

# The future of democracy in Africa

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## Summary

Currently, democracy in much of Africa is constrained from delivering on its development potential for three reasons. First, governance capacity is lacking. Second, the quality of electoral democracy is thin. Finally, neopatrimonialism undermines electoral democracy in Africa. A forecast to 2070 quantifies the contribution that different levels of democracy would have on Africa's economic and human development under two scenarios: a democratic regression and a positive wave of democracy. As countries climb the income ladder and become more socially and economically complex, democracy steadily contributes to good governance, development and growth. This only happens if the key components of electoral democracy are realised.

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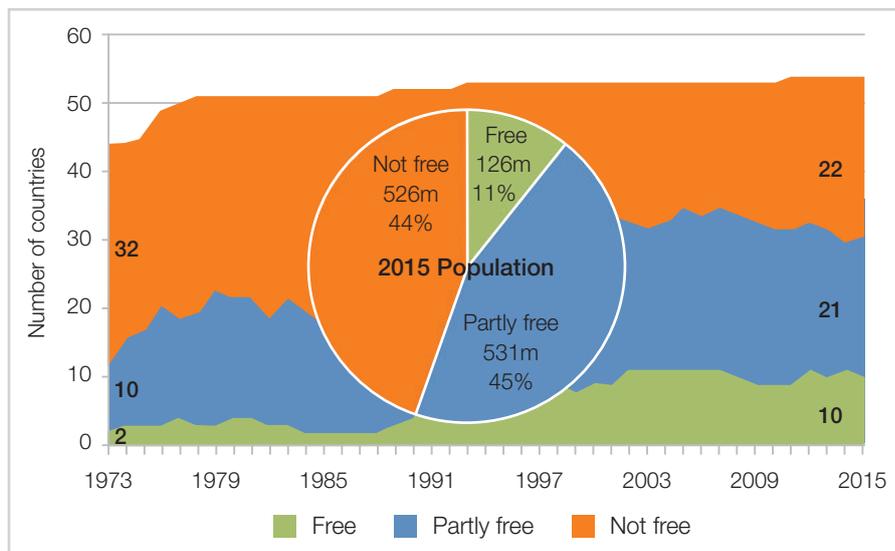
AFRICA HAS MADE remarkable progress in the years since the end of the Cold War in 1989. Freedom House, a think tank based in the United States (US), calculates that in 1988 only 17 out of the 50 African countries on which it reported could be classified as 'free' or 'partly free'. Its most recent data, for 2015, estimates that 31 out of 54 countries are 'free' or 'partly free'.

As reflected in Figure 1, while recent years have not been smooth sailing, the number of 'not free' and 'partly free' countries has shrunk in the last decade.

As in other regions, the process of democratisation in Africa has often been turbulent. Previous work by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) has argued that election-related violence is an important contributor to the prevailing levels of conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The increase in the number of elections every year in Africa (in 2016 the continent could host up to 24 elections, the most for several years) accentuates this trend. Violence in Africa has generally increased since 2005/6 due to a number of additional

**Figure 1: Africa: ‘free’, ‘partly free’ and ‘not free’**



Source: Freedom House, International Futures (IFs) v7.22.

considerations, including the rise of terrorism and the impact and aftermath of the Arab Spring.

The problem is that elections do not necessarily translate into democracy. Regular, free and fair elections do not provide for individual freedoms, political equality, female empowerment, an independent civil society, a free press or scope for deliberation – all key components of liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup>

Incumbent African regimes have also become adept at interfering in the electoral process, as recently seen in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique and elsewhere. Leaders in these countries invest significant resources in ensuring a favourable electoral outcome by constraining the democratic space. This is done by rigging the registration process, running interference (by tying opposition candidates down in spurious legal cases or barring public gatherings), misusing state resources to dispense patronage, controlling the diet of information (particularly through the abuse of public media in favour of the ruling party) and, if all else fails, directly manipulating the results or frustrating any subsequent legal challenge. This happened twice in August 2016, in Zambia and oil-rich Gabon, as presidents Edgar Lungu and Ali Bongo ensured their re-election in what were essentially stolen elections.<sup>3</sup>

Since competitive politics in a multi-ethnic context often rely on the mobilisation of ethno-linguistic groupings for political support, democratisation often increases ethnic tensions. A case in point is South Sudan in 2016, where unresolved tensions eventually led to war between President Salva Kiir's largely Dinka soldiers and Riek Machar's mostly Nuer rebels. One of the most infamous examples of election fraud occurred in December 2007 in Kenya when incumbent president Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner despite blatant electoral manipulation, events that were preceded and followed by widespread violence between Kikuyus, Luos and Kalenjins.

Freedom House uses 25 indicators, where each country and territory is assigned a score from 0 to 4, for an aggregate score of up to 100. These scores are used to determine two numerical ratings, for political rights and civil liberties, with a rating of 1 representing the most free conditions and 7 the least free. It assigns the designation ‘electoral democracy’ to countries that score 7 or better in the ‘electoral process’ subcategory (one of four subcategories that form part of the political rights indicators) and an overall political rights score of 20 or better.

Source: Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2016, and Freedom House, Methodology: Freedom in the world 2016.

Democracy generally operates better above certain minimum levels of income and education, when the web of institutions and the rule of law are able to constrain the misuse and abuse of state institutions.<sup>4</sup> In countries with low levels of income, democracy is often fragile largely because the formal institutions, rules and norms upon which it rests and upon which it depends for effective functioning are absent or insufficiently developed.

While the holding of regular elections in Africa is on an upward trajectory, there are worrying trends in incumbents' clinging to power and blocking executive rotation or replacement. Presidents Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi, Dennis Sassou Nguesso of Congo-Brazzaville and Paul Kagame of Rwanda all recently amended their constitutions to allow for unlimited presidential incumbency.

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The most recent results from the Afrobarometer survey of public perceptions reveal that an overwhelming 75% of African citizens surveyed favoured executive term limits.<sup>5</sup> Africa already hosts some of the longest serving heads of state in the world. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea has been in power for 36 years, Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola for 36 years, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe for 35 years, Paul Biya of Cameroon for 32 years and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda for 29 years. Although none of these leaders has yet broached the 40-year mark (achieved by Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon), others such as Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are clearly signalling their intent to overstay their welcome.

## Purpose and outline

The purpose of this paper is to examine the history of democracy in Africa, its contribution to the continent's development and how this relationship is likely to evolve in the future. It explores the developmental impact of greater political pluralism and competitive democratic systems in Africa and asks if an authoritarian

developmental model (the so-called Chinese model) would be more suitable to poor African countries, in line with the revisionist argument that sees electoral democracy and competitive politics as obstacles to growth.<sup>6</sup>

The paper proceeds in three broad parts. The first section examines the relationship between democracy, good governance and development in Africa, as well as the nature of neopatrimonial regimes (an informal system where patrons use state resources to secure loyalty). The second presents the historical evolution of democracy in Africa before appraising its current status using four different data sources. The data providers are Freedom House, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project and Polity IV. These four datasets all update their data on an annual basis, have established a time series and are widely used in the academic and policy community. After comparing the data over time and between countries, the final section speculates on the likely future evolution of democracy by using the International Futures (IFs) forecasting system to present two scenarios: Authoritarian Regress and Fourth Wave of Democracy.

## The sequencing debate: good intentions gone awry

Following the seminal work of Martin Lipset, a large body of academic literature argues that democracy is mainly a product of economic development. There is, however, less agreement about (a) to what extent democracy contributes to improved economic and developmental outcomes, and (b) the extent to which early democratisation enhances or detracts from growth and human development outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

The mantra is that Africa needs to adopt liberal democracy and good governance as prerequisites for development

In the eyes of many donors, policymakers and often the general public in Africa and the West, democracy, good governance and development all go together and should be pursued in that sequential order, despite the fact that this reverses the historical developmental sequence as outlined by Lipset and others. The mantra is that Africa needs to adopt liberal democracy and various good

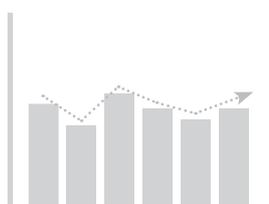
governance practices as a prerequisite for development. Democracy will lead to better governance, which in turn will improve development outcomes. However, David Booth is one of many who argue that '[n]one of today's developed countries enjoyed the kinds of political democracy, rule of law, or arm's length relationships between business and the state that conventional wisdom currently recommends for Africa'.<sup>8</sup> In the context of growing pressures for democratic governance in Africa in the 1990s, Adrian Leftwich cautioned:

Historical evidence suggests that faith in the economic and political liberalism of the minimal state as the universal *means* to development is deeply flawed. Successful modern transformative episodes of economic development, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, have almost always involved both a strong state and an active state to help initiate, accelerate, and shape this process ... what is required then, is not necessarily a democratic state (though this would be highly desirable if it could also be that), but a *developmental state* ... a state whose political and bureaucratic elite has the genuine developmental determination and autonomous capacity to define, pursue and implement developmental goals.<sup>9</sup>

Corruption does not grease the wheels of development but pours sand into the system, soaking up oil and clogging things up

The problem is that African states are often weak and inefficient, and that its elites, while no more greedy or self-serving than those elsewhere, tend to extract resources for 'safe' investment outside the continent. In this manner corruption does not grease the wheels of development but pours sand into the system, soaking up oil and clogging things up.

From the 1970s until the end of the previous century Africa's Western development partners invested in civil service reform and efforts to improve public financial management, and helped to set up anti-corruption watchdogs and public audit bodies. Multi-party elections, democratic decentralisation and other methods of achieving citizen participation were equally popular. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund were at the forefront of efforts to ensure the state's withdrawal from productive sectors, limiting its role to policymaking and regulatory functions. This was based on its inability, in their view, to effectively deliver public goods and limit the abuse of funds. In the process democracy was strongly associated with liberal economic policies or so-called neoliberalism that envisioned a small state and a dominant role for the private sector in development. Ironically, at the same time the West was advancing unquestioned support (and large amounts of aid) to some of Africa's worst dictators (such as Sudan under Gaafar Nimeiry, Somalia under Siad Barre, Liberia under Samuel Doe, the former Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko, Chad under Hissène Habré and Egypt under Hosni Mubarak), who had



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little interest in either sustainable human development or human rights and democracy. These contradictions would later come to haunt the West in its pursuit of developmental outcomes on the continent.

Since the 1990s the explosive growth of China, the associated boom in commodity prices, the impact of urbanisation, and the subsequent improved government capacity changed Africa's previous mediocre growth rates for the better. Although the 2008 global economic recession impacted negatively on the continent's previous sterling growth rates, most African countries remained relatively resilient. A decade later Africa's growth prospects are still healthy, although insufficient to alleviate deep-seated poverty, widespread inequality and structural unemployment.

### **What elements of democracy matter for economic and human development?**

Two recent comprehensive studies by Gerring et al. and Knutsen et al. for the Varieties of Democracy Institute explore the relationship between electoral democracy and economic and human development.<sup>10</sup> Using data from V-Dem and Gapminder the studies include a series of simulations across a century-long period.

