

Foreword

Current African states exist thanks to the colonial partitioning that took place at the turn of the twentieth century. Then the colonial powers were grappling with notions of democratic governance and this seems to be a struggle that continues to plague their now former colonies. The subsequent campaigns for liberation across Africa sought to build on the continent's pre-colonial democratic foundations, but liberal democracy in the western sense has remained elusive.

This book studies *how* this unfolded.

African political economies are in the main influenced by those of their former colonial powers. Indeed, after independence most African countries adopted a democratic model similar to that of their former colonial ruler. This was unfortunate and seemed to reinforce the perception that the new political order simply replicated the mandate of its predecessor. Of course, the former colonial powers had a keen interest in maintaining strong ties given the heat of the Cold War, but it might have been better if these countries had adopted a democratic system that more accurately reflected their societies' reality.

Studying the common colonial heritage of former British colonies, and its footprint on their political application, offers an interesting comparative opportunity.

This book uses various indices to measure the progress that ten specific countries have made towards the practice of democracy. These assess indicators such as the: quality of elections, voter turnout, term limits, role/s of civil society, presence of media freedoms, type of electoral system, impact of youth participation, accountability and the rising role of social media. It is indeed fascinating to note that Anglophone countries have undergone phases or waves of democratisation – from the immediate post-colonial experience to a trend of one-party states induced by the Cold War to the surge of multi-party elections that now seems to be influenced by technology.

While this book details the progress made towards democratisation, it also engages with the disturbing exclusionary nature of democratic practices in these Anglophone countries. A combination of socio-political values, electoral systems and institutional designs have led to the exclusion of women, youth and ethnic minorities in key political decision-making roles – this despite these demographics being in the majority. The authors track various efforts to improve inclusivity suggesting, for example, moving away from the British influenced first-past-the-post electoral system and adopting a type of proportional representation. South Africa, for instance, is an Anglophone country that has used such a system with some success. Proportional representation

might also help these systems overcome 'third termism' and gerontocracy (two other threats to nascent democracies) because it offers more power sharing options to facilitate a peaceful leadership transition.

This book is a much-needed contribution to the assessment of democracy in Anglophone Africa and comes at a time when the established democracies themselves are threatened by nationalistic fervour. While Anglophone Africa may have passed the days of coups, the road to sustainable democratic governance still lies in the distance. And, until these countries truly incorporate the younger members of their societies as well as their women and ethnic minorities, their democratic institutions will struggle to find their feet. The role of civil society, the media and international community cannot be overstated.

But, most importantly, citizens need to continue working towards an authentically African form of democracy, which is deeply entrenched in society and able to effectively counter authoritarian tendencies in a peaceful and productive manner. It is our hope that this book will nudge the process along.

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