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# The Failure of Former African Liberation Movements to Transition to Democracy after Ascension to Power: A Descriptive Analysis of Eritrean People's Liberation Front

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper investigates the perplexing issue of the democratic deficit in Africa's post-liberation states. It seeks to answer why former African liberation movements failed to make a genuine transition to democracy during the second stage of the national liberation struggle, instead of leaving behind authoritarian military regimes and one-party states that disappointed people. The paper's primary goal is to study the transitional path of former liberation movements in Africa and examine the factors that contribute to the failure of the transformation process from armed resistance to conventional politics. The research is descriptive and analytical in nature, conducted using the qualitative research method. The findings show that former liberation movements in Africa failed as governments due to a variety of factors, the most important of which is elite resistance to democratisation, which led to the transition to dictatorship, the absence or weakness of political institutions due to the persistence of the liberation era's political culture, and the tinkering with the constitution and failure to put some of its key principles into effect. Furthermore, the study showed that anti-colonial revolutions in Africa only liberated the state, not the people. Finally, the paper ends with some recommendations i.e. several steps to be taken in order for African countries to overcome the dilemma of the liberation movement's democratic transition failure.*

Keywords: *Eritrea, EPLF, Liberation Movements, Africa, Transition to Democracy, Failure*

## INTRODUCTION

Africa is well known for the production of National Liberation Movements (NLMs), which has to do with the continent's unfortunate history of European dominance, exploitation, and colonisation (Bereketeab, 2007, P1) as well as post-independence repressive national regimes. A liberation movement is a political and/or military organisation that leads a rebellion or a non-violent social movement against a colonial power or national government, often seeking independence to establish a separate sovereign state or overthrow a repressive regime numerous historical and contemporary NLMs have liberated their territories from foreign rule and their peoples from oppressive regimes. From a different point of view, LMs are called insurgencies, rebellions, guerrilla warfare, and civil war, based on its tactics, activities and goals. NLMs struggled for freedom from external colonialists includes: The Front for National Liberation of Algeria (FNL). The West African People's Organisation of Namibia (WAPO), The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), The (PAIGC) of Guinea- Bissau, The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Eritrea is the only African LM that had fought against an African colonial power -

Ethiopia. NLMs that struggle domestic dictatorships or oligarchies includes. The National Resistance Movement of Uganda (NRM), The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), The Tigray People's Liberation Front of Ethiopia (TPLF), and Somalia Liberation Movements.

There are numerous examples of liberation movements in Africa that fought long and often strenuous and fierce battles against colonialism and post-colonial authoritarian regimes, but once victory was achieved, they often formed governments and clung to power. For many, that is not only a failure but also a violation of the requirements and principles of waging a liberation struggle. In other words, it is betrayal and deception. There has been nowhere in Africa, however, has a liberation movement transformed itself seamlessly into a national government (Clapham, 2012). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of African nationalist liberation movements rose to power, including South Africa, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique etc.,

It is only in two nations, Namibia and South Africa, that a national leader peacefully stood down, to be replaced by another head of state drawn from the liberation party – a process that in South Africa has with the succession of Mbeki to Mandela, and Zuma to Mbeki. Whereas leaders in many other countries cling to power; Angola's first president and leader of the liberation movement, Agostinho Neto, ruled the country for 31 years (1975-2006). General Yoweri Museveni, leader of the Uganda Patriotic Movement, ruled the country for 35 years (1986 to present). Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe rose to power as an anti-colonialist crusader and imposed an authoritarian regime that lasted 37 years, (1987-2017). Ethiopian guerrilla leader and former President Meles Zenawi died in office after 20 years in power (1991-2012). There is also the leader of the Eritrean liberation movement and the country's first president, who has been in power since 1991 to pre-set. Hence the failure of these National Liberation Movements to transition to democracy after ascension to Power is a common occurrence.