Knutsen et al. conclude that economic development (using gross domestic product [GDP] per capita as a proxy for economic development) affects the quality of elections, with 'the relationship between economic development and democracy [being] robust only with respect to the electoral component of democracy, narrowly construed as the existence of competitive national elections and the procedural integrity of the electoral process ... We also find that while economic development prevents democratic backsliding it does not show a significant relationship to democratization ...'<sup>11</sup> In contrast with general modernisation theory, these findings suggest that democracy is not clearly identified as a by-product of economic development.<sup>12</sup> This would be in line with a large body of work that has found that rapid rates of economic development have the potential to buy off pressure towards greater democracy, among others.

In their study on the relationship between democracy and human development, Gerring et al. find that democracy has a strong effect on reducing infant mortality rates (a proxy for human development), especially for countries at

the low end of the democracy/development scales. Their findings are specific in that 'some aspects of democracy – but not others – affect human development'.<sup>13</sup> Those aspects that have a positive relationship with human development outcomes are also the 'electoral' aspect of democracy (such as clean elections) as opposed to those aspects related to 'citizen empowerment' (such as individual liberty), which were not found to have positive impacts on human development. Gerring et al. thus conclude that the quality of elections and the selection of leaders are crucial and that 'indices focused on the electoral component of democracy are robustly associated with improved human development ... [E]lectoral competition incentivizes politicians to provide certain public goods and services and these, in turn, save lives.'<sup>14</sup> In their view, the practice of electoral accountability structures the relationship between citizens and the elite such that the resources of the state can be mobilised with a developmental purpose, and the only actor with sufficient resources to make significant and sustained improvements in the quality of human life in a country is the state.<sup>15</sup>

Africa's growth prospects are still healthy, although insufficient to alleviate deep-seated poverty

There are many caveats to these important findings. Significantly, in the case of Gerring et al., the electoral democracy/human development relationship is maximised when '(a) elections are clean and not marred by fraud or systemic irregularities, (b) the chief executive of a country is selected (directly or indirectly) through elections, (c) suffrage is extensive, (d) political and civil society organizations operate freely, and (e) there is freedom of expression, including access to alternative information'.<sup>16</sup> These five components interact with one another and the absence of any one severely mitigates impact, although clean elections have the strongest correlation with positive outcomes on human development.<sup>17</sup>

In an annexure to their study, Gerring et al. use V-Dem data to construct a sub-index, the Multiplicative Electoral Democracy Index (MEDl), that has a specific focus on the

quality of elections and illustrates the potential impact of their findings as follows:

[L]et us imagine a very poor country with a per capita GDP of \$1 000 that has no regime history, or an extremely autocratic regime history ... This approximates the condition of many African countries upon attaining independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Our benchmark model predicts that this country should experience an infant mortality rate of about 93 (per 1 000 live births). Now, let us suppose that this hypothetical country quickly transitions to high-quality democracy (as measured by MEDI) and maintains that level of democracy for a decade – without any increase in wealth. Our model predicts that the improvement in MEDI stock will result in a 50% drop in IMR [infant mortality rate] – from 93 to 49 – during those ten years. ... this stylized example ... provide[s] an illustration of what the coefficients entail for country performance. Democracy may have a dramatic effect on mortality rates, especially for countries at the low end of the democracy/development scales.<sup>18</sup>

Without disputing the relationship, its impact on the rate of infant mortality is extremely aggressive and likely unrealistic, but does provide a useful reference point in illustrating the relationship between electoral democracy and governance effectiveness (for which infant mortality serves as a proxy).

Government capacity is strongly associated with economic growth on the basis that larger tax revenue translates into more capacity

As stated earlier, many elections in Africa are deceptive events where a governing elite goes through the motions but ensures the re-election of the governing party and its preferred candidate. In addition, electoral democracy in Africa may not produce a government committed to pro-poor growth or reductions in inequality, even among upper-middle-income countries. This is most vividly demonstrated in the case of Botswana, which rivals South Africa as the most unequal country in the world. On the one hand, a degree of inequality is necessary for development. On the other, too high levels of inequality eventually become disruptive and detract from development. By its very nature liberal democracy serves to mediate inequalities (since it developed in response to deepening inequality and exploitation) and therefore serves to check excess, but these mechanisms require the dense network of associated institutions and norms characteristic of high-income countries to be effective.

This paper departs from the premise that neither good governance nor democracy is a pre-condition for early development and thus that 'neither authoritarianism nor corruption is incompatible with economic growth'.<sup>19</sup> The findings from Gerring et al. would, however, point to the improvements in



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government effectiveness that can be associated with electoral democracy.

Generally, government capacity is strongly associated with economic growth on the basis that larger tax revenue (through rising incomes) translates into more capacity. Although it seems clear that some aspects of governance need to change to enable an economic transformation from informality and subsistence to more productive endeavours, 'the full set of institutional improvements associated with the idea of good governance becomes feasible for countries only *after* substantial economic transformation has occurred'.<sup>20</sup> And even then the development of good governance accompanies rather than precedes development.

There is much evidence to this effect. For example, the high-growth economies of South-East Asia had starting conditions similar in many respects to those of Africa in the 1960s – widespread poverty, hunger, poor infrastructure, bad health and poor quality of education indices. And many had similarly strong neopatrimonial elements in their political systems even while growing rapidly. Thus 'the transformational policy mix that delivered striking results under conditions broadly similar to those in African countries was supplied by very different types of regimes in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. None of these conformed to conventional good governance criteria.'<sup>21</sup> In simple terms, economic rents may be essential to development. In the eyes of many investors, personal, informal relationships with officials may be more important than rules-based governance in the early stages of development.<sup>22</sup> An important consideration here is the extent to which national elites invest domestically (largely seen to have been the case in Asia) or move their ill-gotten gains outside of the home country (largely seen to be the case with governing elites in Africa).

## Democracy and neopatrimonial regimes

Most African governments (as in poor countries elsewhere in the world) are classified as neopatrimonial and/or rent seeking, but the resilience of neopatrimonial practices as part of Africa's democratisation has been remarkable. As Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn suggest:

One of the most remarkable characteristics of contemporary African politics is indeed the degree

to which authoritarian neopatrimonial regimes have been able to adapt to the formal trappings of electoral democracy. Thus, to a large extent, neopatrimonialism has proved compatible with democracy rather than having dissolved in it. It has endured and reproduced despite a generalized change in the formal rules of politics.<sup>23</sup>

In this manner governing elites and the practices of neopatrimonialism effectively constrain the potential positive developmental impact of democracy.

There is no alternative to elections as a means to determine the 'will of the people'

At least four caveats should be added to this view. First, there is considerable evidence that 'the careless promotion of elections and economic liberalisation – the trappings of democracy and capitalism – in countries where inter-communal relations and political settlements are fragile can be costly in violence and human life'.<sup>24</sup> This has been most evident in so-called post-conflict fragile states such as South Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC and others. Civil society, regional organisations and the international community insist on creating governments of national unity and, shortly thereafter, competitive elections, which often serve to undo much of the progress previously made in ending the conflict. For example, in October and November 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections (admittedly of a unique type) were to be held in violence-torn Somalia with the intention of moving to universal suffrage by 2020. There is little doubt that the process and its aftermath will be bloody. The obvious problem with this situation is that there is no alternative to elections (aka some form of electoral democracy) as a means to determine the 'will of the people', yet the institutions required to support such a system are absent. The result is a choice between violent and disruptive elections (often a sham) or the continuation of the status quo that had given rise to the governance crisis in the first instance.

The developmental starting point is an important second caveat when considering the relationship between

democracy and growth. Poorer countries gain less from democracy than middle- or high-income countries. In *Democracy in Africa: successes, failure, and the struggle for political reform*<sup>25</sup> Nic Cheeseman argues that democracy in Africa has made significant progress over time, despite the absence of many of the supposed pre-conditions for democratic consolidation such as ‘a coherent national identity, strong and autonomous political institutions, a developed and autonomous civil society, the rule of law, and a strong and well performing economy’.<sup>26</sup> Africa’s history since 1990 is, he argues, therefore largely one of democratising against the odds, where progress has been made in a number of poor and unstable countries where these pre-conditions do not exist. In essence, the low levels of economic development and the associated poor average education levels in Africa may imply that democratisation here rests on weak foundations and opens the possibility of a regression to lower or more ‘appropriate’ levels, where a façade of regular elections hides the reality of no/little change.

Authoritarian development models have outperformed electoral democracies in a number of high-profile cases in Asia and Africa

In the third instance it also depends on the time horizon. In the longer term, i.e. over successive decades, democracy has clear developmental benefits over any other regime type.<sup>27</sup> It provides for a mechanism through which the power of the elite or special interest groups can be held in check, it provides for a separation of powers into different branches of government, and it provides for the protection of human rights and the rule of law, which in turn creates confidence for the pursuit of long-term investments. Such substantive types of democracy emerge over time and require significant resources to mature.

At the early stages of development countries often go through the motions of elections but the subsequent government and practice may lack many of the substantive elements of democracy. As a result, authoritarian development models have outperformed electoral democracies in a number of high-profile cases in Asia and Africa. This outcome has, however, been highly contingent on the nature of the governing elite, which is discussed below.

Finally, the quality of democracy is an obvious and important consideration. If democracy simply means the existence of political parties and regular elections (such as in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Angola and a host of other examples) instead of giving meaning to the substance of the concept, there is little to distinguish it from other regime types.

### **Developmental neopatrimonialism, inclusion and competition**

So, if most African regimes (electoral democracies and otherwise) are neopatrimonial, what does this imply for developmental outcomes? Cheeseman, among others, argues that ‘patrimonialism itself is not the



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problem: what matters, is the type of patrimonialism that emerges'.<sup>28</sup> Thus Booth distinguishes between more and less developmental-friendly types of neopatrimonial regimes. The difference, he argues, is the ways in which political elites use rents. He draws a distinction between centrally managed patrimonial relations (so-called developmental patrimonialism)<sup>29</sup> and decentralised and competitive patrimonial systems. More centralised patrimonial systems (evidenced in countries such as Ethiopia and Rwanda) provide coherence and order; take a longer, developmental view on public provision (since there is central political discipline); and generally provide better outcomes over the medium and long term. More decentralised or competitive neopatrimonial systems (such as in Kenya and Nigeria) show the opposite outcomes.

