

# **Elections in Africa: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread, and All Our Problems Are Solved**

by

Matlotleng Matlou, Ph.D.

Director, Excelsior Afrika Consulting, Tshwane;  
Research Fellow, Centre for Africa Studies, University of Free State,  
Bloemfontein, South Africa

## **Abstract**

Democracy (rule of the people) originates from Africa: is a statement of fact that many western scholars and general public predicated on racist and exploitative foundations seek to refute daily. It is conveniently forgotten that Solon the fore-father of Athenian democracy visited Egypt to learn about the tenets of the system there which he subsequently introduced to Greece; that the Mande people under Mansa (Emperor) Sundiata Keita created the 44 article Kurufan Fuga Charter in 1236 (15 years after the Magna Carta in England). Education; freedom of movement; justice, life; participation in decision making and community well-being; and work, as rights, existed in Africa from time immemorial. It is in this environment that foreigners were welcomed to Africa, which did not hesitate to share its heritage. Unfortunately from that time the continent and its people have been increasingly divided, oppressed and exploited. Consequently, huge efforts were invested in denying Africa's contribution to the world as the cradle of civilisation, including the principles of good governance and democracy, this being ascribed to Greece and later built upon by Europe and the United States. These centuries of assault and alienation of Africans from their roots, coupled with imposition of foreign cultures provided an unfortunate legacy for Africa in its "independent" era which has been largely undemocratic; riddled with leadership deficits; conflicts; bad governance and continued underdevelopment. The ruling classes across Africa have largely failed their people and when the pressure for change ensued they have reluctantly introduced facades of democracy and utilised elections which are often not free and fair, as the yardstick in holding to power. Thus unsurprisingly, there is no acknowledgement that Africa created democracy and foreigners today laud it over them purportedly teaching them what is actually their heritage. A people who do not know their history will be deceived and led to the altar of self-hate and inferiority complex, which pervades the Global African Nation, presently.

Democracy has numerous variants, but there are some fundamental principles underpinning it. People must have the right to choose their public representatives in a free and fair manner; there must be protection and equality of different groups; freedom of ideas and views; separation and independence of powers with requisite checks and balances; provision of socioeconomic opportunity, livelihood and reasonable human development so all people can at least be able to seek their highest potential. However, this paper argues, that despite the historical origins of democracy in Africa, its present practices across numerous countries on the continent are deficient with elections being the sole yardstick for judging its status. Through mainly desktop research the history and practice of democracy globally is outlined in a context of national and international struggles between different groups. It is clear that democratisation which involves the separation and sharing of power, clear rules of engagement, requires struggles in order to curb the tendency of the elite to monopolise power. Furthermore, it is necessary not to blithely accept democratic credentials by politicians and countries, these must be vigorously tested. The democratic process in Africa is weak because of centuries-long foreign interventions which have taken the continent of its autochthonous development path, local comprador classes driven by narrow interests and a hostile globalisation system. So numerous Africa states have elections, there are parliaments, some measure of oppositions etc. However, deeper analysis utilising frameworks that the very governments are party to, especially the African Union Democracy, Elections and Governance Charter reveals significant flaws.

## **Introduction**

Until proved otherwise it is widely accepted that humanity originates from Africa, so also the foundation of civilisation; then migrating to other continents over the centuries leaving no part of the globe uninhabited, presently. Through adapting to different climates, local conditions, natural selection and mixing of different peoples, today largely three major human physical variants, exist. In Africa they are represented by the – Bantu-Benue-Congo Negroids mainly south of the Sahara; Hamatic Semitic Afro-Mediterranean caucasoids found in North Africa and Sudanic Mongoloids ; representing over 2,000 distant and close-related languages and cultures. These shared origins, largely south of the Sahara, created a commonality of culture, laws, governance systems and other attributes amongst Africans that exist up to today, even as foreigners inhabited and colonised Africa; espoused through Ubuntu, that a person is a person because of others, communality especially in land ownership, , rights to life, education, freedom of movement, justice, participation in and benefit from community affairs, and work etc as outlined by Williams (1974:171-186) amongst others. Niang (2006: 75-77) further elaborates through the 1236 Kurufan Fuga Charter which still guides some west African societies, though some of its tenets contradict modern international human rights conventions. . Various polities across this vast, heterogeneous continent underwent largely autonomous development but with interesting similarities as per the charter mentioned above, founded on the principles of common purpose and inter-linkages and inter-dependence between people.

Much as there were conflicts and the rise and fall of states across Africa, when there was stability there developed space for greater participation in public affairs, even where slavery existed. People captured during conflict, were often integrated into society on the basis that all humans are inter-dependant. Power was diffused in the various monarchies across Africa; rulers or leaders were rarely absolute; accession to various state offices was based on elections, and succession was not always automatic with the people having a say in choosing rulers. There was separation of powers and rulers were assisted by councils, advisory bodies and law makers. Feudalism did not really take hold because there was no widespread stratification like in other societies. Even though there were castes, there was a limitation to exploitation, less fortunate persons were to be assisted and land could not be alienated since it belonged to all. Leaders were required to consult widely in taking decisions, certainly with the public representatives. Individual freedoms were assured to large extent. Democracy has its roots in Africa and from here some foreigners learnt the tenets and adapted it in their countries. This very interaction led to African resources being fraudulently acquired by foreigners and being utilised to under-develop, control and castigate Africa. This explains why today Africa is at the bottom of the global ladder.

### **Africa and Its Relations with Foreigners: Exploitation, Enslavement, Colonisation and Marginalisation**

Precolonial Africa consisted of over 10,000 polities with different political and socioeconomic organisation. These ranged from small hunter gather groups of the KhoiSan, clans and villages spread across central, east, Horn and southern Africa to the city states and larger empires of Angola, Congo, Dahomey, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gao, Ghana, Mali, Nubia, Oyo, Songhai, Zimbabwe and Zulu etc. The topography of the land especially in the east of high plateaus and rift valleys, deserts in the north; climate and preponderance of wild animals influenced where people settled and their development. Some of the major economic activities were agriculture, arts and craft, hunting, bronze and iron smelting, livestock breeding, mining, trading etc.

Being divided into so many states of varying sizes, meant lack of size advantage and unity, limited power and incapacity to effectively stave off foreign invasion and other dangers (especially with Ubuntu values which welcome foreigners, leading to the loss of African independence and resources). The denigration, exploitation and humiliation of Africa started from the time foreigners landed on its shores: Phoenicians (800 BC); Persians (525 BC); Macedonians led by Alexander (333 BC); Romans led by Caesar (48 BC); Arabs (7th); Europeans (15<sup>th</sup>) and Ottomans (16<sup>th</sup>); from then Africa has been at the receiving end of the negatives of globalisation. Arabs commenced their enslaving activities from their arrival until the 20<sup>th</sup>, taking more than 18 million Africans mainly to the eastern world. Barbary pirates or corsairs also called Ottoman corsairs were North African Arabs also enslaved southern European; transporting to the Americas more than one million commencing in the 13<sup>th</sup> until 1830, until France conquered Algiers. The US navy formed in March 1794 was actually a protection against the Barbary. Arabs colonised all of North Africa, Arabising the local cultures and converting the people to Islam.

