



## STATE AND POLITICS IN AFRICA

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### Abstract:

The relationship between state and politics in Africa has been a topic of much debate and analysis. Africa is a diverse continent, with many different political systems and structures. This research paper examines the historical context of state and politics in Africa, as well as the current challenges faced by African states in terms of governance, democracy, and development. The paper draws on a range of academic literature and case studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of politics in Africa today.

Key words: Decolonization, Governance, Democracy, Authoritarianism, Elections, Nationalism.

### **Introduction:**

The African continent's political landscape has been characterized by significant challenges, including colonization, decolonization, civil wars, political instability, corruption, authoritarian regimes and democratic transitions. Throughout this complex history, the relationship between state and politics has been a constant source of tension and debate. These challenges have been attributed to the relationship between state and politics in Africa. Scholars have debated the relationship between state and politics in Africa, with some arguing that African political systems are a product of colonialism, while others attribute them to post-colonial leaders' choices. Scholars have also sought to understand the factors that have shaped African politics and the challenges that African states face in terms of governance, democracy, and development.

### **Literature Review:**

Factors influencing the state and politics in Africa, as well as how African states have evolved politically since independence.

The literature on state and politics in Africa is vast and varied, reflecting the complex challenges faced by African states in the post-colonial era. One of the key debates in this literature is the role of colonialism and its legacy in shaping African politics and society. Some scholars argue that the imposition of Western-style political systems and institutions during the colonial era has contributed to the challenges faced by African states today, including political instability, weak institutions, and a lack of political legitimacy (Mamdani, 1996). Furthermore, Ake (1996) argues that state and politics in Africa is influenced by colonial legacy left by European powers. Many African states were created by colonial powers, often without regard for existing ethnic and linguistic groups. This has contributed to ongoing conflicts and tensions between different groups within these states. Additionally, the colonial legacy has often resulted in weak and corrupt

institutions, which have made it difficult for African states to build effective and democratic political systems.

Many African states face significant economic challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Nugent, 2017). The economic challenges facing many African states have been a major contributor to political unrest and instability in the region. Poverty, unemployment, and inequality are persistent issues that have plagued the continent for decades. These challenges are particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 40% of the population lives in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2021). High levels of poverty and inequality have contributed to the marginalization of certain groups within African societies, which can fuel social and political unrest. In addition, many African states are heavily dependent on commodity exports, such as oil, minerals, and agricultural products. The reliance on a few key commodities makes these states vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices, which can have a significant impact on their economies. For example, the decline in oil prices in 2014-2015 had a significant impact on the economies of Nigeria and Angola, two of Africa's largest oil exporters (International Monetary Fund, 2016). The impact of economic challenges on political stability in Africa can be seen in many recent examples. For instance, in Sudan, the high cost of living and economic hardship were major factors that contributed to the protests that led to the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019 (BBC News, 2019). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, the economic crisis, including high unemployment and inflation, has led to widespread protests and unrest (Al Jazeera, 2021). To address these economic challenges and promote political stability, many African states are pursuing policies aimed at promoting economic growth and reducing poverty and inequality. For example, some states are investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, while others are promoting foreign investment and

economic diversification. However, progress has been slow, and more needs to be done to address the root causes of economic challenges in Africa.

The quality of political leadership in African states has varied widely since independence. Some leaders have been effective at building strong, democratic institutions and promoting economic growth, while others have been corrupt and authoritarian. Weak or corrupt political leadership can undermine the legitimacy of the state and contribute to political instability (Chabal & Daloz, 1999).