At first blush these conclusions are uncomfortable, since they imply that competitive multi-party politics may advance competitive neopatrimonialism. Efforts to advance democracy in states with strong neopatrimonial systems could thus detract from development. Booth's view is that the developmental patrimonial state is the result of very specific conditions – and never of peaceful multi-party elections. He presents two examples of such conditions, namely (a) where the leadership consists of national liberation forces after war (still evident in many countries in Southern Africa); and (b) in the aftermath of a severe crisis or shock to the system involving large-scale violence (such as experienced in Rwanda and Ethiopia).<sup>30</sup>

Cheeseman comes to these issues from a slightly different perspective, namely the extent to which democracy in Africa is inclusive or competitive. He notes that 'while elements of competition and inclusion strengthen multiparty systems, too much of either can be fatal to the process of democratization'.<sup>31</sup> He uses the examples of Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya to argue for the need for greater inclusion and points to Ghana and Senegal as two examples where political competition has driven progress: 'Excessive inclusion is therefore just as bad for democracy as excessive competition.'<sup>32</sup> The most notable examples of excessive inclusion are often governments of national unity or power-sharing arrangements that, since they preclude competition and are largely premised on the need for conflict management, are unable to sustain or promote economic growth. Following instances of electoral violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe in the mid-2000s and recently in South Sudan, regional actors

helped craft governments of national unity that, while producing a measure of political stability, also engendered paralysis in governance and economic performance.<sup>33</sup> Lack of development leads to social instability and in these circumstances a government of national unity sometimes unwittingly plants the seeds of the next crisis. There are no obvious or easy choices in these matters.

Kenya and Nigeria exemplify the limitations of electoral democracy along the lines described here, in that politics is about who governs and not about policy or improved livelihoods. Issues around personality, affiliation and identity dominate, particularly where the associated democratic outcome is of the winner-takes-all variant. These systems are therefore of the competitive neopatrimonial type, rather than the centralised neopatrimonialism characteristic of those African countries with strong single-party systems. Both countries also reveal the potential of political experimentations with dispersing power, through a steadily expanding federal system in Nigeria and the more recent county system in Kenya. So while politics is exceptionally competitive, robust and loud in these two countries, electoral democracy does not deliver improved livelihoods.

### Kenya and Nigeria exemplify the limitations of electoral democracy – politics is about who governs

Absent civil war or some other calamity, both Nigeria and Kenya will almost inevitably grow given the expansion of the working-age population, rising levels of education and rapid rates of urbanisation. But that growth is unlikely to promote sustainable, broad-based human development outcomes. It is also unlikely that democracy will have contributed to that growth. Moreover, the neopatrimonial regimes in these countries have barely managed to constrain the long-standing regional and communal conflicts that remain on the horizon with every election.

Examples of countries with centralised patrimonial systems include relatively recently liberated countries in Southern Africa such as Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, where liberation parties continue to dominate politics. In South Africa, where the governing African National Congress (ANC) did not come to power

through the extensive political indoctrination and associated broad-based people's war evident in the others, a liberal constitution, active civil society, entrenched Bill of Rights and independent judiciary have barely been able to constrain the ANC's ability to dispense patronage. Recent intra-ANC fissures and the emergence of new parties have, however, started to whittle away at the dominance of the governing party and put considerable pressure on the solidity of governance institutions.

The degree to which centralised patrimonial systems can advance development is heavily dependent on the quality of the top leadership. A strong, visionary leader such as Paul Kagame, Thabo Mbeki or Meles Zenawi can have a significant impact upon development outcomes. But there is no guarantee that s/he will not succumb to the attractions of office (as Museveni in Uganda, Kagame in Rwanda and Kabila in the DRC have done). Weak leadership and a party comfortable with its liberation credentials with no competitive pressures is the general norm, as seen in countries such as Mozambique and Namibia, as well as to a lesser extent in South Africa under Jacob Zuma. In Ethiopia, in the aftermath of Meles's demise, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front has maintained a measure of national cohesion and coherence, but pressures from some regions for transparent and accountable local governments are beginning to threaten stability.

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### **Demand, supply and government capacity**

The debate about the neopatrimonial nature of African governments has interesting implications for the demand- and supply-sides of democracy as measured by organisations such as Afrobarometer.<sup>34</sup> In simple terms, the demand/supply approach implies that what is needed in Africa is to improve one or the other, ideally both. Thus support for the community monitoring of public services and various social accountability efforts would improve the demand for good governance (to be delivered through voice, empowerment and accountability, aka democracy). And packages of budgetary aid or policy-based lending and public financial management would deliver an improved supply.<sup>35</sup>

There are two problems with this approach. The first is that electoral democracy is not the same as substantive democracy. Going through the motions of regular elections may eventually translate into real democracy, but progress is not assured. The second problem, Booth argues, is that '[t]he two perspectives share an important feature: an implicit assumption that there are actors [elites and communities] who are committed, in an uncomplicated way, to public-good objectives'.<sup>36</sup> This is not the general case, he argues.



MOST DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS UNDERESTIMATE THE TIME REQUIRED TO IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Approaches that assume that either governments or citizens in low-income countries have an uncomplicated commitment to improving governance and the provision of public goods are mistaken ... No doubt, there are many individuals who have a genuine interest in the development and transformation of their country. But, in the round, this is less important than the fact that, in the here and now, most actors face prohibitive problems in acting collectively to take even elementary steps in pursuit of those interests ... governance challenges in Africa are not fundamentally about one set of people getting another set of people to behave better. They are about both sets of people finding ways of being able to act collectively in their own best interests ... it is more realistic to understand governance limitations as the product of multi-faceted collective action problems, and to think about remedies on that basis.<sup>37</sup>

There are many examples that attest to the limited ability of political elites to affect change in poor African countries

Booth therefore underscores the importance of looking at context and the nature and constraints of the interactions that determine outcomes, rather than policy or intent. The winner of the August 2016 elections in Zambia or Gabon makes little short- or medium-term difference since neither of the competing elites has the capacity to deliver improved development outcomes. With an incapable civil service and stripped of policy space due to their dependence on single commodities (a function of the choices made by previous elites as well as the dictates of the global economy), Zambia and Gabon will likely bumble along. Burgeoning populations will push up the countries' economic growth rates and the trickle-down effects from the wealth that accrues to a small political elite at the high table of patronage will improve living standards only among a very small middle class.

There are many examples that attest to the limited ability of political elites to affect change in poor African countries. In November 2015 President John Magufuli – nicknamed 'The Bulldozer' for his no-nonsense approach to corruption and waste – was elected as the candidate of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party in Tanzania.

However, the impact of his 'government by gesture', as *The Economist* magazine coined it, remains to be seen in practice.<sup>38</sup> Thus 'Mr Magufuli's zeal may be admired, but his party, which has ruled Tanzania since independence, is thuggish and undemocratic: it suppressed dissent during the elections last year and then cancelled a vote held in Zanzibar after the opposition probably won it'.<sup>39</sup>

This is a discussion that reverts to the unity and capacity of a ruling party and of governments to deliver, rather than the extent to which they are inclusive or exclusive, elected or non-elected. Of course, as countries advance along the development trajectory the need for greater inclusion becomes a more important driver of future development. Diversified economies require innovation and knowledge production to sustain growth, which is quite different to the requirements of an undiversified, single-commodity-based economy largely dominated by informal activity.

In summary, most development partners and the international community generally underestimate the time horizon required to improve development outcomes, and overestimate the ability of political leaders to improve matters such as delivery on poverty reduction. Evidence suggests that strong authoritarian leaders, such as in Rwanda and Ethiopia, who are at the helm of an organised party that has a firm grip on the country, politics and development (i.e. centralised patrimonial systems) have delivered more rapid results in the recent past – but this is by exception. The dependence upon a single key figure can more readily prove the undoing of progress, as it has in Uganda, Angola and many other countries.

Against this background the next section looks at the evolution of democracy in Africa within its historical context.

### Three successive waves of democratic advance

The Industrial Revolution in Britain, north-western Europe and North America pulled these regions away from the rest of the world, and resulted in the 'Great Divergence' in wealth and power between the West and the rest that is only today being rebalanced by the rise of China and others. But as much as this era witnessed a sharp divergence in the wealth between countries, capitalist

economic development also increased divergence within countries. The French scholar Thomas Piketty, in his recent volume *Capital in the twenty-first century*,<sup>40</sup> is only the most recent of many to argue that inequality is the inevitable consequence of economic growth in a capitalist economy. Piketty argues that the resulting concentration of wealth can destabilise democratic societies and undermine the ideals of social justice upon which they are built. In accordance with this functionalist line of reasoning, the historical development of democracy in the industrialised West can be interpreted as the evolution of a system of governance partly in response to the income disparities associated with the rise of capitalism.

In modern history, electoral democracy is generally understood to have advanced in three successive waves. Each wave raised the previous high-water mark of global democracy and included successively larger proportions of the world's population and the number of countries classified as being democratic. The first wave arguably began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the vote was granted to the majority of white men in the US and ebbed in the years leading up to the Second World War. At its peak there were 29 democracies in the world – a number that fell to just 12 by 1942. The second wave followed the end of the Second World War and crested in 1962 with 36 recognised democracies, dropping to 30 by the mid-1970s. The third wave of democracy began in 1974 with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal (which buried the last vestiges of the Portuguese empire of some six centuries).

Each wave raised the previous high-water mark of global democracy and included successively larger proportions of the world's population

Part of the third wave was a rash of democratic transitions in Latin America in the 1980s and shortly thereafter in several Asia-Pacific countries. The third wave gained momentum from 1989 as the dissolution of the former Soviet Union allowed a number of countries in Eastern/Central Europe to break away and establish representative systems of government. In Africa the third wave led to hurried independence proceedings in Angola (1975) and Mozambique (1976) and eventually set the stage for change in the former Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe, in 1980), South-West Africa (now Namibia, 1990) and South Africa (1994). Average levels of electoral democracy in Africa, generally on a slow downward path until 1989 (due to coups and the role of the military in politics), changed radically for the better from 1990 and, since 1993/4, have been on a slower but still sustained upward trajectory.

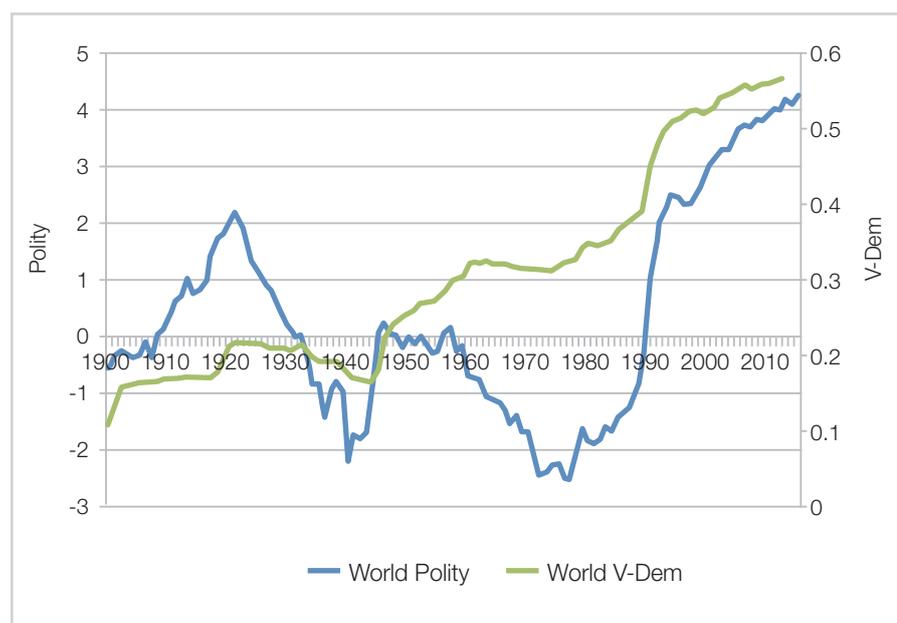
Recent trends, i.e. over the last 10 years, are less clear. Figure 1 on page 2 presents the impression of a regression in freedom since 2007, a measurement necessarily closely correlated with liberal democracy. Although the number of countries categorised as 'free' has remained roughly constant since then, the number of 'not free' countries has decreased and those labelled as 'partly free' have declined marginally.