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) is the last African LM that failed to learn from the failures of Africa's other NLMs, squandering a golden opportunity to democratise and become a beacon of hope for democracy in Africa. The EPLF reproduce the same imperial power relations that it had once fought against. The Eritrean revolution has come to symbolise the final nail in the coffin of the African state. It did not succeed in breaking the dominant paradigm of former liberation movements failing as governments.

The central theme of this paper is to investigate why former African liberation movements fail as governments. It examines three major factors in this regard: liberation leaders who became presidents, post-independence state institutions, and constitutionalism. The scope of the paper's investigation is limited to the three factors mentioned above; however, the existence of other factors influencing the NLM's journey towards democracy, such as economic situation, lack of civil society, militarization, and external interventions, is acknowledged. This research paper does not intend to conduct a comprehensive examination, but rather focuses on the more visible factors.

**African Liberation Movements' Performance in Government**
Post-liberation regimes were thought to be a step forward for democracy in Africa. People anticipated a better economic and social life and a democratic environment, in contrast to what they had experienced under the colonial regime. After decades of independence, many African countries ruled by liberation movement governments and former military leaders are either failing or at the verge of failing (For brief reflections on the transformational challenges facing guerrilla movements making the transition to civic

governance in other nations (such as Aceh, Colombia, Nepal and Northern Ireland), see Dudouet, 2009, pp. 38-40). People living under these regimes continue to face the scourges of political insecurity, economic decline, ethnic strife, corrupt political classes, and authoritarian rule. The post-independence performance of most liberation movements has been disappointing because, in reality, they have achieved very little, and it has been difficult to bring about the level of change they promised during the liberation struggles. In this respect, liberation movements that have evolved into governments can be judged by their human security and human development performance which relates to much more than security from violence and crime to look at the security of people's livelihoods (economic, food, environment, or health security) as well as personal, community and political security (UNDP, 2012).

Table 1 displays the nine African countries ruled by Liberation Movement Governments and their human security performance. Somalia, South Sudan, and Eritrea are the most human vulnerable. Political insecurity is high in Eritrea (due to lack of good governance and political instability) and Somalia (lack of centralised governance structures). South Africa and Namibia have the lowest human insecurity among liberation movement governments; both have more advanced economies. Note that the lower the ranking, the more insecure the population of the country.

Table 1 Human Insecurity Index ranking 2012

| Country | Economic | Food | Health | Environment | Personal & Community | Political | Human Insecurity Index | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Somalia | 90.00 | 72.92 | 48.30 | 87.00 | 100 | 100 | 90.00 | 1 |
| Eritrea | 79.40 | 90.63 | 19.69 | 83.75 | 61.04 | 88.75 | 79.20 | 2 |
| Ethiopia | 77.61 | 82.48 | 45.53 | 60.14 | 38.14 | 68.88 | 78.02 | 6 |
| South Sudan | 73.35 | 60.35 | 48.23 | 24.42 | 78.92 | 66.00 | 73.51 | 8 |
| Angola | 00.95 | 75.19 | 87.43 | 26.78 | 40.47 | 49.75 | 71.29 | 10 |
| Mozambique | 75.11 | 59.82 | 95.24 | 41.72 | 25.02 | 35.25 | 69.51 | 12 |
| Uganda | 67.65 | 32.42 | 77.32 | 33.17 | 72.49 | 43.00 | 68.23 | 14 |
| Rwanda | 68.64 | 60.80 | 63.99 | 28.35 | 30.69 | 45.00 | 62.25 | 19 |
| Namibia | 43.07 | 40.63 | 59.55 | 22.07 | 12.83 | 17.57 | 41.00 | 66 |
| South Africa | 33.85 | 11.46 | 21.65 | 12.05 | 31.60 | 39.00 | 31.24 | 85 |

Source: National Liberation Movements as Government in Africa (Bereketeab, 2017, p29)

## Why Do Former Liberation Movements in Africa Fail as Governments?

The failure of NLMs in Africa as a ruling party is a phenomenon that has sparked much commentary and analysis by observers and continues to be the subject of dialogue among policymakers and experts. The experiences of African liberation movements that seized power after a country was liberated from foreign colonialism or a national dictatorial regime reveal numerous challenges that continue to significantly impact politics and governance across Africa.

