

## Democratization of Politics

Paul A. Adekunle<sup>1</sup>, Matthew N. O. Sadiku<sup>2</sup>, Janet O. Sadiku<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>International Institute of Professional Security, Lagos, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Roy G. Perry College of Engineering, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX, USA

<sup>3</sup>Juliana King University, Houston, TX, USA

### ABSTRACT

The democratization of politics refers to the process by which political systems become more democratic, that is, how they become more inclusive, participatory, accountable, and representative of the people. In this sense, democratization of politics would involve free and fair elections, political participation, rule of law and civil liberties, separation of powers and checks and balances, accountability and transparency, pluralism and political competition. Usually democratization involves transitioning from systems such as military rule, monarchies, single-party states, and colonial governments to systems where power is held by the people, typically through elected representatives. In this paper, we will look into the challenges and the benefits of democratization of politics to man.

**KEYWORDS:** *Democratization, types of democracies, regimes, hybrid regime, politics, democratic backsliding, rule of law, civil liberties, free and fair elections, democratic norms, accountability and transparency, pluralism, political competition, political participation, separation of powers, checks and balances.*

### INTRODUCTION

Democratization is the process by which a political regime changes from a non-democratic (authoritarian, single party, military, etc.) to a democratic one [1], as shown in Figure 1. This is not just the holding of elections: it involves establishing democratic norms, rule of law, civil liberties, free and fair elections, separation of powers, accountability and transparency, pluralism and political competition, political participation, checks and balances, etc. [1]. It therefore follows that democratization of politics is the process by which political systems evolve from authoritarian or undemocratic rule towards greater public participation, representation, and respect for rights and freedoms, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The historical overview of democratic politics is as outlined below:

#### 1. Ancient Greece (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE)

Perhaps the first well-documented instance of democracy in history was in Athens. Around 594 BCE Solon's reforms was geared towards participatory government. Around 508-507 BCE, the

reforms of Cleisthenes reorganized the political structure, creating institutions that allowed broader citizen participation [2].

Athenian democracy was direct: male citizens (excluding women, slaves, non-citizens) could attend the assembly (ekklesia), vote on laws, and serve in certain public offices [3].

#### 2. Rome and early Republican Models

In Rome, republican institutions (senate, popular assemblies) provided another early model of political participation – though different from modern democracy in terms of who counted as “citizen,” property qualifications, etc [2].

#### 3. Medieval and early Modern developments

Over centuries, various European political systems evolved that incorporated some democratic elements: consultative assemblies, local councils, and parliaments.

Key events include Magna Carta (1215) in England, which limited royal power and established the idea that rulers are bound by law [3].

**How to cite this paper:** Paul A. Adekunle | Matthew N. O. Sadiku | Janet O. Sadiku "Democratization of Politics" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-10 | Issue-1, February 2026, pp.1042-1046, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd100165.pdf



Copyright © 2026 by author (s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



The English Civil War (mid-1600s), and the Glorious Revolution (1688), further entrenched parliamentary authority and rule of law [4].

#### Enlightenment & Revolutionary Age

##### 4. Enlightenment Thought

17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers (Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, etc.) developed ideas about natural rights, separation of powers, social contract, etc., which undergirded modern democratic theory [4].

##### 5. Age of Revolutions

Late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries:

- American Revolution (1776) 'n U. S. Constitution (1787/1788), establishment of representative institutions and a bill of rights [5].
- French Revolution (from 1789) 'n Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen; struggles over democracy, monarchy, and republicanism [4].

##### 6. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Expansion & Liberalism

Throughout the 1800s, many European countries experienced pressures for liberal reforms: expansion of suffrage (often limited at first by property or tax qualifications), the creation of more representative parliaments, and constitutional monarchies [4].

Revolutions of 1830, 1848 in Europe (especially in continental Europe) are key moments: people demanding national self-determination, constitutional limits on rulers, civil liberties [4].

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Century & Universal Suffrage

##### 7. Post-World Wars & Democratization

After WW I, some empires collapsed, new republics appeared in Europe. The interwar period saw both democratic experiments and reversals (rise of authoritarian regimes) [4].

After WW II, there was a stronger wave of democratization: decolonization, establishment of democratic states in many regions, greater recognition of human rights [4].

##### 8. Universal Suffrage

As time went on, the right to vote was extended to all adult men, then women, then eliminating property or status restrictions. This was a major transformation from earlier limited franchise systems [5].

#### Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century & Third Wave

##### 9. Third Wave of Democratization (Huntington)

From the mid 1970s onward, many countries in Latin America, Southern Europe (Spain, Greece, Portugal), Asia, and Africa moved from authoritarian regimes to democratic governments [6].

Also, the end of the Cold War triggered a major expansion of democracies in Eastern Europe, Soviet republics, etc. [4].

