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Moshumee T. Dewoo, *The Democracy Illusion in Mauritius*. Publisher: Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2024, 144 pages. ISBN#13: 978-9956-554-39-3.

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In the introduction to *The Democracy Illusion in Mauritius*, Moshumee Dewoo argues that while many African countries have sought to provide sound democracy, Mauritius—often celebrated as a model of democracy and economic growth in Africa—faces systemic challenges that undermine its democratic framework. Dewoo presents a compelling critique, attributing these difficulties to a flawed application of democracy at the time of independence.

The author identifies several critical factors hindering democracy in Mauritius, such as weak and corrupt political leadership influenced by traditions rooted in Indian culture and European colonial practices. These factors have eroded the integrity of government institutions, diminished public trust, and fostered an environment ripe for the exploitation of power. This, in turn, has created a crisis of confidence between the government and the people, leaving citizens disillusioned with the democratic process.

Dewoo further highlights the structural inequalities rooted in Mauritius's colonial past that perpetuate systemic marginalization. The legacy of colonial rule has created an imbalance of power that benefits a select few while disenfranchising large segments of the population. This imbalance undermines the ideals of inclusiveness and equal representation, both fundamental to a functioning democracy.

A sizable portion of the book examines the discrimination faced by the Creole population, descendants of enslaved Africans. Despite their contributions to the country's cultural and social identity, Creoles remain marginalized economically and socially. Dewoo emphasizes that excluding Creoles from meaningful participation in the democratic process not only undermines the regime's legitimacy but also exacerbates social inequality.

and tensions. The author challenges the compatibility of Western-style democracy with Mauritius's complex social and political realities. Dewoo argues that Mauritius requires alternative systems of governance better suited to its unique circumstances. The book serves as a stark analysis of the abuse of political power and a call for policymakers to address weak institutions and eroding democratic norms.

The study is divided into three chapters, each examining a specific cause of the decline of democracy in Mauritius. Dewoo precedes these chapters with an introduction that provides a brief history of Mauritius: Originally uninhabited, the island attracted expansionist colonists starting in the 16th century. The Dutch arrived in 1598, followed by the French in 1715 and the British in 1810. Mauritius was ceded to the Indian Mauritian intellectual elite on March 12, 1968—now celebrated as Independence Day. In 1992, Mauritius became a republic and was regarded as a post-colonial success story, boasting a functioning democracy, a vibrant civil society, and a free press; however, Mauritius's democratic image has deteriorated in recent years.

Chapter One: Ineptocracy. Dewoo argues that inefficient leadership after independence played a key role in weakening democracy. He examines the political landscape shaped by successive migrations to the island. Mauritius's diverse demographic composition—comprising former African slaves, European settlers, Indian laborers, and Chinese traders—has resulted in a complex society with varying needs, histories, and aspirations. The author critiques the dominance of legal professionals and doctors in political leadership, who have controlled critical sectors such as housing, education, and agriculture. Dewoo contends that this narrow representation has hindered effective governance, asserting that competence requires leaders with diverse skills capable of addressing Mauritius's multifaceted challenges.

Chapter Two: Bad Bedrock. Dewoo identifies the colonial foundation of Mauritius's political system as another reason for the decline of democracy. As a previously uninhabited island, Mauritius lacked an inherent political structure prior to colonization. European powers imposed political systems that served colonial agendas rather than the needs of the indigenous population. Dewoo also addresses the marginalization of the *Nation* ethnic group, descendants of enslaved Africans, who make up 25% of the population. Despite the abolition of slavery, systemic discrimination persists. He highlights police brutality, media demonization, and limited access to education as evidence of their continued exclusion.

Chapter Three: Western Democracy vs. African Realities. Dewoo explores the incompatibility of Western-style democracy with Mauritius's African roots. Western democracy emphasizes rigid structures and majority rule, which often marginalizes minority voices. In contrast, African governance traditions prioritize consensus and adaptability. Dewoo argues that Mauritius needs a flexible political system capable of embracing innovation and addressing its unique cultural and social realities. He contends that Western democracy, with its predictability and rigidity, stifles political development and fuels inequality, protests, and unrest. Dewoo summarizes the decline of democracy in Mauritius with three key reasons:

1. Incompetent Leadership: Post-colonial leaders imitated colonial practices, prioritizing power over governance.
2. Weak Foundations: The political system was built to serve colonial interests, perpetuating structural inequalities.
3. Incompatible Systems: Western democracy does not align with Mauritius's diverse and dynamic socio-political fabric.

The book concludes by advocating for alternative political systems tailored to Mauritius's fluid and diverse society. Dewoo warns that imposing external governance models risks disrupting social harmony and stability. *The Democracy Illusion in Mauritius* provides a thought-provoking analysis of the country's political challenges. It serves as a timely wake-up call for policymakers and a compelling read for anyone interested in African democracy and governance.

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