Entangled in Electoralism and Narcissistic Leadership Disorder?: Furthering Democracy Beyond Electoral Procedures in Africa

Abstract
Democratic elections are widely recognized as a foundation of legitimate government. Despite significant steps towards democratisation in the last two decades, problems of consolidation are evident in Africa. In several countries, semi-authoritarian regimes persist while leadership failure becomes a common denominator across the governance spectrum. Yet, leadership is a necessary factor in every sphere of life, especially at the political level where decisions and actions affect the entire members of a nation. Narcissistic Leadership Disorder as used in this essay is a coined version of Narcissistic Personality Disorder in psychology which is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others. For some African political leaders (or narcissist-politicians), given their grandiose sense of self, they are inclined to believe they can get away with almost everything including periodic but manipulated elections and constitution, ironically, in the name of democracy. The thrust of this essay is that consolidating democracy in terms of building democratic institutions and the capacity of the narcissist-politicians to manage the political and economic processes of society for development remains a major challenge for many African countries.

KeyWords: Democracy, Electoralism, Democratisation, Consolidation, Narcissistic Leadership

Introduction and Background to the Study
The global shift towards democratic norms of governance since the end of the Cold War has been one of great historical significance. In the late 1980s, only a third of the world’s population lived under some form of democratic government. By the early 2000s, with the expansion of political pluralism in Central Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, that figure had expanded to nearly 70 per cent (Freedom House, 2012, cited in Siegle, 2012:471). It was during this era, then, that for the first time in history a majority of the world’s citizens were living in a political system where they had a voice in political discourse, rights to exercise basic liberties, and a role in selecting their government leaders (ibid:472). Today a majority of the world’s nations accept the legitimacy of democracy and at least pretend to hold competitive elections. What really distinguishes political systems from one another is the degree to which the elites ruling them seek to use their power in the service of a broad public interest or simply to enrich themselves, their friends and their families (Fukuyama, 2016).

From the 1950s through to the 1970s, decolonization swept across Africa. While freedom was greeted with euphoria in many places, it could not mask the deep political instability that often accompanied independence. Violence and coercion became a common means of changing power. Coups, counter coups, and aborted coups littered the political landscape on the continent (IPI, 2011). Most African nations came to independence as constitutional democracies. By the 1980s, with the exception of semi-democracies in Senegal and the Gambia, and an untested dominant-party democracy in Botswana, all of sub-Saharan Africa slipped under some variant of authoritarian rule (Joseph, 2008:114). Put differently, a quarter-century after sub-Saharan Africa experienced an upsurge of democracy, a different and more complicated political era has dawned. The expansion of liberal democracy has slowed in the continent just as it has globally. Several forces are responsible for this dénouement: the rise of China; the entrenchment of illiberal systems; intensified and multiplying conflicts in the Middle East; authoritarian nationalism in Russia and other countries; the harmonizing of market economies with non-democratic governance; and jihadist and other intractable wars (Joseph, 2016). The third wave of democratization that began in the early 1990s facilitated the emergence of democratic institutions critical to the holding of credible elections in some African countries. These include independent election management bodies, nonpartisan civil society election monitoring groups, and independent media.

However, the political, social, and economic contexts in many new democracies diverge significantly from those of most established democracies. In many new democracies, deep social divisions divide the polity; rule of law is only partially established; electoral fraud corrupts numerous aspects of the electoral process; violence and voter intimidation occur with regularity; the informational environment is undeveloped; voters lack education and experience evaluating parties and candidates; poverty creates incentives for politicians to buy votes rather than invest in public goods; and parties and party systems have shallow roots (Ferree et al, 2013:14). The region’s protracted economic crisis and lagging recovery are often traced to the nature of political regimes. Authoritarian governments have misused public resources, impeded the development of markets, and refrained from providing crucial public goods needed for economic expansion. Leading analyses of economic failure in the region have elaborated the roles of dictatorial personal rulers and political systems grounded in patronage relations. The depredations of predatory rulers in Congo (Zaire), Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone or the Central African Republic have been well documented, while economic mismanagement and authoritarianism in such countries as Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ethiopia, Togo and Zimbabwe have also been widely remarked (Lewis, 2008:67). In modern democratic systems of representative governance, elections are periodic contests which determine the next set of rulers in a nation state (Mapuva, 2013:89). Although nearly every country in the world today holds multiparty elections, these contests are often blatantly unfair. For governments, electoral misconduct is a tempting but also a risky practice, because it represents a violation of international standards for free and fair elections (Donno, 2013). Elections, the primary events in citizens’ lives that allow them to connect with and influence national politics, are few and far between in sub-
Saharan Africa. Every four to six years in democratic regimes, the state is obligated to interact with citizens, to physically produce millions of ballot papers, hire and train polling station agents, and stage a nation-wide event in which theoretically every single citizen’s voice can be submitted (Michelitch, 2012:1). Democracy creates certain public expectations and understandings, including respect for the rule of law and for the outcomes of elections. It requires respect for values beyond elections.

Democracy has made inroads in several countries, and the continent is freer and more democratic almost two decades into the 21st century than it was at the close of the Cold War, but it is also still a haven of instability and autocracy (Glen, 2012:172). Perhaps, that is why many Africans have excellent reasons to doubt the usefulness of the “democracy” that was so enthusiastically touted to them at the turn of the 1990s. Threatened by a wide variety of violent conflicts in their countries or at their borders, Africans have been kept in poverty by unproductive and unfair economic systems (Yabi, 2015). The feasibility of democracy in Africa, has also long been questioned by scholars such as Shivji, Mazrui among others, considering the realities, issues and factors on the ground. These include the colonial legacy, the lack of an influential middle class, the supposed incompatibility of Western democracy with African culture, power struggles, lingering cultures of corruption and the marginalisation of the masses (Tlou, 2015).

In his Claude Ake Memorial Lecture in 2006, Cyril Obi observed that Africa in the spirit of the ‘global moment’ embraced democracy, more precisely liberal democracy because it found acceptance within Africa’s political elite and perhaps more significantly, within the donor community and western democracies that seek to connect the processes to market based economic reforms and development on the continent. He accuses the west of seeking to globalize their own political culture and market ideology as part of the process of universal homogenization, or more bluntly stated hegemonization (Larok, 2011). In spite of this view, Africans have fought hard to ensure that democratic elections are the required and preferred way for government representatives to access, maintain and give up political power (Kadima, 2008). There are other variables which suggest that democracy, if nurtured correctly, may thrive in Africa. The focus now however, is being shifted from the quantity of multiparty elections to the quality, with an emphasis on their credibility and legitimacy which forms the thrust of this essay - a critical assessment of African elections within the context of liberal democracy.

Indeed, I am inclined to admit that liberal democracy connotes “respect for the rule of law, competition among individuals and organized groups, political pluralism, inclusive participation in the selection of leaders and policies, dynamic civil society, individual civil and political liberties, and constitutionalism”; then subjecting African democracy to scrutiny on the basis of these parameters may be in tandem with African realities within a universal democratic framework. After all, the type of an African democracy canvassed for by African leaders of post-independence Africa such as Nyerere in Tanzania, Nkrumah in Ghana, and Kenyatta in Kenya is a form of government based on one-party rule. That is, political parties may exist nominally but may not freely organise political activities in opposition to the rulers and the ruling party. As Uwizeyimana (2012:140) posits, a description of African democracy put forward by African leaders of the post-African independence is based on their argument that traditional African societies rested on a politics of consensus not competition a principle they perceived to be promoted by proponents of multiparty democracy.