Today almost one third of the African land mass is under Arabs. They also sought to spread their religion and culture to other parts of like east and west Africa, usually through holy wars (jihads). Europeans initially traded commodities and manufactured goods with Africans whose kingdoms were often far advanced than them. However, with the benefits of the industrial revolution, increasing military superiority, need for labour in the Americas, they turned to enslaving Africans from the C15th to C19th taking more than 12 million people; the most productive in procreation and work, plus youth who were the future. Many perished in the process and untold suffering was rained upon those captured. This was genocide, rape and dehumanisation of Africans and those of them that colluded with the enslavers soon suffered similar fates. Africa's resources – intellectual, human, financial and material – became fair game for all and sundry; culminating in enslavement and ultimately in being colonised. In this process African culture, history were corrupted and falsified; being replaced by that of the exploiters and conquerors. The divineness, solidarity, unity, justice, consensus driven, communalism, democratic and human rights bases of African society, were eroded and soon replaced by Arab and European systems of greed, individualism, exploitation and undemocratic rule.

The enslaved undertook numerous uprisings; escapes; destruction of property; cultural assertion and many abolitionist groups like Sons of Africa in London composed of Africans mainly ex-slaves themselves campaigned against slavery. Africans resistance was more successful against the Europeans and Americans than the Arabs who virtually eliminated or assimilated them into their societies. The Maroons escaped and formed their own communities in the Caribbean and in Haiti the 1791 African rebellion led to independence on 01 January 1804, defeating the French, Spanish and US allies. However, they were forced to pay a crippling debt for this to the French and USA until the 1940s, never recovering from this sword of Damocles remaining today highly underdeveloped and poorest country in the western hemisphere.

Interestingly, the industrial revolution financed by exorbitant profits made from exploitative extraction of labour provided more productive machinery and technology therefore undermining its own success and rationale for slavery. Unsurprisingly, the British the biggest enslavers who were also the most advanced industrially led the charge to abolish slavery. Slavery was abolished in 1807 in Britain, but continued in other countries formally ending in Brazil (having received over 4 million enslaved people) in 1888. From 1808-60, the British navy, strongest then globally through its West African Squadron seized over 1,600 ships and freed over 150,000 people. To add insult to injury, former slave owners instead of who were exploited and developed other lands with no compensation were compensated for losing their property! Some of the global corporates Barclays bank; Lloyds; etc existing today were from that era. Europeans found that they could get more of the commodities produced in the Americas from Africa cheaper, whilst supplying them with manufactured goods at exorbitant prices. Europeans then turned their efforts to colonialism through their explorers, armed forces and missionaries.

This laid the foundation for the Kongo (Berlin) Conference of 15 November 1884 to 26 February 1885, 129 years ago, where 13 European countries<sup>1</sup> and the United States met and partitioned Africa. Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Turkey ended up with colonies. By 1914 when Britain annexed Egypt only vastly reduced Ethiopia and Liberia maintained a measure of independence. African subjugation and humiliation continued for 60 odd years when the winds of decolonisation blew thunderously through the continent eventually reaching South Africa in 1994. Presently the only colonies are Saharawi Democratic Republic which Morocco, another African country took over in the 1970s with the departure of the Spanish; and various islands under France and the USA. However, independence did not mean Africa had control over its affairs as it became a pawn in the ensuing cold war between the East and West; marginalised in the global socioeconomic hierarchy being largely an export of cheap raw materials and a consumer of expensive finished imports. Indeed another scramble for Africa is ongoing; the Arabs and West are joined or being superseded by emerging nations led by China, India and Brazil. Africans are to blame for naivety when engaging with foreigners, not learning from their bitter past and mentally liberating themselves.

### **African Genesis of Democracy and its progression across the Globe**

Williams (1974: 171-186) outlines the origins of African democracy and inter-linked principles of some political theories ancient constitutional law and fundamental rights of the African People found across the continent. These principles continue to exist at different levels based upon the extent to which African societies have been assaulted by foreign cultures and how successful the fight against these have been.

Nwuawa (2005) argues that restricting the birth or practice of democracy to one location, Athens is unjustifiable, indicating that during that era societies were developing independently across the globe and had their own variants of democracy. He concentrates on different polities across east and west Africa where the people vigorously participated in governance of their societies, notwithstanding structural stratification, centralised and decentralised systems, monarchies and representational democracy, and gender differentiation of roles.

Diop (1987:21-34) indicates the influence of Africa, especially Egypt on the birth of democracy in Greece and later the Roman empire. Tiky (2012) postulates “that it is from Africa that the *fire* of Athenian democracy was *stolen*”. Both authors outline the political and socioeconomic organisation of 6th Athens, where power resided in autocrats supported by the aristocracy: administered by nine magistrates (*Archons*) appointed by a Council of Elders (*Areopagus*) for annual terms. Furthermore a consultative forum the *Ekklesia* was established for developing and overseeing implementation of public policy.

These bodies were closed to the masses (*Thetes*), including women and slaves, leading to conflict. Diop and Tiky argue that the proposals for unlocking the impasse, proposed by Solon (594-483 BC) a former magistrate, were learnt from his previous visit to Egypt based on lessons he learnt with centuries of experience managing socioeconomic and political systems which provided opportunities of participation for different groups of people, all considered equal before and belonging to God. Greece as a whole learnt a lot from Egypt – arts and culture, the sciences, philosophy, religion, governance etc.

Solon proposed the division of society into four political classes based on wealth: At the pinnacle were the *Pentacosiomedimnoi* who could become Archons and then join the *Areopagus*. The second and third classes qualified for lower public service, whilst the masses were still locked out. Further changes were: expunging usage of human beings as guarantees for debts; appeals to jury courts; provision for redress against injustices; citizenship for all eligible; and adult citizens could participate in the *Ekklesia* and serve as jurors. The elite were unhappy at having lost some power, whilst the masses believed the reforms should go further to include re-distribution of property especially land. Change is never easy nor smooth; moving from autocracy to burgeoning democracy is a lengthy process of learning and unlearning; developing new mind-sets and of course dealing with resistance. Those with power never give it up willingly, whilst the less powerful are not always sure of themselves and sometimes not united. The elite soon re-imposed autocratic rule and in less than 80 years there was major upheaval.

Tiky (op cit.) states that Cleisthenes (508-7 BC) known as the father of Athenian democracy was tasked with building on the efforts of Solon learnt from the source – Africa through Egypt. He recommended a system based on *isonomia* (iso – equality; *nomos* – law); expansion of the male citizens council (*Boule*) which ran city affairs from 400 to 500 members who now served for one year and for only two terms. Furthermore, some members of the *Boule* were elected by the Assembly which was a gathering of direct democracy and not representatives of other people. Sometimes these assemblies comprised over 6,000 people debating and dialoguing on various public affairs. This democracy survived for two centuries, crumbling under pressure of wars, lack of unity, increased population, complexity of public affairs and conquest by autocratic and despotic Roman rulers led by Caesar, Octavian to Nero.

It would take centuries for democracy, building on foundations in Africa then to resurface and flourish in England commencing in 1215 with proclamation of the Magna Carta; strengthening of parliament, especially establishment and expansion of the house of commons through the 1832 Reform Act. These developments were engendered by the industrial revolution and capitalism; recognition of trade unions following the popular mobilisations during 1838-48; and in 1885 extending the vote to the majority, with universal suffrage being birthed in the early 20th. Other parts of the world were also developing seeds of democracy at different rates and variants. The United States won independence in 1776 on the premise that all men (women not included) are born equal, but still continued to enslave Africans for almost another century and only signed a Civil Rights Act after much blood, sweat and tears had been shed in 1963.

