divide. African writers and non-African researchers, interested in African politics, blame ethnic divides and competition among African states on artificial borders and cultural distinctions, constructed and imposed on Africans by colonial rulers. The subject of ethnic divisions and state disputes, caused by ethnic competition, has been frequently noted by numerous African and non-African scholars as one of the key challenges African governments have had to contend with [17].

The weapon, employed by Europeans to achieve the goals of colonialism, was education. To some degree, Europeans implemented their own curriculum without regard for African situations. In terms of content, the schools provided the African with nothing more than a basic understanding of the English language in preparation for an economic future, in which a senior clerkship was the highest level of development possible. There were hundreds of contenders for every school post in terms of need and ambition [16]. The colonizing government recognized that they gained power not just through physical control, but also through mental control. This mental control is accomplished via the educational system, which serves as a primary intellectual site. The colonial schools aimed to increase foreign dominance and economic exploitation of the colony [18].

### **3. 2. The African State Post colonialism: challenges of democratization in Africa**

The first three decades of post-independence Africa were marked by a high frequency of military coups and military governments, as well as an even higher number of failed military plots and coup attempts. Military authority is characterized by authoritarianism and corruption, and the historical record demonstrates that military regimes have damaged democracy in the Africa

States [19]. In terms of political culture, most African nations have greater relationships with their previous colonial rulers (Britain, France, Spain, and Italy) and are grappling with post-colonial issues, ranging from disputed borders, ethnicity, corruption, nepotism, and client-patron relations. The dreaded “colonial hangover” is strongly ingrained [20]. Akinbobola [21] indicated that democratization in Africa has been a challenge. The difficulty is that there is a stated intention to democratize the polity, but the attitude and commitment to do so are shaky. Africa’s democratic transition oscillates between neo-authoritarianism and constitutional democracy. Umoh [22] argued that conflicts in Africa’s many aspects, such as interethnic, separatist and interstate, have been based largely on the quest for economic and political benefits. Armed conflict in African countries is exacerbated by the predominance of autocratic governments rather than representative democracies. Most African nations are weak, and this is due to defective frameworks based on non-democratic ideas. **Table 1** provides a list of challenges to democracy and democratization in Africa.

**Table 1**  
Challenges of democracy and democratization in Africa

Challenge	Remarks
Inadequate opposition.	Absence of a powerful opposition party capable of challenging the governing party’s policies and programs; the absence of alternative policy and program alternatives, demanded by the people; zero-sum fight for power.
Civil society is underdeveloped.	Civil society is typically weak due to a lack of a substantial middle class with class interests and stakes in society, which is supposed to resist cooptation by the state.
Weak economies.	A productive economy was required to enable the state to give goods and services to the voters; limited resources may convince, if not compel, electorates to forsake democratic procedures. Worse, people might be “bought” into voting for the wrong candidates.
There is no distinction between the state and the governing party.	The governing party dominates and manipulates the political process; constitutions are often changed to maintain power; public resources are apparently utilized to serve the ruling party’s interests; Citizens and opposition organizations are subjected to coercion by governmental security personnel.
Affecting people based on their ethnicity, religious affiliation, and nepotism	Divisive sectarian inclinations have a mitigating effect on politics and governance; democratic processes (voting, for example) are held captive by the sectarian feelings and allegiance of political players and voters; and state policies are impacted by sectarian fragmentation and attitudes.
Military intervention has the potential to be used.	There is a strong likelihood of military involvement because of any misunderstanding, caused by a political impasse between opposing political groups.
Weak democratic political culture	Opposition parties and pressure organizations are coerced or enticed to forgo their role in restraining state officials’ abuses; poor democratic institutions and ideals, such as participation, civil freedoms, voting.
There has been no regime transition (there has been an incumbency continuity).	A long history of minimal political change; regime continuity; and dissident persecution.

Source: Thomson (2004).