The quality of political leadership in African states has been a major factor in shaping the political and economic landscape of the continent since independence. While some leaders have been effective at promoting democratic governance and economic growth, others have been characterized by corruption and authoritarianism. Weak or corrupt political leadership can undermine the legitimacy of the state and contribute to political instability, which can have far-reaching consequences for economic development and social progress. For example, in Botswana, the leadership of Seretse Khama was instrumental in promoting democratic governance and economic development after independence. Khama, who served as the country's first president, implemented policies aimed at diversifying the economy and promoting social welfare, which helped to reduce poverty and inequality (Mmolai, 2019). As a result of his leadership, Botswana is often cited as a model of democratic governance and economic success in Africa. On the other hand, in Zimbabwe, the leadership of Robert Mugabe was characterized by corruption and authoritarianism, which undermined the legitimacy of the state and contributed to political instability. Mugabe's policies, including the seizure of white-owned farms and the suppression of political opposition, were widely criticized for their negative impact on the country's economy and democratic institutions (BBC News, 2017). Mugabe's leadership ultimately led to his forced resignation in 2017, following widespread protests and political pressure. The impact of political

leadership on state legitimacy and political stability in Africa can also be seen in other recent examples. For instance, in Ethiopia, the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has been credited with initiating significant political and economic reforms, including the release of political prisoners and the promotion of foreign investment (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). However, his leadership has also been criticized for its failure to address ethnic tensions and human rights abuses in the country. It is observed that the quality of political leadership in African states has varied widely since independence, with some leaders promoting democratic governance and economic growth, while others have been characterized by corruption and authoritarianism. Weak or corrupt political leadership can undermine the legitimacy of the state and contribute to political instability, which can have far-reaching consequences for economic development and social progress.

Many African states are home to diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, which can create tensions and conflicts. These tensions are often exacerbated by competition for resources, such as land and water. In addition, some African states are divided along regional lines, which can lead to regionalism and instability (Nugent, 2017). For example, in Nigeria, the country is home to over 250 ethnic groups, with the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo being the largest. Ethnic tensions have frequently led to violence and conflict, such as the Biafra War in the late 1960s, which was fought along regional and ethnic lines (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). In recent years, conflicts between farmers and herders have also been fueled by competition for land and water resources, leading to widespread violence and displacement (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). Similarly, in Ethiopia, the country is home to over 80 ethnic groups, with the Oromo and Amhara being the largest. Ethnic tensions have frequently led to violence and conflict, such as the protests that erupted in 2015 and 2016, which were sparked by concerns over political and economic

marginalization of the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups (Al Jazeera, 2016). The government's response to these protests, including the imposition of a state of emergency and the use of force against protesters, further exacerbated tensions and led to widespread criticism. The impact of ethnic and regional divisions on political stability can also be seen in other African countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, which have experienced prolonged conflicts fueled by ethnic tensions and regionalism. It is important to note that the diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups in African states can create tensions and conflicts, particularly when combined with competition for resources. Additionally, regional divisions can exacerbate instability and conflict, as seen in examples like Nigeria and Ethiopia. Addressing these challenges requires efforts to promote social cohesion and inclusive governance, as well as addressing the underlying economic and resource challenges that contribute to tensions.

International actors, such as foreign governments, international organizations, and multinational corporations, can also play a significant role in shaping state and politics in Africa. For example, foreign aid can influence the policies and priorities of African governments, while multinational corporations can have a significant impact on the economy and natural resources of African states (Harrison, 2013). Their influence can affect policy decisions, economic development, and natural resource management. For example, foreign aid can be a major source of funding for African governments, accounting for a significant portion of some countries' budgets. This aid can come with conditions, such as requirements for policy reforms or governance improvements, which can influence the priorities and decisions of African governments (Bräutigam, 2013). In some cases, foreign aid can also be tied to geopolitical interests, such as support for allies or countering perceived threats. Multinational corporations can also have a significant impact on African states. These corporations can bring investment and job opportunities, but they can also contribute to