Little wonder democratic elections which can help put a country on the path to reform and lay the groundwork for institutionalizing human rights protections and good governance are usually subverted by the political elites. Elections in Africa are largely characterized by minority participation and opinion. This has reduced leadership to the expression of the minds and interests of the minority who have held the polity by the jugular. To them, nations are only democratic in as much as they can organize elections into political offices neglecting the substance of the process, the stewardship of the elected and the expectations of the electorates. Many African electorates have lost confidence in the process and have consequently become apathetic to the system, a situation that further promotes the preponderances and ambivalences of political actors (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2011). According to Cheeseman (2015), the state of democracy in Africa is one of the most controversial and difficult questions facing the continent today. Is Africa getting more or less democratic? Why have so many countries become stuck in a murky middle ground between democracy and authoritarianism? How can we design democracy so that it better fits African realities? What is the state of governance in sub-Saharan Africa, and is it possible to identify best practices and approaches to establishing political systems that promote accountability, transparency, credible transitions, and civic space to all? This essay is basically designed to probe into these research questions with a view to establishing, within the context of liberal democracy and leadership, the degree of adherence to global best practices.

**Election and Democracy: A Conceptual Analysis**

There are many different definitions of what constitutes a democracy, yet they all have in common the following two principles: a democracy must protect the freedoms and liberties of all groups and must involve open electoral processes (Darkwa, 2009). Finnish political scientist Tatu Vanhanen defines democracy as a political system in which different groups are entitled by law to compete for power and institutional power holders are elected by and responsible to the people (ibid). The words “election” and “democracy” have become synonymous. We have convinced ourselves that the only way to choose a representative is through the ballot box (Van Reybrouck, 2016). After all, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states as much: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

According to Hague and Harrop (2001), the Greeks invented two of the most potent political features of our present age: the very idea of citizen – as opposed to subject – and democracy. This invariably means that, the citizens should own their democracy. In other words, democracy should be tailored to meet the expectations and aspirations of the citizens.
Democracy is committed, in the first instance, to political equality. In ancient Athens, this entailed the equal right to put oneself forward to hold political office and the equal probability, via the lot, of being selected (for most magistracies). Yet it is far from clear what equality among citizens ought to mean in modern representative democracies. Under universal suffrage—one person, one vote—all citizens in principle ought to have equal opportunity to choose the candidate they believe will best protect their interests (Rehfeld and Schwartzberg, 2013:56).

Pennock (1979) defines it as, “government by the people, where liberty, equality and fraternity are secured to the greatest possible degree and in which human capacities are developed to the utmost, by means including free and full debate of common problems, differences and interests”. In the same vein, Schmitter and Karl (1991) define democracy as a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives. According to Adedeji (2007), democracy is the right of the people to choose their own government through an institutionalised multiparty system and periodic secret ballots. To him, democracy is so important that it remains the only coherent political aspiration of mankind. Adedeji argues that man is born with his inherent rights. Any political system or regime worth its name must promote human rights, protect freedom and ensure justice.

What initially comes to mind when the word democracy is brought up is free and fair elections, but “democracy is more than the outward appearance of elections” alone (Abbing and Hesseling, 2000:21). Political scientists such as Samuel Huntington call elections a minimal requirement for democracy. Elections are crucial to building democracy, and many academics believe it is the foundation on which all other aspects of democracy will spring from. Those with opposing views to Huntington note that while elections may be a baseline for democracy they “cannot in itself decisively contribute to the building of a democratic culture” (ibid). Elections do however provide means to simultaneous elect and oust leadership in a fair and structured manner. It is a means of checking and balancing the government, and the chance to alter the status quo. Ultimately elections boil down to the selection of leaders and the individuals chosen to run a country hold the keys to its success.

Democratic elections are widely recognized as a foundation of legitimate government. By allowing citizens to choose the manner in which they are governed, elections form the starting point for all other democratic institutions and practices. Genuine democracy, however, requires substantially more. In addition to elections, democracy requires constitutional limits on governmental power, guarantees of basic rights, tolerance of religious or ethnic minorities, and representation of diverse viewpoints, among other things. To build authentic democracy, societies must foster a democratic culture and rule of law that govern behavior between elections and constrain those who might be tempted to undermine election processes (IDEA, 2001:4).

There are many different views on what democracy is, or ought to be. Yet, a common institutional denominator for modern democracy is elections. This is, in part, a consequence of the impracticalities of direct democracy in larger polities (Jefferson 1935: 83; Mill 1958: 212-18). Elections have become the institutional key to the modern actualization of the essence of democracy: rule of the people by the people through representative government. Elections, particularly, free and fair elections, are a key criterion of the democratic system, alongside the freedom and independence of the media and the protection of civil rights and liberties. Elections emphasize two key elements of democracy – participation and competition. While elections are not the be all and end all of a democracy, they provide a major blueprint for the existence of democracy (Bratton 1999). In fact, elections may coexist with systematic abuse of human rights and the disenfranchisement of some of the electorate; nonetheless, holding formal competitive elections is a key necessary condition for a political system to be a representative democracy (Lindberg 2006: 8). Elections also help ensure democratic peace and reduce the likelihood of a democratic reversal. Third, elections allow for competition among elites, and provide for participation of the public in the selection of leaders (O’Neil 2006).

Elections are at the very core of democracy. Even if democracy is conceived as involving much more than elections, and even if an ideal democracy includes important forms of direct participation by citizens in many aspects of public decisions, still the most basic constraint on oppressive state authority that we have is the fact that we elect the decision makers and can get rid of them if we dislike what they do. As affirmed by Gambo (2006:88) any political leadership which emerges from a free and fair electoral process enjoys consistent support of the citizenry and is scarcely questioned in terms of legitimacy. Indeed, such a political leadership, depending on how it exercises the popular mandate given to it to govern, may experience rising or declining legitimacy rating profile. Election is not merely a condition for democracy, it is a necessary process. As a result of this, a system of government cannot be regarded as democratic if it does not result from the choices of parties, politicians and policies made by citizens through free and fair electoral rules, processes and administration (Alemika, 2006: 138). The question of choice is, therefore, central to democracy. Elections provide an avenue for choosing between different political parties and candidates offering different programmes. Elections give them the power of deciding how they are ruled and who rules them (Obi, 2008:20). It should be noted that while regular multi-party elections do not necessarily guarantee the establishment of a democratic state, no state can be said to be democratic if it does not hold regular elections, according to a set of rules that are fair to the political parties and the electorate involved.

Democratic elections therefore, require more than the casting and counting of ballots. In a healthy democracy, elections hold governments accountable to the governed. This happens when: Citizens are free to select their political representatives; Citizens can choose among candidates seeking their support; Officeholders must be re-elected to retain their positions after a specified interval. They face regular electoral verdicts on their performance and risk losing power at the ballot box (Bunce, 2010:8). Periodic elections are key factors in entrenching a stable democratic polity. The outcome
of election is a means, not an end itself. The end result of the electoral process should present a delicate balance between the winners and the losers. The electoral process settles the problem of transition from one administration to another, from one governmental epoch to another.

**Modes of Transition**

The colonization of most of Africa has had important bearings on its development, and the transition from colonization to independence has been driven by its leaders (Williams, 2013). Thus, leadership is an important part of the historical narrative of Africa, and one can understand the current environment by understanding how the leaders of Africa have shaped its story. Emergence from the colonization of Western nations was an important time for Africa, but also a time that demonstrated the best and worst of leadership (Jallow, 2013).

Since most African countries gained home rule from colonial powers during the second half of the 20th century, the issue of electing thoughtful and selfless political leaders dedicated to a good governance project has been tough. A consolation on this matter, if one is to refer to it as such, is that few regions of the world are immune from the “curse” of poor leadership in the management and administration of their polities. As a consequence of this development in Africa, many countries were confronted with political instability, military coups and counter-coups, economic collapse, civil wars, and refugee problems. Moreover, some countries have failed to function as viable states due in part to unstable institutions and structures, and accordingly some of these states have been referred to as failed or collapsed states in political science parlance. A major issue critical for advancing stability in this region is the leadership quandary that is frequently associated with a second problem: electoral malpractice (Udugou, 2016:x).