There was the French revolution of 1789 which overthrew the monarchy, abolished feudalism and ushered in the declaration of the rights of man under liberty, egalitarianism and fraternity (women were not given full rights!). Interestingly, these very countries proclaiming their democratic credentials were enslavers and colonisers.

## **Birth of Pan-Africanism**

These brutal acts galvanised struggles by the oppressed globally and amongst others birthed pan-Africanism in the Diaspora, later filtering into the continent. Various people are associated with its genesis, with no agreement on who were its founders; more important, is the understanding of the philosophy. Some prominent pan-Africanists are Blyden, Williams, Amy and Marcus Garvey, Diop, Padmore, Luthuli, Dubois, Nkrumah, Fanon, Aime, Senghor, Nyerere, Lumumba, etc. Born in 1869, Barbados-born Sylvester Williams originally settled in Trinidad then London in 1896; formed the African Association (AA) in 1898, which was restricted to African members. The AA campaigned for various African causes, especially improvement of Africans living in the diaspora and self-determination for those colonised. In 1900 the AA organised the 1<sup>st</sup> Pan-African Congress in London and he was elected secretary general. Dr J Colenso, son of the Bishop of Natal, a white person was elected Treasurer, contrary to the restriction of membership to Africans; does this mean others also attended the conference; was this a case of Ubuntu or naivety? The congress established the Pan-African Association (PAA) seeking to: secure civil and political rights for Africans and descendants globally; encourage friendly relations between Caucasians and Africans; educational and commercial enterprise amongst Africans; influence legislation that concerned Black peoples; ameliorate the conditions of Africans globally and would meet biennially. A prolific writer, Williams established the short lived journal the Pan African to propagate the aims of PAA and other issues; moved to South Africa in 1902 becoming its first African lawyer, where the white population sought to ostracise and cripple his pan-Africanist inclined law practice. He was involved in many causes including the fight for the return of African land illegally taken by whites; but soon returned to England because of the supreme obstacles engineered by the white community. Five other congresses followed in Europe with Africans fighting for change and self-determination.

In 1914 Marcus Garvey formed the United Negro Improvement – African Communities League (UNIA-ACL) in Jamaica extending it in 1916 to the US and globally eventually having over 6 million members in its zenith; the greatest African organisational achievement in a period void of modern communication and transport system. In 1920, it organised a global conference which issued a 54 article Declaration on the Rights of the Negro. Furthermore, it strove for Africans to unite, be self-reliant and proclaimed Africa for Africans. Thus UNIA-ACL established various enterprises though unfortunately they were unsuccessful because of poor management, plus sabotage by the white establishment and its African American compradors. Any efforts to liberate Africans, especially mentally would sabotage the oppressors' plans to continue holding them in bondage. Garvey was eventually incarcerated and deported weakening the UNIA-CL. However, it celebrated 100 years in 2014 and exists in various parts of Africa and Diaspora.

Early in the C20th various peoples across Europe clamoured for independence from countries that had colonised them, especially in the Balkans. The different alliances mobilised and eventually the European War of 1914 to 1918 erupted during which, their colonies around the world were unwittingly dragged into the vortex contributing massive human and material resources with little benefit to themselves. African Americans in the US armed forces returned home to continued discrimination. Africans and colonised people increasingly agitated for independence and various Pan African Congress were held in Europe. In 1945 after Second European War, British prime minister Churchill, promised sovereign rights and self-government and but indicated that this did not include Africa further galvanising burgeoning struggles for independence. Many of those returning from this imbroglio fighting for “democracy” in other parts of the world returned to oppression at home.

Over the centuries African culture and governance systems were destroyed, European culture was imposed and most things African were maligned. Brutal force, psychological warfare and deception were utilised to subjugate, divide and control whilst local collaborators were handsomely rewarded. Such persons were absorbed at the bottom rungs of the establishment and utilised to praise and propagate enslavement and colonialism. Across most of Africa few Europeans commanding thousands of Africans ruled for decades exploiting the colonies for the benefit of the colonisers. Most laws were oppressive and driven to keep Africans subjugated; particularly in Algeria, Kenya and southern Africa with numerous settlers. Following the loss of their land and other resources, movement of Africans was restricted, they could not practice their cultures, they were exorbitantly taxed and were victims of forced labour. The democratic rights that were budding in the colonial centres were denied Africans. Few elections ensued across Africa: the French who incorporated their territories being the exception. Consequently in countries like Ivory Coast and Senegal from the C19th French communes voted for deputies to represent them in the French legislature. Only after 1945 as Africans fought for independence did the British and French belatedly scheme to introduce elections and manipulate these to usher in their chosen and obedient compradors in most countries; the Belgians and Portuguese virtually made no progress in this area. Golder and Wantchekon (2004:1) state that from 1946-2000 there were 189 country-years of democracy compared to 1823 country-years of dictatorship, showing that Africa in general spent more time under dictatorships. The balance has shifted considerably since the democratic winds of change of the 1990s.

## **The Challenges of the Post-Independence Period in Africa**

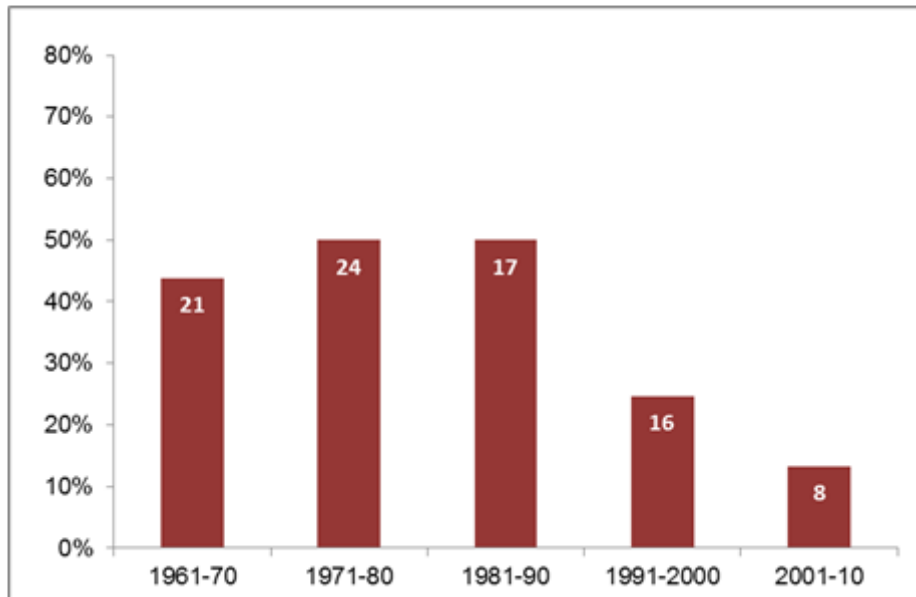
The waves of change blowing across Africa from the 1950s sweeping out colonialism ushering independence were short-lived. Within a decade the veil of foreign implanted “democracy” was uprooted in numerous countries commencing with civil war in Sudan (1955) military takeovers in then Congo Kinshasa (1961); Togo; Ghana (1966); Nigeria (1966); Libya (1969); replaced by wholesale prescribing of opposition parties and institution of one-party states.