The transition from the armed liberation movement to governance was not easy for any of the national resistance movements that came to power after decades of leading war, operating illegally or underground. From the outset, there was the challenge of having a slew of new tasks and responsibilities without the necessary skills or experience, let alone the financial resources, to deal with them. The transition from armed resistance to conventional politics necessitates adopting a new civilian political culture, the formulation of a new programme, the establishment of party organisational structures, the

presence of state leadership, the recruitment of party cadres, and the development of their capacity to govern.

Several arguments and hypotheses from numerous disciplines have been proposed in the literature to explain why former liberation movements fail as governments. What has caused them to become authoritarian? and how do their use of power contradicted their former ideals and principles? See for example: (VillalÃ3n & VonDoepp, 2005; Suttner, 2004; Baker, 1999; Osaghae, 1999; Bratton & Nicholas van de Walle, 1997). Several factors, considerations, and causes have been proposed to explain why former national liberation movements fail as governments, including economic under-development, poverty, illiteracy, the nature of political institutions, a lack of civil society, militarisation, external interventions, and low levels of industrialisation, to name a few, see (See Przeworski et al.,1996; Lipset et al.,1993; Diamond & Plattner,1993; Huntington 1991; Diamond et al., 1989). In this regard, it is difficult to disagree with Diamond, J.J. Linz, and S.M. Lipset's analysis, which attributes decolonisation governments' democratic deficit to a variety of factors, including regime insecurity, ethnic cleavages, weak political structures, distorted local institutions, and Cold War rivalry (Diamond & Lipset, 1989, p. 419).

This paper does not seek to generalise about African national liberation movements' failures to function as governments. African national liberation movements are complex, with historical, geographical, and cultural contexts varying greatly from case to case. As a result, it is difficult to discuss all of the factors. However, they do share some important general characteristics. In this article, we will look at these factors that are most noticeable across the African continent to provide an answer to the question posed here.

The question of why former liberation movements in Africa fail as governments could be better explained by examining three major factors that have received little attention in the literature: elite resistance to democratisation, which led to the transition to dictatorship, the absence or weakness of political institutions due to the persistence of the political culture of the liberation era, and the absence or weakness of political institutions due to the persistence of the political culture of the liberation era, and constitutional dysfunction.

**Elite Resistance to Democratisation Leading to the Transition to Dictatorship**
Extensive research has been undertaken to understand and explain the dynamics behind the failure to transition to democracy in most cases of NLMs after   gaining state power and that the former military leadership resistance to democratisation is on the top. Works by John Higley and Michael Burton (1989), Samuel Decalo (1990), Huntington (1991), Nicolas van de Walle (1994), Haggard and Kaufman(1997), Richard Joseph (1997), Chabal Staffan Lindberg (2006), and others address the role of leadership resistance to democratisation in Africa's post-liberation movement regimes as critical reason that have contributed to the breakdown of the transition to democracy in Africa.

In Coups and Army Rule in Africa, Samuel Decalo examined four African states—the Congo, Benin, Uganda, and Togo—to discover what actually happened when military replaced civilian rule. He finds that African armies are incapable of delivering democracy, peace, and justice because they are cliques of ambitious officers pursuing self-advancement (Decalo,1990). Huntington argues that one serious impediment to democratisation is the absence or weakness of real commitment to democratic values among political leaders in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

When they are out of power, political leaders have good reason to advocate democracy; however, the test of their democratic commitment comes once they are in office (Huntington, 1991, p. 33) Haggard and Kaufman argue that the key actors in the transition process are political elites, whether in the government or opposition, not interest groups, mass organisations, social movements, or classes (Stephan and Robert, 1997, P264). John Higley and Michael Burton suggest that the decisions by societal elites play a role in a regime's democratic transition breakdown (John Higley and Michael Burton, 1989, P17). Bratton and van de Walle point out 'the interaction between the "big man," and his extended retinue defines African politics, from the reaches of the presidential palace to the humblest village assembly (Bratton, and van de Walle,1994, p. 459). Those so-called "big men" frequently used ethnicity and religion to keep a tiny group of elites, who identified themselves as previous military commanders, in a privileged position, while the majority of people excluded from real participation in the affairs of their homeland.