Clapham [23] when it comes to African countries, it has long been considered that ‘artificial’ nations, created by foreign colonization, have unique problems in developing the foundations of stable governance. Many sections of Africa have yet to establish democratic institutions and ways of governance. Consequently, throughout the majority of the post-colonial period, Africa has been riven by conflict. Conflicts in Africa are often founded on conflicts for political control, ethnic privilege, national prestige, and limited resources. The great majority of conflicts are now of domestic origin. Domestic politics are often reflected in interstate confrontations [24]. Many African nations’ political and economic cultures are still immature and fragile. They lack the prerequisites for establishing liberal democracy, such as a substantial and autonomous middle class, a competitive party system, constitutionalism and the rule of law, a neutral bureaucracy, and strong market economies. It is impossible to establish liberal democracy under such circumstances [21]. Independence did not bring about profound improvements for the bulk of Africans in the new re-

publics. It was a declaration of independence, with the ruler, holding a begging bowl, and the ruled, clutching a diminishing belly. It was self-sufficiency with a question mark. The people rapidly realized that the new African leaders were not interested in them, the economy, or society, but in stealing the riches of the countries and adopting the role of a mediator between Western interests and the people [7].

### **3. 3. Country-specific Evidence of challenges to democracy and democratization in Africa** *Internal dynamics of power-sharing in Angola*

Power-sharing has a long history in the African continent. This has been evident in the cases of Nelson Mandela's involvement in efforts to pursue peace through power-sharing in Burundi, and the unity government that Mbeki himself had helped to instigate during the peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [25]. In addition, Thabo Mbeki's quiet diplomacy with Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe is another example of power-sharing strategies. But why do African states need it? To answer this, Cheeseman and Tendi [26] refer to two motives: firstly, unity governments have often permitted incumbent presidents to remain in office; and lastly, the power-sharing model resembled the unique combination of inclusiveness and limited competition that had supported the one-party state's stability in the 1970s, and so struck a chord with the political elite in many of Africa's gerontocracies.

A succession of power-sharing initiatives in Angola was thwarted by a mix of high levels of violence and poor levels of elite cohesiveness, leading to mistrust of politics. The country's first experience with unity administration came shortly after the military revolution that overthrew the Caetano government in Portugal in April 1974. The three nationalist groups, the Movimento Popular de Libertacao (MPLA), the Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola (FNLA), and the Uniao Nacional para an Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA), competed for dominance in the political vacuum, created by the metropole's government transition [25]. In 1975, however, the three factions' leaders agreed to establish a single front in order to negotiate with the new Portuguese government. According to Martin [27], the Alvor Agreement, which was part independence treaty, part peace agreement, and part power-sharing agreement, formed a transitional government, in which each of the three parties held one-third of the ministries and was represented by one member on the Prime Ministerial Council (PMC). Conversely, while the equal distribution of political power preserved each party's interests, it also resulted in gridlock. The gridlock was because of the lack of confidence among important actors, the unwillingness of any faction to be the first to stand down its forces, and the Portuguese government's preference for the MPLA, rising instability culminated in a rapid return of civil war. As a result, the inability to execute a decentralization system intended to foster a sense of inclusion among the country's diverse ethnic groups, heightened intercommunal tensions and provided opposition leaders with new reasons to take up weapons [25].

### **3. 4. The abrogation of the people's right to vote in Kenya**

The democratization of African countries presented a different viewpoint to the notion of democracy itself. In the African continent, democracy was introduced giving emergence of a different phenomenon, hybridity. This hybridity is between elements of democracy and autocracy. This happens in situations, in which elements of democracy and liberal politics operate in contexts where neo-patrimonialism and authoritarian tendencies also remain [17]. The new "democracies" in many of Africa's hybrid regimes and systems have been dominated by either the same martial and authoritarian forces that previously campaigned against plural democracy, or forces and components, linked with them. Hybridity is a contradiction in its own terms, especially in the context of a basic concept of democracy or, perhaps, the core ethos of democracy, such as free, fair, and competitive elections. Authors, such as Schmitter and Karl [17], have warned against the error of "electoralism" or considering such procedural criteria in an election as the only measure of democracy's actuality and success. This limited viewpoint is because "elections are now everywhere... but democracy nowhere. Elections are ubiquitous. But democracy is still awaited" [28]. However, the challenge is whether these elections competitive, free and fair, and regular. If they seem not to meet this criterion – it, therefore, does permit to evaluate of the performance of democracy with a