However, executive and legislative elections continued to take place often with incumbents winning in the high 90s and sometimes above 100%; highly extraordinary and showing that miracles do occur! One party states were justified as necessary, with the Asian tigers being glowing examples; for nation building, reduction of conflicts and, enhancing socioeconomic development.

**Table I**

**Military Coups between 1960-2010**



Source: Carbone, 2014

Africa was for decades since the 1960s plagued by poor governance, weak economic policies, misrule, inadequate progress and limited human development. Oxfam estimates that conflicts retard development by 10-15 years and cost Africa \$300bn between 1960s-1990s; millions maimed, killed or displaced; and huge infrastructure and institutional damage. Conflicts fuel the arms race; make Africa a humanitarian disaster zone, donor dependent and encourage foreign interference. Were we not asking for too much of the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) in the crises in North Africa (Commissioner Jean Ping in his report to the AU Summit in January 2011, said he could not speak to the Arab Spring that was then blowing across North Africa); Ivory Coast; Madagascar, Zimbabwe amongst others. The Economic Community of West African States and Southern African Development Community have been seized with some of these matters, but very little visible progress can be accountable to them.

Between 1961-2010 there were 86 coups across Africa: 24 and 8 in the decades of 1971 and 2001 respectively. The proverbial Big Men of low ranking military officials, promoted themselves to Field Marshals and General and ruled for life, whilst others were overthrown or assassinated after decades in office.

**Table II**

**Longest Serving Leaders in Post-Independence Africa**

Leader	In power from/to	Consecutive years in office
1. Omar Bongo (Gabon)	1967-2009	42
2. Mummar Gaddafi (Libya)	1969 -2011	42
3. Gnassingbé Eyadéma (Togo)	1967-2005	38
4. Josè Eduardo dos Santos (Angola)	1979-2014 (in office)	35
5. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (Equatorial Guinea)	1979-2014 (in office)	35
6. Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe)	1980-2014 (in office)	34
7. Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Cote d'Ivoire)	1960-1993	33
8. Haile Selassie I (Ethiopia)	1941-1974	33
9. Paul Biya (Cameroon)	1982-2014 (in office)	32
10. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (Congo, Dem. Rep.)	1965-1997	32
11. Mswati III (Swaziland)	1983-2014 (in office)	31
12. Hastings Banda (Malawi)	1964-1994	30
13. Hosni Mubarak (Eqypt)	1981-2011	30
14. Dawda Jawara (Gambia)	1965-1994	29
15. Yoweri Museveni (Uganda)	1986-2014 (in office)	28
16. Blaise Compaoré (Burkina Faso)	1987-2014 (in office)	27
17. William Tubman (Liberia)	1944-1971	27
18. France-Albert René (Seychelles)	1977-2004	27
19. Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia)	1964-1991	27
20. Ahmed Sékou Touré (Guinea)	1958-1984	26
21. Omar Al-Bashir (Sudan)	1989-2014 (in office)	25 <sup>2</sup>

Source: Ditto

The three monarchies even in so-called constitutional monarchies are not included in Table I. King Sobhuza of Swaziland born in 1899 became regent at four months in 1900 after his father died, ascending the throne in 1921 until death in 1982; then his son King Mswati since then. Hassan II ruled Morocco for 38 years (1961-1999); followed by his son Mohammed IV. King Moshoeshe II ascended the throne in 1966 (exiled for eight months in 1970) until 1990, when a military government dethroned him, replacing him with his son King Letsie III who abdicated in his favour in 1995. He died on the throne in 1996.

Having elections and legislatures was a ploy by the ruling elite to lead people to imagine that they were exercising their democratic rights, whilst these were really institutions for patronage dispersed to members and party leaders. Often regions opposing the leaders were denied development (education, energy, food, transport, water etc.), the people harassed, leading to serious ethnic conflict.

British Somaliland and the Trust Territory of Somalia (formerly Italian Somaliland) achieved independence on 26 June and 1 July 1960 respectively and then united to become the Somali Republic; was the only country in which there was peaceful change of leaders through elections in the 1960. Aden Abdulla Osman Daar and Abdirashid Ali Shermarke, elected president and prime minister respectively by the legislature In 1964 President Osman chose Mr Hussein as prime minister. In the 1967 presidential elections in the national assembly Osman and Shermarke both members of the ruling Somali Youth league were pitted against each other and the latter won. has been racked by civil war since 1991 and is a failed state. After that it was only in 1982 that an alternation of government occurred in Africa, when the Labour Party led coalition lost to the Mauritian Militant Movement in Mauritius.

**Table III**

**Modes of the Opposition Ascending to Power**



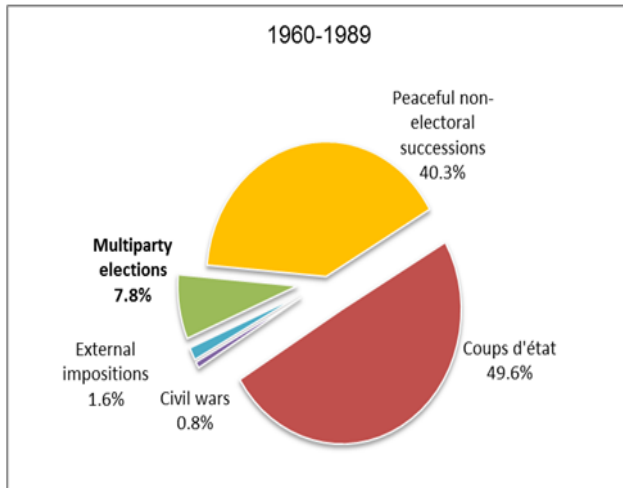
Source: Ditto

Elections are a necessary ingredient for democracy, they are the means through which the demos (people) are supposed to exercise their cratos (power or rule - of choice) of who will represent and govern them. However, in real life once politicians have been elected they often veer of the path of promises made to the people. Certainly in Africa they often disappear, do not practice the rule of law and only return when the next elections are imminent, to fool the people again. So elections become the main issue and are utilised as a beacon for democracy, whilst reality is different. In the 1970s there were few elections at local, provincial or state and national levels across Africa, whilst presently there are hundreds annually. However, more important than quantity of elections is their quality and the growing legitimacy vacuum or crisis in many countries. It is vital that before elections there is adequate preparation by an independent electoral management body, space for political parties to campaign freely and fairly, no gerrymandering, citizens are properly informed, voters are registered, freedom of association and expression exists, corruption is checked and ruling parties do not illegally usurp government resources to their advantage. During the elections there is little or no intimidation of voters and parties, rigging, and undue favouritism towards any individuals, groups or parties; whilst after elections there are agreed standards of good governance and all parties are held accountable leading to the next elections. This paper contends that unfortunately in Africa elections are held as the one and be all determinant of democracy with insufficient consideration given to other factors thus leading to the continued underdevelopment, high levels of conflict, poor governance, corruption and dis-satisfied citizenry even in those countries, like Botswana, Namibia and South Africa scoring commendable marks on various international indexes.

Following the ushering in of multi-party elections in the 1990s many of the opposition parties having been frozen out for decades were often weak, unknown, without patronage that ruling parties had etc. Consequently they fared poorly in the initial elections and actually in 15 countries they boycotted the elections of 1995-1997. Table IV shows that multi-party elections were very limited in the period 1960-1989, increasing significantly in the following table. However these elections still remained below 50% as a means of leadership change.