Democratic deficit in Africa's post-liberation rests squarely with the incumbent elites and their desire to retain power; they are most directly responsible for the transition failure and obstruction of the ex- liberation movements' progress toward democracy. As soon as they had assumed state power, they defined as their central priorities grip power which unfortunately only ceases with death. There has been in all the cases in which the liberation movements won and took power in their countries, none of the leaders gave up power except in South Africa and Namibia. Most of the former freedom fighters clung to power and refuse to hand it over to the people creating autocracy leadership and brutal regime which did not hesitate to use violence against their comrades and own people. Ironically, those who fought for oppressed peoples usually adopted authorities' practices they rejected and sought to depose.

As a consequence, they faced armed opposition from those who felt excluded, resulting in a never-ending struggle for power among the original liberation leaders, culminating in the flourishing of the liberation movement across the continent, and the lack of peace and stability. And because there were few differences between post-liberation movement regimes and the colonist or authoritarian regimes that were overthrown, people have been divided on how to memorialise these movements and their leaders. Some have lauded them as "liberation heroes" who led the struggle to overthrow repressive rulers, while others have concentrated on portraying them as murderous dictators who ruined whatever good they had done in their earlier years.

Though some of the NLMs have succeeded in transforming from revolution to state, most of the revolutionary leaders were operating as though they are a battalion commander running a liberated zone rather than officials governing a modern state. They fail to form a national state, and in many places, democratic transitions were short-lived or delivered less change than promised. The process of building democracy in African countries ruled by liberation movement governments has been hampered by a failure to fulfil its promises of democracy, good governance, and human rights.

In this perspective, there are several views of why leaders of erstwhile Liberation Movements resisted democratisation:

(1) The most important reason is the armed resistance leaders' lust for power, which resulted in the cancellation of the goodwill generated during the liberation struggle (Mohamed Salih, 2007, p. 682) as well as a total shift in promises and even rhetoric, producing political practices that prioritise struggle for state power over service to the people, and corrupted governors who believe they are the sovereign centre, culminating in resistance to change, limning the possibility of openness and inclusiveness. They frequently use fabricated ethnicity and religion

to control the state and exploit resources for their personal advantage and that of their supporters, who are typically drawn from their own ethnic or religious groups, excluding many people from participating in their country's affairs. Hence the democratic and human rights aspects fall by the wayside, at the same time, the selfish drive for power trumps everything else.

(2) There is also the sense of entitlement among liberation movement leaders to the benefits of the armed struggle, which breeds negative attitudes toward power sharing with others, as well as deep conviction in the rightness of power monopoly, and survivors' entitlement and responsibility to continue to exercise power and pursue the goals for which they fought. The coercive approach of assuming power gave them the perception that their power is derived from the gun and that, as a result, they are answerable to no one but themselves. They are prone to regard the legitimacy derived from the struggle as limitless (Melber, 2010).

(3) Another explanation is that former liberation movement leaders resisted democratisation because they lacked a clear vision for governance and consensus on how to govern, as well as a lack of objective and self-critical viewpoint. Therefore, after winning the liberation war, the majority of them embraced a one-party system that limited opposition political activities and democratic government.

(4) Another factor leading to the liberation movement leaders' resistance to democratisation is the overly obedient behaviour of those around them. Some are motivated by self-preservation, while others are corrupted or motivated by ethnic mobilisation, such as the president's advisors, can only be classified as sycophants for failing to criticise their leader's errors.

