Governance
Governance - inclusion

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The third dimension of governance is inclusion and for analysis and the development of a reasonable forecast, two indices can be used in this regard: levels of democracy and gender. Since a separate theme on this website is devoted to gender, here we focus on democracy.

To review the state of democracy in Africa, various sources track trends and provide extensive datasets, particularly the Global State of Democracy analysis hosted by International IDEA, the V-Dem project and Polity.[1]

V-Dem's Democracy Report 2021 (including data up to 2020) noted the steep global decline in democracy in the Asia-Pacific region, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America since 2010, concluding that 'the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2020 is down to levels last found around 1990's and that the quality of democracy had suffered a similar retreat. Liberal democracies, it noted, could now only be found in 32 countries, representing just 14% of the global population. The trend in Africa has recently been following that global downturn.

Focusing on the electoral component of democracy, International IDEA has adopted a threefold regime typology, namely democracies (of varying performance), hybrid regimes and non-democracies. Democracy is based on five attributes: representative government, fundamental rights, checks on government, impartial administration, and participatory engagement. Each has a number of sub-attributes, and for a country to classify as a democracy, it needs to hold minimally competitive multiparty elections. Depending on how they score on the five core democratic attributes, countries are then categorised as high performing democracies, mid-range performing democracies or weak/low-performing democracies.[2]

The situation in Africa in 2021 with these criteria applied, is summarised in Chart 12.

Chart 12: Regime types by country in Africa, 2021

Source: International IDEA dataset version 6, 2022
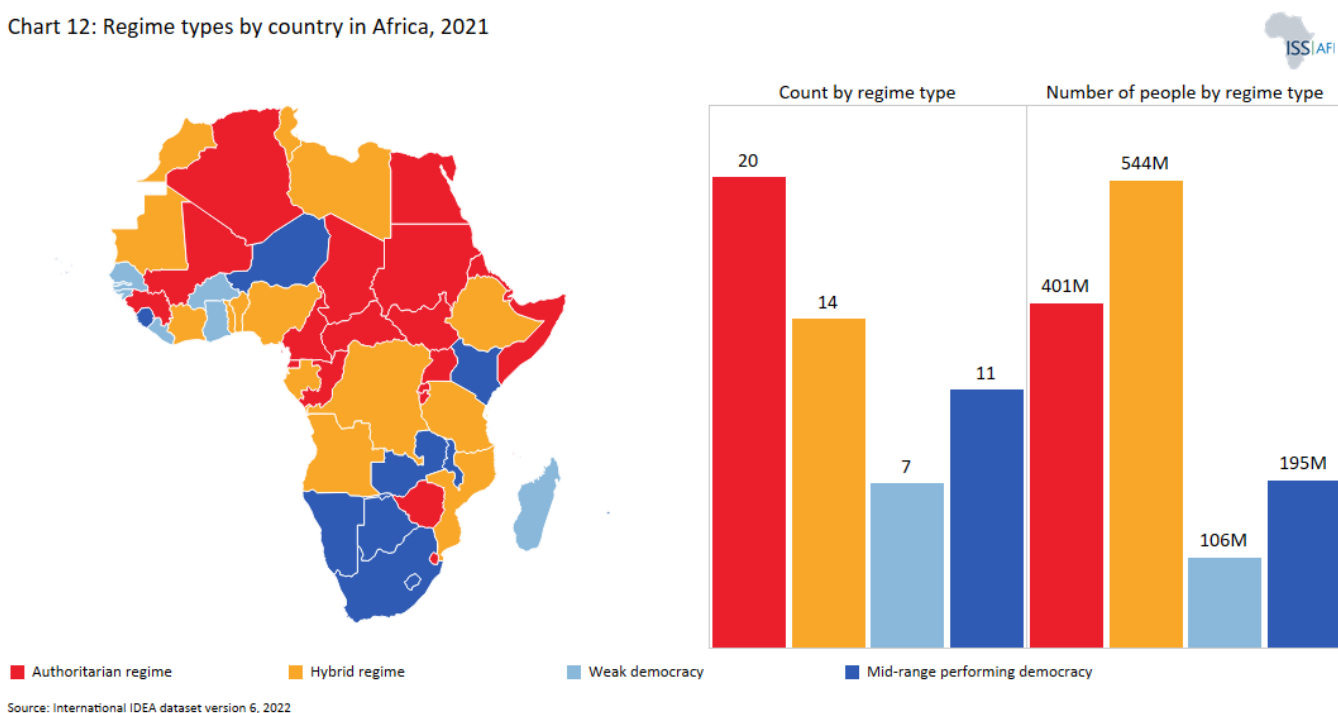
The IFs forecasting platform uses the Polity index from the Center for Systemic Peace with a similar threefold regime classification.[3] The index ranks countries from 10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated multiparty democracy). Countries that score from 5 to +5 are considered anocratic (or mixed/hybrid) regimes that display elements of democracy (e.g. regular elections) that coexist with autocratic behaviour and institutions (e.g. limited legislative oversight).