#### Contemporary Challenges & Transformations

##### 10. Hybrid Regimes and Backsliding

Not all transitions lead to stable, liberal democracies. Some states adopt democratic forms (elections), but limit rights, concentrate power, reduce checks and balances.

Recent scholarship notes democratic backsliding (i.e. decline in democratic norms), erosion of institutions, populism, challenges from misinformation, and polarization [7], as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

##### 11. Global Spread & Persistence

Democracy has spread to most parts of the world, though with varying quality and types [4].

There is also ongoing tension between formal democracies and substantive democracy (whether people's rights, equality, participation are meaningfully realized) [8, 9], as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

#### **BENEFITS OF DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICS**

Some of the benefits of democratization of politics include the following [10-12]:

1. Increased citizen participation: Democratization empowers citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process, either directly or through elected representatives, leading to a more inclusive and representative government.
2. Protection of human rights: Democratic systems tend to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and press.
3. Promoting accountability: Democratization promotes accountability and transparency in government, as elected officials are held accountable for their actions by citizens and the media.
4. Reducing corruption: Democratic systems tend to have lower levels of corruption, as institutions and mechanisms are in place to prevent abuse of power and ensure accountability.
5. Encouraging economic growth: Democratization can lead to economic growth, as democratic institutions and the rule of law create a stable and predictable environment for investment and entrepreneurship.
6. Fostering peace and stability: Democratic systems tend to be more peaceful and stable, as conflicts are resolved through dialogue and compromise rather than violence.
7. Promoting social justice: Democratization can also lead to greater social justice, as marginalized

groups gain a voice and are able to advocate for their rights and interests.

8. Empowering marginalized groups: Democratization can help empower marginalized groups like women, minorities, and indigenous peoples, by giving them a voice and representation in the political process.
9. Improving governance: Democratization can lead to better governance, as democratic institutions and mechanisms promote transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to citizens' needs.

## CHALLENGES AND THE SOLUTIONS TO DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICS

Democratization of politics faces several challenges, which include the following [13, 14]:

1. Weak civil society: Democracy requires a high level of civil society engagement, but many African countries struggle with low levels of literacy, economic instability, and limited civic participation.
2. Elite politics: In many African countries, politics is dominated by special interest groups or individuals with superior intellectual, social, and economic status, which undermines the principles of democracy.
3. Ethnicity, religion, and nepotism: Ethnic and religious differences can lead to conflicts and favoritism, while nepotism can lead to unequal distribution of resources and opportunities.
4. Diminished state sovereignty: External pressures and conditionality imposed by international organizations and foreign powers can limit the policy choices available to democratically elected governments.
5. Economic dependency: The dependency on external aid and investment can create power imbalances and hence undermine democratic institutions.
6. Populist leadership: Leaders who prioritize short-term gains over long-term stability and democratic principles can erode democratic institutions.
7. Corruption: Corruption tends to undermine trust in government and democratic institutions, and can lead to instability and conflict.
8. Political polarization: Extreme polarization can lead to gridlock, reduce compromise, and even incite violence, as seen in the U. S. Capitol riots of 2021 [15].

9. Disinformation and media manipulation: This leads to the spread of fake news and propaganda (especially on social media) to distort public opinion and undermines informed participation, for example, the Cambridge Analytical scandal during the 2016 U.S. elections [16].

The solutions to the above mentioned challenges include [17]:

1. Strengthening institutions: Building strong, independent institutions, such as the judiciaries and electoral commissions, are crucial for democratic consolidation.
2. Promoting civic education: Educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities is essential for informed participation in democratic process.
3. Encouraging political dialogue: The fostering of dialogue among various stakeholders can help promote peaceful conflict resolution and reduce tensions.
4. Promoting inclusive governance: Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women and minorities, is vital for promoting equity and social justice.
5. Addressing economic inequality: Implementing policies to reduce economic inequality can help build trust in government and democratic institutions.
6. Combating corruption: Implementing effective anti-corruption measures, such as asset seizure and forfeiture, can help stem and deter corrupt practices.

## CONCLUSION

The democratization of politics is a complex yet essential process for ensuring inclusive governance, accountability, and respect for human rights. Democratization of politics faces a lot of serious challenges, including corruption, political polarization, disinformation, elite dominance, and suppression of civil liberties, which tend to weaken democratic institutions and hinder citizen participation, more particularly in emerging or fragile democracies. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. The following solutions offer viable paths forward such as the strengthening of the rule of law, promoting civic education, ensuring media integrity, and encouraging inclusive political participation, among others. Democratization is not a one-time event but an ongoing process which requires continuous reform, vigilance, and public engagement. By addressing the structural and cultural barriers to democratic participation, societies can move closer to

achieving more just, equitable, and responsive political systems.