In the early days of independence most of African leaders swiftly imposed their own stamp on the fragile states they had inherited, reshaping institutions they often condemned as colonial impositions. New ideas such as “African socialism” swept the region, along with the notion of a specifically African form of democracy. Leaders such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana led the way in arguing that new states needed to put national unity ahead of multi-party democracy, often imposing one-party systems of government that swiftly turned into bullying autocracies. In many cases—witness Ghana and Nigeria—unity was supposedly saved by military coups that were easily mounted because armies were the only strong institutions inherited from empire (The Economist, 2016).

The significance of the position of president as a symbol of national unity degenerated in many instances into a reward of particular persons that contributed to independence, and their close compatriots (Ogot, G 2013 cited in Namakula, 2016:9). This led to a ‘big man’ syndrome in Africa’s politics. Efforts to monopolise political space were met with corresponding attempts to access the spectrum, causing strife among several African countries, with many plunging into armed conflicts fuelled by rebellion and state-sanctioned violence. In the period prior to 1990, many African leaders were ousted from power through military coups, assassinations and other forms of violent overthrow. In West Africa alone, there were thirteen (13) coups between 1963 and 1970; eleven (11) coups between 1971 and 1980; and seven (7) coups between 1981 and 1990. Only a handful of presidential-system constitutions of African countries contained presidential term-limit clauses prior to 1990. These include The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1961; The Constitution of the Federal and Islamic Republic of Comoros, 1978; The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1984; The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1986; and The Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia, 1959 as amended in 1988 (Dulanl, 2015 cited in Namakula, 2016:9). Thus, when in the early 1980s, Mobutu SeseSeko, the dictator of Zaire, famously declared that "Democracy is not for Africa", he did not seem far off course because only four countries were holding multiparty elections then on a continent dominated by autocrats and military juntas.

Some military juntas did hand power back to civilians, but in many cases they led to dictatorship in whatever guise. An extreme example of this was Mobutu SeseSeko of Congo (or Zaire, as he renamed it), who, after taking power in a coup, became the archetype of an African dictator. Before the news was broadcast to the nation every morning on television, his face would emerge out of the clouds, framed by the sun. Mobutu declared that absolute rule was authentically African (The Economist, 2016). Some of the most enduring systems of personal rule in the world can now be found in Africa, as the cases of Cameroon, Gabon, and Togo attest. Regimes that came to power by armed force, and have permitted restricted electoral competition, can crush political opponents with little harm to their external relationships. Such systems can be seen in Angola, Ethiopia, and Rwanda (Joseph, 2016).

No shortage of skepticism greeted Africa's new democracies. Many analysts questioned whether they would last- and, if so, whether they would make any significant contribution to economic recovery and poverty reduction. One set of doubts stemmed from the absence of structural “requisites” observed in established democracies. A key premise here was that democratization has historically been part of a broader social transformation- encompassing processes like industrialization, mass education, the ascendency of a large middle class, and at least a clear sense of national identity. Many African countries remain at low levels of socioeconomic development and are highly ethnically fragmented, raising concerns about the structural bases for stable democracy (Alence, 2009). As if confirming the doubts, in most countries, democracy did not last long, generally attributable to weak state institutions, a lack of experience with and commitment to democratic procedures, especially among elites, as well as intense political rivalries, often along ethnic lines. Single-party regimes or military dictatorships soon replaced democratic governments (Brown, 2013).

Although the nature and circumstances vary from one country to another, two basic patterns in the modes of transition to democracy have been identified. Transitions from above occur when functioning rulers respond to an impending or actual crisis by initiating democratic reforms. Transitions from below occur when there are mounting popular pressures from the people resulting in national conferences, popular revolutions, coup d’état, or pact formations, all with the goal of moving toward a more democratic society (Kpuneh, 1992).
Some scholars argue that transitions from above are more promising in terms of their ability to “deliver” democracy, because they tend to be more specific about their time frame, procedural steps, and overall strategy. Transitions from below are said to be plagued with a great deal of uncertainty. Other writers contend that every historical case of regime change has involved some negotiation—explicit or implicit, overt or covert—between government and opposition groups. Transitions may also begin as one type and become another, particularly if the government is unsure of how far it wants to go in opening up the country. In many cases, however, they combine elements of the two transition processes (Kpundeh, 1992). Also, except when the change of government is as a result of a military coup, or of an opposition party winning free and fair elections, power in African democracies has tended to be an intra-elite transfer (from the father to the son in the case in the monarchies, or from the incumbent president to a hand-picked successor) (Uwizeyimana, 2012:152).

It is important to qualify that, although the nature of the transition to democracy varies from country to country, there have been common sociological, political, and economic constraints on developing democratic societies throughout Africa. Some of these constraints include inefficient bureaucracies, fragile institutions, economies in serious trouble, and an undemocratic political culture wherein people live in fear with little trust or pride in government (Kpundeh, 1992). The democratisation process which ought to engender democratic values and, by way of expectation, good governance on the continent have always been tormented by political instability fuelled largely by an electoral process in crisis. Elections are organised and are typically rigged to produce a pre-determined outcome, usually in favour of the incumbent party. In such cases the elections merely provide justification for the party’s prolonged rule.

**Narcissistic Leadership Disorder in Africa: An Overview**

In addition to other factors, the governance technique in Africa has a lot to do with the nature of the state or how leaders view the state as custodians. If African leaders see themselves as kings and emperors, it follows that the state lacks national legitimacy and autonomy since it caters to the interests of a few—the leaders, subordinates, and vocal elites. This construction of a plutocracy of sorts militates against the advancement of democracy—particularly liberal democracy. In order to consolidate their authority and fully control the state in this arrangement, political leaders connive with plutocratic oligarchs to manipulate the electoral process to facilitate their election and re-election (Udogu, 2016:4). Perhaps this is why the concept of pretend democracies is applied to some democratic African states —referring to those systems of democratic government which, although having adopted formally written constitutions in which those democratic ideals such as respect for human rights, freedom of the individual and of the media and other taken-for-granted democratic rights, do not enshrine or implement these values (Uwizeyimana, 2012:152).

According to Calderisi (2006 cited in Owoye, and Bissessar, 2012) “the simplest way to explain Africa’s problems is that it has never known good government” and that “no other continent has experienced such prolonged dictatorships.” Ayittey (2012) also agrees that lack of good government in African countries owes its existence to the long term tenure of their dictators. Examples of past dictators with long tenure include Ethiopia’s Emperor Haile Selassie (44 years), Gabon’s Omar Odimba Bongo (42 years), Libya’s Moammar Gaddafi (42 years), Togo’s Gnassingbé Eyadéma (37 years), and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak (31 years). Similarly, some of the current dictators on the continent with tenure spanning more than three decades do not show any fatigue for continued unproductive leadership. Like many of their contemporaries who were in power for a long time, these leaders or dictators spent their entire careers enriching themselves, intimidating political opponents, avoiding all but the merest trappings of democracy, actively frustrating movements toward constitutional rule. According to Ayittey (2012), they are successful because they control the major arms of government: civil service, electoral bodies, security forces including the military, the press, media and the central banks in their countries. They ruled like kings and drew no distinction between their own property and that of the state (Calderisi, 2006 cited in Owoye, and Bissessar, 2012). Thus, democracy on the continent may be threatened by increasing number of few leaders inclined to rule for life.

