

# Democracy in Africa

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# Democracy in Africa

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## *Political Changes and Challenges*

Edited by

**Saliba Sarsar**

**Julius O. Adekunle**

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*For Dr. Kod Igwe  
distinguished professor,  
renowned sculptor, and  
generous donor.*



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# Abbreviations

ACF	Arewa Consultative Forum
ADI	Independent Democratic Action
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AJM	Association of Journalists and Media Workers
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
ANC	African National Congress
AP	Associated Press
ASP	Afro-Shirazi Party
ASU	Arab Socialist Union
AU	African Union (formerly Organization of African Unity OAU)
AZ	Agenda for Zambia Party
BAWATA	<i>Baraza la Wanawake Tanzania</i> (Tanzania Women's Council)
BMA	British Military Administration
BMM	Brigade Mixte Mobile
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CCM	<i>Chama Cha Mapinduzi</i>
CCM	<i>Centre for Cinématographique Marocain</i> (Moroccan Cinema)
CD	Campaign for Democracy
CdIA	Camp of the Autonomous Islands
CDT	<i>Confédération démocratique de travail</i>
CENER	<i>Centre National des Etudes et des Recherches</i>

CGEM	<i>Association Marocaine D'Employeurs</i> (Moroccan Employers Association)
CNRR	Coalition for National Reconciliation and Reconstruction (CRRN in French)
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CODO	Democratic Coalition of the Opposition
CPC	Countries of Popular Concern
CPDM	Cameroon's People Democratic Movement
CPNC	Cameroon People's National Convention
CRC	Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros
CSF	Central Security Forces
CUF	Civic United Front
DP	Democratic Party
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DTA	Deutsche Turnhalle
EDA	Eritrean Democratic Alliance
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
ELECAM	Elections Cameroon
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCFA	Francs (currency) of the Bank of Central African States
FEDECO	Federal Electoral Commission
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FJA	Freelance Journalists Association
FNJ	National Front for Justice
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GNP	Gross National Product
GNPP	Great Nigerian Peoples Party
GUMW	General Union of Moroccan Workers
HDI	Human Development Index

HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISD	Information Services Department
JET	Journalism for Environment in Tanzania
KNC	Kamerun National Congress
KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
KPP	Kamerun People's Party
LPF	Liberal Progressive Front
MAP	<i>Maghrib abd Arabe</i> (Maghrib Arab Press)
MDFM	Force for Change Democratic Movement
MDR	Mouvement Démocratique Républicain
MDR	Movement for the Defense of the Republic
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MINAT	Ministry of Territorial Administration
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MLP	Mauritian Labour Party
MLSTP	Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
MMM	Mauritian Militant Movement
MpD	Movement for Democracy
MSM	Militant Socialist Movement
MTD	Democratic Labour Movement
MUC	Movement for Union of Cameroon
MWU	Moroccan Workers Union
NDP	National Democratic Party
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NEO	National Electoral Observatory
NEPA	National Electric Power Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NLC	Nigerian Labor Congress
NP	National Party

NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NPP	Northern Peoples Party
NR	National Radio
NRC	National Republican Convention
NUEW	National Union of Eritrean Women
NUPF	National Union of Popular Forces
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAICV	African Party of Independent Cape Verde
PARMEHUTU	Parti du Movement de l'Emancipation Hutu
PCD-GR	Democratic Convergence Party-Reflection
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PJD	Justice Development Party
PF	Patriotic Front
PFDJ	People's Front for Democracy and Justice
PGE	Provisional Government of Eritrea
PMSD	Mauritian Social Democratic Party
PRP	People's Redemption Party
PSD	Social Democratic Party
RND	National Rally for Development
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTLML	<i>Radio et Television Libres des Mille Collines</i>
RTM	<i>Radio-Television Marocaine</i> (Moroccan Broadcasting Network)
SADR	Saharan Arab Democratic Republic
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (in Egypt)
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SDI	Status of Democracy Index
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SEDOC	<i>Service des Etude et de la Documentation</i>
SNP	Seychelles National Party
SPPF	Seychelles People's Progressive Front