focus on elections as this is one of the core pillars of democracy. Thus, we argue that a review of an African states' electoral performance or practices can be limited but it is necessary – not for the purposes of an overall evaluation of the country's democracy. It is because of this reason that this article further includes other country-specific challenges, which are also widely linked to pillars of democracy.

In the context of electoral procedure as a challenge to democratization in African states, Kenya presents a number of events and series that encapsulate this criterion of democratization. In the Kenyan case, democracy in Africa is often led by long-term serving leaders who manipulate several elements of democracy, especially the electorate to sustain their power. The Kenyan case is referring to how the “Big Man”, and Africa's longest-serving head of state, President Arap Moi managed to sustain his power through the manipulation of elections. Moi assured that Kenya's power structure could not be changed by the electorate. In 1992 and 1997, he rigged the ballots for himself and other KANU candidates, retaining and achieving legitimacy under the guise of multi-party elections. However, Moi and KANU's capacity to influence the elections was aided by the severe divisions amongst his opponents, primarily along ethnic – and to some extent, ideological – lines. This was after he changed Kenya's constitution in 1982, to formally become a one-party state. Thereafter, Kenya has been featured with a number of electoral injustices, often leading to viewing elections as a “daylight robbery” because of the ethnic-based ruling elite and therefore resorted to violence to protest the rigging. Despite the removal of Moi in 2022, there has been inter-ethnic pogroms proof of deep-seated historical grievances and societal dysfunctions that may have been addressed by democratic methods over time. The ethnic cleansing lasted two months, putting Kenya's business survival in jeopardy. According to the United Nations estimates, 1200 people were murdered, thousands were injured, and over 300,000 people were displaced, with around 42,000 homes, farms, and businesses plundered or destroyed [17]. This case proves that democracy in an African state can be deeply affected because of electoralism and the approach that those in power perceive themselves –as well as their morality and viewpoint towards democracy.

### **3. 5. Democratization and Military Coups in Africa: Fragility and Under Development**

The decolonization of Africa (1950s to 1975) coincided with the need for Africa to take control of its developmental path and consolidate good governance and political stability [29]. For decades, colonisation demolished African values, culture, and traditions, and the demise of colonialism was therefore seen as Africa's renewal period, a period where post-colonial African leaders would use the resources of the continent to forge an inclusive developable path, in which all Africans would socio-economically benefit [30]. The developmental path, forged by Africa in a post-colonial era, has to a great extent not lived up to the expectations of the people and this has been driven by ever-increasing rates of poverty, scattered conflicts, and the inability of African leaders to leverage Africa's vast resources for collective development. While colonialism was autocratic, the post-colonial formation of the modern African state incorporated democracy as a form of governance that was characterized by giving people the power to decide their developmental trajectory, even though some countries never adopted democracy holistically, some are still semi-democratic with some form of civilian liberties, while other are still autocratic. McGowan [31] alludes that despite the adoption of democracy by some African states, this alone did not resolve Africa's governance challenges, which have today given rise to instability in the continent. Africa's continuous struggle with poverty, conflict, driven by the need to control resources, and the observation that post-colonial African leaders have failed to improve the lives of millions of Africans have given rise to governance issues and have resulted in a resurgence of military coups, further aggravating Africa's already fragile state. A military coup or coup d'état is a sudden, often violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. A coup is typically an illegal, unconstitutional seizure of power, conducted by a dictator, a guerrilla military force, or an opposing political faction [32]. In his book, titled “Political Order in Changing Societies”, Samuel P. Huntington described three types of coups. Firstly, a breakaway coup happens when the military or an opposing group of civilian organizers overthrow a sitting government and install themselves as the new leaders. Often this is associated with the suspension of the constitution and civil liberties. Secondly, a guardian coup is