In their analysis of destructive and transformational leadership in Africa, Kets de Vries, et al (2016), interrogate the nature and features of destructive leadership which are relevant to this essay. Although it does not have a monopoly on destructive leadership – destructive dictators come in all different races, skin colours, religions and ideologies – Africa seems to have had more than its fair share. By the late 1980s, Africa had become a continent known for its dictators, and narcissistic leadership was then norm rather than the exception. Destructive leaders are known for their narcissism, defined as “a relatively stable individual difference consisting of self-love and inflated self-views” (Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, &Marchisio, 2011: 269 cited in Kets de Vries et al, 2016). This extreme self-importance typically manifests in destructive leaders as an autocratic style, demands for unquestioned loyalty, and a hyper-aggressive abuse of power resulting in mistreatment of followers (Campbell et al., 2011; Padilla et al., 2007; cited in Kets de Vries et al, 2016).

The essential characteristics of narcissism are a need for grandiosity, a persistent search for admiration and a lack of empathy. In short, narcissists are preoccupied with dreams of glory, power, status and prestige. Restless and bored when they are not in the limelight, they are flagrant attention-seekers. Because narcissistic leaders overvalue their own worth, they see special treatment as their inalienable right and believe that the rest of the world owes them something. Considering themselves above the rules that others play by, they disregard social conventions and often are arrogant, haughty and disdainful. Determined self-involved, these people have difficulty recognizing the desires and subjective experiences and feelings of others. Even when they do recognize a desire contrary to their own, they believe that their own needs take precedence over everyone else’s; hence their interpersonal relationships tend to be exploitative (Kets de Vries et al, 2016).

Narcissist-politicians’ immense appetite for flattery, praise, and adulation is also abundantly gratified. Quite independent of professional achievement, they expect to be treated as superior. Their fragile psyche demands being admired and looked up to—and unquestionably holding high office almost guarantees that this ego requirement will be amply met. This could...
be seen in dictatorial tendencies of some African leaders and their desire to perpetuate themselves in power through tenure elongation. While term limits were widely embraced by the larger African public, these rules have in recent years come under increasing attack from incumbent presidents seeking to extend their tenures. As noted by Dulani (2015:1), in the first six months of 2015 alone, the presidents of Burundi, Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda have either personally or through their supporters expressed the intention to dispense with or circumvent term limits in order to seek additional terms of office. Despite the widespread adoption of term limits in the early 1990s, both new and old generations of African leaders continue to seek ways to drop these rules or to identify loopholes that would enable them to remain in power. Across the continent, almost 30 African countries have contemplated the removal of presidential term limits since 1998 (Dulani, 2011).

Interestingly, in the past two years, promoting term limits has become a central element of US diplomacy on the continent. In remarks at the AU in July 2015, the then US President, Barack Obama, spoke of term limits as a core feature of democratization, declaring that “Africa’s democratic progress is at risk when leaders refuse to step aside when their terms end.” The increasing attention paid to presidential term limits points to a hard reality in African politics: elections are not sufficiently competitive, and long-serving presidents are rarely removed from office through the ballot box. Even in Africa’s more democratic countries, the electoral playing field is heavily slanted toward incumbents, and opposition parties are prone to fragmentation. Meanwhile, Africans’ expectations of their governments continue to rise. This has fueled vibrant protests over the past decade, exemplified by the Occupy Nigeria protests of January 2012 and the large-scale Oromo protests in Ethiopia in 2014 and again in the early months of the year (Lebas, 2016:170).

Some of these movements have focused on bread-and-butter issues: Occupy Nigeria called for the restoration of gasoline subsidies; the Oromo protesters oppose the Ethiopian state’s municipal expansion plans, which are likely to lead to land grabs and residential displacements. In Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and other countries, protesters have taken strong stands against government corruption or the inadequacy and rising cost of state services. Protests in support of presidential term limits arise from the interaction of two forces: the impediments to change through the ballot box and the growing push from below for government accountability. The repeated success of executives in removing these provisions and remaining in power epitomizes the very real obstacles to democratization in sub-Saharan Africa (Lebas, 2016:170). In other words, a major issue critical for advancing stability in this region is the leadership quandary that is frequently associated with a second problem: electoral malpractice (Udogo, 2016: x). The next section puts this in perspective citing recent events in some African countries.

**Emerging Trends of Electorat Democracy in Africa: Practice, Problems and Promises**

Some people support democracy based on their belief that it is the political regime most compatible with humanistic values, such as respect for a certain number of fundamental individual rights and freedoms. This means supporting democracy for its underlying values and thus for itself. However, others support democracy, and prefer it to all other options, because they think that democratic regimes are more effective than others in producing security, peace, stability, economic development or some other form of progress appreciated by humankind (Yabi, 2015). This vision, which is more utilitarian than idealistic, makes democracy more of a means than an end in itself. In the real world, idealistic arguments are rarely enough to secure popular support for a political regime that is particularly demanding of both its elite and the common citizen. In countries and societies where a significant proportion of the population lives in a permanent state of extreme physical and material vulnerability, in which human needs that are elsewhere considered elementary are not satisfied, it is not enough to defend democracy by brandishing its theoretical content of freedom (Yabi, 2015).

Competitive elections promote uncertainty among political aspirants and thus encourage their responsiveness to citizens. Elections will only produce accountability when they are regularly held and when they are free and fair. In many new democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa and post-communist Eurasia, electoral competition has not ensured accountability. Sometimes this is because electoral procedures are irregular, rather than transparent and in full conformity with constitutional guidelines. In some nations, incumbents dominate the political playing field by dispensing patronage to established and potential supporters, or they manufacture “fake” oppositions, and harass their “real” opposition (Björnlund, 2010:5). Even more decisive than the rise of democracy has been the end of the one-party state in Africa. Since the 1990s, elections have become increasingly regular and frequent, and almost all African elections have been contested. As has been the case in Nigeria—as well as in Ethiopia, Gambia, Uganda, and most brutally, Zimbabwe, among others—many of these elections have been arbitrarily limited, manipulated, or blatantly rigged (Diamond, 2008:9).

Countries that describe themselves as democratic are members of a very broad church. They range from nations that respect citizens’ political freedoms and civil liberties to those that repress dissent and hold elections that are neither free nor fair. Just as other regions of the world display varied systems of governance, there are discrepancies among African countries too (The Guardian, 2016). As stated in the International IDEA Policy Dialogue (2016:4), after most of the recent elections, new types of non-democratic government have come to the fore: competitive authoritarian regimes—in which autocrats submit to meaningful multiparty elections but engage in serious democratic abuse. These regimes have formal democratic institutions. But their leaders circumvent and ignore them so often that they cannot be described as democratic. In his research on the state of democracy in Africa, Cheeseman (2015) findings suggest that African politics is likely to take a number of directions, rather than cohering on a common experience. According to him, “if we leave out those states with no effective government, such as Somalia, a very simple breakdown might go as follows”:

In the first group, there are the states that have established open and competitive democracies: Botswana, Benin, Ghana, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa, and so on. These countries are likely to continue to make democratic gains and consolidate over time. Second, there is a group of countries in which leaders with authoritarian inclinations are still attempting to hold out against increasingly confident and popular opposition...
parties: Burundi, the DRC, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and so on. My research, suggests that these countries are likely to oscillate between opposition gains and authoritarian repression until the government of the day is willing to accept defeat...Finally, there are the states in which authoritarian governments have established strong control over their political systems and so have had little to fear from holding elections: Cameroon, Chad, Rwanda, and so on. The great authority wielded by presidents in these countries makes it tempting to think of this group as a stable authoritarian category (ibid).