Analysis of the Polity data within IFs provides two interesting insights. The first is that it allows a comparison of the level of autocracy/democracy in a country with the average for countries with similar levels of education and GDP per capita. It reveals countries that have particularly high levels of democracy compared to other countries at similar levels of development (a democratic 'surplus') or low levels (a democratic 'deficit'), as shown in Chart 13. A difference of five points from zero in either direction is taken as indicative of a surplus or deficit. The chart is for 2018, the last year of available data in Polity V.

Chart 13: Democratic surplus or deficit in Africa, 2018

Source: IFs 7.84 using Polity V data
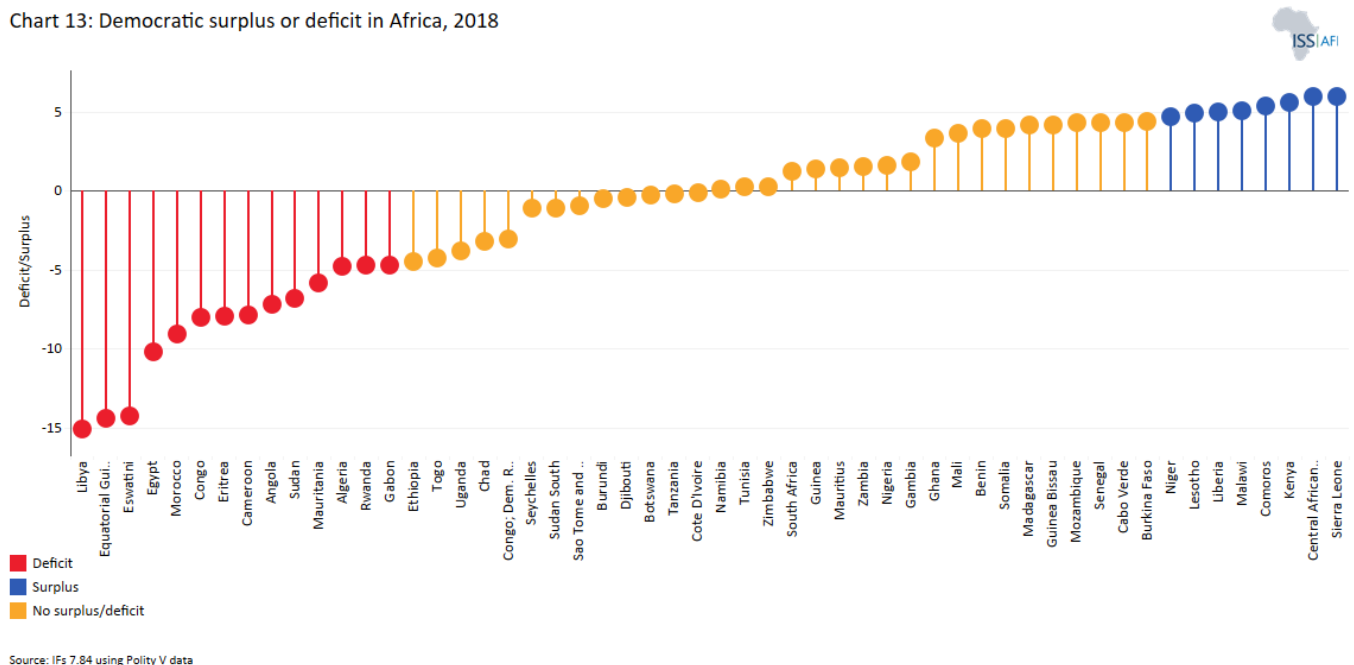
According to this interpretation, Niger, Sierra Leone, CAR, Kenya and Comoros have constitutions and democratic practices that are considered more democratic when compared with other countries at the same levels of development. In contrast, in Libya, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Egypt, Morocco, the Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Cameroon, Sudan, The Gambia, Angola and Mauritania, the levels of democracy are substantially lower than in other countries at similar levels of income and education.