SUPF	Socialist Union of Popular Forces
SWAPO	South West Africa Progressive Organization
TAJA	Tanzania Journalists Association
TAMWA	Tanzania Media Women Association
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TASWA	Tanzania Sports Writers' Association
TLP	Tanzania Labour Party
TPA	Tanzania Photographers' Association
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UDC	Cameroon Democratic Union (as translated in English)
UDP	United Democratic Party
UGTM	Union Général des ouvriers marocainas
UMT	<i>Union des ouvriers marocains</i> (Union of Moroccan Workers)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	National Union for Democratic Progress
UNIA	United Negro Improvement Association
UNIP	United National Independent Party
UNMEE	United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia
UNMT	<i>Syndicat national du Maroc</i> (National Union of Morocco)
UPC	Union of Populations of Cameroon
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
UPND	Unity Party for National Development
UR	Union for the Republic
WDC	Workers Democratic Confederation
ZADECO	Zambia's National Congress Party
ZCTU	Zambia Confederation of Trade Unions
ZDM	Zambia Daily Mail
ZNP	Zanzibar Nationalist Party
ZUJ	Zambia Union of Journalists



# Series Editor's Preface

The *Carolina Academic Press African World Series*, inaugurated in 2010, offers significant new works in the field of African and Black World studies. The series provides scholarly and educational texts that can serve both as reference works and as readers in college classes.

Studies in the series are anchored in the existing humanistic and the social scientific traditions. Their goal, however, is the identification and elaboration of the strategic place of Africa and its Diaspora in a shifting global world. More specifically, the studies will address gaps and larger needs in the developing scholarship on Africa and the Black World.

The series intends to fill gaps in areas such as African politics, history, law, religion, culture, sociology, literature, philosophy, visual arts, art history, geography, language, health, and social welfare. Given the complex nature of Africa and its Diaspora, and the constantly shifting perspectives prompted by globalization, the series also meets a vital need for scholarship connecting knowledge with events and practices. Reflecting the fact that life in Africa continues to change, especially in the political arena, the series explores issues emanating from racial and ethnic identities, particularly those connected with the ongoing mobilization of ethnic minorities for inclusion and representation.

Toyin Falola

University of Texas at Austin



# Foreword

I commend this book to readers for the significance of the subject matter and the innovative approaches adopted in various chapters. Today, we are all witnesses to the monumental changes in the northern part of the continent. Street protests in Egypt and the full-scale war in Libya demonstrate the extent of those struggles, and the demand for democracy and accountability.

Since the mid-twentieth century, when most African states gained independence from colonial rule, the practice of democracy has been an issue. Africa is a plural society with different political systems, making the practice of democracy, in its liberal definition, a challenging one. While elements of democracy existed among the various polities in the pre-colonial period, the introduction of the Western political system, through colonialism, brought about significant political changes with which Africans had to grapple. Changing from the old political order of monarchy to the parliamentary system, African leaders and peoples have faced the challenges of implementing the Western form of democracy. While colonialism helped to introduce a new political framework in Africa, it was not necessarily in the context of democracy.

As the euphoria of independence died down, and the reality of governance dawned on the emerging political leaders, it became important to fashion politics on the Western model, align with the democratic states of the world, and adopt democratic principles. It did not take long for many independent African states to be engulfed in ethnic conflicts, economic problems, and political instability, all spurred on by bad governance and corruption. These, and other issues, led to military intervention, which delayed or completely halted attempts to integrate democratic practices into African political culture. The military in politics is a fundamental violation of a democratic system, since military rule is by decree, not by law. As the military gained political control, they suspended democracy, especially between the 1970s and 1990s. Politics will be more democratic and stable if there is a balanced interaction between the government and the people. African states are experiencing pervasive unrest and political explosions partly because of the wanton violation of democratic ideals.

People need to be politically empowered; they should be able to enjoy their fundamental rights, and derive the benefits of democracy.

The contributors to this important book have demonstrated the changes and challenges that are associated with democracy in contemporary Africa. Drs. Saliba Sarsar and Julius O. Adekunle and their contributors are aware of the complexities of the principles and practices of democracy; they have clearly examined how the African countries represented in this book deal with the challenges of democracy. Other African nations have similar political and democratic conditions as those discussed in this book. What gives this book its uniqueness is the adoption of the Status of Democracy Index (SDI), which has been used to analyze and measure the level of democracy in Africa.