Though Africa’s record on fair and free elections is mixed, at present, most of Africans have embraced elections as indispensable mechanisms for determining their future course (Teshome, 2008:1). According to Deeg (2003), between 1989 and 1994 almost 100 elections had taken place in Africa. Moreover, in the 1990s alone, 42 out of 48 African countries made democratic reforms and held elections (Eid 2002, 2). Political elections pose a major litmus test for a country’s democratic fabric. In 2011, a number of elections were conducted on the continent with mixed outcomes. Some African countries demonstrated an increasing level of democratic maturity by organizing relatively transparent and peaceful elections. For instance, elections in Zambia and Tunisia in September and October 2011, respectively, were hailed as credible. As a result, Zambia was upgraded to the ‘flawed democracy’ category while Tunisia was among four African countries which moved to the ‘hybrid democracy’ category. Others were Egypt, Mauritania, and Niger2011 (African Development Bank Group, 2012). Yet, a clear picture or understanding of leadership and governance crises in Africa attests to a growing number of civilian dictators bent on perpetuating themselves in power with absolute disregard for democratic norms.

Put differently, a club of authoritarian leaders have maintained an iron grip on power in parts of Africa, either by amending laws to extend their terms of office, hosting rubber-stamp elections or repressing opposition and civil society (The Guardian, 2016) despite advances in African democracy since the end of the Cold War. Thus, “the degree of democracy among African states continues to vary considerably, with authoritarian regimes at one extreme, functional multiparty systems at the other, and many forms of imperfect democracy in the middle” (Omorogbe, 2011 cited in Glen, 2012:150). This range encompasses failed or disintegrating states, such as Somalia and Congo, countries in a state of flux or transition, like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, following the revolutions in those countries, dictatorial regimes, including those in Zimbabwe, Sudan, Chad and Rwanda, and consolidated, functioning democracies, including South Africa, Cape Verde, Botswana, Ghana and Mali (Glen, 2012:150).

The Economist Intelligence Unit’s democracy index (Cited in The Guardian, 2016) identifies four categories of regime: full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid and authoritarian. Its 2015 index shows uneven progress in sub-Saharan Africa, but notes a dramatic drop in successful “coups from within” since 2000, and says holding regular elections is now largely commonplace. Even so, the index only awarded full democracy status to Mauritius, a quiet achiever with strong rule of law. Some countries defy the narrative of a democratic deficit in Africa, however. In its 2016 Freedom in the World report, Freedom House named Nigeria, Liberia and Ivory Coast among the countries with the biggest improvements in political rights and civil liberties. In Nigeria, 2015 was the first year an opposition party gained power through elections. Botswana, Ghana, Cape Verde and Benin have also been lauded as democratic examples.

Although elections do not automatically lead to representative governments, competitive, multi-party elections constitute a sine qua non for democracy, and regular ballots indicate progress towards ensuring citizens are able to choose their leaders (The Guardian, 2016). No region has more countries that straddle the divide between democracy and pseudo-democracy than Africa. Independent and effective electoral administration has become institutionalized in some African countries, such as South Africa and Ghana, and a few other democracies, such as Mali, are fairly liberal, but in most of Africa, civil liberties are constrained, opposition rights are tenuous, and elections are riddled with malpractices, to the point where it is fair to question whether some of these regimes are democratic in any sense (Diamond, 2008:7). In Nigeria and other emerging democracies, politicians may not have the skill to choose their voters by redistricting of constituencies, but they learn other methods such as stuffing ballot boxes or manipulating election outcomes to the extent that elections are not truly the verdict of voters. This is the contemporary challenge of democracy (Ekwo, 2016). Indeed, recent elections conducted on the continent, as captured below, attest to this submission.

Recent Election Outcomes: Still with Mixed Feelings

Events in some African countries may have justified the reasons why many analysts posit that authoritarian regimes might benefit from holding elections, specifically how they might stabilize authoritarian rule. For instance, Schedler (2006) points out that the ability to hold elections and reap the legitimacy benefits they convey without much risk of relinquishing office is a net gain for authoritarian leaders.

In recent years, African politics have been marked by increasing numbers of leaders seeking to evade presidential term limits in order to extend their stays in office. These moves not only compromise national constitutions, but they also often trigger instability and conflict (Nantulya, 2016).

In countries where there are no term limits, the challenge lay in the credibility of electoral processes. This is especially true in states where incumbent and influential leaders wield the power to determine the outcome of electoral results (ISS, 2016). Some long-serving regimes have opted for ‘rigged’ elections to legitimise their power. Others have systematically weakened opposition parties and dissenting voices through political repression, limiting the financial capacity of opposition parties and using state resources to dispense patronage. A number of African countries have no term limits for presidents. These include Gabon, Togo, Uganda, Cameroon, Chad, the Gambia and Sudan. In others, presidents have only very recently agreed to such limits, often window-dressing while they plot to prolong their stay at the helm. In Zimbabwe, Mugabe agreed in 2013 that presidents should have two five-year terms, which would technically allow him to stay in
power until 2023. A chronicle of some of the events in these countries particularly in the last few years of their latest elections, will surface here:

In the Republic of Congo, for instance, President Denis SassouNguesso, who has ruled for 32 years, ensured his re-election in March 2016 through constitutional changes. According to the New York Times (March 30, 2016), Sassou-Nguesso has been accused of running a rampanty corrupt and nepotistic government that has used the country's oil wealth to enrich a small elite while delivering scant benefits to a poor population. When the 72-year-old leader ordered a referendum last October to remove age and term limits on the Republic of Congo's presidency, thousands took to the streets of the capital, Brazzaville, in protest. The government responded with tear gas and lethal force. Several people were killed, and opposition leaders were arrested.

Also, in Chad, President IdrissDébyItno secured his fifth term in office having led a constitutional reform that removed term limits in 2005 (ISS, 2016). The three presidential elections held since 1990 have all been tagged frauds, and Chadians have risen up against Déby in one form or another since. The president of Chad has equally received criticism over his corruptly run administration, fraught with human rights abuses and oppression (Okoroafor, 2016). President Idriss Déby has been in power since his 1990 coup. With consummate chutzpah, Déby promised to reintstate two-term limits if re-elected (Gruzd and Mpungose, 2016).

In Equatorial Guinea, President Teodoro Obiang Ngueuma, was re-elected with 99.2% of the vote in April 2016. Term limits were scrapped in 2011, which means that Obiang—who is now 74 years old—is technically serving his first term in office. This term will last for seven years with grounds for possible re-election for a second term. According to Reuters (April 28, 2016), Obiang, Africa's longest-serving leader, has ruled the former Spanish colony since 1979 when he staged a bloody military coup and ousted his uncle, who was later executed. Obiang's closest challenger in the polls was Avéline Mocache Benga, who won just 1.5 percent of the vote.

In Zanzibar, the opposition boycotted the election in March 2016 over allegations of electoral fraud. The election was a re-run of the presidential polls in October 2015, which had been annulled due to allegations of fraud. However, the main opposition party, the Civic United Front, claimed that the cancellation of the October vote was aimed at preventing its leader—Seif Sharif Hamad—from claiming victory. The opposition boycotted the second round of the election, leading to a comfortable win for incumbent President Ali Mohamed Shein of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party. He won the election with 91% of the vote. The CCM has ruled Tanzania for over five decades. As observed by The Irish Times (2016) serious violence marred three out of the last four elections in Zanzibar. In 2000, the police and military shot hundreds protesting against another apparently rigged election, killing at least 35 and initiating a campaign of violence which sent thousands into exile. Similar trouble followed the contested 2005 poll, which led to the CUF boycotting parliament. A compromise power-sharing government was brokered in 2010, leaving CCM in power, and CUF leader Seif as vice-president.