usually considered to be in the best interest of the country [33]. Such a coup takes place when one elite group seizes power from another elite group. For example, an army general overthrows a king or president. Finally, a veto coup happens when the military steps in to prevent radical political change [33]. In Africa, the most predominant type of coup is the breakaway coup. There have been several reasons put forward that give rise to coups, while poverty and power struggles have been observed as major drivers, the underlying causes of coups are specialization in and dependency on primary goods for export, exacerbated by poverty [34]. Such preconditions render even the most responsible governments open to accusations of incompetence and corruption, so inviting coups d'état. While coups have become prevalent in Africa, neither military nor civilian governments have been able to resolve the development crises, facing African states. Additionally, McGowan [35] observes that coups today have become an African phenomenon, even though they were at one stage frequent in the global South, since the mid-1980s successful military coups d'état have become relatively rare in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and Asia [35]. Sub-Saharan Africa experienced 80 successful coups and 108 failed coup attempts between 1956 and 2001, an average of four a year, and between 1985 and 2001 SSA experienced 21 successful coups and 41 failed coup attempts.

A schematic representation of the trends in military coups in Africa since 1960 to 2022 is provided in Fig. 1.

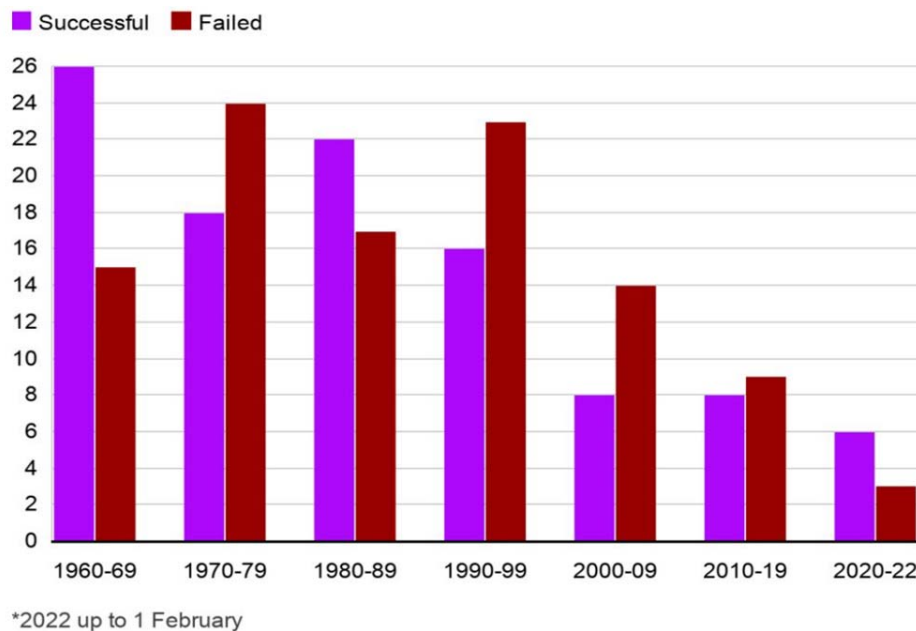


Fig. 1. Military coups in Africa over the decades. Source: Mwai, 2022

Barka and Ncube [36] argue that the economic and political situation prevalent in African countries and the influence of external actors during different periods (post-independence, Cold War, and post-Cold War eras) have all played a part in fuelling conflicts and coups in the region. There are many factors that have given rise to a resurgence in coups in Africa and these varied depending on the national context. For example, opposing factions, seeking to gain power in the aftermath of independence, the need to control resources; established and stable states, burdened by the poor quality of governance and by corrupt officials, regimes that are autocratic and oppress any form of opposition they feel is not in line with their goals [36]. As a result, low levels of economic growth, coupled with poverty, are symptomatic of the social grievances that may precipitate military coups in African countries. Furthermore, foreign powers' quest for geostrategic influence and security, has in the past translated into shadow participation in African inter-and intrastate conflicts and in support of African dictators, thereby fanning the flames of violent dissent. In Africa, one would be naive to look at military coups without taking into consideration the role, played by external forces or former colonizers. Some Western countries support leaders who serve their interests, but once a leader stops serving their demands, they plan for his oust-

er [35]. Mustafa Mheta, a senior research fellow and head of the Africa Desk at Media Review Network, a Johannesburg-based think tank, supported this view and argued that France may have had a hand in some of the coups in its former West African colonies and as the country is involved in the affairs of many of these West African states, and it still wants to manipulate these countries and continue to milk them [35]. While the debates as to the true involvement of external powers in the military coups in Africa remain highly urgent, it is undoubtedly, that there is great scepticism towards their apparent role.