(5) Finally, one might wonder about the external influence on these leaders, or, at the very least, how much encouragement and support they receive. It is difficult to imagine leaders such as Yoweri Museveni, Idriss Deby, Isaias Afwerqi, salva kiir, remaining in power without outside support; after all, they serve foreign interests and they have sought the assistance of any regional or international forces that may help them stay in power for as long as feasible.

**Lack of Political Institutions and the Persistence of the Liberation-Era Political Culture**

Analysts almost unanimously focus on the role of the so- called "political legacy of struggle" that is the experiences which shaped the character of the liberation movements and determine their performance in power (Clapham, 2012, P5). That is because during the protracted liberation struggle, particular forms, norms and practices of rule were developed in the "liberated zones". A Strong hierarchy was established, as well as secrecy, high degree of loyalty, strong centralisation, hardship and brutality, and links with external backers and arms dealers were strengthened (Dorman, 2006, p. 1086).

These and others factors continued to influence the style of the movement's governance, institutional forms, and relations with the civilian population. It is not an exaggeration to argue that the nature of liberation movements has shaped the nature of post-colonial states, and the political mould of these movements has already been determined to create dictatorship governments, and that it is all too easy to see the legacies of the struggle not only as a blessing but also as a curse (Clapham, 2012) and liability.

The process of building democratic institutions in Eritrea appears to have started with Eritrea's independence in 1993. Upon its independence Eritrea inherited no colonial state structures and institutions. There was no parliament or legislative branch, and the judiciary was very weak and under-

resourced, inherited from Ethiopian law. There was no institutional foundation of democracy, no civil-society organisations, no political parties, and no strong media corps.

The country's political institutions were reliant on the EPLF institutions, which were suffering from a hierarchy-controlled system. State institutions were not built, and sometimes parallel institutions such as the Military Court were established, in order to limit due process and executive interference in the judiciary. State affairs were executing away from existing institutions, in addition to the misuse of the military and security forces, there was a complete abandonment of the constitutional structure so that one man can dominate the government, as Kibreab has put it, Eritrea's post-independence regime under Afewerki, systematically dismantled the formal institutions in order to facilitate whole effective personalized rule (Kibreab, 2009, p. 353).

At the heart of these devastating policies lie the intolerant revolutionary rule, who perceived everything outside of their control as a threat to the nation. As a result, hundreds of citizens suffered in 'secret' detention camps, including government critics, especially former members of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), Islamist activists, civil servants, students and journalists, they were all charged as a threat to the regime, thereby making them vulnerable to arrests, torture and disappearances (Amnesty International Report, 2008).

The inherited system of liberation movements contributed to post-liberation political institutions' weakness and incapacity to manage the democratic transition from revolution to state. It was also connected with a disregard for establishing and promoting governmental institutions. As a result, the state system became highly centralised around the presidential office, and all government departments were compelled to refer to the president, who has become the sole solution to all manner of minor issues, as well as the representative of all institutions and the executor of their tasks (Bereketeab, 2018, P164). Therefore, it is possible to claim that a lack of institutional checks and balances is another significant reason liberation movements perform badly as post-liberation regimes.

While the general trend for the failure of democracy in Eritrea was the inability of the political actors to settle their differences and agree on the rules of the transition and abide by them, the political actor decisions and motivations were supposed to be regulated by rule of law and limited by the state institutions. Eritrea was in need of introduction of institutional constraints on the revolutionaries especially in the transition stage from liberation movement to civil governance. We thus maintain that a clear picture of post-independence Eritrea trajectories demands careful analysis of the relationship between political actors and the then dysfunctional political institutions.