The Polity IV dataset is hosted by the Center for Systemic Peace. Polity provides a spectrum of governing authority that spans the range from full autocracy through mixed systems (so-called anocracies) to fully institutionalised democracies on a 21-point scale. The original Polity IV composite score (on a scale from -10 to +10) culminates in a three-part categorisation of 'autocracies' (-10 to -6), 'anocracies' (-5 to +5) and 'democracies' (+6 to +10). The use of the term 'anocracies' is an effort to capture the extent to which countries in this range have both autocratic and democratic characteristics. A score of -10 generally indicates a hereditary monarchy and +10 a consolidated multiparty democracy. Polity uses a weighted additive aggregation of competitiveness, openness of executive recruitment, competitiveness and regulation of political participation, and constraints on the chief executive. It does not consider the assumed benefits of democratic authority, such as economic integration, individual rights/empowerment and general affluence in its assessments.

Source: Center for Systemic Peace.

The average global scores from 1900–2015 for the two data providers with long time series in measuring democracy, Polity and V-Dem, are presented in Figure 2. The Polity index is on the left y-axis and the V-Dem on the right y-axis. Both datasets tell a largely similar story in the steady advance of democracy globally, but the Polity data show much greater peaks and troughs with each wave than V-Dem. This is because the Polity index is largely a measure of elections and executive competition whereas V-Dem includes a large number of additional indices, including the extent to which key policymaking bodies are elective, rights of free association and free expression, the extensiveness of suffrage, and the quality of the electoral process, including aspects of citizen empowerment.<sup>41</sup> Even the most pronounced third wave of democracy that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union is much weaker, according to V-Dem, since many of the substantive features of democracy such as freedom of association (that are included in V-Dem but not in Polity) take a number of years to develop.<sup>42</sup>

**Figure 2: Waves of democracy according to Polity and V-Dem electoral democracy index**



Note: The Polity composite score is from -10 to +10. The V-Dem index is their electoral democracy index (v2x\_polyarch) that includes significantly more substantive indicators of democracy than Polity.

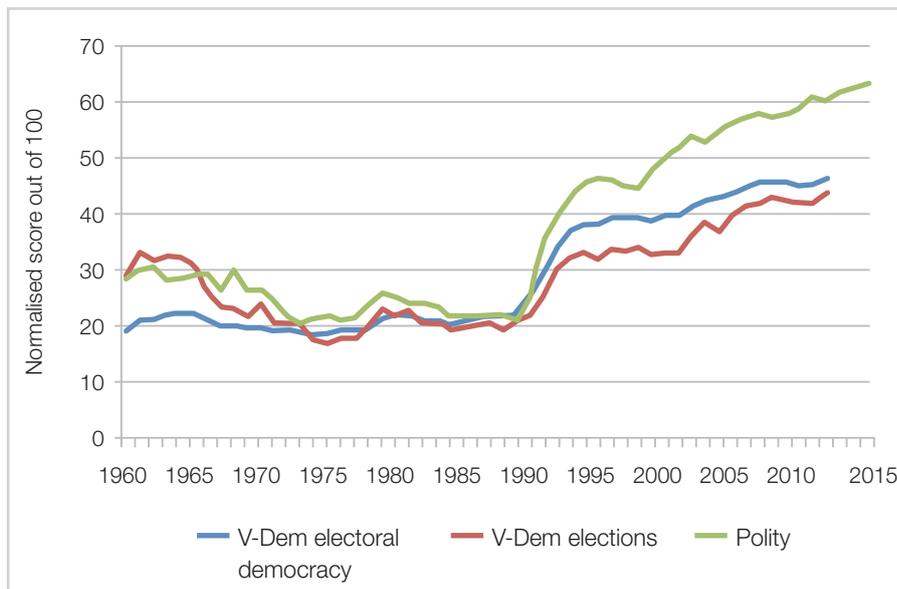
Source: Center for Systemic Peace, V-Dem.

One can, of course, only really refer to democracy in Africa in a post-colonial context, i.e. largely after 1960. Figure 3 presents three indices that measure the level of democracy in Africa from 1960 to 2015, using the scoring of the V-Dem electoral democracy index (v2x\_polyarch) and the subsidiary clean elections index (v2xel\_frefair),<sup>43</sup> also from V-Dem, as well as the Polity index. For the purposes of this figure the scores for all three indices have been normalised to a range of 0 to 100 and the V-Dem data is only to 2012, the last year for which the project has released a full dataset.

V-Dem is a large and complex global effort at conceptualising and measuring democracy, co-hosted by the University of Gothenburg, Sweden and the University of Notre Dame, USA. V-Dem adopts a comprehensive approach to characteristics associated with democracy. This paper uses the V-Dem electoral democracy index (v2x\_polyarch). V-Dem complements that with the six 'properties' of democracy (liberal, consensual, deliberative, majoritarian, egalitarian and participatory) that are each disaggregated into numerous lower-level components and indicators such as regular elections, judicial independence, direct democracy and gender equality, and provides disaggregated indicators for each conception and each component.

Source: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem).

Figure 3: Democracy in Africa since 1960 – Polity and V-Dem



Source: Center for Systemic Peace, V-Dem.

Before the start of the third wave in 1989, Africa’s levels of democracy were slowly declining from an already low base, or remaining flat. Then the collapse of the Soviet Union released the continent from the straitjacket of the Cold War era and, together with donor conditionalities, led to rapid democratisation in a number of sub-Saharan countries (the third wave).

The comparison is a source of comfort for proponents of democracy, although there are clear year-on-year differences. The trends are similar despite using completely different approaches and data, with data collection carried out in different time periods as well. Most striking is the convergence of low levels of democracy from around 1970–1989 and larger divergence thereafter. Thus, when Africa was not doing well (from a democracy perspective) the indices converge, but once things start improving they diverge, since each measures different aspects of the improvement in electoral democracy. As a result the gap between the average global and African (using Polity IV data) scores decreased more than fourfold, from around 31% during the late 1980s to just 7% by 2014/5.<sup>44</sup> This trend is also evident in the data from V-Dem, although it is much weaker.

The EIU and Freedom House data series start much more recently.<sup>45</sup>

Beyond its well-known measurement of freedom (see Figure 1), Freedom House also releases a subsidiary categorisation of countries as democracies that largely accords with the description of electoral democracy and executive competition used by Polity. Freedom and electoral democracy are not the same, of course. Thus while Freedom House data on the number of electoral democracies reflect a static trend in recent years (Figure 4), the Freedom House data on countries that are not free, partly free and free tell a more concerning picture of the start of a democratic regression (see Figure 1).

THE GAP BETWEEN THE AVERAGE GLOBAL AND AFRICAN DEMOCRACY-LEVEL SCORES DECREASED FROM

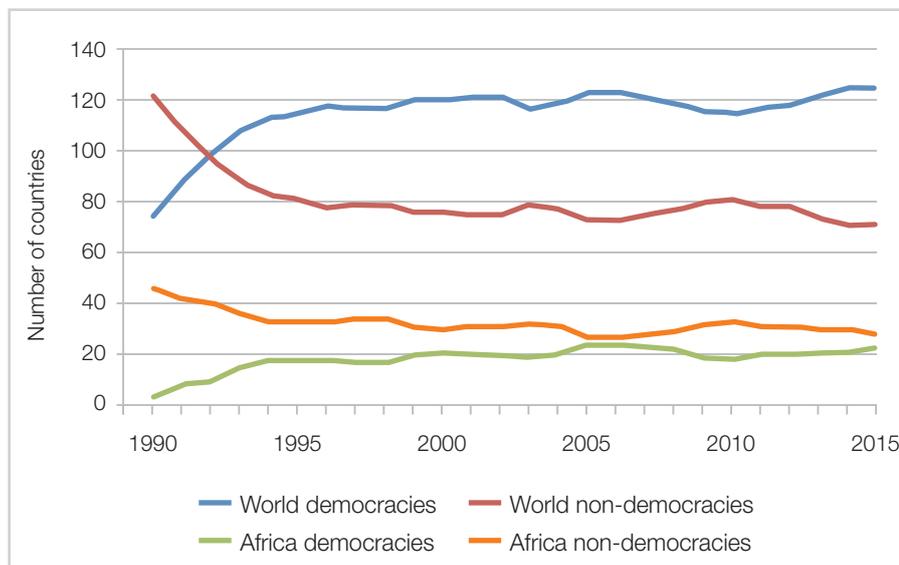
±31%

DURING THE LATE 1980S TO JUST

7%

BY 2014/5

**Figure 4: Freedom House – number of democracies vs non-democracies in Africa and the world**



Source: Freedom House.

According to Freedom House, the third wave of democracy had globally run its course by 2005/6. Its analysis points to a regression in the rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals globally and in Africa over the last 10 years. The promise of a fourth wave of democracy in the form of the Arab Spring has clearly not borne fruit, according to this analysis, but neither is there evidence of a substantive democratic regression.

Before the start of the third wave in 1989, Africa's levels of democracy were slowly declining from an already low base, or remaining flat

According to the Democracy Index of the EIU, there has been little change in the number of democracies, although the EIU generally classifies fewer countries as democratic compared to Freedom House. Despite the difference in levels (i.e. the number of countries included in each category) the trends for the period since 2006 are similar to that of Freedom House.

Figure 5 presents the V-Dem and Polity levels of democracy in the world and in Africa on a normalised score from 0 to 100. While the global averages for V-Dem and Polity are at roughly same levels, the V-Dem analysis puts levels of substantive democracy in Africa at a considerably lower point than that estimated for regular free and fair elections/executive competition by Polity IV.