This book is a novelty in its approach and depth of analysis. It offers a new, interesting, and informative path to understanding the dynamics and intricacies of democracy in Africa. The book reveals the hitherto unrecognized extent of the weakness of democracy and brings issues to our attention with unprecedented clarity and precision. It is an eye-opener that urges African political leaders to focus on the various aspects of governance that will promote democracy and political stability.

Toyin Falola  
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Vice President, International  
Scientific Committee  
UNESCO's Slave Route Project

# Acknowledgments

*Democracy in Africa* is the result of a collaborative effort among scholars who are deeply interested in understanding and strengthening the democratic structures and processes in Africa. The authors' names appear atop the individual chapters; their ideas provide a fresh look at the concept and practice of democracy, and how its challenges can be overcome. We extend to them our heartfelt thanks for their incisive analyses and their patience during the process of editing and producing this book. We are grateful to Dr. Toyin Falola for his strong interest in our work, as well as for authoring the Foreword. We also wish to express our gratitude to Ms. Maria Geiger for her great assistance in meticulously editing and proofreading the manuscript. Along with the contributors, we thank Carolina Academic Press for accepting to publish this book. Last but not least, we appreciate our respective spouses, Hiyam Z. Sarsar and Esther A. Adekunle, for their encouragement and support.

Saliba Sarsar and  
Julius O. Adekunle



# Introduction

*Saliba Sarsar*

Democracy is easier to understand than to live. It is not a quick fix, or to be practiced only on election days. It is a generational project that must be anchored in the participation of citizens, accountability of rulers, open economies, and just societies.

Democracy cannot be achieved through manipulated elections or rubber-stamp parliaments. For any country to have democracy, its political structures must be based on a multiparty system without ideological disqualifiers. Its elections must be free, frequent, and fair in order to ensure the consent of the governed. Its judiciary must be independent, and must apply the rule of law in an equitable and impartial manner. Its fundamental individual civil liberties and political rights, such as freedom of expression and assembly, must be protected. Its citizens' human rights, religious freedoms, human development, and economic freedoms must all be guaranteed.

For democracy to work, all major political factions, including opposition groups, must agree to play by the same rules and uphold the same law. The rule of law is essential as a safeguard against those who would limit democracy to its formal trappings by creating to what amounts to a single party system, or those who would seek power with the intention of ultimately disempowering others.

## The African Experience

Generally, African countries have had a less than satisfactory democratic record, essentially caused by both external and internal factors. In Egypt, British colonialism usurped the country's resources, and tolerated royal abuses. This eventually led to a revolution in July 1952, and a succession of authoritarian leaders. A popular uprising in early 2011 enhanced the departure of President Hosni Mubarak after almost 30 years in power. This scenario is similar to what

occurred in Tunisia, where President Zein El Abidin Ben Ali left power and the country after 23 years of authoritarian rule.

Cameroon is one of the few countries to be colonized by the three European powers of Germany, France, and Great Britain. In addition, it is a multicultural society with more than 250 ethnic groups, giving it the appellation “Africa in miniature.” While multiculturalism has, in many respects, been a blessing to the country, it has also served to impede the practice of multiparty democracy.

In Rwanda, there is no evidence that democracy existed before, during, or after colonialism. The many revolutionary and liberation movements did not produce the good governance that encompasses democracy as one of its main features after independence, as occurred in Eritrea. In Nigeria, the evolution of politics reveals a tendency to oscillate between civilian and military rulers.

More often than not, the beneficiaries of democratization have not been its best promoters. Many of those who benefitted from the democratization efforts in the post-1990 period manipulated the electoral system and the constitution making process in their countries to ensure that they retained power. Moreover, in Kenya and South Africa, elections subsequent to the first multiparty elections have not been characterized by higher electoral quality and enhanced democratic consolidation. The worst-case scenarios involve rulers who refuse to step down peacefully when they lose elections, such as that which occurred in the Ivory Coast in 2011, sparking an all-out civil war.

Botswana has had a good track record of healthy multi-party elections, even though a single party has ruled since independence. Benin led the way in 1991 by changing governments peacefully after the ruling party lost the election. Ghana has achieved some success in democracy and development.

While the path of democratization in Africa has to be designed by Africans, democratic nations around the world have an obligation to help Africans help themselves. The dilemma for the United States and other democratic nations is how to move the pace of democratization forward without risking the chances of extreme parties gaining control of their government via electoral victory.