Djibouti changed its constitution in 2010 to jettison term limits. President Omar Guelleh won his fourth term handsomely (breaking a promise not to run), with 87% of the vote in April 2016, despite a boycott by major opposition parties. According to BBC News (2016), his main rival, representing the opposition Union for National Salvation (USN) coalition, was Omar Elmi Kaireh, a Djibouti independence hero. He came second, with 7%, according to provisional results announced by Interior Minister Hassan Omar. Opposition leaders are particularly concerned about the legitimacy of the election oversight agency, which they say is rife with fraud. In 2013, following the parliamentary elections that saw Guelleh's party win with 49 percent of the vote, his rivals demanded that an independent election commission be established. The commission has not been created (VOA News, April 9, 2016).

In Niger, the army ousted President MamadouTandjia in 2011 after mass protests when he failed to change the constitution to allow himself a third term bid. Interim military leaders kept their promise to hold early elections, won by Mahamadou Issoufou. In February 2016, presidential and legislative elections saw Issoufou romp home with 92% of the vote. A 20-party coalition called a boycott and threats of terror attacks saw a low turnout. Opposition leader Hama Amadou was arrested for alleged child trafficking shortly after announcing his candidacy. Voters lacked proper identity documents and voting stations ran out of materials, extending the poll for a day (Gruzd and Mpungose, 2016).

Term limits were dropped from Uganda's constitution in 2005. As expected, February 2016 elections saw President Yoweri Museveni comfortably notch up his seventh five-year term since 1986. His perennial rival, Dr Kizza Besigye, was repeatedly arrested before and after the vote (as in previous campaigns). According to a BBC report (February 20, 2016), the 71-year-old won 60.75% of the vote while his nearest rival Kizza Besigye took 35%, critics say he has become increasingly authoritarian.

For 22 years, Jammeh ruled with increasing ruthlessness in Gambia, one of the smallest nations in the world. The European Union and the regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), did not even monitor the Gambian elections, with the latter concluding that there was little point in doing so (Vines, 2016). Yahya Jammeh said he would not step down and condemned efforts by west African regional leaders to get him to hand over power after he lost an election to challenger Adama Barrow. The comments on state television were a hardening of the veteran president's position after days in which hopes mounted he could be persuaded to hand over power at the end of his mandate on 18 January (The Guardian, 2016). The African Union called Jammeh's rejection of the results “null and void” since he had already conceded defeat (Aljazeera News, 2016). Jammeh employed all manner of tactics to keep himself in power to no avail. These included a petition to the country's Supreme Court seeking to upturn the result of the election, which could not be heard because he had sacked several of the justices; declaration of a state of emergency
across the country and an extension of his tenure for three months through the parliament. But as he was plotting all these, his key aides and political associates were deserting him.

Internationally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) were on the side of Barrow, who was sworn into office in neighbouring Senegal on January 19. ECOWAS had intervened in many ways to ensure Jammeh respected the Gambian constitution and left office gracefully but he did not give a hoot. He suddenly became a political orphan in a country he had toiled to build, and even globally. In total defiance to the omen of doom, which was all around him, he still went ahead to get himself sworn into office for another term of five years also on January 19. But as ECOWAS was about to make good its threat of forcing him out, with the backing of both the AU and UN Security Council, Jammeh discovered he lacks the gut to square up to the international community and went into hiding despite his initial braggadocio (Agbedo, 2017).

Zimbabwe’s ruling party has endorsed 92-year-old President Robert Mugabe as its candidate in the national election scheduled for 2018. The ruling ZANU-PF party announced its support in the south-east town of Masvingo, where the party’s youth wing even proposed that Mr Mugabe should rule for life with broad powers (ABC News, 2016). Mr Mugabe was elected when the country moved away from white minority rule Opposition groups have suggested he and loyalists are “out of touch” Deteriorating economy, high unemployment, increasing pressure on Mr Mugabe. As the oldest serving president in the world, Mugabe has become something of a caricature of a leader who clings to power at all costs, ignoring the principles of democratic change of power.

It has not all been gloomy. Despite the serious threat to democracy posed by the extension of presidential term limits, as well as the manipulation of election results, several countries on the continent have recently managed to hold credible presidential elections that saw a democratic change of leadership.

Since the early 1990s, African countries have made substantial democratic progress, with many notable success stories in the last decade alone. In 2012, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade conceded defeat in run-off vote after a heated controversy over the constitutional validity of his candidacy for a third term. Liberia’s first post-conflict election (2005) and Sierra Leone’s first election in the absence of peacekeeping troops (2007) were conducted in peaceful atmospheres and widely hailed as credible. In Ghana’s 2008 presidential election, which was notably competitive, the ruling party’s candidate – after winning the first round and losing in a subsequent run-off vote – handed power over to the opposition, reaffirming the country’s place as one of the most successful democracies in Africa (Sweeney, 2014).

In 2016, in Benin, incumbent President Thomas Boni’Yai stepped down after his second term, in line with the constitution. Patrice Talon was elected president on 6 March. In São Tomé and Príncipe, Evaristo Carvalho defeated president Manuel Pinto da Costa, who had served as president from 1975–1991 and 2011–2016. Jorge Carlos Fonseca was re-elected for a second term as the president of Cape Verde with 74% of the votes in an election considered free, transparent and fair.

ECOWAS tried in 2015 to introduce a binding norm that its leaders would only serve two terms, but unsurprisingly, Gambia and Togo were in opposition. Togo’s President Faure Gnassingbé was re-elected for a third term in April 2015, but attempts by other incumbents to stay in power have failed. The most dramatic example of this popular rejection of an overreaching head of state was in Burkina Faso, where BlaiseCompaore—who took power in 1987—attempted to scrap presidential term limits in 2014 and was driven out of power by mass protests. Coalitions of activists and political interest groups have in recent years successfully rejected efforts by presidents to extend their terms in Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal and Zambia (Vines, 2016).

Also, some important elections took place in Africa in 2015. Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Burkina Faso (despite some stop and starts) all saw democratic transitions of power. In Nigeria, on 28 March 2015, the Africa’s most populous nation and biggest economy, surprised the world by organising largely “peaceful” presidential and national assembly elections. The event marked one of the few cases in the electoral history of the entire African continent where an incumbent was unseated by a challenger. By accepting defeat, President Jonathan ensured the country avoided the post-election violence that many – both within Nigeria and outside of the country – feared.

Can Democracy Work in Africa?

Even though, over the past two decades, virtually every country in Africa has held repeated multiparty elections, democratization is progressing at an uneven pace across the continent. In some countries there seems to be a deepening commitment to democratic norms and practices, but in others, this commitment, both by political elites and the public, has proven shallow (Burchard, 2014:1). Some observers have suggested that in the African context, the emphasis on elections is an example of Western cultural imperialism, of the West's imposing its value system and political practices where they may not be appropriate. Critics will argue that for elections to work there must be a sense of national identity, the rule of law, a certain level of education, and sufficient economic development to allow voters to make a free choice and not feel beholden to their boss, patron, or ethnic leader (Campbell, 2011). Current reflections seeking to improve electoral processes in Africa highlight that an election is best conceptualized as an element of a broader political process, rather than a one-off event(African Union Panel of the Wise, 2010).

The emphasis– central to this study– is that free and fair elections conducted on a regular basis are only one component of a healthy democratic society. Put differently, the conduct of free and transparent elections is a necessary step towards democratization but it is not by itself sufficient to consolidate democratic governance. Other factors also play an important role in strengthening democracy and these must be fully embraced. Indeed, the empirical evidence is mixed on the relationship between elections and democracy. The irregularity of empirical findings may be explained in part by the fact that some elections have produced authoritarian regimes, mainly due to constitutional manipulations designed to
perpetuate their hold on power. Thus, relying on elections to decipher democratic governance under such conditions may be a flawed approach. Genuine democratic regimes also pass the test on such aspects as the effective functioning of government, political participation, respect for human rights and cultural diversity. Nonetheless, successful political elections can be an opportunity to rewrite a country's new chapter (African Development Bank Group, 2012).