Four additional trends are readily discernible. The first is the initial impetus of the third wave of democracy from 1990, and the second the continued impact of this third wave even after its levelling off in 1994. The third is a small decrease in the size of the gap between the average levels of democracy

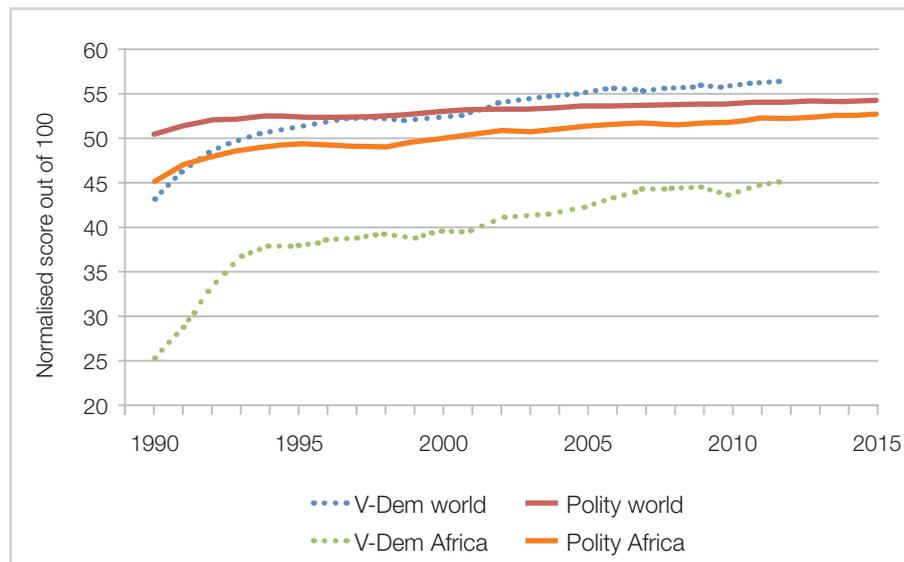
Although Freedom House releases a separate list of electoral democracies it does not release country scoring, only a yes/no list that was used to compile the data presented in Figure 4. The aggregate country scores that Freedom House releases include political and civil liberties and therefore roughly equates with the measure of a liberal democracy.

Source: Freedom House.

The EIU methodology culminates in a summary score on a scale from 1 to 10 as: 'full democracies (scoring from 8 to 10)'; 'flawed democracies (6 to 7.9)'; 'hybrid regimes (4 to 5.9)'; and 'authoritarian regimes (below 4)'. The EIU established its index in 2006 and annual updates only occurred since 2010.

Source: EIU.

**Figure 5: Polity and V-Dem – world and Africa**



Source: Center for Systemic Peace, V-Dem.

in Africa when compared to the global average, although this is more pronounced with Polity than V-Dem.

Finally, the global and African averages lie across the middle of the Polity score, classified as anocracies. These regimes are more susceptible to abrupt regime change and governance setbacks than countries that find themselves at the extremes of the Polity scores (full autocracies or full democracies). Since anocracies are less stable they can reduce growth. Thereafter the African average approaches the world average in the Polity measure at a more rapid rate than that seen in the V-Dem data.

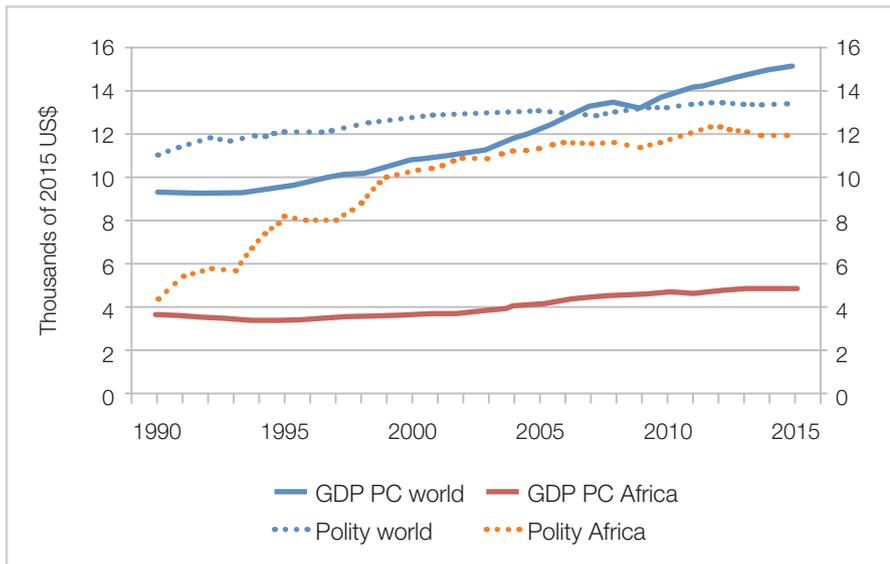
Anocracies are more susceptible to abrupt regime change and governance setbacks



AFRICA IS NOT GROWING RAPIDLY ENOUGH AS IMPROVEMENTS IN NATIONAL GDP ARE BEING OFFSET BY RAPID POPULATION GROWTH

Thus, according to Polity, the levels of democracy in Africa are slowly approaching the global average, while V-Dem points to a much larger gap, although also to (slower) convergence. This convergence is occurring despite the fact that the average level of GDP per capita in Africa (measured in either market exchange rate [MER] or purchasing power parity [PPP]) diverges from the global average (i.e. levels of income in Africa are growing more slowly than the global average). These trends are depicted in Figure 6, where the left-hand scale is average GDP per capita in 2015 PPP and the right-hand scale is the average Polity democracy score (presented here as ranging from 0, absolute monarchy, to 20, consolidated multiparty democracy). The main reason for this divergence is that levels of democracy in low-income countries have improved far more rapidly than those in middle-income African countries, since

**Figure 6: GDP per capita (PC) vs democracy**



Source: IFs v7.22.

the former begin from a lower baseline and therefore have greater potential for early gains. Africa is also not growing rapidly enough. Improvements in national GDP are being offset by rapid population growth, with the result that growth is not being translated into improvements in individual income.

In addition, over time the income level at which countries democratise has decreased, meaning that countries now transition to democracy at steadily lower levels of income than previously. This is likely because of the dominance of the liberal democratic West and the accompanying global example (or push) for democratisation as the most desirable governance model in an interconnected world where citizens can compare their domestic situation with that of people in other countries.

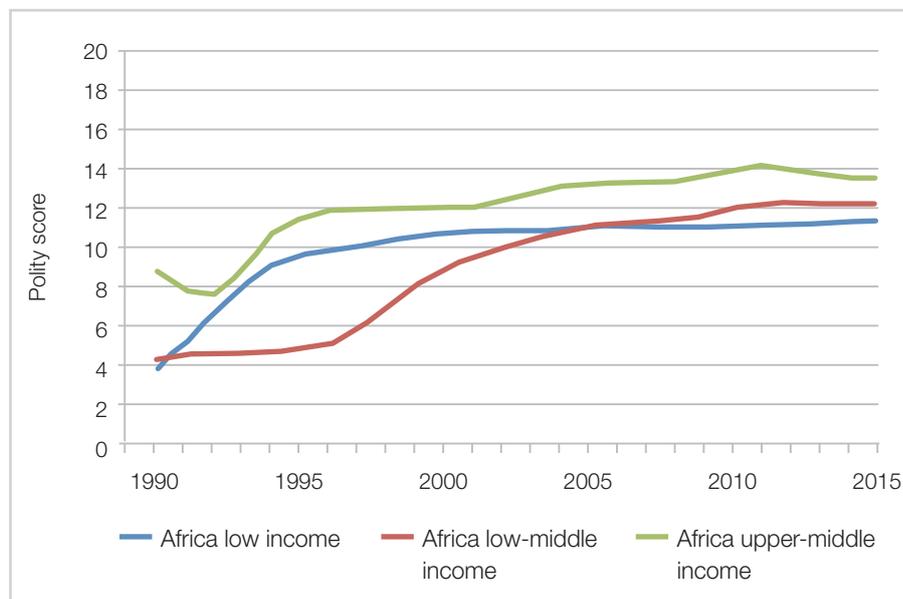
In the broader narrative that accompanies their datasets both the EIU and Freedom House (based on their civil liberties ratings) write about signs of a democratic regression. The Polity dataset presents a picture of a continued improvement in the number and quality of elections and competition for executive positions globally, including in Africa to 2015, while the V-Dem data to 2012 do not show a democratic regression.

Figure 7 illustrates that the Polity index score for countries classified as upper-middle income is consistently higher than for those countries that the World Bank classifies as low or lower-middle income. For the period 1991–2005 the levels of electoral democracy/competitive executive positions as measured by Polity in low-income countries were actually on average higher than in lower-middle-income countries. This also reflects the impact of external conditionalities from Africa’s largely Western-led development partners during this period. In addition, a number of African countries have graduated from one to another income group. The purported African Rising narrative in part illustrates the ability of some countries to advance to high levels of



COUNTRIES NOW TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY AT STEADILY LOWER LEVELS OF INCOME THAN PREVIOUSLY

Figure 7: Democracy in Africa by income group according to Polity



Note: The income groupings used for Africa (low, low-middle and upper-middle) exclude the two high-income countries, namely Equatorial Guinea and Seychelles.

Source: IFs v7.22.

income, even though this trend has been challenged by the recent declines in commodity prices.<sup>46</sup>

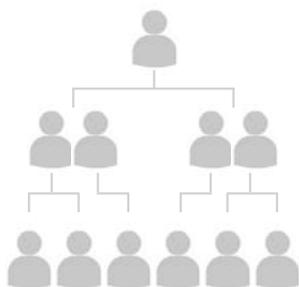
This section confirms that the four data series present roughly similar trend lines over time.<sup>47</sup>

A separate exercise was undertaken to compare country-level data over a single year. To this end the scores for V-Dem, Polity IV and the EIU were normalised out of a 100 average for the 48 countries in Africa that have scores from all three datasets. The average difference was found to be 6.<sup>48</sup> Additional analysis indicates that the scores for fragile states are more varied than those for low-, lower-middle- or upper-middle-income groups.<sup>49</sup>

The next section concludes the analysis of recent trends with a summary view of the current state of democracy in Africa.

### The status of democracy in Africa in summary

Democracy is not the dominant form of government in Africa. The EIU only considers nine African countries as either full or flawed democracies (see Figure 8A). According to Freedom House (Figure 4), 23 out of the 51 African states that it reviews were electoral democracies in 2015, although it only considers 10 as ‘free’ and 21 as ‘partly free’. According to Polity IV (see Figure 8B), only 21 out of the 53 African countries included in its data were democracies in 2015, constituting roughly 38% of Africa’s population. This score is made significantly more generous by the fact that Nigeria (with an estimated 182 million people) was classified as democratic for the first time in 2015, a change that increases the number of Africans living in democracies from a proportion that would otherwise be only 22.5%.