The nature and the point at which inclusion becomes excessive (and what that means) remains unclear, however. It likely depends on the context and may wax and wane over time.[4]

Historically, the reason for early or premature democratisation in a number of African states is likely the dominance, until recently, of the liberal democratic West which provided significant amounts of conditional development assistance to Africa. Furthermore, in an interconnected world, citizens can compare their domestic conditions to those in other countries. This has steadily led to the conviction among the majority of Africans that democracy is the most desirable regime type given their lived experience of decades of brutal post-independence authoritarianism. Although electoral democracy has hardly delivered better developmental results in Africa, the process of being consulted and having the power to affect changes in leadership has reshaped the dynamics of power and the perception of accountability.[5]

Based on survey data, Afrobarometer[6] reports that 'on average across the continent, Africans support democracy as a preferred type of political regime. Large majorities also reject alternative authoritarian regimes such as presidential dictatorship, military rule, and one-party government.'[7] This trend is confirmed in subsequent surveys even as Africans' positive view of authoritarian China has overtaken that of the democratic US.[8] The most notable examples of 'excessive inclusion' are governments of national unity or where there are power-sharing arrangements. This is a common approach to paper over divisions in a society, typically producing a measure of political stability but engenders paralysis in

governance and economic performance.[9] Lack of development, in turn, leads to social instability and in these circumstances, a government of national unity sometimes unwittingly plants the seeds for the next crisis since it is often unable to sustain or promote economic growth.

A second insight relates to countries with a Polity score of 5 to +5, so-called anocracies, versus autocracies and full democracies (roughly similar to the hybrid regime type used by International IDEA). The 2018 Polity data presented in Chart 14 indicates which African countries could be considered autocratically stable (such as Eswatini and Eritrea), countries with mixed regime types (ranging from Cameroon to Zimbabwe) and countries that could be considered largely democratic and stable (ranging from Burkina Faso to Mauritius). Subsequent to the last data update from Polity, things have deteriorated in Burkina Faso, following a severe drought and the growing threat of an Islamic insurgency that, in 2022, saw a military coup.

The group of anocracies in the middle band across the chart in 2018 (Cameroon to Somalia) are those with mixed/hybrid regimes. According to Persson and Rothstein, 'hybrid regimes are comparatively more clientelistic and corrupt than both full-fledged democracies or outright dictatorships … and tend not only to perform worse than consolidated democracies but also than authoritarian regimes on a large variety of public goods indicators, including population health, education, access to clean water and sanitation, as well as to basic infrastructure such as roads and electricity.'[10]

Chart 14: Polity V score on democracy in Africa for 2018
Click on map to highlight country