In a true democracy, the rule of law, democratic political institutions, and independent civil society organizations help ensure respect for electoral outcomes. These institutions and values in turn bolster people’s faith in their governments and their willingness to support peaceful political transitions (Björnlund, 2010). The challenges to democratization on the continent have been well-parsed. These include a lack of competent institutions, poverty and illiteracy, corruption, and a political culture of exclusivity. Each challenge poses discrete problems to the goal of democratization (Glen, 2012:172). A brief analysis of the elements needed to consolidate democracy on the continent will be made here.

**Rule of Law**

The rule of law and the proper functioning of democracies depend on independent and efficient legal systems which ensure access to justice for all. As the guarantor of justice and arbiter of disputes, the judiciary enjoys a particular importance in the eyes of the people. It acts as its protector against the possible excesses of the state. Without the effective, independent, timely and competent protection and enforcement of rights and freedoms guaranteed by the judiciary, democratic security is not conceivable (Council of Europe, 2016:14). The rule of law comprises legitimacy, fairness, effectiveness, and checks and balances. Legitimacy requires that laws reflect a general social consensus that they be enacted in an open and democratic process. Fairness includes equal application of the law, procedural fairness, protection of civil liberties, and reasonable access to justice. Effectiveness refers to the consistent application and enforcement of laws (Björnlund, 2010). The top priority of the majority of African countries is to work towards a minimum of reconciliation between the democratic aspirations and respect for the rule of law proclaimed in their constitutions and the reality of political and institutional practices imposed – with a greater or lesser degree of sensitivity and refinement – by the elite on the bulk of the population (Yabi, 2015). There has to be real and effective access to the courts, human rights commissions and other watchdog organizations. However the efficacy of the courts depends on public confidence in the integrity of the courts (Ndulo, 2008:91).

**Orderly Transition and Effective Electoral/Party Institutions**

The orderly transition of office and power from one political party to another cannot be taken for granted. It requires a framework of law and widespread confidence based on practical experience that elections are fair. In new or evolving democracies, especially those beset by deep cultural divisions, the lack of experience or trust in the electoral process is inevitably a challenge (Corcoran, 2010:14). For a nation attempting to build and consolidate democratic institutions, the challenge facing rival leaders is to accept defeat as a bridge beyond personal ambition and party interest. The ritual of concession and victory does more than heal. The formal exchange of tributes may seem like nostalgic gestures from a more genteel, less cynical era, but the participants re- enact a classical political dramaturgy. In the aftermath of a hard-fought battle, the speeches are a ritual display of very abstract concepts: ‘democracy at work’ and ‘voice of the people.’ Fierce opponents are restored as a citizen body, reunified and renewed in commitment to values that transcend rivalry (Corcoran, 2010:14).

Institution and capacity building is a primary concern. African states must “develop and strengthen competent institutions of democracy, such as the media, judiciary, civil service, electoral systems, independent commissions, and educational institutions. These and similar institutions implement policies that are necessary to democracy and development” (Udombana cited in Glen, 2012:173). Democracy – characterised by political equality, individual freedoms, gender parity, an independent civil society, a free press and scope for deliberation – must be supported and sustained by a sophisticated network of institutions, rules and norms.

Electoral institutions are not a sufficient condition for the consolidation of democratic rule, but they are necessary. Without electoral rules to govern the election of executive and legislative powers, representative democracy is not viable. The rules go a long way toward shaping the type of democracy that develops. They determine whether relevant perspectives are included in decision making, the nature of the government that emerges, and the ways in which the public can hold this government accountable. The spread and consolidation of sustainable democratic practices depend on the diffusion of knowledge about the institutions that promote inclusion and deliver legitimate outcomes (Htun and Powell, 2013:1). Strong and effective electoral institutions enhance electoral process credibility and reinforce the public expectation that electoral results will be respected. They assure defeated candidates that the victors’ terms of office are limited and there will be opportunities to compete again.

Political institutions that restrain, or check, governmental power also contribute to stability. This is especially important in new and developing democracies, where election outcomes can produce uncertain political environments or moments of crisis (Björnlund, 2010).

Similarly, as traditional institutions of representative democracy, political parties play a critical role in the overall functioning of democratic governance system. Parties still remain the primary institutional vehicles for political representation, interest aggregation and articulation, and as a constituent mechanism for the formation and organization of government, as well channels for maintaining oversight and demanding accountability from governments (Shale, 2010). The consolidation of democracy in Africa must of essence recognize the critical role political parties play and no amount of democracy assistance can translate into meaningful results if political parties are not part of it.
Effective Anti-Corruption Strategy

Coupled with institution building is the need to eradicate public cultures of corruption (Glen, 2012:173). There is agreement that accountable governance is central to all issues relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of governments. Good governance promotes public service delivery and the eradication of poverty, thus fostering the capacity of citizens to participate in public affairs (Ndulo and Gazibo, 2016). Unlike a modern political system where political and public interactions are regulated by formal and civic norms, a neo-patrimonial system is sustained by the network of informal relations between and among the rulers, the ruled, elites and non-elites. The prevalence of informal networks has shaped the nature of mobilization and distribution of wealth in Africa. Hyden (2013) draws a concept of “economy of affection” to describe the particularity of societies in Africa. He explains that the civic rules and values have less impact on the social and political realities in Africa than the informal and affective ties between individuals. In such a system, ordinary citizens are motivated to establish personal ties to those who hold important positions in the public, and exploit these networks as a means of gaining support (Hyden, 2013:55).

Corruption undermines the independence of public institutions and makes governmental decisions depend not on the equal application of known standards, but on backroom deals made to benefit an already entrenched elite. Governmental decisions must be open, transparent, and made pursuant to scrupulously applied and generally known standards. Democracy requires this form of decision-making, and corruption can only undermine nascent democracies and contribute to a crisis of faith in whether the substance of a decision is based on relevant criteria or an impermissible quid pro quo (Glen, 2012:173).

Strong Civil Society Organisations/ Citizen Participation

Recent years have shown that elections alone do not assure democratic rule. Nations that hold fair elections where the winners are accountable to clear standards of good governance share a key advantage: strong civil society institutions. A study of real and would-be democracies reveals that civil society and democracy are mutually reinforcing (Gilley, 2010:16). After free and fair elections, civil society turns to the less dramatic, less teleogenic, but arguably far more important everyday good governance. Civil society engages in a daily struggle to head off repressive laws, expose corruption, and ensure the fair representation of all groups, interests, and ideas. It strives to compel government accountability, and to assure that officeholders continue to play by the rules of the game (ibid). By articulating a society’s issues and concerns, advocacy groups contribute to transparency and accountability. By pressuring the government to follow through on its campaign commitments, they enhance government responsiveness. Civil society organizations can shape government behavior and can help define people’s expectations of how their government will operate (Bjornlund, 2010). Thus, African governments should empower civil society to help marginalized groups use the institutions provided by the government to exercise their voices and assert their rights. This may first be achieved by providing space within the political arena for civil society to act as advocates.

In an increasingly interconnected world, marked by an international movement towards widely shared information and greater group and individual engagement and solidarity, citizen participation offers renewed opportunities to strengthen democracy, accountability and the rule of law (Mindzie, 2015). Indeed, the core assumption of elections as instruments of democracy is that citizen influence on government formation generates citizen influence on government policies, as the power of citizens to replace their representatives at elections, i.e. “throwing the rascals out”, creates incentives for representatives to be responsive to citizens’ needs (Powell 2000; Przeworski, Stokes and Manin 1999). It is only when democracy is sound and solidly established in the minds of the elite and a critical mass of citizens that it can give the full measure of its benefits, its ability to resolve conflicts peacefully and to impose rules on the different groups with their contradictory interests which safeguard the essential: a certain idea of the public good (Yabi, 2015).