## Tinkering with the Constitution and Failure to Put Some of its Key Principles into Effect

Constitutionalism is a key component of the democratic concept. It is crucial in ensuring a seamless political transition to a fully-fledged democratic order. Furthermore, constitutionalism is the first authentic practice of political self-determination, bringing people into the realm of democratic involvement. Making a constitution is part of peace-making, dispute resolution and important step towards democratic transition processes. Constitutional order, more than any other framework, makes the political environment safer and more stable, giving rise to the commonly held belief that democracy works when there are laws and regulations.

Colonial and repressive regimes always rule by military laws and do not recognise constitutions; thus, constitution making, and nation building has become one of the most crucial tasks of liberation movements as governments, to fulfil the basic law that gives a people political existence,

governs the coexistence of individuals and groups, and organises the division of powers among the three main organs of government. Despite the fact that the vast majority of NLMs administrations began by adopting constitutions, they did not enact them and thus failed to build and maintain constitutional governance, impeding a true transition to democracy. This constitutional flaw assisted in the concentration of power in the hands of the movement's former leaders, resulting in a lack of checks and balances. In most cases, the constitution was easily modified in order to entrench the liberators in power. And as a result of tinkering with the presidential term limit article, liberation movement governments turned the constitution into a facade.

Eritrea did not have a state constitution when it formally acceded to independence on 24th May 1993; hence, constitution-making became one of the most crucial things to adopt. In 1994, under the pressure of local, regional and external factors, the EPLF-based transitional government established the Constitutional Commission of Eritrea (CCE) see (Provisional Government of Eritrea, 1994, Proclamation No. 55/1994) which was entrusted with the task of designing a new constitutional and political order for the country. The EPLF leadership declared that the establishment of political parties and democratic elections had to be preceded by a constitution.

The draft constitution was adopted by the National Assembly in July 1996 but suspended by the president before it ever came into effect. And so, the transformation towards a constitutional government and democracy were blocked, and the interim government with a four-year life-span became a permanent one.

**EPLF as an Example of LM that Failed to Bring about Democracy**
The case of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) is a paradigm of an Armed Liberation Movement (ALM) that failed to transform into a democratic government. The EPLF was more than anti-democratic; it was emerged as a Marxist-Leninist organisation, controlled by a secretive core, split up with the Eritrean Liberation Front in the 1970s. During the liberation struggle, it represented the interests of Christian highlanders, in terms of culture and leadership. After independence in 1991, Muslims were persecuted and many crimes committed against them, including religious discrimination, marginalization, torture, and murder by death squads, abduction, closing traditional Muslim Schools, systematic uprooting, and forceful settlement in Muslims' lands, among other things. See (Eritrean Covenant by Mejlis Ibrahim Mukthar, 2010)

A flagrant example of the common saying "Guerrilla fighters do not make the best democratic politicians." Hence it is valid and applicable to say that; not all liberation movements led to freedom and were followed by the democratic system, even if the movement is based on noble ends, and that success struggle period did not guaranteed a successful democratic transition. Eritreans now regard the legacies of the struggle as a curse and the source of their present predicament. Their liberation movement has proven to be a failure because they experience oppression eerily similar to that experienced under colonial rule. And perhaps, of all the national liberation movements in Africa, the EPLF represent the most ruthless and tragedy end of formidable victory (Kjetil & Daniel, 2014, p. 178; Gaim, 2009, p. 119).

Following more than three decades of war, Eritrea achieved de facto independence from Ethiopia in 1991, and de jure independence after a referendum held in 1993. On 28 May 1993, the United Nations General Assembly admitted Eritrea as the organisation's 182nd Member State (United Nations Security Council resolution 828, 1993), to become the newest independent state in Africa and

the first successful case of an African country's breaking away from another African state. South Sudan is the second African country after Eritrea to break from its parent state after a referendum.

The country was fully liberated by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). It was supposed to embark on a democratisation process, as a fresh new start for the country towards constitutional democracy and elected government. After all, the Eritrean liberation movement's main goal was to free the country from foreign occupation having accomplished that task; the movement was bound to hand over power to the people. Eritreans did not see independence as an end in itself, but rather as a means of achieving a higher end. They fought and struggled for a government that ruled within the framework of a democratic constitution. Democracy and good governance were, therefore, inevitable as one of the fundamental principles of the Eritrean revolution.