DEMOCRACY IS NOT THE  
DOMINANT FORM OF  
GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA

Figure 8A: EIU democracy index – countries and population

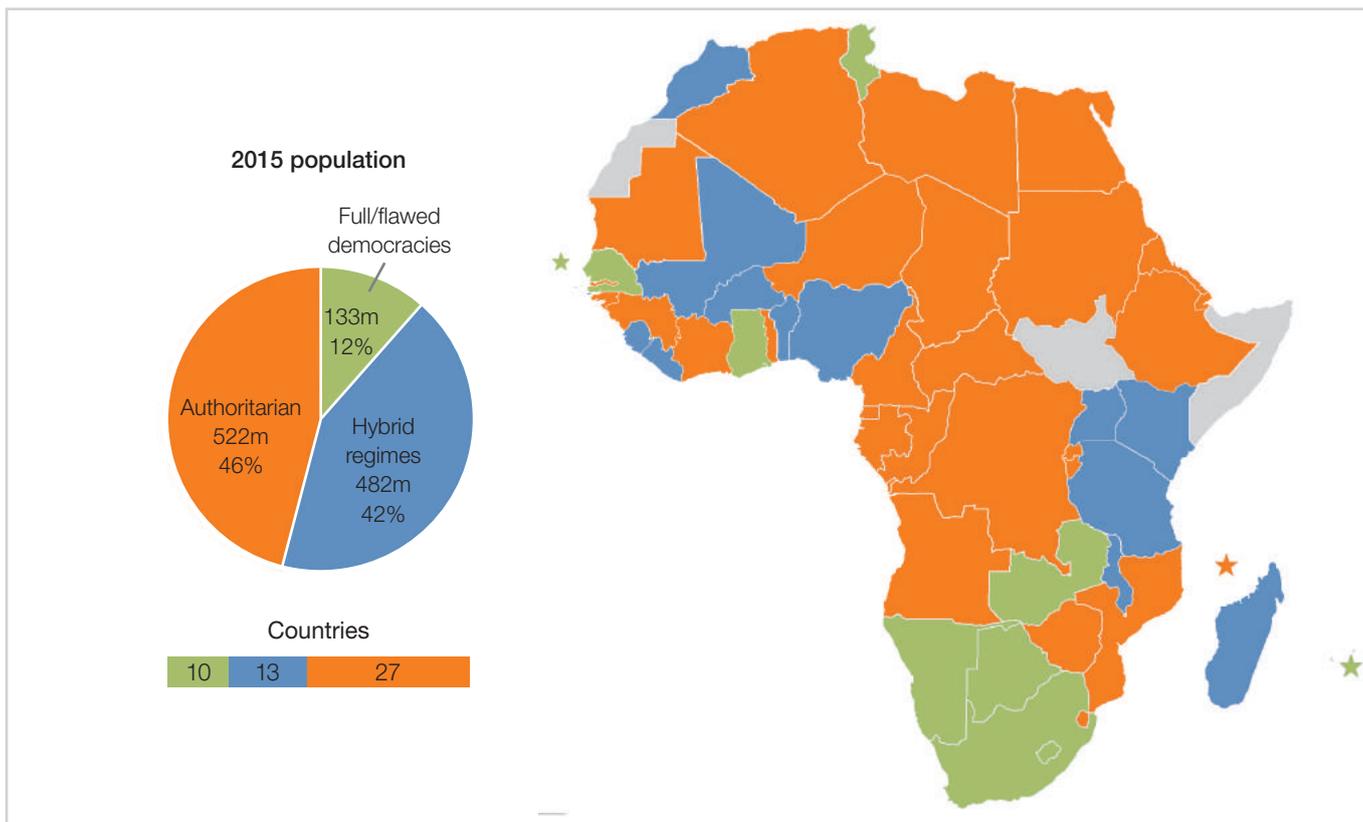
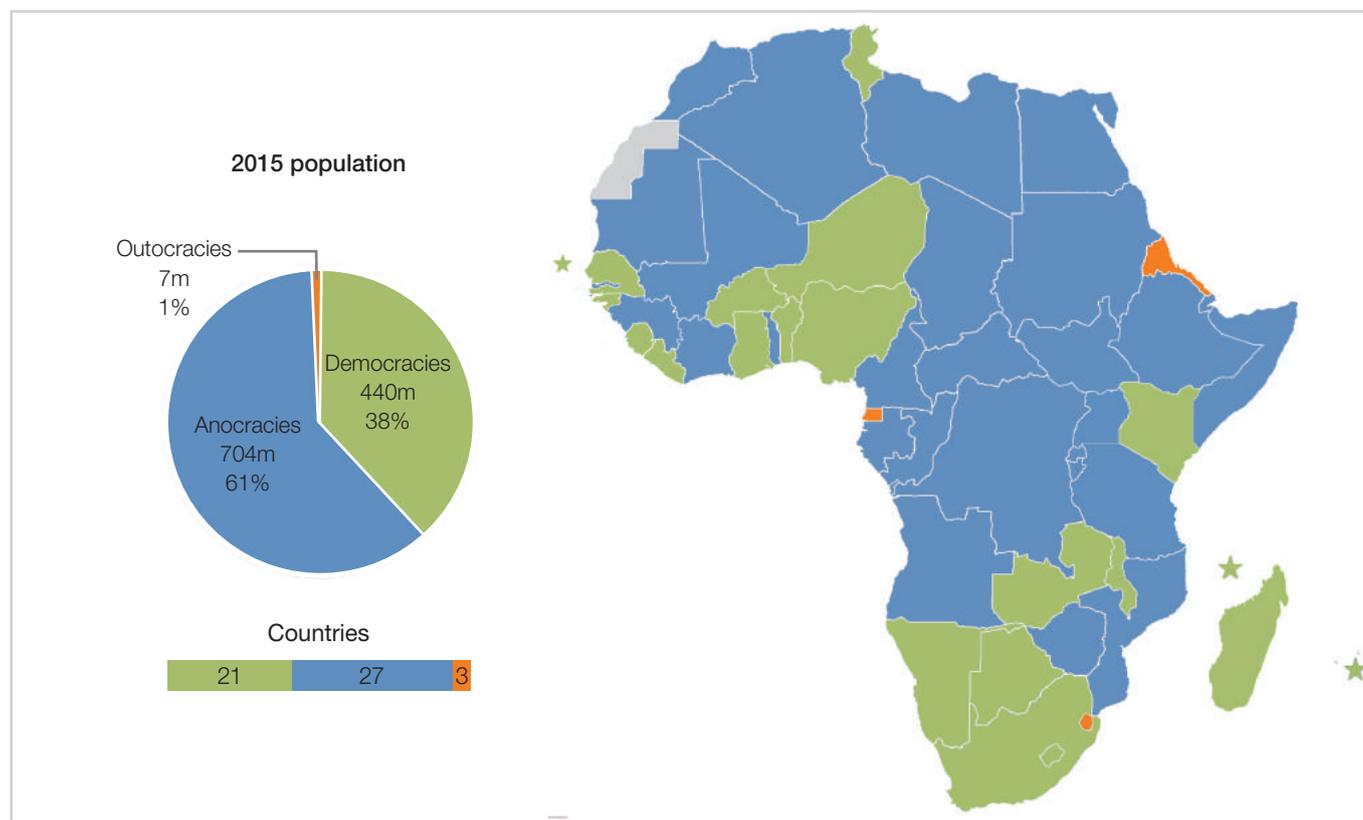


Figure 8A: Polity index – countries and population



Source: EIU, Center for Systemic Peace, IFS v7.22.

Collectively these four indices tell an optimistic story of increased levels of democracy in Africa over time, but a relatively pessimistic story in terms of current coverage, i.e. the number of countries and people experiencing democracy. As mentioned previously, views on a recent democratic regression are mixed.

This is certainly good news for Africa, for, once established and in conjunction with minimum income levels and education, democracy is the most stable form of governance – but the road ahead is long. Thus Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shleifer find that: ‘Averaging across the starting years 1960, 1970 and 1980, the probability of a well-educated democracy remaining a democracy twenty years later is 95 percent. The probability of a well-educated dictatorship becoming a democracy within 20 years is 87 percent.’<sup>50</sup>

We next turn to future prospects.

### **A fourth wave or a regression?**

Many analysts hailed the so-called Arab Spring that started in Tunisia at the end of 2010 as the start of a fourth wave of democratisation, since it originated in the region with the lowest levels of political and economic inclusion globally. Today the rise of terrorism, the impact of the US invasion of Iraq, the continued impact of the 2008 global financial crisis and the influence of an authoritarian China that competes for global influence with the West have turned that early optimism into deep democratic pessimism. Certainly the situation in Libya, Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa is worse than before.

Even in some of the richest and most politically stable regions in the world, it seems as though democracy is in a state of serious disrepair

In addition, the future of democracy in the developed world appears set to evolve in uncertain ways. The 2016 EIU democracy index notes

the threat to democracy emanating from the fearful mood of our times, which informs the reactions of ordinary people and political elites alike. An increased sense of personal and societal anxiety and insecurity in the face of diverse perceived risks and threats – economic, political, social and security – is undermining democracy, which depends on a steadfast commitment to upholding enlightenment values (liberty, equality, fraternity, reason, tolerance and free expression) and fostering democratic institutions and a democratic political culture.<sup>51</sup>

In a recent issue of the *Journal of Democracy* Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk go as far as to question the durability of the world’s affluent, consolidated democracies, noting that ‘trust in political institutions such as parliaments or the courts have precipitously declined ... as has voter turnout,



THE ARAB SPRING HAS BEEN  
HAILED BY SOME AS THE  
START OF A FOURTH WAVE  
OF DEMOCRATISATION

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party identification has weakened and party membership has declined'. Today, they argue, in these societies 'voters increasingly endorse single-issue movements, vote for populist candidates, or support "antisystem" parties ... Even in some of the richest and most politically stable regions in the world, it seems as though democracy is in a state of serious disrepair.'<sup>52</sup> Thus the two authors refer to 'structural problems in the functioning of liberal democracy'.<sup>53</sup> Drawing on survey data from the World Values Survey (conducted from 1995–2014) they find a crisis of democratic legitimacy among younger generations of voters in North America and Europe that is much wider than previously appreciated. Having no experience of life without democracy and no memory of the struggles to secure and sustain it, young voters in the industrial democracies of the West are not politically engaged and increasingly politically apathetic. Voter turnout is falling, political party membership has plummeted and support for distinctly undemocratic regime forms is on the rise. Instead of its consolidating, the authors believe that democracy in the rich West may be under threat of 'deconsolidating'.

The relative decline of the West could see a commensurate reduction in the impetus towards democratisation

It is, however, still early days to speak of a crisis of democracy in the industrialised West. While it seems apparent that political parties and traditional politics face serious challenges it is not necessarily democracy itself. The importance of single issues, increased demonstrations and protests appears to reflect a change in the sociology of political parties and their relationship to voters, with uncertain outcomes, but it is doubtful that this translates into a regime-type crisis.

However, the demonstration effect of the West has a strong impact on behaviour elsewhere, particularly in Africa, which had been colonised by the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Belgium and Germany. As a result, democratic deconsolidation would have a negative impact in Africa since the example from these countries (and the strong relationship between many African countries and the European Union) resonates strongly on the continent. In addition, one can argue that the relative decline of the West could see a commensurate reduction in the impetus towards democratisation, as the impact of global leadership by established liberal democracies becomes less evident against the example (and influence) of successful authoritarian development models such as China. In addition, as Western domination of institutions such as the UN Security Council and support for civil society and pro-democracy advocacy groups weaken, pro-democracy pressure is declining.