## Focus and Organization of the Volume

This book contains specific analyses of the five main African regions in the northern, western, eastern, central, and southern parts of the continent. Each of the ten representative chapters explores the democratic challenge, specifi-

cally in Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Cameroon, Rwanda, Eritrea, the Insular States, Tanzania, Namibia, and Zambia.

As a background to the political history of Africa, in Chapter 1, Julius O. Adekunle examines the issues of democracy and cultural change before and during the colonial period. He argues that since the pre-colonial times, Africans practiced democracy in one form or another in both centralized and stateless societies. Drawing on examples from different kingdoms to show how Africans conceived and practiced democracy, he asserts that African cultural practices supported political stability. As examined in this book, he also points out that colonialism and modernization were forces of political change, which caused Africans to adopt new forms of democracy.

In Chapter 2, Saliba Sarsar argues that Egypt's successive leaders have been afraid or reluctant to share power and view democracy in broad and generational terms. Egypt's exponential population growth and its incapacity to provide adequately for its citizens on the one hand, and its difficulty to navigate political Islam while engaging in modernization on the other, have made the democratic challenge even more difficult. For Sarsar, democratic reforms are successful to the extent that the regime introduces policies that ensure a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; protect civil liberties and political rights; encourage the development of new political parties and engage the opposition; allow private media outlets to function and prosper; and build confidence among the Egyptian electorate. Improvements in human rights, religious freedom, human development, and economic freedom will complete the picture by enhancing Egyptian wellbeing and prosperity.

In Chapter 3, Raphael Chijioko Njoku analyzes the twists and turns of Moroccan democracy. He assesses the chances for a successful democratic transition in Morocco in light of the implications of the country's ages-long religious and political culture. The possibility of realizing a successful transition from monarchical authority to democratic governance is unlikely, given the king's unwillingness to relinquish his authority and privileges, as well as the fear he and others have that radical Islamist groups might win a popular election in the manner of the National Liberation Front in neighboring Algeria.

Nigerian politics has been oscillating between civilian and military governments since attaining independence in 1960. The first military coup in January 1966 was the first rude interlude on the nascent democratic government. In Chapter 4, Ngozi Kamalu and Fuabeh Fonge critically examine the level of democracy in Nigeria since 1970, when the Nigerian Civil War that began in 1967 came to an end. The Second Republic, that began in 1979, was characterized by a high level of corruption that led to another military intervention.

The Babangida Administration did not provide a safe gateway to democracy. Thus, the struggle to establish true democracy began in 1999, when the country returned to civilian administration.

The Nigerian quest, however, continually gets interrupted by acts of violence that include political assassinations, harassment, and intimidation. In addition, “godfatherism” and political and economic corruption combine to hinder the smooth running of democracy. Human rights have been violated as a result of prevalent insecurity arising from political violence. Hostage taking, especially in the Niger Delta, inflicts negative effects on the nation’s economy. Julius O. Adekunle discusses these problems in Chapter 5, concluding that Nigeria has not scored high marks in terms of democracy.

The elusiveness of democracy exists in Cameroon as well. In Chapter 6, Emmanuel M. Mbah explains that while multiculturalism has been a blessing, it has also served to impede democratization. In particular, the unification of former French and British Cameroons, with their various cultural and colonial backgrounds has been a challenge to governance and democratic practice in Cameroon. It has seriously threatened both the *raison d’être* of that union, and the future of Cameroon. Democracy will materialize only when the dictatorship changes and stops relying on intimidation, brutality and human rights abuses, electoral fraud and corruption, patronage politics, and the constant interference in the constitution to suit the powers that be.

In Chapter 7, Julius O. Adekunle analyzes democracy as it relates to political change in Rwanda. He finds no evidence of it before, during, or after colonialism. The regimes before the genocide of 1994 were too ethnically and politically biased. The process of power-sharing, which emanated from the Arusha Peace Accords—a conflict-resolution strategy designed to end the long standing conflict between the Hutu dominated government and the Tutsi guerilla fighters—could have promoted democracy, but, apparently, the opponents of power-sharing did not embrace them. The plane crash that killed President Juvénal Habyarimana while returning from signing the Accords and the genocide were a clear revelation of the undemocratic political system in Rwanda. While relative peace and political stability have existed since the end of the genocide, there has been no meaningful democracy.