At that time, Eritrea's independence was an irreplaceable chance to launch a new age of peace, prosperity, and democracy. To that end, the EPLF became the transitional government for a limited duration from 1993 to 1997, during which specific strategies were expressed in Proclamation no. 37/1993. It entrusted the government with the duty to prepare and lay the foundations for a democratic system of government, as well as some significant measures and steps leading towards a political transformation and a democratic future. One example was the EPLF's reconstitution from a military organisation to a mass political movement-renamed itself to the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ); revised its programs and constitution; and adopted a new national charter with a commitment to democracy and rule of law. Another example was establishing a Constitutional Commission, which drafted a new Constitution adopted and was ratified by the constituent assembly in 1997 (Bereket, 2010, P58). A further example was the establishment of National Electoral Commission, which aimed to introduce a multi-party democracy. In addition, several attempts have been made to begin the preparation by setting up committees to draft policies on the key issues of politics, economics, education, and social affairs.

Eritrea missed the opportunity to begin a genuine transition towards democratic governance and national reconciliation, where promises have been denied, hopes quashed, constitution disrupted, elections postponed indefinitely, and opposition political parties barred. Since then, people have suffered all forms of violence and stripped of fundamental human rights; The Eritrean story is thus one of failure, not only of the people's dreams, but also of the sacrifices of their martyrs, who gave their lives so that their people could live in peace and freedom. Eritrea is now a large prison, and its name stands for tyranny and refugees.

Obviously, the Eritrea's impediments to democratisation are centred on unspeakable destructions of institutions, constitutional crisis, and corrupt military leaders, in addition to deeply ingrained authoritarian habits. In order for Eritrea's democratisation process to be successful in the future, appropriate institutions based on democratic principles must be established in the interests of promoting democracy and contributing to development, stabilisation, and improved governance.

## CONCLUSION

Across Africa, there have been several cases of freedom struggle movements in which locals rose up and fought against colonialism but eventually fell into oppressive regimes after independence. Eritrea's experience blatantly replicates a common trend of failed democratic transitions turned into a dictatorship. Eritrea's current situation is a symbolic reminder of the difficulties that democratic transitions are experiencing in Africa.

This study was inspired by a real concern about why former African liberation movements fail as governments, and it used the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) as real-world example to provide a plausible explanation. The paper investigated African liberation movements' poor performance in government, its impact on democratic political system, drew attention to some of the obstacles and impediments to democratic transition, and concluded that the democratic deficit in Africa's post-liberation rests squarely with three significant factors: 1) The broken promise of leadership; 2) The absence of state institutions leading to the formalisation of the authoritarian system; and 3) The constitution's tinkering and failure to put some of its key principles into effect, leading to a squandering of the opportunity to move towards a constitutional government.

Today, the vast majority of African wars are waged between national governments and liberation movements with the goal of deposing authoritarian regimes and defending oppressed peoples within their boundaries. In order for African countries to overcome the dilemma of the liberation movement's democratic transition failure, the following processes must be followed. At the outset, it is suggested that 'liberation' should be redefined to reflect the true meaning of  freedom for the people, rather than simply deposing the rulers and leaving the people to be oppressed and looted by the revolutionaries.  Furthermore, Africans should develop the habit of holding their leaders accountable for their current situation or state rather than simply endorsing their candidacies out of nostalgia for golden days gone by.  Moreover, African governments and legislatures should put in place and strictly enforce presidential term limits. Constant changes in political leadership should be practiced on a regular basis, so that corrupt leadership can be easily replaced at the end of a presidential term.  Lastly, political institutions must be formed, built, and strengthened in order to manage transition and structural transformation while avoiding the persistence of liberation-era political culture.

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