#### 4. Discussion

We have so far demonstrated that several coups have taken place in Africa, however, does the occurrence of such coups imply that democracy is failing in Africa? Notably, the recent coups have taken place in African countries, such as Sudan, Zimbabwe, Mali, and Chad [37–43]. Taken together, such frequent occurrences of coups (whether successful or failed) could imply that democratisation has indeed stalled in Africa Sanches et al [44]. Gopaldas [45] posits that “this notion is fuelled by internet shutdowns, muzzling of the opposition and rising third termism”. Sanches et al [44] aver that quite a few countries in Africa have made progress towards the institutionalisation of democracy, including Botswana, Ghana and Namibia. Indeed, more countries that initially made headway to democratisation have suffered setbacks, countries, such as Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania [44]. In addition, there is another cohort of countries that have never attained democratic status at all, such as Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Rwanda. Instead, leaders in these countries have introduced or used dubious constitutional tactics to remain in power in their respective countries [39, 46, 47].

Mbaku [39] avers that weak democratic institutions and the relative absence of a democratic culture have given rise to most of the abovementioned problems in Africa. This claim confirms Fukuyama’s [48] assertion that “Weak or failed states are at the root of many of the world’s most serious problems, from poverty and AIDS, to drug trafficking and terrorism, to the failure of democracies”. In this regard, Fukuyama [48] contends that the building of new or solidification of the existing democratic institutions is an imperative global issue. In most African states where democratic processes and good governance practices are averted, it is having been often so because there are relatively weak structures, which subsequently facilitate the ability of African leaders to avoid accountability. In this context, the Freedom House [49], cited in Sanches et al [44], only rated 14 % of African states as ‘free’ and 49% as not ‘fully free’ and 37 % as not ‘free at all’. This implies that 86 % of African countries denote considerable characteristics of authoritarian rule [44]. However, Gopaldas’s [45] thesis on this matter contrasts the picture, painted in Sanches et al [48] and Freedom House [49]. Gopaldas [45] argues that “evidence suggests that while there are pockets of concern” about how some African states have handled their affairs, however, “a robust democratic culture is, in fact, growing in many parts of the continent”.

Validating the above-mentioned thesis, Gopaldas [45] cited instances where democratic processes and accountability prevailed in several parts of the continents. He argues that the 2017 elections in Liberia and Sierra Leone delivered a peaceful transition from the old administration to the new government. Instances where there were issues of protests and frustrations, these were dealt with through courts and subsequently, the new government were inaugurated peacefully. Indeed, this demonstrated political and democratic maturity in these historical anti-democratic countries. In addition, a free and fair election was observed in Nigeria where political power was transferred to the opposition party for the first time since the dawn of democracy in 1999 in a religiously and ethnicity-embedded country [50–53].