**Table IV**

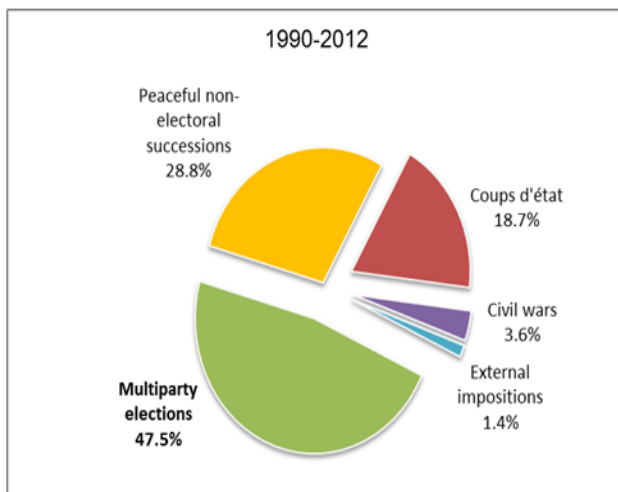
**Variants of Leadership Changes**



Source: Ditto

**Table V**

**Variants of Leadership Changes**



Source: Ditto

More needs to be done, especially as China and other emerging economies move aggressively into Africa, to ensure a reduction in this vicious cycle and to concentrate on sustainable development. Intra-African trade is stagnating at 11% compared to 47% and 70% in Asia and Europe respectively; especially in light of the reduced growth of 2.7% against the predicted 5% that Africa achieved in 2012 (the tumultuous conflicts across the continent being a huge contributory factor). Unemployment, especially amongst the youth, high disease burdens and poor quality of life persist. Thirty-four of the world's 49 least developed countries (racked by instability and low human development) are African (many landlocked and resource rich). The global economy continues to be a source for worry from the economic crises birthed in 2009. Predicted global growth in 2014 is under 2%, whilst in Africa this is about 5% (down from the 6-7% annual average of the 2000 decade). When the latter is disaggregated removing North Africa which is slowly recovering from the tumult of the Arab Spring the figure falls to 4.5%; whilst South Africa dragged this figure down with less than 2% growth. The continuing Eurozone and US debt crises; slacking growth in emerging economies of Brazil, China and India; a Russia staving off western sanctions following the Ukrainian imbroglio, have dampened global demand and reduced exports for many countries whilst creating a snowball effect on employment, taxes and the plans of governments and societies. Thus African countries must deepen democracy, improve governance and implement policies that engender appropriate human development. Peace and stability can be guaranteed where the benefits of growth are more equitably spread, the majority have greater opportunities to improve their lives, especially through education, having jobs or becoming entrepreneurs. Star performers like Mauritius, Cape Verde, Botswana and Namibia will continue to be models to emulate; whilst others to watch include rapidly improving Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome.

## **Regional Issues and the Unfulfilled Promises to the African Masses**

Kwame Nkrumah, Ghanaian president, movingly implored the 25 May 1963 OAU summit that:

“We must unite now or perish. I am confident that by our concerned effort and determination, we shall lay here the foundations for a continental Union of African States. The struggle against colonialism does not end with the attainment of national independence. We have emerged into independence in a different age, with imperialism grown stronger, more ruthless and experienced, and more dangerous in its international associations. We must recognise that our economic independence resides in our African union and requires the same concentration upon the political achievement. Is it not unity alone that can weld us into an effective force, capable of creating our own progress and making our valuable contribution to world peace?”

Yet all stock exchanges in the world are pre-occupied with Africa's gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, copper, and iron ore. We have been too busy nursing our separate states to understand fully the basic need of our union, rooted in common purpose, common planning, and common endeavour.

We shall link the various states of our continent with communications by land, sea, and air. We cannot afford to pace our needs, our development, our security, to the gait of camels and donkeys. For us, it is a simple matter of grasping with certainty our heritage by using the political might of unity. All we need to do is develop with our united strength the enormous resources of our continent. Not one of us working singly and individually can successfully attain the fullest development. Only a united Africa functioning under a union government can forcefully mobilise the material and moral resources of our separate countries and apply them efficiently and energetically to bring a rapid change in the conditions of our people. Unite we must. Without necessarily sacrificing our sovereignties, we can forge a political union based on defence, foreign affairs and diplomacy, and a common citizenship, an African currency, a monetary zone and a central bank. We must unite in order to achieve the full liberation of our continent.”

Fifty-one years on the vision remains unrealised. The OAU concentrated on political independence mainly in eastern and southern Africa, whilst in the socioeconomic sphere remained weak, initiating numerous plans with little implementation. It faltered on human rights, good governance, in curtailing inter and intra African conflicts and regional integration. Unlike Europe which founded its union on shared values, stringent membership criteria and held states accountable, the OAU was weak in relation to its constituent parts. This also stymied it at the multilateral and global levels further marginalising Africa. Unsurprisingly after majority rule in South Africa in 1994, there was a sustained drive to transform the OAU, leading to the birth of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in 2001, founded on the rule of law, democracy, sustainable development, and a call for genuine partnership from external parties.

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Planning Agency formed 13 years ago has not met most of the commitments or targets including the \$64 billion aid from donors; reduced potpourri of regional economic communities; greater regional integration; increased acceptance of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) etc. Many observers, especially Africans ridiculed its acronym terming it KNEEPAD reflecting African leaders genuflecting with begging bowls before others across the globe and kowtowing to the Washington and Beijing Consensus’. This organisation has become less and less visible, with its transformation from a secretariat to a planning agency in 2013. The huge territorial fights over the location of NEPAD in South Africa rather than Ethiopia have taken their toll; NEPAD being strangled because of the slight independence it wanted from the AU; donor fatigue set in; and the body too tied the founding fathers, many of whom are no longer in power. These are vital issues must be pondered on as Africa seeks to move along the path of integrating itself. As we reflect on 13 years of its existence we must ask why it was formed and how far it has met its objectives; what obstacles it faces and what support it requires. African civil society and other stakeholders must make their voices heard on this important issue and not allow their future be mortgaged for business as usual.

In 2002, the OAU morphed into the African Union (AU) with emphasis on strengthening member states and rationalising regional economic communities into five regions, eventually leading to a united and self-sufficient Africa. In 2003, the African Peer Review Mechanism was added to the AU structures to encourage the good governance. Since a leopard does not change its spots, is the AU piling up on good plans with minimal implementation?

Two options were debated regarding membership of the AU in 2001: based on democratic and development criteria or geography meaning all countries in Africa. How different the AU would have been if the first option had been chosen. It would have meant countries only became members if they met the agreed criteria. The others would then be evaluated and then given action plans with timeframes based on variable geometry which would determine when they could join. What rather happened was that all countries became members and then there have been feeble attempts through the APRM to encourage change. This may have been able to work if the AU was a strong supranational organisation. It is wishful thinking to expect leaders who have been in power from on average over twenty years in most African countries to encourage others to give up power; become more democratic, not rig elections, strengthen civil society to criticise them etc. Africa must urgently put its house in order. AU membership criteria must be revised and being a member must be so priceless that non-members will endeavour to meet the conditions for joining. There must be stiffer sanctions for breaching membership criteria. Our international partners, if they are real partners, must respect the revised AU and take their cue in dealing with Africa based on the principles the AU expounds. Of course, the realist school of international relations will advise that in real politics power is the name of the game. If Africa can transform itself like China and India, then we would be taken more seriously and treated with the necessary respect.