environmental degradation, resource exploitation, and social inequality. For example, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, multinational oil companies have been accused of causing extensive environmental damage and contributing to social unrest (Human Rights Watch, 2011). In some cases, multinational corporations have also been accused of collaborating with corrupt or authoritarian governments to secure favorable business deals (Global Witness, 2016). International organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also play a role in shaping state and politics in Africa. These organizations provide loans and technical assistance to African governments, but their policies and conditions have been criticized for contributing to economic inequality and perpetuating dependence on foreign aid (Stiglitz, 2003). It is therefore, important to note that international actors play a significant role in shaping state and politics in Africa, with foreign aid, multinational corporations, and international organizations having a significant impact on policy decisions, economic development, and natural resource management. Addressing the challenges posed by the influence of international actors requires efforts to ensure that these actors are accountable, transparent, and promote sustainable and equitable development. Others highlight the role of elite politics, corruption, and weak institutions in perpetuating political instability and hindering development (Ake, 1996; Bayart et al., 1999). Still, others emphasize the impact of globalization, economic policies, and external actors on African politics (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Mkandawire, 2001). Still, others emphasize the impact of globalization, economic policies, and external actors on African politics. This perspective argues that the forces of globalization and neoliberal economic policies have had a significant impact on African states, contributing to economic inequality, political instability, and a lack of social progress.

The role of elite politics, corruption, and weak institutions in perpetuating political instability and hindering development. According to this perspective, the challenges faced by African states are

not solely the result of historical legacies, but also stem from current political and economic factors that contribute to the perpetuation of elite rule, corruption, and weak governance (Ake, 1996; Bayart et al., 1999). While these debates are ongoing, there is broad agreement that African states face significant challenges in building stable, prosperous societies. Some of the key issues include weak institutions, corruption, ethnic conflict, and limited access to education and healthcare. Addressing these challenges will require a multifaceted approach that includes investments in education and healthcare, the promotion of democratic governance and transparency, and a commitment to economic development and social progress. Elite politics, corruption, and weak institutions have been identified as key factors that perpetuate political instability and hinder development in many African states. These challenges are not solely the result of historical legacies, but also stem from current political and economic factors that contribute to the perpetuation of elite rule, corruption, and weak governance. Corruption is a major challenge in many African states, and it undermines the legitimacy of the state and contributes to political instability. For example, in South Africa, corruption scandals involving high-ranking officials in the ruling party have eroded public trust and contributed to political instability (Reuters, 2021). Similarly, in Nigeria, corruption has been identified as a major obstacle to economic development and political stability, with estimates suggesting that billions of dollars are lost to corruption each year (Transparency International, 2021). Weak institutions are also a significant challenge in many African states, and they contribute to political instability and hinder development. For example, in Somalia, weak institutions have contributed to decades of conflict and political instability (BBC, 2021). Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, weak institutions have hindered economic development and contributed to political instability (World Bank, 2021). In addition to corruption and weak institutions, elite politics is another factor that contributes to political instability and



hinders development in many African states. For example, in Zimbabwe, the ruling elite has been accused of perpetuating human rights abuses and stifling political opposition (Amnesty International, 2021). Similarly, in Cameroon, the ruling elite has been accused of suppressing political opposition and perpetuating human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Addressing the challenges posed by elite politics, corruption, and weak institutions requires a multifaceted approach that includes investments in education and healthcare, the promotion of democratic governance and transparency, and a commitment to economic development and social progress. It also requires the active participation of civil society and a commitment from political leaders to prioritize the needs of their citizens.

### **Status of Democracy in Africa**

The status of democracy in Africa is a topic of ongoing debate and analysis. While there have been some positive developments in recent years, many African states continue to struggle with issues such as corruption, authoritarianism, and weak institutions. According to the Democracy Index 2020 report by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the state of democracy in Africa remains mixed. Out of the 54 African countries, only 11 were categorized as "full democracies," while 26 were considered "authoritarian regimes" and 17 were classified as "hybrid regimes" that show some democratic features but also significant shortcomings. The report further notes that the situation has worsened in recent years, with several African countries experiencing setbacks in terms of democratic governance. For example, in 2020, Tanzania, one of the continent's most populous countries, experienced a heavily disputed election in which the opposition claimed widespread fraud and violence. Similarly, the report highlighted the challenges faced by countries such as Zimbabwe, where the government has been accused of using violence and repression to silence opposition voices and maintain its grip on power. Moreover, the report cited the case of Guinea,

where the military staged a coup and overthrew the democratically elected government in September 2021. The incident has raised concerns about the fragility of democracy in the region. However, there have been some positive developments as well. The report notes that countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan have made progress towards greater political openness and democratic governance, with both countries undergoing significant political transitions in recent years. The report highlights the mixed state of democracy in Africa, with some countries making progress while others continue to struggle with issues such as corruption and authoritarianism.