Government/Electoral Accountability

Accountability implies that voters have the ability to remove the government from office if it fails to perform, and this, purportedly, motivates governments to perform as expected by voters. To establish and maintain accountability, voters must be able to assign responsibility for the outcome in question to the government and, within the government, to an identifiable actor or party (Powell, 2000). In addition, voters must be assured that sanctioning of the government actually delivers the desired result: electorally unpopular leaders or parties must fail to retain office- or, at the very least, see their influence in government significantly wane.

Democracy requires that those who have authority use it for the public good, in a democratic system of government that begins by recognizing all members of society are equal. For democracy to be effective – to have a significant, long-lasting and beneficial relationship with human development and economic growth – elections must be clean and competitive. When elections are hindered by nefarious or corrupt tactics, democracy contributes little – if anything – to development or growth. As noted by Kadima (2008), democratization and regime change have not generally led to improved political performance or human development. Critics therefore argue that maintaining a commitment to elections may become a challenge. However, successful elections are crucial for political legitimacy and a prerequisite for political stability and socio-economic development.

‘Capacity Development’
Capacity development requires a systemic approach. Although traditional capacity development strategies put the emphasis on strengthening the performance capability of individuals and organisations, experience indicates that, depending on the situation, these kinds of measures must include moves to upgrade institutions and policies (because of their dual function). Capacity development focuses on the question of how a project changes people, organisations and societies, and what incentives it creates for the participants to maintain these impacts in the long term. Indicators must be used at all levels to quantify improved performance or the achievement of results (performance and results indicators) or to assess the inputs in terms of their effectiveness in supporting particular performance improvements or the achievement of results (Gómez, 2003). In the final analysis, the impacts of capacity development activities must be measured at the level of the ultimate beneficiaries (target group level), because they are the ones who are intended to benefit from the improved performance, resources and framework conditions.

With governance and capacity variations among African countries today, there is a need to, first and foremost, shape perceptions of state effectiveness and societal engagement within the necessary framework of Capacity Development. Essentially, ‘capacity development’ denotes country-owned and country-led development and change processes. This is what we should be promoting. Importantly, capacity dividends have the potential to reinforce good governance, with emphasis on achieving objectives and results. Therefore, Capacity Development is instrumental to achieving governance objectives as well as sector objectives (Mayaki, 2013:22). Democracy will have no meaning if the promises of democracy do not translate into tangible benefits to the citizens. To this end the nexus between democracy and development must be explored.

Concluding Remarks

Africa has long been a continent of contradictions, blessed by great beauty and natural resources on one side but cursed by widespread poverty and corruption that have long cast a dark shadow over its people. This sad state of affairs is arguably a by-product of Africa’s lack of widespread liberal democratic systems of governance, with only 11 of its 54 nations ranked as “free” according to various criteria (Trevitt, 2016). The wave of democratization in the region is partial and potentially reversible, and skeptics have identified important vulnerabilities. Yet Africa's democracies have lasted longer and performed better than initially expected. Meanwhile, emerging evidence seems to confirm that, in African countries where democracy has been established, states have tended to perform better as agents of economic development. These effects seem to hinge on the benefits of imposing institutional checks on leaders’ discretionary authority, backed by the ability to remove governments that fail to improve the well-being of their people. By contrast, the region’s most catastrophic developmental failures—including Zimbabwe’s current plunge—have only spun out of control when constitutional checks and balances have been absent or dismantled (Alence, 2009).

The past three decades have witnessed considerable flux in systems of governance at the political level. There is clearly a realization that institutions are central to the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery, poverty reduction, optimum resource exploitation and utilization, public management, transparency and accountability, peace and security, and respect for the rule of law. Thus, consolidating democracy in terms of the building of democratic institutions and the capacity of the state to manage the political and economic processes of society for development remains a major challenge for many African countries (Ndulo and Gazibo, 2016). Elections are complex processes. Beyond their potential to help countries shift from autocratic regimes to more democratic ones, emphasis should be placed on "transformations not transitions."

The holding of elections alone does not speak to the quality of democracy in a country and, as has been demonstrated time and again, it can spark large-scale violence. Rather, elections should be part of a broader political framework that promotes good governance, the rule of law, and equal participation in politics (IPI, 2011). A research carried out by Lindberg (2006) shows that elections are not a mere indicator of democracy, but that—at least in sub-Saharan Africa—they have a significant positive effect on democracy as measured by improvements in civil liberties. While the research does not suggest that elections are the only or even the principal causal factor behind democratization, it shows that the repeated holding of elections in new electoral regimes promotes and breeds democratic qualities (Lindberg, 2006).

The new drive toward spreading democracy in the African continent has led the Western sponsors of this political ideology to link the much-needed development aid packages to the introduction of liberal democratic principles and values (Ezeanyika, 2011). In fact, there seem to be tangible stakes for the world in the spread of democracy—namely, greater peace, prosperity, and pluralism, even though controversial means for promoting democracy and frequent mismatches between deeds and words have clouded appreciation of this truth. For Africa, Brown (2013) contends that perhaps, more time is needed for African countries to continue in a slow process of democratization. Indeed, democracy-promotion activities might have made positive contributions, especially by strengthening the structural underpinnings of democracy (Brown, 2013). Most democracy assistance is focused on technical goals. It seeks to strengthen institutions that are essential for democracies to function. As canvassed by Campbell (2011), Western democracies should continue to support African civic organizations that are working for credible elections, the rule of law, independent judiciaries, and democracy. These organizations often operate on a shoestring, limiting their capacity, but in some countries (Nigeria, for example) they have strong grassroots support. Western donors should provide political and material assistance to African judiciaries as well.

Also, when governments are involved in election rigging, the international community should disapprove publicly and withhold official expressions of congratulations to the victor. In the same vein, outside democratic governments should be leery of supporting “governments of national unity,” which enable “big men” who have lost credible elections to stay in power largely because they are willing to resort to violence. Governments of national unity in Zimbabwe and Kenya have
done little to promote democracy or to resolve fundamental political issues (Campbell, 2011). The crucial elements in the
good governance being called for in Africa are accountability, transparency, predictability, human rights etc. African can
develop the common values necessary for the governance of Africans societies which in essence must be rooted in the
spirit of cooperation, tolerant and adherence to constitutional rules and procedures (Obasanjo, 1993:100).

African leaders have launched several democratic initiatives targeted at institutionalizing the tolerance of militaristic
tendencies such as military coups d'états and rebellions, as has been demonstrated by the coming together of Nigeria and
other Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members in dealing with coups in Sierra Leone, Sao
Tome, and Principe (Ezeanyika, 2011). These efforts to promote inclusive and democratic governance are supported by a
growing body of other regional and continental norms and institutions (Mindzie, 2015). For instance, Elections Declaration
was adopted by member states of the OAU in 2002. The goal of the Elections Declaration was to establish standards for
monitoring free and fair elections in African countries, thereby facilitating the establishment of democracy and democratic
institutions across Africa. In this light, the AU has to take bold action to challenge governments to implement progressive
and structural changes in the conduct of elections with a view to enhancing the credibility of democracy in Africa. It has to
champion regular, competitive and transparent elections to enhance the accountability of governments to their people, the
electorates. This includes advocating for the independence of electoral commissions and judicial institutions and the
creation of a level playing field where all parties have equal and free access to media, and the right to campaign and
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