AU members should be compelled to pay their dues; implement AU resolutions and live up to the treaty obligations. The membership dues are assessed on a country's capacity. Surely with many African countries growing at an average of 5.5% annually (even though from a low base) and spending huge resources on un-necessary items, the least they can do is pay membership dues if they want to be part of the AU. It does not seem like the organisation is suspending members for non-payment, so it is not taken seriously. Libya paid the dues of many countries and with the imbroglio it has faced since 2011 a substantial part of the AU budget is not being met. We need to recognise that the weakness, particularly of the AU is what has led to outsiders having a greater say in African affairs. There were NATO meetings in 2011 in Europe and other parts of the world discuss Libya, with virtually no African representation; after all they had disregarded Africa when they instigated the murder and overthrow of the Gaddafi regime. Today Libya has still not recovered from the conflict fuelled 3 years ago, whilst the west enjoys its oil supplies, so called reconstruction of the economy through its corporates etc.

Africa must remain steadfast on the political and socioeconomic transformation processes started at the end of the last century, at the national, sub-regional and continental levels. Africa must vigorously lobby for global support to engender peace, support for its economic revival and fair returns for its products and services.



In view of the persistence by the media both domestic and particularly the international one in spreading mainly bad news about Africa efforts must be redoubled to collate the good news about Africa and disseminating this, first across Africa and then the globe. Of course as Franz Fanon states we must 'tell no lies and claim no easy victories'; we will tell the truth about what wrongs continue to plague Africa, both the internal and external causes.

The unwieldy number of RECs must be dealt with speedily; in this regard the action plan of the Tripartite Free Trade Area following the June 2011 Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, East African Community and Southern African Development Community summit in South Africa is encouraging. Citizens of these RECS must hold leaders to the commitments they made and require that substantial progress is achieved in the timeframes agreed to. The AU summit of Equatorial Guinea in June/July 2011, as usual issued a lengthy declaration; more talk-shops with little action. It committed to creating an African Economic Community by 2017 which the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action had envisaged for year 2000! Little envisaged 34 years ago has been achieved; African states are still very divided. This has created a snowball effect meaning the African Economic Union planned for 2027 under the Abuja Treaty in 1991 is impossible. Well not to be outdone for wishful thinking, African leaders now pontificate on Agenda 2063 a hundred years after the formation of the OAU. The adage "if wishes were horses beggars would ride" comes to mind.

Over 70% of the AU budget relies substantially on foreign donors, giving them undue leverage to meddle in African affairs. The saying do not look a Greek horse in the fate, became for the AU do not look a Chinese horse in the face, following the Chinese "gift" of an over \$200million new headquarters inaugurated in January 2012. Some might argue that in an era of growing South South relations and with the AU already relying on donors for most of its budget, why begrudge the Chinese and other emerging powers which seek to assist? All that will be said on this matter is that it contradicts the spirit of self-reliance espoused by the NEPAD principles (just as many criticise the provision and building of houses for able bodied people in South Africa which creates dependency; rather than assisting them build their own houses), compromises security and raises the question of what leverage the Chinese could have over the AU. Surely the AU should have done more to mobilise resources from a continent which is an oxymoron: rich in resources yet poor in development terms. A bridge too far, some will espouse!

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, Chair of the AU Commission has prioritised the mobilisation of African resources to pay for more AU activities; this will include seeking to reduce the membership fees owed. This greater financial independence will hopefully also reduce the foreign interference in AU and African affairs. As the ebola pandemic swept through various African countries there was a belated AU mobilisation of African resources to deal with this one of many scourges. Part of this effort must also concentrate on research to fathom the numerous suspicions that the west could have introduced this disease as part of its quest for global domination by all means – biochemical in this instance. However, African governments also need to be more committed to the human development of their countries and reduce the waste of resources, corruption, destruction of institutions and infrastructure.

In 2003, 47 countries from 53 member states then: Morocco is a non-member and Sudan was one country signed the AU Protocol Amending its Constitutive Act which under Article (3q) designates the Diaspora as its 6<sup>th</sup> Region whereby it “..... invite(s) and encourage(s) the full participation of the Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in building of the African Union”, from 53 member states then: Morocco is a non-member and Sudan was one country. Non-signatories were: Botswana, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Seychelles. Eritrea and Ethiopia (even has a ministry of Diaspora Affairs) with their large diasporas are anomalies, enjoying the significant Diaspora contributions whilst simultaneously treating them as opponents. Cape Verde also has a significant Diaspora. Non-ratifiers are: Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Brazzaville, Djibouti, DRC, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Of these countries only a few have small Diasporas or are in major conflicts with them. All benefit through huge remittances (finance, investment, telecommunications, tourism, trade, and flow of ideas) from their Diaspora. As the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AU approaches, it is disappointing that only 25<sup>3</sup> ratifications had been mustered instead of 36 required for the protocol to come into effect; putting into question African states’ commitment to the sixth region concept. Civil society should campaign unceasingly until this untenable impasse is surmounted and the promised land envisaged by the fore fathers (all the leaders meeting in Addis Ababa on 25 May 1963 were men) 51 years ago is reached!

Supposedly democratic Western countries led the charge of supporting democratisation moves in Africa from the last decade of the C20th, often wielding this as a pre-condition for relations and assistance, imposing sanctions on those considered undemocratic. Central African Republic, Eritrea, Saharawi Democratic Republic, Sudan and Zimbabwe were excluded from the Africa USA summit of August 2014. However, USA allies undemocratic, long serving dictators and some soldiers turned civilian presidents were at the summit; triumph of interests over values. Western hypocrisy plays out clearly in international relations and its quest for world dominance and protection of its interests; power being all that matters. This is evident in various international forums where veto power (also a preserve of Russia – previously the USSR and China) or dominance through economic muscle or history. There is fierce resistance to reform the UN and other bodies like the IMF, World Bank and other global governance institutions. There is no democracy in these institutions. The East and West, led by the USA often violate the UN Charter with impunity, pressurise some countries to vote along particular lines; UN Security Council resolutions are twisted or stretched to undertake unauthorised actions. This happened with the invasion of Libya, holding of prisoners of war in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; supporting regime change in Iraq; sponsoring terrorist groups especially in the Afghanistan and Middle East and instigating coups in some African and Latin American states. Some emerging powers are not very different either in pursuing their interest, especially China. It states that its international relations are driven by non-interference in the affairs of other states. However, it insists on not having bilateral relations with those African countries linked to Taiwan; is reputed to have pressurised South Africa on more than one occasion not to grant the Dalai Lama and not hesitating in utilising its economic power to as leverage where necessary.

## **The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**

Articles 3 and 4 of AU Constitutive Act appreciate that sustainable democratic governance in Africa requires political and socioeconomic stability, peace and security. AU upholds principle that elections are a legitimate method of transfer of power and the only manner of expressing popular sovereignty is representative democracy. The concern that propelled Charter's development was political destabilisation caused by unconstitutional changes of governments and unsatisfactory human development and is founded on various human rights and governance protocols. The Charter adopted by the African Union Summit in Ethiopia on 30 January 2007. First to sign was Guinea on 09 May 2007; Mauritania ratified and deposited appropriate instrument on 07 and 28 July 2008 respectively. Non-signatories and non-ratifiers are nine<sup>4</sup> and twenty-three<sup>5</sup> respectively. It came into force on 15 February 2012, one month after Cameroon deposited its instrument of ratification (it had ratified on 24 August 2011) meeting the necessary threshold of 15 as required. The two latter groups make for interesting bed fellows. Some countries that have been known for decades as democratic have neither signed nor ratified the charter. For others it is unsurprising given their history.