In Chapter 8, Saba Tesfayohanness Kidane analyzes how democracy is understood in present-day Eritrea, and gives a historical overview of the country before it became a sovereign state in 1993. The Eritrean People’s Liberation Front, which later transformed itself into the government of the newly born Eritrea, masterminded the political philosophy and direction of the country. It envisioned a state that is far from the modern concept of the ideal democratic state. With active government involvement in the political, economic, social,

and cultural lives of the people in Eritrea, top-bottom style of leadership is the rule, rather than the exception.

In Chapter 9, Jose Adrian Garcia-Rojas presents a more hopeful image of democracy in the African insular microstates of Cape Verde, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, and Seychelles and Comoros. In the last fifteen years, for instance, there has been an increase in the stability of their democratic institutions and party systems. This has been expressed by top rankings among African countries in terms of better governance, more freedom, absence of international sanctions on human rights conventions, and clear legal norms and other democratic parameters. Focusing on the similarities and differences between the insular states, Garcia-Rojas explains how Mauritius has had free elections since its independence, how Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Seychelles have enjoyed such elections since 1990, and how Comoros has had a hard time consolidating its democratic institutions and party systems.

Shadrack Wanjala Nasong'o focuses on the relationship between political culture and democratization in Tanzania in Chapter 10. Official corruption and economic and political weaknesses remain key obstacles. His main point is that though much has been achieved along the democratization trajectory, there is still a long way to go before the country reaches the democratic Promised Land.

In Chapter 11, M. Fenyo writes about the paradoxes of democracy in Namibia. Although a single political party has dominated the government since independence, Namibia has a rather successful parliamentary democracy. Despite its unevenly distributed wealth, its progressive constitution has provisions regulating the ownership of the means of production, services, education, health, and civil and human rights.

In Chapter 12, Joshua Kivuva examines Zambia's multiparty politics in a single party political culture. He holds that Zambia has moved beyond the initial phase of democratic transition to a more complex process of democratic consolidation and institutionalization. The process, however, has been sidetracked, although not entirely abandoned. The euphoria and optimism that met the first multiparty elections in the country in 1991 has, to a large extent, evaporated. The main argument is that although Zambia has already held four multiparty elections since 1990, this has been attained without any meaningful democratization taking place.

## Status of Democracy Index

History, political context, national economy, party systems, ethnic divisions, and external influences—all have played crucial roles in advancing or

retarding Africa's democratization processes and practices. Several of the chapter authors have incorporated into their analyses the Status of Democracy Index (SDI), which was developed by Saliba Sarsar to assess the current state and score of democratic life, and how it can be improved in Middle East countries.<sup>1</sup> Since 2008, the SDI has been applied in order to understand the economics of democracy in Muslim countries. There is a special focus on the relationship between order and security on the one hand, and social harmony and economic prosperity on the other.<sup>2</sup>

The SDI is a composite measure that quantifies democratization through consideration of multiple variables: four variables address governance and representative government. These mark how heads of state and members of the legislature are selected, as well as political party development, suffrage, and the maturity of political rights and civil liberties. The annual Freedom House survey provides a fifth variable measuring media freedom. Measurements of religious liberty can be derived from U.S. Department of State reports. A seventh addresses the observance of human rights with the information from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the U.S. Department of State. The United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index provides a measurement of human development, and finally, the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom quantifies economic freedom.

The Status of Democracy Index assigns each of these nine variables 2 points for a total of 18 points. Each score ranges from 0 to 2, with 0 being nonexistent, and 2 being the highest measurement. For example, if the head of state or legislature is not elected, then that country receives a score of 0. Prohibition of political parties would also equate to a 0, while tight controls would merit a 1, and reasonably free functioning would lead to a 2. Media freedom, religious liberty, and respect for human rights are each easy to quantify: 0 for not free, 1 for partly free, and 2 for free. Human development is scored by level: 0 for low, 1 for medium, and 2 for high. Economic freedom, the last variable, is scored on the level of governmental interference in the economy, with 0 for strong, 1 for moderate, and 2 for low interference. It is then possible to convert the totals to a percentage for easy digestion.