One of the major challenges to democracy in Africa is the persistence of authoritarianism. According to the 2021 Freedom in the World report by Freedom House, 21 African countries were categorized as "not free," while 23 were classified as "partly free," and only 10 were considered "free." The report notes that many African countries continue to experience restrictions on political rights and civil liberties, including limitations on freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. For example, in countries such as Eritrea and Equatorial Guinea, there is no independent media, and the government controls all information. Moreover, the report highlights the use of violence and repression by authoritarian governments to maintain their grip on power. In countries such as Burundi and Cameroon, the government has been accused of using violence against opposition figures, civil society activists, and journalists. The report also notes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on democratic governance in Africa. According to the report, many governments have used the pandemic as an excuse to restrict civil liberties and suppress opposition voices. In addition, the report highlights the role of external actors in supporting authoritarian regimes in Africa. For example, countries such as China and Russia have been accused of providing economic and military support to authoritarian governments in exchange for access to resources and political influence. The report underscores the persistence of authoritarianism as a major challenge to

democracy in Africa, with many countries continuing to experience restrictions on political rights and civil liberties.

The prevalence of corruption undermines democratic governance and the rule of law. According to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, the majority of African countries scored below 50 out of 100, indicating significant levels of corruption. For example, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan were ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world.

The 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index report by Transparency International reveals that corruption remains a significant challenge to democratic governance in Africa. The report indicates that corruption undermines democratic institutions and erodes public trust in government. According to the report, the majority of African countries scored below 50 out of 100, indicating significant levels of corruption. Somalia and South Sudan were ranked as the most corrupt countries in the world, while Sudan ranked 175 out of 180 countries surveyed. The report highlights the impact of corruption on democratic governance, noting that it often leads to the concentration of power in the hands of a few, undermines the rule of law, and hinders economic development. Moreover, the report notes the link between corruption and the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the increased risk of corruption in emergency procurement processes and the diversion of funds meant for pandemic response. Addressing corruption will require a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, and encouraging citizen participation. As noted in the report, "the fight against corruption must be at the heart of democratic governance."

The lack of strong institutions and legal frameworks to protect democratic processes has also hindered the consolidation of democracy in Africa. Weak institutions and corruption have enabled political leaders to manipulate democratic processes and perpetuate their hold on power, leading

to a lack of accountability and transparency. However, there are also positive developments in democratic consolidation in Africa. Many countries have held successful elections and peaceful transitions of power, indicating a growing commitment to democratic norms and values. Civil society and media have also played an important role in monitoring and holding governments accountable, contributing to democratic consolidation efforts. To address the challenges of democratic consolidation in Africa, scholars suggest the need for greater attention to structural inequalities, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and the empowerment of civil society and grassroots movements. This requires sustained efforts and investments in education, economic development, and political reform, as well as regional and international cooperation and support. Recent scholarship highlights the prospects for democratic consolidation in Africa, but also the challenges posed by elite-driven transitions, weak institutions, and underlying structural inequalities. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts and investments in democratic reform and regional and international cooperation. The status of democracy in Africa remains complex and multifaceted, with both positive developments and ongoing challenges. Addressing issues such as corruption, authoritarianism, and weak institutions will be key to promoting democratic governance and sustainable development in the region.

### **African countries on track to democratic rule**

Despite these challenges, there have been some positive developments in recent years. For example, countries such as Ghana, Senegal, and Botswana have been praised for their peaceful transitions of power and commitment to democratic governance. In addition, civil society organizations and media outlets are increasingly playing a vital role in holding governments accountable and promoting transparency.

Recent statistics show that there has been some progress towards democratic governance in Africa. According to the Afrobarometer, a pan-African research organization that conducts public opinion surveys, 68% of Africans support democracy, and 54% prefer it to any other form of government (Afrobarometer, 2021). Additionally, the number of African countries holding regular, multiparty elections has increased from just three in 1990 to 26 in 2021 (The Economist, 2021).