This charter has 53 articles, comprising 11 principles and 13 objectives. The latter are outlined below:

1. Promote adherence, by each State Party, to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights;
2. Promote and enhance adherence to the principle of the rule of law premised upon the respect for, and the supremacy of, the Constitution and constitutional order in the political arrangements of the State Parties;
3. Promote the holding of regular free and fair elections to institutionalize legitimate authority of representative government as well as democratic change of governments;
4. Prohibit, reject and condemn unconstitutional change of government in any Member State as a serious threat to stability, peace, security and development;
5. Promote and protect the independence of the judiciary;
6. Nurture, support and consolidate good governance by promoting democratic culture and practice, building and strengthening governance institutions and inculcating political pluralism and tolerance;
7. Encourage effective coordination and harmonization of governance policies amongst State Parties with the aim of promoting regional and continental integration;
8. Promote State Parties' sustainable development and human security;
9. Promote the fight against corruption in conformity with the provisions of the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption adopted in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2003;
10. Promote the establishment of the necessary conditions to foster citizen participation, transparency, access to information, freedom of the press and accountability in the management of public affairs;

11. Promote gender balance and equality in the governance and development processes;
12. Enhance cooperation between the Union, Regional Economic Communities and the International Community on democracy, elections and governance; and
13. Promote best practices in the management of elections for purposes of political stability and good governance.

Once the required instruments of ratification were deposited with the African Union Commission it became part of the African Union Constitutive Act and binding. However, African countries are generally known more for breach than adherence of the myriad continental and other international agreements that they are party to. In the case of sub-regional and continental agreements there is no supranational authority able to enforce such legislation, especially against the more powerful states; neither has the APRM been a sufficient enough deterrence in soliciting the appropriate compliance.

Member states are supposed to report every two years on their implementation of the charter to the AU Commission. This period passed recently on 15 January 2014 and the AU has hardly received the requisite reports, indicating a likely trend into the future. Even where reports will be submitted they are likely to be late, patchy and unsatisfactory; in view of the experience with many such endeavours of the AU, the APRM being a good example. The definitions of democracy, legitimate elections and good governance are varied but these have some common denominators and have been measured through various indexes globally. The AU charter objectives provide a useful foundation for an overarching evaluation of these principles and the argument that it has only been in force for just about three years cannot be an excuse for the poor state on democracy etc in Africa. This is the fount of democracy; even if this was interrupted by long periods of local and foreign oppression and exploitation. There is enough experience in these areas across Africa to proffer an assessment. There are numerous indexes for measuring democracy and governance. However these are often criticised as being western biased, not grounded in local conditions and having harmful agendas. African-driven indexes are also often criticised of being elitist, manipulated to serve specific interests or poorly constructed. The Mo Ibrahim Governance Index is African-led, though for the first few years it was dominated by western, mainly US scholars. Now in its seventh year of operation, with increasing improvements, it will be used to evaluate democracy and governance in Africa since the index covers the charter objectives.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2014:3) index defines “governance as the provision of political, social and economic goods that a citizen has the right to expect from his or her state, and that a state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens”. It is based on data from 34 external sources converted into 95 indicators; divided into 14 sub-categories under 4 categories of Safety and Rule of Law (rule of law, personal safety, accountability and national security); Participation and Human Rights (participation, gender and rights); Sustainable Economic Opportunity (public management, business environment, infrastructure and rural sector) and Human Development (welfare, education and health) derived from 14 sub-categories and 88 indicators.

A scale of 0-100 is used for each sub-set above. The 2014 report notes that since 2000 progress has been registered in 11 out of 14 sub-categories; all for those under the latter 2 categories above, with the declines being in the 1<sup>st</sup> two – rule of law, personal safety and rights. Overall continental score from 2000-2011 improved by plus 4. Nevertheless, paucity of data and limited statistical capacity present challenges and conflicts mean some countries like Republics of Sudan and South Sudan not included in the study. So the index is for 52 countries only. The results are unsurprising, with the most peaceful countries and regions registering the highest scores. Numerous countries have improved their scores in different categories and must be commended. However, these have been from previously very low scores, they are playing catch up and are still very fragile. Central Africa a highly conflicted region scores lowest in all categories; so also Somalia a failed state which is in gradual recovery. Sustainable economic opportunity is the lowest category reflecting development challenges, high levels of corruption, waste of resources, weak economic policies, over-reliance on few products which are exported in their raw form, low employment, high poverty and deep inequality. This is then followed by Participation and Human Rights; Safety and Rule and Law; and Human Development is highest. The average score of 51.5 for Overall Governance signifies the need for speedy and deep transformation across numerous countries.

**Table VI****Mo Ibrahim Index - 2013**

<b>Overall Governance</b>	
African average	51.5
Highest – Mauritius	81.7
Lowest - Somalia	8.6
Highest regional average – Southern Africa	59.3
Lowest regional average – Central Africa	41.4
Number of countries that achieved their best performance in 2013	23
Improved in overall governance and the 4 categories over past 5 years	13
Showed year on year improvement over past 5 years	7
<b>Human Development</b>	
African average	58.7
Highest - Mauritius	85.6
Lowest - Somalia	14.1
Highest regional average - North Africa	69.7
Lowest regional average – Central Africa	51.8
Number of countries that achieved their best performance in 2013	24
<b>Participation and Human Rights</b>	
African average	49.9
Highest – Cape Verde	83.5
Lowest - Somalia	10.7
Highest regional average – Southern Africa	59.1
Lowest regional average – Central Africa	37.6
Number of countries that achieved their best performance in 2013	20
<b>Safety and Rule of Law</b>	
African average	51.7
Highest - Botswana	85.3
Lowest - Somalia	5.9
Highest regional average – Southern Africa	62.8
Lowest regional average – Central Africa	40.6
Number of countries that achieved their best performance in 2013	10
<b>Sustainable Economic Opportunity</b>	
African average	45.6
Highest - Mauritius	79.7
Lowest - Somalia	3.5
Highest regional average – Southern Africa	52.3
Lowest regional average – Central Africa	35.7
Number of countries that achieved their best performance in 2013	15

Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2014

Electoral systems like first past the post means parties need not win majority votes to assume power; smaller parties are disadvantaged without the benefit of proportional representation where votes beyond a threshold can be transferred to other candidates. The size of wards and constituencies, voting age, utilisation of secret ballots or not, whether voting is compulsory or not, provisions meant to improve gender or minority representation, number of voting stations, time provided for voting all impact on the outcomes of elections. Safety and security of candidates and general public, perceptions of people about the fairness of process leading to elections, importance that people give to voting and their ability to influence politics all determine voter turnout and results. Voter turnout is falling in many countries especially if people believe the process will be rigged. Elections in many African countries are seen as life and death contests, winner takes all and avenues to jobs, power and privilege so candidates and their supporters spare no effort legal and illegal to win. Once in power those who funded candidates require returns on their investments, fuelling further corruption, violence and other negatives. Poor infrastructure hampers movement, provision of supplies, undertaking of voter education etc. limiting the consolidation of democracy. Thus, lack of regular supplies of energy means that voting cannot ensue once night falls; travel, social media utilisation, and other activities are also negatively impacted.