Furthermore, other countries, such as Ghana, Gambia, São Tomé and more recently Zambia, acted in favour of democracy, which shows that indeed a culture of democracy is thriving in Africa. Moreover, Gopaldas [45] cited the recent arrest of former president Jacob Zuma in South Africa as one of the remarkable examples that democracy is prevailing in South Africa. Indeed, whether former president Zuma’s arrest was constitutional or not remains a highly debated legal matter both in South Africa and abroad. However, it is safe to postulate that former president Zuma’s arrest signified that South Africa’s judiciary is independent and that the rule of law remains dynamic and vibrant in the country. Furthermore, in Kenya (2017) and Malawi (2019), the vibrancy of the judiciary was demonstrated where the courts stood firm against the purported “abuses of power and executive overreach, where election results were annulled due to misconduct and irregularities” [45].



The democratisation of African states is not straightforward, nor perfect, but great progress is being made in many parts of the continent. Consequently, we argue that the imperative of building new state institutions or supporting the existing ones – as articulated in Fukuyama [48] – is what democracy and peace and prosperity-loving African leaders and other stakeholders, such as civil society and media, should advocate for in the continent. Gopaldas [45] offers an excellent analysis of why there are challenges regarding democratisation in some African states. He rightly avers that “The continent’s premature democratisation leads to instability as it is ‘not accompanied by the institutions, required to move from personalisation to institutionalisation’” [45]. Nevertheless, we must state that the democratisation of African states while welcomed, it has not brought with it significant changes to the lives of the people in the continent, rather it has to some extent given rise to post-colonial leaders and elites who are seemingly out of touch with the realities of the people. Indeed, there has been an increase in autocracy, corruption, instability in governance, and conflicts over resources, and as a result, this has given rise to challenges in the continents. Moreover, the recent ratings that the continent received from the Freedom House [49] and Afrobarometer [50] are a cause for great concern. Therefore, African leaders must move towards constructing new governmental institutions or help strengthen the existing institutions that shall support the foundation of democracy in the continent.

The current study has two limitations. Firstly, the study is mainly conducted through a qualitative approach – which makes it impossible to also consider data on perceptions and views on decolonisation in the African context. It also does not make use of primary data, whether, through surveys or any type of interviews, this there limits the in-depth value of the study to the broader scholarship in this research area. It is on these premises that this study recommends that future research considers examining democratization and decolonization in African states using surveys and/or in-depth interviews with key informants in this research area. In addition, this study proposes that future research could focus on the evaluation of the democratization procedure and success among “new or young” democratic African states. Finally, the study recommends that future studies adopt mixed methods for their methodological framework to address this research focus.

## 5. Conclusion

It is evident, that Africa as a continent still has a long way to go before the democratization of African states is completely achieved. The leaders, elected by the public under a democratic system, are not attentive to the concerns of the citizens but are more concerned with their gain and well-being. Democracy has been used in Africa as a system to benefit the political elites, not the public at large. Most African nation’s governments are teeming with corruption, political instability and political leaders that are not accountable and responsive to people’s needs. Democracy has failed to free people economically and educationally; this is because around 490 million people in Africa live below the poverty line. Democracy has not been able to promote good governance in Africa; political office bearers in Africa are not responsible and take public responsibility for granted, which is regrettable since these political office bearers are the ones, elected by the people to lead them out of poverty. Regrettable the political elites and their families are well-taken care of by the democratic governments, but the public at large is pushed into deep poverty on daily basis. The governments in the African States need to be accountable and be driven by a motive to change people’s lives and strive for a better Africa for democracy to benefit all Africans and tackle the challenges in the continent. Democratic countries cannot achieve their objectives if public needs are ignored, and corruption is prevalent in the governance system. The African citizens have a role to play as well, which is to understand the power of their votes, they should not keep on voting for political leaders that are not responsive to their needs, by doing so democracy will be promoted to some degree.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this paper, as well as the published research results, including the financial aspects of conducting the research, obtaining and using its results, as well as any non-financial personal relationships.

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