Ghana has indeed made progress in addressing some of its challenges, as evidenced by recent statistics. According to the World Bank, Ghana's economy grew by 3.3% in 2020, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is projected to grow by 4.6% in 2021 (World Bank, 2021). In addition, Ghana has made strides in reducing poverty, with the national poverty rate declining from 24.2% in 2012/13 to 11.8% in 2019/20 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Moreover, Ghana has made efforts to improve its governance and tackle corruption. In 2019, Ghana ranked 80th out of 180 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, an improvement from its ranking of 81st in 2018 (Transparency International, 2021). Ghana has also taken steps to strengthen its institutions and promote transparency, including the establishment of the Office of the Special Prosecutor in 2018, aimed at investigating and prosecuting corruption cases (Government of Ghana, 2018). In addition, Ghana has made progress in addressing ethnic tensions, which have historically been a source of conflict in the country. The government has implemented policies to promote unity and inclusivity, such as the establishment of the National Commission for Civic Education, which aims to promote civic awareness and participation among all citizens (Government of Ghana, 2019). While Ghana's progress is noteworthy, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, including issues of gender inequality, access to quality education and healthcare, and environmental sustainability. The government has acknowledged these challenges

and has committed to addressing them through various policies and initiatives (Government of Ghana, 2020).

An example of a country that has made significant strides in recent years is Rwanda. The country experienced a devastating genocide in 1994, but has since undergone a remarkable transformation. Rwanda's progress under President Paul Kagame's leadership in promoting national reconciliation, economic development, and social progress has been widely acknowledged. The country has one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa and has made significant progress in healthcare, education, and gender equality. Rwanda has also made strides in addressing the legacy of the 1994 genocide, implementing policies aimed at promoting reconciliation and healing, and encouraging national unity (Reyntjens, 2015). Rwanda is a remarkable example of a country that has made significant strides towards political stability, economic development, and social progress. The country's transformation since the 1994 genocide has been remarkable, and President Paul Kagame has been widely credited with implementing policies aimed at promoting national reconciliation, economic development, and social progress. One of the key factors in Rwanda's success has been the government's focus on building strong institutions, particularly in the areas of healthcare and education. The country has invested heavily in healthcare infrastructure, and today has one of the highest rates of healthcare coverage in Africa. The government has also prioritized education, with initiatives aimed at increasing enrollment rates and improving the quality of education in the country. In addition to these investments, the Rwandan government has also implemented policies aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women. For example, the government has instituted quotas for women in political office, and has launched initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in the workforce and promoting women's rights. Despite these successes, however, Rwanda still faces significant challenges. The country's political system has been

criticized for its lack of political freedom and human rights abuses, and there are concerns about the government's commitment to democracy and transparency. There have also been concerns about the government's treatment of opposition figures and journalists. Despite these challenges, Rwanda remains an inspiring example of a country that has made significant strides towards stability, development, and progress. By focusing on building strong institutions, promoting education and healthcare, and empowering women, the country has laid the groundwork for sustainable development and long-term progress.

South Africa's transition to democracy was a significant achievement, but the legacy of apartheid continues to shape many aspects of society, including patterns of economic inequality and political power. While the ANC has been in power since 1994, it has faced criticism for its handling of issues such as corruption, unemployment, and crime. In recent years, there have also been concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions and the independence of the judiciary, as well as tensions around issues such as land reform and racial reconciliation. Despite these challenges, South Africa remains a key player in regional and international politics and continues to be seen as an important model for democratic transition in Africa (Seekings & Natrass, 2015). One of the most significant challenges facing South Africa is its high level of inequality. Despite the country's economic growth in recent years, income and wealth disparities remain among the highest in the world. The country's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, is one of the highest in the world. This inequality is closely linked to the country's history of apartheid and its legacy of unequal access to education, employment, and land. Another challenge is corruption, which remains a significant problem in South Africa. High-profile corruption scandals involving government officials, including former President Jacob Zuma, have eroded public trust in the government and highlighted the need for stronger anti-corruption measures. Social unrest is also a

challenge facing South Africa. Protests and demonstrations have become more common in recent years, with many of them related to concerns about service delivery, housing, and employment opportunities. In some cases, these protests have turned violent, highlighting the deep-seated frustrations and grievances of many South Africans.

Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has experienced political turmoil and economic decline under the authoritarian regime of Robert Mugabe, who ruled the country for almost four decades until his ousting in 2017. During Mugabe's rule, Zimbabwe experienced hyperinflation, widespread poverty, and political repression. The country's recent transition to a post-Mugabe era has been marked by both hope and uncertainty. The relationship between state and politics in Africa can be illustrated by examining specific African countries. In Zimbabwe, the Mugabe government's policies of land reform and economic empowerment have been criticized for being undemocratic and authoritarian (Simpson, 2004). The country's recent transition to a post-Mugabe era has been marked by both hope and uncertainty (Raftopoulos, 2018). While there is optimism about the potential for political and economic reform under President Emmerson Mnangagwa, there are also concerns about the extent of his commitment to genuine reform and the capacity of the government to deliver meaningful change. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has experienced political turmoil and economic decline under the authoritarian regime of Robert Mugabe. Similarly, in Ethiopia, the government has been accused of suppressing opposition and civil society organizations, which has led to political instability (Yirga, 2017). Ethiopia has been facing political instability in recent years, with accusations of government suppression of opposition and civil society organizations. The Ethiopian government, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, has been criticized for its crackdown on opposition groups, journalists, and civil society organizations, which has led to a shrinking space for political expression and activism. The government has taken a number of steps



to address these concerns, including the release of political prisoners and the easing of restrictions on civil society organizations. However, these efforts have been met with criticism from some quarters, who argue that the government has not gone far enough to address the underlying causes of political instability in the country. One of the key issues driving political instability in Ethiopia is ethnic conflict. The country is home to more than 80 different ethnic groups, and there have been tensions between these groups for decades. In recent years, these tensions have escalated, with outbreaks of violence and protests calling for greater political representation and economic opportunities for marginalized groups. Another issue contributing to political instability in Ethiopia is the country's struggling economy. Despite being one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, Ethiopia still faces significant challenges, including high levels of poverty and unemployment, and a lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from the Ethiopian government, civil society organizations, and international partners. This effort must include measures to promote inclusive governance and political representation, as well as investments in economic development and social services to improve the lives of all Ethiopians. By addressing these underlying causes of political instability, Ethiopia can work towards building a more stable, prosperous, and democratic future for its citizens.

Recent statistics also show an increase in the number of women holding political office in Africa. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the average proportion of women in African parliaments has increased from 9.8% in 1995 to 25.2% in 2021 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). Additionally, Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world, with women holding 61.3% of seats in the lower house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). There are several other African countries that have made significant progress in increasing the number of

women in political office. The proportion of women in the South African National Assembly has increased from 27.7% in 1994 to 45.6% in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). The proportion of women in the Ethiopian parliament has increased from 16.3% in 2010 to 38.8% in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). The proportion of women in the Namibian National Assembly has increased from 26.7% in 2005 to 46.3% in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). The proportion of women in the Senegalese National Assembly has increased from 22.5% in 2012 to 42.7% in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). The proportion of women in the Tunisian parliament has increased from 31.3% in 2014 to 47.6% in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). These examples show that African countries are making progress towards gender equality in politics, but there is still a long way to go to achieve equal representation for women. However, it is important to note that there are still significant challenges to be addressed in terms of gender equality and women's political representation in Africa. Women continue to face barriers such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited access to education and economic opportunities, which can hinder their ability to participate fully in political life (UN Women, 2021).