Government institutions are often utilised to advantage incumbents: demarcation boards gerrymander constituency borders arbitrarily; security forces harass rather than protect the people or some candidates; parliaments rubber stamp government initiatives or renege on its oversight duties and sometimes enacts unfair unconstitutional legislation; state media is commandeered; vast resources are utilised for patronage especially prior to elections; voter education not adequately undertaken etc. Often massive tenders are granted to supporters of the ruling elite just before elections and they can utilise these positions to advantage those in power; in South Africa just before elections food parcels are often distributed. Electoral Commissions are not provided adequate resources, some are not properly trained and they depend on other organs of government which can choose to cooperate with them.

Recent elections in various SADC states were not free and fair, especially. In the DRC in 2011, ballot papers were insufficient, voting stations opened late, some members of the elections commission were members of the president's party; in Angola in 2012 state resources were abused by incumbents and opposition harassed and; there was no voters register in Zimbabwe in 2013. Yet the AU and SADC amongst other state observers from Africa declared otherwise. This happens with numerous elections across Africa with deep flaws are usually declared peaceful, free and fair.

Nevertheless, numerous endeavours have been undertaken to improve democracy and governance since the 1990s. People are able to more and more exercise freedom of choice; multi-party elections are now entrenched in virtually all countries; civil societies are increasingly holding governments accountable, even as they resist there is a vibrant and freer media, especially with the advent of social media.

Yet there are also various challenges facing Africa as outlined over the years. Many countries have elections without sufficiently constructed voters registers, sufficiently independent electoral commissions, biased judiciaries, stifling of the media, increasing electoral violence, weak parliaments, leaders staying on power for decades or same parties winning the elections continuously, innovative rigging, marginalisation of some groups and communities and other attributes that are creating democracy and governance deficits. International indexes measuring these issues often have Africa at the bottom.

Botswana is presented as a beacon of democracy and good governance. However, the Botswana Democratic Party has become an institutionalised incumbent, winning all 11 elections since independence in 1966; the electoral law has not been amended since independence; the independence of the electoral commission is questionable with its officers, budget etc., being controlled through administrative links to the public service. The weak opposition which is often divided has not assisted, though it did better in the October 2014 general election.

In Egypt the armed forces intervened in usurping the revolution that overthrew the Mubarak regime and the sham elections in 2014 have a military man in a suit ruling. On 19 June 2014 prime minister Thabane of Lesotho prorogued parliament, with the king's consent, to thwart efforts of the opposition effort of a vote of no confidence. South Africa issued a statement expressing grave concern about the political and security situation noting that any unconstitutional change of government would not be tolerated and placing the matter on the AU Summit of the same month. Nothing much happened to resolve the crisis until 30 August 2014 when a coup attempt ensued. Then a SADC intervention forced the parties to reach a settlement opening parliament and leading to early elections in February 2015. In Burjina Faso president Blaise Compaore in power since 1987, and wanting an illegal extension of his regime was overthrown in November 2014; the French assisted him to escape to Ivory Coast usurping an African Spring like in Egypt a few years back! As usual the AU made belated pronouncements about unconstitutional change of government when it was silent about Compaore's similar move nor had it earlier sort to sanction prime minister Thabane. The AU does not have effective early warning systems to deal with such situations and often sides with the rulers much as they are undemocratic and oppress their people in contravention of international law and their various commitments. It stands strong on enforcing sanctions for unconstitutional changes to government suspending members, but hardly chastises governments for not adhering to the charter's numerous democracy and governance requirements. This is unlike the European Union which stringently holds members to its laws and values.

## **Conclusion**

Africans must assert themselves in writing their own history in order to correct the numerous long standing fallacies about the continent. They must understand that this is a war of ideas but very much driven by material issues. The world has gone through various development epochs and even though not all countries are at the same stage we in the global knowledge economy era.



Production is not now, driven by the factors of land, labour, technology and capital where returns are reliant on extracting excess rent and sweating the other factors. Human prowess converted into intellectual capital, tied to global logistics or value chains, fast and efficient information and communication technology and transport are some of the unique selling points. Ideas; innovation; drive etc. are the foundations of this era.

So Africa must claim its rightful place and establish that indeed all other civilisations stand on its shoulders. Democracy and governance commenced in Africa and she shared these with other nations. However, they took and did not acknowledge their debt. Africa was re –paid with exploitation, humiliation and being written out of human history. Violence was utilised to subdue African resistance; her resources illegally acquired and Africans taken off their development trajectories. Division was sworn amongst families, communities, nation and regions as a tactic to control them. Africans were then enslaved and taken to foreign lands where they developed other countries whilst their own became under-developed through loss human capital, conflicts, their natural resources illegally harvested or they received low prices for them, whilst paying exorbitantly for manufactured and other imports. This violent interjection taking Africa off its autonomous development trajectory has set the continent back centuries. It will fall back even further in this fast transforming global village where other countries and continents are not standing stationary. So every further setback it suffers is tragic; getting off this vicious cycle is not easy especially where local compradors collude with foreigners to siphon resources, instigate conflicts and stall progress. Thus even as Africa has democratised this is often more in quantity of elections than their quality and increased deepening of democracy and governance. The elite continue to aggressively seek power in order to access patronage to enrich themselves and their allies.

Many indexes show marginal if any progress and often there is regression in one field or another. The international environment is also often unsupportive, exploitative and unfriendly. This creates huge challenges for different countries and sub-regions across Africa. Comprehensive indexes like the Mo Ibrahim one amongst others cover an array of areas in governance ensuring that measurements are realistic. Countries can determine which areas are satisfactory and where there are challenges. The data is also comparative and different sectors in a country, across countries, region and inter-regional can be analysed and appropriate actions taken. Since the index has been ongoing for seven years and will continue into the future we can study countries and regions over periods of time, evaluate their performance and recommend appropriate action. Africa will need to build on its similarities whilst melding its diversity for unity and for lessons in order for the region to tackle its sustainable development challenges and build on progress made. Unity will also be vital in defining Africa's interests and securing its resources for the benefit of its own people, as well as both cooperating and competing with other regions.

Numerous endeavours have been undertaken by Africa to improve democracy and governance since the 1990s. People are able to more and more exercise freedom of choice; multi-party elections are now entrenched in virtually all countries; civil societies are increasingly holding governments accountable, even as they resist there is a vibrant and freer media, especially with the advent of social media.

However, even as Africa has democratised this is often more in quantity of elections than their quality and increased deepening of democracy and governance. The elite continue to aggressively seek power in order to access patronage to enrich themselves and their allies. Many countries have elections without sufficiently constructed voters registers, sufficiently independent electoral commissions, biased judiciaries, stifling of the media, increasing electoral violence, weak parliaments, leaders staying on power for decades or same parties winning the elections continuously, innovative rigging, marginalisation of some groups and communities and other attributes that are creating democracy and governance deficits.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway ( united between 1814 to 1905) and Turkey

<sup>3</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo.

<sup>4</sup> Botswana, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi (subsequently ratified), Seychelles, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

<sup>5</sup> Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia and Uganda.