On the other hand, democracy in some form or another is rapidly becoming the dominant type of governance globally (although it still has a long way to



DEMOCRACY IN SOME FORM OR ANOTHER IS RAPIDLY BECOMING THE DOMINANT TYPE OF GOVERNANCE GLOBALLY

go in Africa) and the pressure for change in authoritarian development states (including China) is increasing. More importantly, the push for greater democratisation in Africa comes from a citizenry that has been poorly served by authoritarianism. Although electoral democracy has hardly delivered better results, the process of being consulted and having the power to effect changes in leadership reshapes the dynamics of power and the perception of accountability. There is strong support for electoral democracy in the results presented by successive rounds of the Afrobarometer opinion surveys, which regularly measure the demand and supply of democracy, among others, in 35 African countries.<sup>54</sup> Despite the poor empirical relationship between development and democracy, Africans are tired of autocrats and big men. They want the ability to replace their leaders and the promise that this could translate into improved human development outcomes.<sup>55</sup>

### Scenarios

Against the preceding background this section presents two illustrative scenarios, namely a global **Fourth Wave** of democracy and a global **Authoritarian Regress** to 2070 using the IFs forecasting system.<sup>56</sup> IFs is a global system dynamics model that integrates data and outcomes across development systems, developed by and hosted at the Frederick S Pardee Center for International Futures, University of Denver.<sup>57</sup> Among its 3 000 datasets, IFs incorporates and forecasts the Polity measure of democracy. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, Polity is a composite index that codes the

authority characteristics of states ranging from hereditary monarchy (-10) to consolidated democracy (+10) and was not originally conceived as a measure of democracy, although it includes regular elections as part of the coding of democracies and is widely used for this purpose.

The push for greater democratisation in Africa comes from a citizenry that has been poorly served by authoritarianism

Based on their analysis of the evolution of governance in the period 1960–2010 within IFs, Hughes et al. found that democratic waves could have magnitudes (trough to crest) of as much as 6 points on the 20-point Polity scale, and that that downward shifts tend to be only one-third, i.e. two points on the Polity scale.<sup>58</sup> The upward or pro-democracy impetus of the successive waves of democratisation is therefore historically much stronger than the reverse, in line with the view that fundamentals such as improved levels of education, urbanisation and income are likely to lead to sustained pressure for more democracy in Africa and elsewhere in the world.<sup>59</sup>

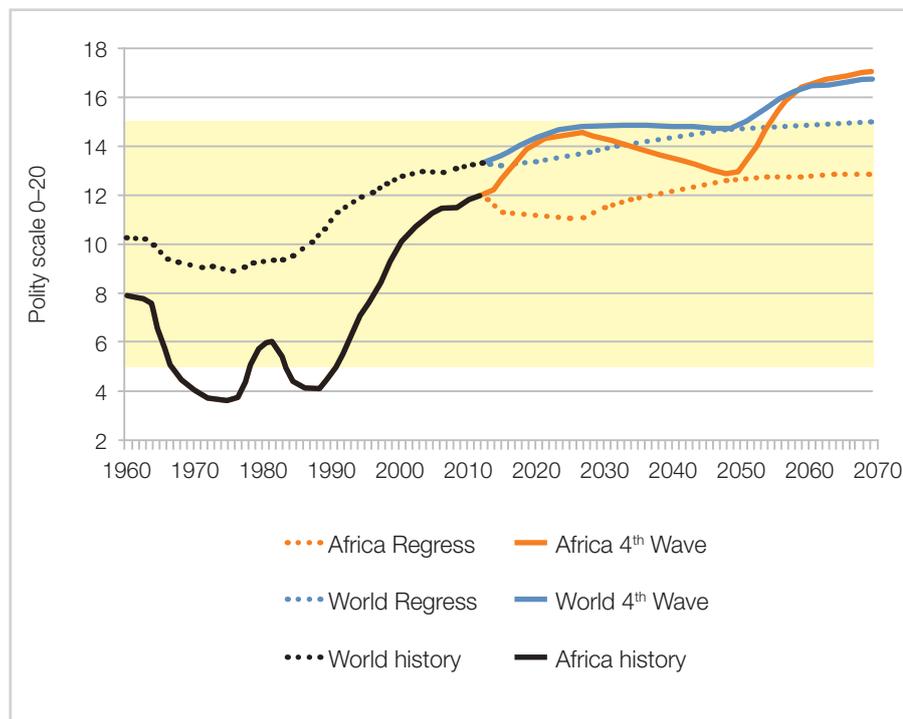
Figure 9 presents the Polity index of democracy in Africa and the world from 1960 (which was also presented earlier in Figure 3), but then adds in a forecast to 2070 for each of the two scenarios with a maximum amplitude of 6 for the Fourth Wave and a maximum amplitude of 2 for the Authoritarian Regress. Coming off a lower base, the average levels of democracy in Africa have

#### The IFs forecast is driven by the following formulations:

- The impact of more or less gender empowerment (Hughes replaces adult years of education with a Gender Empowerment Measure that he found to have a slight further advantage [which is itself strongly influenced by adult education]).
- The size of the population 15 to 29 years old divided by the total population, to determine the size of the youth bulge.
- The proportion of energy exports as a component of total exports (a high proportion dampens the prospects for democracy). To mimic this impact, IFs uses an algebraic formula that combines energy exports in billion barrels of oil equivalent, energy price per barrel and GDP in billion constant 2011 dollars market price to mimic the negative impact of a high dependence on energy exports (such as oil and/or gas) as a share of GDP.
- The correlation between democracy and income levels. This correlation is strong and the forecast uses the historical relationship between average income (GDP per capita) and democracy levels globally. The impact of this relationship is to nudge levels of democracy towards the average level of democracy for countries at similar levels of income over time.

Source: IFs help system.

**Figure 9: Polity history and forecast**



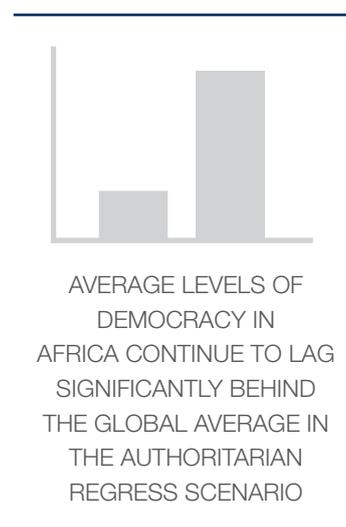
Note: Scores are presented using a five-year moving average. The Polity range for the unstable anocratic regime type is coloured light yellow.

Source: Polity data and forecast in IFs v7.22.

greater oscillations than in the global average. The general upward trend towards higher levels of electoral democracy is evident when reading the left-hand Polity scale, represented here from 0 to 20 (instead of -10 to +10 as was done in Figure 3). Over time the average levels of democracy in Africa graduate from the unstable anocratic regime type (light yellow) to the more stable democratic regime type.

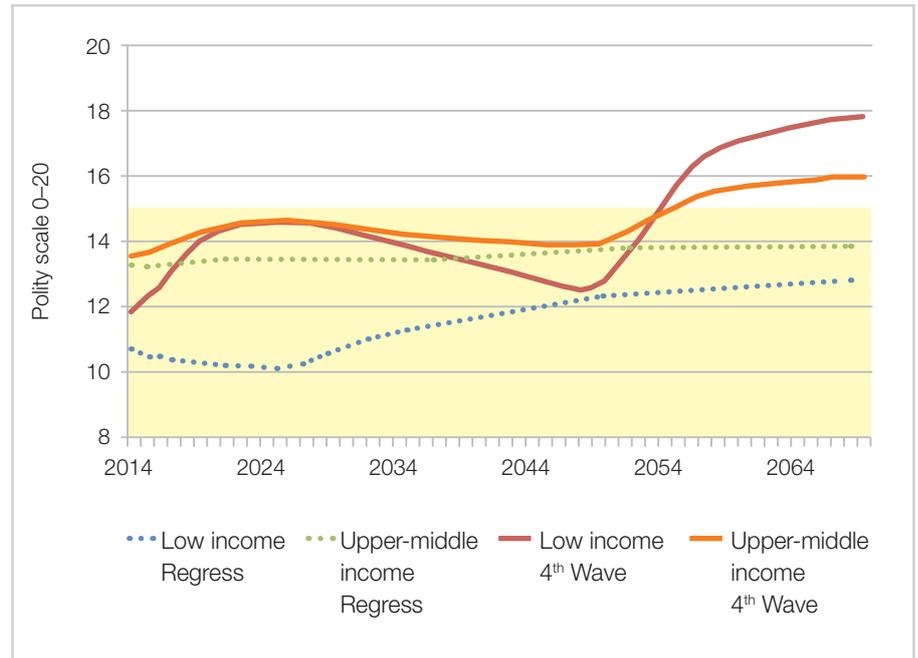
In the Authoritarian Regress scenario average levels of democracy in Africa continue to lag significantly behind the global average. In the Fourth Wave scenario the average levels of democracy in Africa vary, but improve significantly towards the end of the forecast period, approaching the global average.

The impact of the improvements and decreases in democracy differs among Africa's low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries. Low-income countries are forecast to experience larger fluctuations than others. Upper-middle-income countries experience the smallest fluctuations. Figure 10 presents these two scenarios with average levels of electoral democracy for Africa's current low-income and upper-middle-income countries. Towards the end of the forecast period the levels of democracy in those countries currently categorised as low income have improved substantially. By this time many of these countries will also have graduated from their current low-income status to lower-middle or even upper-middle-income status. The unstable anocratic regime type is again coloured light yellow.



AVERAGE LEVELS OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA CONTINUE TO LAG SIGNIFICANTLY BEHIND THE GLOBAL AVERAGE IN THE AUTHORITARIAN REGRESS SCENARIO

Figure 10: Africa forecast – low- vs upper-middle-income countries



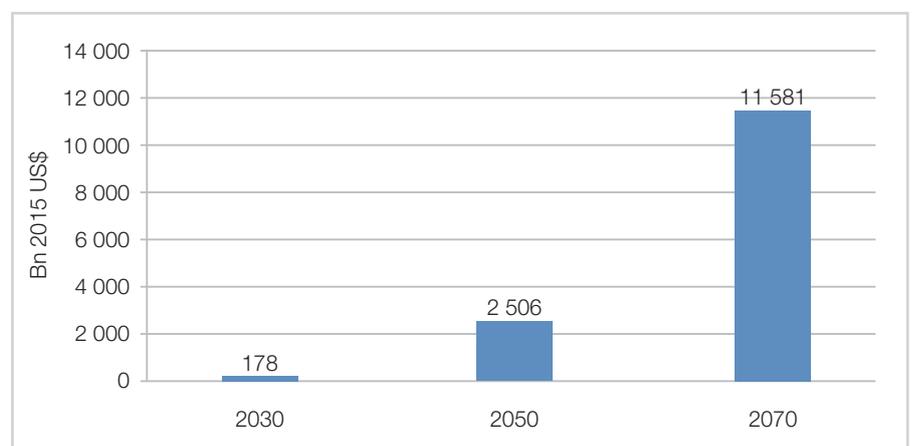
Note: To avoid clutter, lower-middle-income countries have not been included in this graph. Scores are presented using a five-year moving average. The Polity range for the unstable anocratic regime type is coloured light yellow.