Civil society organizations and media outlets have played an increasingly significant role in promoting democratic governance and holding governments accountable. For example, in Sudan, protests led by civil society groups and the media contributed to the removal of former president Omar al-Bashir in 2019 (BBC News, 2019). In addition, the media played a crucial role in exposing corruption scandals in countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, leading to public pressure for accountability and reform (Reuters, 2021). Furthermore, civil society organizations have also played a role in promoting democratic governance in Africa. For example, in Senegal, the civil society group Y'en a Marre ("We're Fed Up") mobilized youth voters in the 2012 presidential election, contributing to the peaceful transfer of power from incumbent Abdoulaye Wade to Macky

Sall (Council on Foreign Relations, 2012). Similarly, in Nigeria, the Bring Back Our Girls movement raised awareness and international pressure for the return of over 200 schoolgirls kidnapped by the militant group Boko Haram in 2014 (BBC News, 2014). According to the Civicus Monitor, a global research group that tracks civic freedoms, civil society space in Africa remains restricted, with some countries using repressive tactics to silence dissent and restrict civic participation (Civicus Monitor, 2021). For example, in Zimbabwe, human rights activists and civil society groups have faced intimidation and violence, with some facing arrest and detention for their work (Amnesty International, 2021). In addition, media outlets in countries such as Ethiopia and Tanzania have faced restrictions and censorship, limiting their ability to provide independent coverage of political issues (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2021). It should be noted that while there are still significant challenges to democratic governance in Africa, these positive developments suggest that there is potential for progress in the future.

### **Prospects for Democratic consolidation in Africa**

Recent scholarship has focused on the prospects for democratic consolidation in Africa. While many African states have made significant strides in democratization, the continent continues to face challenges in this regard. Some scholars argue that democratic transitions in Africa have been largely elite-driven and have failed to address the structural inequalities that underpin political instability (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Tripp, 2000). While many African states have made significant strides in democratization, some scholars argue that democratic transitions have been largely elite-driven and have failed to address underlying structural inequalities that contribute to political instability. Democratic transitions in Africa have often been characterized by elite-level bargaining and negotiation, rather than genuine grassroots movements for political change. This

has resulted in a limited redistribution of power and resources, leaving underlying structural inequalities largely unchanged. As a result, political instability and social conflict continue to pose challenges to democratic consolidation in Africa.

Other scholars emphasize the importance of civil society and popular mobilization in promoting democratic change (Oquaye & Tettey, 2015; Bratton & Gyimah-Boadi, 2014). While some scholars highlight the importance of elite-driven negotiations and institutional reforms in promoting democratic consolidation in Africa, others emphasize the role of civil society and popular mobilization in bringing about democratic change. Oquaye and Tettey (2015) argue that civil society organizations play a crucial role in promoting democracy by providing a platform for citizens to participate in political processes and hold governments accountable. Through advocacy, mobilization, and monitoring, civil society can help to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance.

Similarly, Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi (2014) emphasize the importance of popular mobilization in bringing about democratic change. They argue that mass protests and social movements can create pressure for political reforms and contribute to the downfall of authoritarian regimes. By mobilizing large numbers of citizens and challenging the legitimacy of repressive regimes, popular movements can help to create the conditions for democratic transition and consolidation.

However, it is important to note that civil society and popular mobilization are not always sufficient to bring about democratic change. In some cases, governments may respond to protests with violence and repression, or co-opt civil society organizations to undermine their effectiveness. Furthermore, while popular mobilization can create pressure for change, it may not necessarily lead to the establishment of durable democratic institutions. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to democratic consolidation in Africa requires attention to both elite-driven negotiations and

institutional reforms, as well as the role of civil society and popular mobilization. By combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, African states can create the conditions for democratic transition and consolidation, addressing both structural inequalities and the need for strong institutions and popular participation.

The dependency theory suggests that African states are underdeveloped because of their economic dependence on developed countries. The theory argues that African states cannot develop independently due to the global economic system's unequal distribution of resources (Frank, 1967).

The dependency theory is a critical perspective that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s to explain the economic underdevelopment of African states. The theory posits that African states are trapped in a cycle of underdevelopment because of their economic dependence on developed countries.

According to the dependency theory, African states are structurally constrained by the global economic system's unequal distribution of resources, which perpetuates their underdevelopment.