Anocracies   Autocracies   Democracies

Source: IFs 7.84 using Polity V data
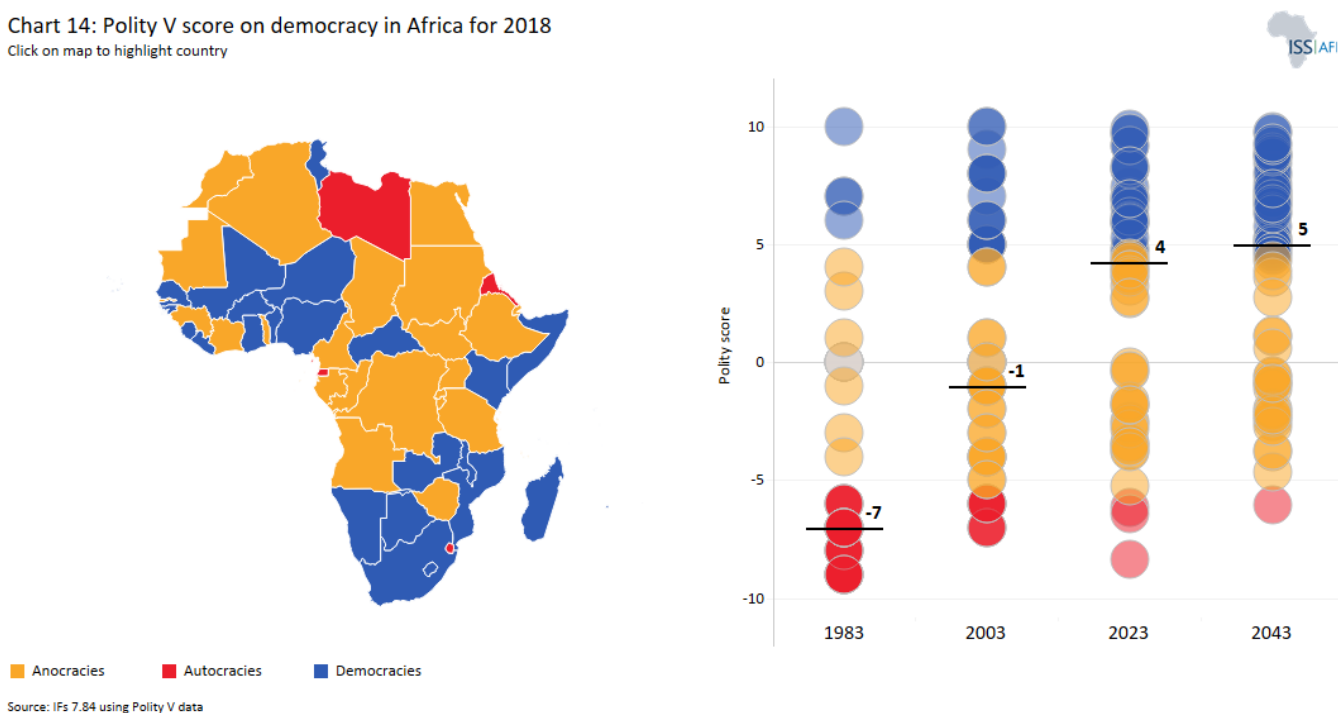
Generally, liberal democracies are more stable and peaceful than other regime types. The reason is linked to the 'primacy of institutions'[11] that set the game's rules rather than the whims of personalities when considering long-term economic success. Inclusive economic institutions typically feature 'secure private property, an unbiased system of law, and a provision of public services that provides a level playing field in which people can exchange and contract; it also must permit the entry of new businesses and allow people to choose their careers.'[12] Institutions are, of course, expensive and require leadership and resources to establish meaning that they are typically associated with high-income countries.

Being more inclusive has not compensated for a lack of security or capacity though. For example, as the number of conflict actors increases, resolving conflict in countries such as Sudan, South Sudan, the DR Congo and CAR becomes more complex.[13] Rebel (and extremist) groups that split into smaller groups complicate efforts at mediation or reconciliation. Although commentators and interest groups readily agitate for maximum inclusion as part of agreements, the problem

with most peace agreements is a lack of implementation rather than inclusivity.[14] No sooner do mediators persuade the warring parties to sign an agreement than a group splits off and a new faction emerges, and additional demands follow.

Similarly, political inclusion, such as having a broadly representative cabinet, contributes less to peace than most suspect — a finding underlined by data on the composition of cabinets for several countries collected by the African Cabinet and Political Elite Dataset[15]. Most African leaders are involved in complex, dangerous and costly games of 'elite management' in the interest of remaining in power, thereby severely constraining their ability to undertake economic or other reforms.

More inclusivity generally only matters if it improves security and capacity. However, the transition from autocracy to democracy is often turbulent, and mixed regime types (so-called anocracies or hybrid regimes) are volatile. For example, of the 16 African countries that experienced sustained armed violence in 2021, none are fully democratic.[16] Many African governments include elements of both autocracy and democracy and function as anocracies according to the Polity definition for 2018,[17] namely Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Algeria, Burundi and The Gambia. The 2021 list of hybrid regimes from International IDEA is longer: Angola, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo and Tunisia. Despite regular competitive elections in these intermediate regimes, the legislature has little practical control over the executive branch of government and political elites are often focused on ensuring their own continuity rather than on governance.[18]

Intermediate regimes (anocracies or hybrid regimes) are six times more likely to experience new outbreaks of civil conflict than democracies and 2.5 times more likely than autocracies. More than half of them experience a significant regime change within five years, and 70% within ten years.[19] Recent years have seen imaginative efforts by incumbents to amend the rules in their own favour. From 2000 to 2019, for example, there were 25 attempted constitutional amendments to favour presidential third-term projects. Of these, only seven failed; 18 were successfully implemented or enforced.[20]

Recent coups in Chad, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Sudan do not mean that democracy in Africa is failing. The evidence suggests that while the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and recently the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is inevitably placing downward pressure on democracy, a robust democratic culture is, in fact, growing in many parts of the continent.

