

# Review of: "Against Jump-Starting Western-Type Democracy on Africa's Socio-Political Tarmac"

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The article "Against Jump-Starting Western-Type Democracy on Africa's Socio-Political Tarmac" presents a thought-provoking critique of the imposition of Western-style democracy in Africa. The author uses the metaphor of "jump-starting" to describe how external democratic models, especially those influenced by European colonizers, have been forced upon African political systems, often with disastrous results. While the article effectively raises important questions about the appropriateness of Western democracy in African contexts, it also struggles with coherence and depth in its theoretical and historical analysis. This review will engage critically with the strengths and weaknesses of the article, focusing on the argument's structure, evidence, and conceptual framework.

## Structure and Coherence

One of the article's most notable strengths is its use of metaphor, which immediately sets the tone for a critical discussion on the relationship between Africa and Western democracy. The comparison of Africa's political terrain to an "inclined tarmac" and Western democracy to a "malfunctioning vehicle" provides a vivid and easily relatable image for readers. This metaphor highlights the difficulties Africa faces in adopting a democratic system that does not align with its historical and cultural realities.

However, the structure of the article is problematic. After a promising introduction, the author shifts from one argument to another without a clear roadmap. While the introduction sets up the metaphor and the main question — whether Africa should adopt Western-style democracy or return to its own traditions — the subsequent sections lack a coherent flow. For instance, the discussion on the etymology of democracy, while informative, feels disconnected from the article's central thesis. It is as if the author wanted to include as much historical context as possible, but without sufficiently connecting these points to the broader argument.

The article would have benefited from a more organized structure where the history of Western democracy, African traditional governance systems, and the critique of modern African political structures were systematically linked to the central thesis. The over-reliance on metaphors and the frequent shifts in focus detract from the article's overall coherence.

## Conceptual Framework and Definitions

The article rightly points out that the notion of democracy, especially in its Western form, is Eurocentric and has been

inappropriately applied to African contexts. The critique of democracy's etymological and historical origins is valid; however, the article could have engaged more deeply with alternative political theories that critique the universality of Western democratic models. Concepts such as cultural relativism or post-colonial theory would have strengthened the article's position.

The author's exploration of African traditional governance as a form of democracy, while intriguing, remains underdeveloped. For instance, the mention of pre-colonial African systems such as the Oyo Empire and its parallels to Western democratic ideals is a valuable contribution, but the discussion remains superficial. The article does not provide sufficient comparative analysis of how these traditional systems functioned in practice, nor does it consider whether they could truly serve as viable alternatives to modern democracy in Africa today. The suggestion that Africans should return to these traditional systems seems overly idealistic without a more nuanced exploration of their feasibility in the contemporary political landscape.

Moreover, the term "democracy" is problematically essentialized throughout the article. While the author attempts to deconstruct the concept by tracing its Western origins, they do not fully explore the diverse forms democracy can take. For example, there is little discussion of hybrid democratic models or how democratic principles might be adapted to fit African contexts. Instead, the author implies a binary choice between Western democracy and traditional African governance, which oversimplifies the complex spectrum of political possibilities.

## Historical Analysis

The historical analysis presented in the article is ambitious but suffers from a lack of depth and precision. The discussion on ancient Greek democracy, for example, raises legitimate questions about Eurocentric historical narratives, but the critique lacks specificity. The article could have expanded on how Western political thought, particularly during the Enlightenment, constructed the notion of democracy as a universal ideal and how this has influenced post-colonial governance in Africa. Such an exploration would have provided a more robust critique of the imposition of Western democratic norms on African societies.

In addition, the article's historical treatment of African governance systems is uneven. While the author mentions several pre-colonial African states, including the Oyo Empire, Sokoto Caliphate, and Ashanti Kingdom, these examples are not thoroughly examined. The article would have benefited from a more detailed discussion of how these systems balanced power, maintained accountability, or incorporated elements of public participation. Furthermore, the transition from traditional governance to colonial rule is treated too briefly, leaving the reader with an incomplete understanding of how colonialism disrupted these systems and replaced them with Western models.

The reference to Nigeria's colonial history and post-independence challenges is one of the article's more compelling sections. The author effectively highlights how artificial colonial boundaries, ethnic divisions, and the imposition of foreign political structures have contributed to Nigeria's political instability. However, the article misses an opportunity to engage with the broader implications of these colonial legacies for other African nations. The discussion could have been

expanded to include a more comparative analysis of how different African countries have navigated the tension between indigenous governance systems and Western democratic models.

## Evidence and Argumentation

The article's argumentation is uneven, and its use of evidence is sporadic. While the author draws on historical examples and some scholarly references, these are often presented in a cursory manner without sufficient critical engagement. For instance, the reference to Chinua Achebe's proverb about the lion and the hunter is powerful but not fully integrated into the article's larger argument. Similarly, the discussion of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's concept of "decolonizing the mind" is insightful but is not explored in depth.

The article's conclusion, which calls for a return to traditional African governance systems, is provocative but ultimately unconvincing. The author does not provide a clear plan for how these systems could be re-implemented in the modern African state. Moreover, the article does not address the practical challenges of reviving traditional governance structures in the face of contemporary political, economic, and social realities. While the critique of Western democracy is compelling, the proposed solution lacks the necessary detail and theoretical grounding to be persuasive.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, "Against Jump-Starting Western-Type Democracy on Africa's Socio-Political Tarmac" raises important questions about the imposition of Western democracy in African contexts. The article's metaphorical framing and critique of Eurocentrism are valuable contributions to the debate on democracy and post-colonial governance. However, the article suffers from structural weaknesses, underdeveloped arguments, and a lack of depth in its historical and theoretical analysis. A more organized and nuanced approach, coupled with a deeper engagement with post-colonial theory and African political thought, would have strengthened the article's argument. While the author's call for a return to traditional African governance systems is provocative, it remains an idealistic proposition that requires more rigorous examination to be taken seriously in the current political discourse.