Developed countries have historically exploited African resources for their own benefit, resulting in a lack of local capital and infrastructure to support economic growth and development. The

theory argues that African states have been relegated to producing primary commodities and raw materials, which are exported to developed countries, leading to a persistent trade imbalance that

undermines local industries and markets. Moreover, the dependency theory highlights the role of multinational corporations and international financial institutions in perpetuating the cycle of

underdevelopment in African states. These institutions often impose policies that prioritize the interests of developed countries and multinational corporations over the needs of local

communities, resulting in further economic inequality and marginalization. Critics of the dependency theory argue that it oversimplifies the complex factors that contribute to African states'

underdevelopment. They contend that the theory overlooks internal factors such as corruption,

weak governance, and inadequate investment in human capital and infrastructure. Furthermore, some argue that the theory neglects the agency of African states and their ability to resist external pressures and pursue their own development strategies. It is observed that while the dependency theory has been criticized for oversimplifying the causes of African states' underdevelopment, it has contributed to a critical understanding of the structural constraints that undermine economic development. To address these challenges, African states must pursue strategies that prioritize local economic development, investment in human capital, and the promotion of equitable trade relations. Additionally, international institutions must be reformed to better address the needs and priorities of developing countries.

The modernization theory, on the other hand, suggests that African states can develop by adopting Western models of governance and economic systems (Lerner, 1958). However, the institutional theory suggests that African states need to develop their institutions to improve governance and reduce corruption (North, 1990). The modernization theory and institutional theory represent two different approaches to explaining the underdevelopment of African states and proposing solutions to promote development. The modernization theory suggests that African states can develop by adopting Western models of governance and economic systems, while the institutional theory emphasizes the importance of developing local institutions to improve governance and reduce corruption. According to the modernization theory, African states can achieve economic development by adopting Western models of governance, such as democracy and capitalism, and investing in modern infrastructure and technologies. The theory posits that development is a linear process that all societies must pass through, and that the adoption of Western models will accelerate this process. In contrast, the institutional theory emphasizes the importance of developing local institutions that can effectively manage resources and promote accountability.

The theory argues that African states need to develop their institutions, including legal systems, bureaucracies, and political structures, to improve governance and reduce corruption. Institutions are seen as critical to economic development, as they provide a framework for markets to operate effectively and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently. Critics of the modernization theory argue that it overlooks the unique social, cultural, and economic factors that shape African societies and undermines local agency in the development process. They contend that the adoption of Western models without considering local context can exacerbate existing problems and create new ones. On the other hand, institutional theory critics argue that institutions alone cannot guarantee development and that external factors, such as global economic policies and international trade relations, must also be addressed. It should be remembered that both the modernization theory and institutional theory offer different perspectives on promoting development in African states. While the modernization theory emphasizes the importance of adopting Western models of governance and economic systems, the institutional theory highlights the importance of developing local institutions to improve governance and reduce corruption. To achieve sustainable development, African states must pursue strategies that take into account local context, address external factors, and promote institutional development alongside economic growth.

The civil society organizations (CSOs) play a critical role in shaping state politics in Africa. CSOs have been instrumental in advocating for democracy, human rights, and good governance in many African countries. For example, the civil society movement in Nigeria played a significant role in ending military rule and establishing democratic governance (Jega, 2013).

Rwanda has also experienced significant political and economic development since the end of the genocide in 1994 (Reyntjens, 2015). It is important to acknowledge that while many African

countries continue to face significant political and economic challenges, there have been some notable successes in recent years. Ghana, for example, has been widely recognized for its successful transitions to democracy and has held several peaceful democratic elections since the adoption of its 1992 constitution. The country has also made progress in areas such as human rights and economic growth (Agyeman-Duah, 2012). This is a positive example of how a country can overcome a legacy of colonialism and political instability to build a more democratic and prosperous society. On the other hand, there have been positive developments in other African countries, such as Ghana, which has held several peaceful democratic elections since the adoption of its 1992 constitution.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the relationship between state and politics in Africa is complex and multifaceted. African states face a range of challenges in terms of governance, democracy, and development, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these problems. This paper has drawn on a range of academic literature and case studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of politics in Africa today. While there are many obstacles to overcome, there are also reasons for hope. African societies are dynamic and resilient, and there is a growing sense of civic engagement and activism across the continent. By continuing to explore these issues and seek solutions, scholars and policymakers can contribute to a more democratic and prosperous future for Africa.



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