Source: IFs v7.22.

Following the work of Gerring et al. and Knutsen et al. referred to in an earlier section, each of these scenarios has important economic and developmental outcomes. The previous discussion noted that if the requirements for clean and competitive national elections are met, electoral democracy has a robust relationship with economic growth (including, therefore, average income) and human development.<sup>60</sup>

Figure 11 compares the difference in GDP (in MER) between the Fourth Wave and the Authoritarian Regress scenarios for 2030, 2050 and 2070. In the

Figure 11: Difference in GDP (MER) between scenarios



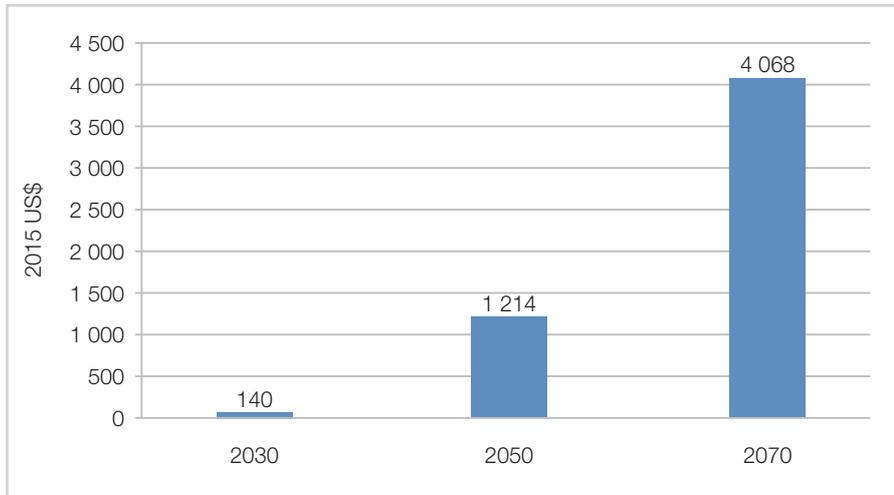
Source: IFs v 7.24.

IN THE FOURTH WAVE SCENARIO, AFRICA WOULD HAVE A GDP THAT IS

50% LARGER

BY 2070 THAN IN THE AUTHORITARIAN REGRESS SCENARIO

**Figure 12: Difference in GDP per capita between scenarios**



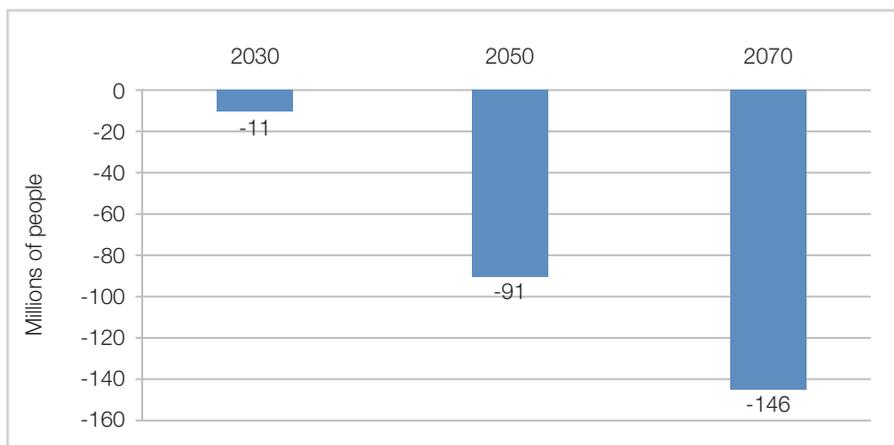
Source: IFs v 7.24.

case of the Fourth Wave, Africa would have a GDP that is 4% (US\$ 178 bn) larger by 2030, 23% (US\$ 2 506 bn) larger by 2050 and a whopping 50% (US\$ 11 581 bn) larger by 2070 than would be the case with the Authoritarian Regress scenario.

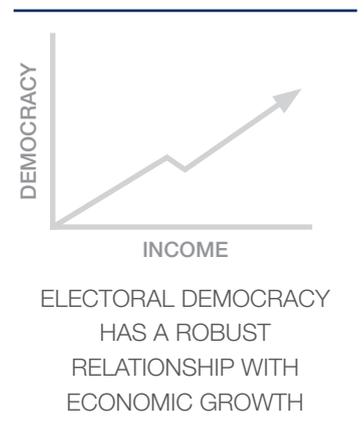
Figure 12 compares the difference in GDP per capita between the Fourth Wave and the Authoritarian Regress scenarios for 2030, 2050 and 2070. In the case of the Fourth Wave, Africans would have an average GDP per capita (in 2015 US\$ PPP) that is 2% (US\$ 140) higher than the Authoritarian Regress scenario by 2030, 15% (US\$ 1 214) higher by 2050 and 36% (US\$ 4 068) higher by 2070.

Figure 13 shifts the focus to human development issues. Using the updated extreme poverty line of US\$1.90 per person per day, the Fourth Wave scenario would see 11 million (or 2%) fewer Africans living in extreme poverty by 2030 compared to the Authoritarian Regress scenario. By

**Figure 13: Difference in absolute poverty numbers between scenarios**



Source: IFs v 7.24.



2050 17% (91 million) fewer Africans would be classified as living in extreme poverty, and by 2070 33% (or 146 million) fewer Africans. These are impressive results that signal the impact that greater government effectiveness and appropriate policies would have on Africa's large poverty burden, although over long time horizons.

In summary, the electoral component of democracy (in the sense of clean, competitive elections) has a positive impact upon economic growth (and therefore on total GDP and GDP per capita over long time horizons) as well as on indicators such as absolute poverty levels. When this impact is disaggregated by country income groups, it becomes apparent that the impact is larger on upper-middle-income than low-income countries.

The electoral component of democracy has a positive impact upon economic growth as well as on indicators such as absolute poverty levels

Clean, competitive elections improve government effectiveness and, in combination with appropriate policies, therefore improve economic and developmental outcomes across a range of outcomes.

## Conclusion

This paper started with a brief overview of the relationship between democracy, economic growth, good governance and human development. At the early stages of development, where many African states currently find themselves, the relationship is weak. As countries go up the income and social-economic complexity curve the relationship strengthens and eventually clean elections, an elected executive, broad suffrage, free association and free expression (the five key tenets of electoral democracy) are collectively positively associated with human development. However, few African countries can currently claim this benefit.

There is therefore potential for a larger human developmental benefit from democracy in Africa further down the line, with democracy able to make a more substantive contribution to sustaining growth and improving human development. The scenarios modelled in this paper indicate that, on average, Africa would experience a 0.5% increase in economic growth under the Fourth Wave scenario compared to the Authoritarian Regress scenario over the period to 2070. That said, Africa grows under all scenarios but more rapidly in the Fourth Wave scenario.

Despite the positive relationship between electoral democracy and improved human development, democracy in much of Africa is constrained from delivering upon its potential due to the extent to which patrimonialism has accompanied (and frustrated) key aspects of democratisation, such as regular, free, fair and contested elections. Many countries go through the motions

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---

of regular elections with little apparent improvement in the substantive nature of democracy or in the turnover of governing elites. Due to the changing global power balance, rigged elections in Africa today also face fewer international penalties than before. Although this is not an issue explored in any depth in this paper, African observers such as those from the African Union (AU) and the various regional economic communities consistently prioritise stability in pronouncing on election processes, favouring the incumbent elite rather than their challengers.

Progress in human development in most of Africa's low-income countries is often determined by considerations such as the strength and cohesion of the governing party and associated state capacity, rather than electoral democracy. The paper also noted the extent to which neopatrimonialism has been able to coexist with the processes of democratisation in Africa and the extent to which the core notions of electoral democracy (such as clean elections and free expression) are often frustrated.

### The limited democratisation that Africa currently experiences has barely altered the conditions of most Africans

A comparison between four democracy indices to determine trends and the extent of democracy in Africa provides a source of comfort, reflecting steadily improved levels in democracy since the end of the Cold War. Africa is slowly becoming more democratic, but even the most generous categorisation, by Polity, indicates that only 21 out of 53 countries included in the dataset are electoral democracies of various types and hues, constituting roughly 38% of the continent's population. Levels of freedom and substantive democracy are much lower. Country-level differences between the indices were calculated at an average of six in either direction on a 100-point score, and can partly be explained by the different conceptualisations of democracy (or authority) measured, as well as by the challenges in 'measuring' democracy in conflict-torn fragile states. There is some dispute on more recent trends regarding the onset of a global (or African) democratic regression although the analysis leans towards a likely global regression.

The long-term trend on democracy in Africa will likely continue to be positive despite the potential onset of democratic regression globally. Waves have troughs and peaks, and a democratic regression will likely be followed by a democratic wave that will raise the high-water mark of democracy globally, as humanity continues to advance on the road to greater prosperity, health and knowledge. Unforeseen events such as a global pandemic or nuclear war can, of course, undo any effort at looking to the future.

The limited democratisation that Africa currently experiences has barely altered the conditions of most Africans, who still endure high poverty levels and social marginalisation. In addition, in most of Africa democratisation has not resolved the age-long problems of ethnicity, regionalism and class. While not growing rapidly enough, Africa's prospects have, however, changed significantly for the better in recent years.

In his lucid study on health, wealth and the origins of inequality, Princeton economist and Nobel laureate Angus Deaton includes democracy as part of the pursuit of wellbeing,

the things that ... make for a good life. Wellbeing includes material wellbeing, such as income and wealth; physical and psychological wellbeing, represented by health and happiness; and education and the ability to participate in civil society through democracy and the rule of law.<sup>61</sup>

Deaton includes democracy in his description of wellbeing because it is the only regime type that allows for greater self- and collective fulfilment for the citizens of states, irrespective of geography, religion or culture. Coming at this from a very different perspective, the World Values Survey similarly finds the 'desire for free choice and autonomy is a universal human aspiration'.<sup>62</sup>

It is therefore apt to conclude that, beyond contributions to economic growth and human development, the purpose and contribution of democracy is to additionally allow for individual and collective self-actualisation. Democracy advances human wellbeing and plays an important role in sustaining growth and stability. Its future in Africa appears positive despite efforts by governing elites to often frustrate its substantive progress.

## Notes

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- be explained by the fact that when a country measures badly all measures are poor, but with a bit of improvement the Polity measure increases more rapidly than that of V-Dem.
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## About the African Futures Project

The African Futures Project is a collaboration between the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. The African Futures Project uses the International Futures (IFs) model to produce forward-looking, policy-relevant analysis based on exploration of possible trajectories for human development, economic growth and socio-political change in Africa under varying policy environments over the next four decades.

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