More information on democratization of politics can be obtained in the books in [18-22] and in the following related journals:

- Third World Quarterly
- International Political Science Review
- Comparative Political Studies
- American Journal of Political Science
- Government and Opposition
- Journal of Democracy

**REFERENCES**

[1] C. M. Kauffman, “Democratization 1 Definition, Theories. & Facts 1 Britannica,” <https://britannica.com>

[2] “Democracy,” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

[3] “Timeline: Democracy,” <https://worldhistory.org>

[4] D. M. Green, (PDF), “Democratization: The world-wide spread of democracy in the modern age,” <https://eolss.net>

[5] “History of democracy,” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

[6] “Democracy 1 Definition, History, Meaning, Types, Examples, & Facts 1 Britannica,” <https://britannica.com>

[7] F. Klimm (3 November 2022) (PDF), “Quantifying the ‘end of history’ through a Bayesian Markov-chain approach,” <https://arxiv.org>

[8] “Waves of democracy,” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

[9] “Historical and contemporary trends in global democracy,” March 18, 2024, <https://polsci.institute>

[10] “Understanding the theories of democratization,” (17/10/2024), <https://www.newculturalfrontiers.org>

[11] “Democratization definition, causes & examples,” (11/21/2023), <https://study.com>

[12] “Exploring democratization: meaning, phases, and impact,” March 16, 2024, <https://polsci.institute>

[13] E. S. Chukwuemeka (June 27, 2024), “Major problems/challenges of democracy in Africa: Top 6,” <https://bscholarly.com>

[14] “Challenges to democratization: Key impediments,” March 20, 2024, <https://polsci.institute>

[15] J. McCoy, T. Rahman & M. Somer (2018), “Polarization and the global crisis of democracy,” *American Behavioral Scientist*.

[16] C. Wardle & H. Derakhshan (2017), *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework*.

[17] N. Penuel (October 15, 2023), “Challenges and solutions of democracy in Nigeria,” <https://www.emmason247.com.ng>

[18] S. P. Huntington, “The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century.”

[19] F. Fukuyama, “Political order and political decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization Democracy.”

[20] S. M. Lipset, “Political man: The social bases of politics.”

[21] S. Noakes, “Democratization: A thematic approach.”

[22] E. Nwokedi, (28 June 2020), “Politics of democratization: Changing authoritarian regimes in sub-Saharan Africa.”

**Government Powers Under U.S. Federalism**

National Powers	Shared Powers	State Powers
Regulate foreign & interstate commerce	Levy Taxes	Regulate intrastate commerce
Coin money	Borrow money	Establish & maintain schools
Tax imports & exports	Administer courts	Establish local governments
Establish & regulate the postal system	Make & enforce laws	Issue licenses, permits & certificates
Conduct foreign relations & make treaties	Build roads & transportation systems	Protect public health, safety & morals
Create & maintain armed forces	Charter banks & corporations	Maintain state militia (National Guard)
Declare war	Utilize eminent domain	Ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution
Amend the U.S. Constitution		

**Figure 1. Regime**

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regime>



**Figure 2. Democracy**

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy>



**Figure 5. Democratic backsliding in the United States**

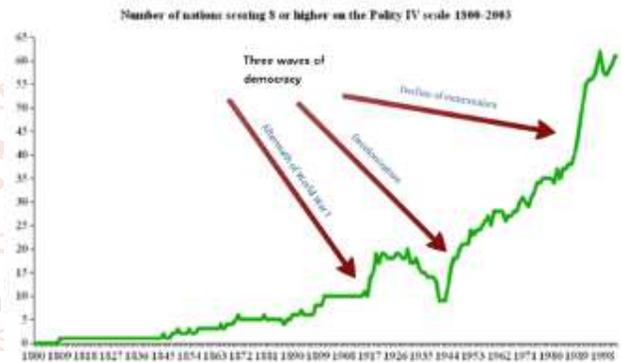
Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic\\_backsliding\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_backsliding_in_the_United_States)



**Figure 3. Politics**

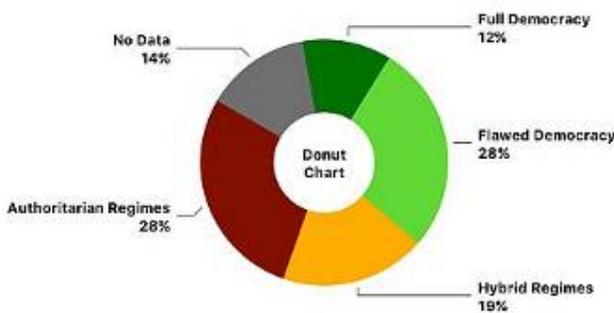
Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics>



**Figure 6: History of democratization**

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)



**Figure 4. Hybrid regime**

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybrid\\_regime](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybrid_regime)



**Figure 7. Political history of the world**

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_history_of_the_world)