Endnotes

1. Whereas Polity was originally conceptualised to understand regime characteristics (autocratic versus democratic), V-Dem is explicitly designed to measure the extent to which countries evidence different types of democracy and delves deeply into the associated characteristics of each. Practically, Polity is closest to the V-Dem conceptualisation of electoral democracy or polyarchy, but there are important methodological and conceptual differences between the two.

2. International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices: Methodology, November 2020.

3. The Polity Index categorises states according to their regime characteristics, with attention to six component measures: regulation of executive recruitment; competitiveness of executive recruitment; openness of executive recruitment; constraints that exist on executive action; regulation of political participation; and competitiveness of political participation. MG Marshall, TR Gurr and K Jaggers, Polity IV Project: Political regime characteristics and transitions, 1800–2016, Center for Systemic Peace, 25 July 2017.

4. N Cheeseman, The state of democracy in Africa, Democracy in Africa, August 2015.

5. N Cheeseman, The state of democracy in Africa, Democracy in Africa, August 2015.

6. Afrobarometer, Analyse online.

7. R Mattes and M Bratton, Do Africans still want democracy?, Afrobarometer Policy Paper 36, November 2016, 2.

8. JA Sanny and E Selormey, Africans welcome China's influence but maintain democratic aspirations, Afrobarometer Dispatch 489, November 2021.

9. M Miguna, *Peeling back the mask: A quest for justice in Kenya*, Nairobi: Arrow Press, 2012; On Zimbabwe, see: T Hoekman, Testing ties: Opposition and power-sharing negotiations in Zimbabwe, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39:4, 2013, 903–20; B Raftopoulos, Towards another stalemate in Zimbabwe, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, October 2012.

10. AL Persson and B Rothstein, Lost in Transition: A bottom-up perspective on hybrid regimes, *Annals of Comparative Democratization*, 17:3, 2019, 10.

11. D Rodrik, A Subramanian and F Trebbi, Institutions rule: The primacy of institutions over geography and integration in economic development, Working Paper 9305, National Bureau of Economic Research, November 2002.

12. D Acemoglu and J Robinson, *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity and poverty*. New York: Crown Business, 2013.

13. UCDP measures and codes these as conflict dyads consisting of two conflicting primary parties.

14. M Joshi and JM Quinn, Implementing the peace: The aggregate implementation of comprehensive peace agreements and peace duration after intrastate armed conflict, *British Journal of Political Science*, 47:4, 2017, 869–92.

15. C Raleigh and D Wigmore-Shepherd, Elite coalitions and power balance across African regimes: Introducing the African Cabinet and Political Elite Data Project (ACPED), *Ethnopolitics*, 21:1, 2020, 22–47.

16. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Autocracy and instability in Africa, 2021.

17. On the Polity score, a mixed/intermediate regime type has a score from +5 to 5 in an index that ranges from +10 to 10. V-Dem distinguishes between different types of democracy, each with its own index. Its Electoral Democracy Index is closest to the Polity IV index.

18. MG Marshall and GC Elzinga-Marshall, Global Report 2017 Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility, Vienna: Center for Systemic Peace, 2017.

19. MG Marshall and GC Elzinga-Marshall, Global Report 2017 Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility, Vienna: Center for Systemic Peace, 2017; Also: JA Goldstone et al, A global model for forecasting political instability, *American Journal of Political Science*, 54:1, 2010, 190–208; CH Knutsen and HM Nygård, Institutional characteristics and regime survival: Why are semi-democracies less durable than autocracies and democracies?, *American Journal of Political Science*, 59:3, 2015, 656–70; H Hegre, T Ellingsen, S Gates and NP Gleditsch, Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change, and civil war, 1816–1992, *American Political Science Review*, 95:1, 2001, 33–48.

20. D Zounmenou, Third terms for presidents of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea must be stopped, Institute for Security Studies, September 2020.

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Cite this research

Jakkie Cilliers (2024) Governance. Published online at futures.issafrica.org. Retrieved from https://futures.issafrica.org/thematic/12-governance/ [Online Resource] Updated 08 March 2024.

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Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director of the ISS. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees and head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria oce of the ISS. His 2017 best-seller Fate of the Nation addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution (March 2020), The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities (April 2021), and Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

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