SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PITCHED CONTESTS *for* DEMOCRATIZATION THROUGH 2022

A GLOBAL TRENDS PAPER I FEBRUARY 2018

A publication of the National Intelligence Council

This assessment was prepared under the
auspices of the National Intelligence Council.

Comments and questions about this paper can be directed to the NIC's
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This Global Trends report can be found online at www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends

Sub-Saharan Africa: Pitched Contests for Democratization Through 2022

Key Insights

The governance landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa is shifting. Two decades after a wave of democratization swept across the region, African publics are again taking to the streets in record numbers to demand better government accountability and responsiveness. Standing in contrast to what academics have noted as a global drift toward authoritarianism, democracy remains a potent ideal in Africa. Even as citizens are challenging state control through more sophisticated protest strategies, regimes continue to rely on blunt tools for repression and control. We judge that this tug of war between leaders and their publics will become more intense through 2022, as stagnating economies, urbanization, and access to technology upset many longstanding balances of power.

The resulting volatility will pose challenges and create opportunities for the international community as it pursues its strategic interests in this rapidly changing landscape. Amid public appeals to the international community to umpire in this contested arena, the West's overt backing of incumbents or even inaction would risk eroding its longstanding reputation as an advocate of democracy. At the same time, this volatility also poses a unique opening for Washington and Western capitals to forge close ties with the next set of African leaders and to shape political reform in a region poised for change.

We judge that Sub-Saharan Africa is entering a period of heightened competition between governments and their citizens over the nature of democratic governance that is likely to breed persistent volatility through 2022. Across the region, public demand for democracy has expanded and deepened in the past decade, giving rise to a wave of protests across the continent. Meanwhile, many longstanding autocrats are seeing their traditional bases of support erode, as the economic slowdown in much of the region depletes state coffers, weakens patronage networks, and gives rise to new political opponents. In response, several African leaders are leveraging their security relationships with the West to bolster their tools for repression and rebuff calls for reform. Although African governments have used this assistance to more effectively address security threats, many also are using a more capable security apparatus to monitor opponents, stifle government critics, undermine opposition leaders, and mistreat ethnic groups aligned with political opponents. At the same time, European interest in reducing the wave of African migration is likely to encourage some European states to bolster their support to authoritarian African leaders capable of controlling population flows within Africa.

A shifting balance of power between countries' chief executives and Africa's governing institutions will almost certainly present hurdles to democratic consolidation through 2022, leading to dramatic swings between democratic and authoritarian politics. African legislatures, judiciaries, and civil societies have made measured gains in their capacity and independence in recent years, but they have been met with commensurate levels of executive interference and repression.

The West will almost certainly face continued pressure from African publics to referee this contested arena for democracy, even as a growing number of African governments—including some traditional Western partners—would respond to such engagement by lashing out at the West for perceived interference in their domestic affairs. A further expansion and deepening of democracy would probably be associated with enhanced human rights, quality of life, and greater long-term economic prosperity. At the same time, the spread of democracy is also likely to create challenges for Africa's international partners. Democratic transitions are generally long-term processes because periods of liberalization are often accompanied by violence as leaders in and out of government seek to mobilize supporters. As new democracies create broader and more inclusive governing structures, they are likely to be slower, more deliberative, and less consistently supportive of the West's policy priorities than some of their authoritarian counterparts.

The West will probably have opportunities to both navigate and shape the changing governance landscape in Africa, but Western democratization efforts could be in tension with other strategic goals, including counterterrorism, particularly in West Africa and the Greater Horn. African leaders have capitalized on the Western focus on counterterrorism by undermining democratic institutions and consolidating power. However, as those leaders' positions become more tenuous in the face of mounting domestic opposition, the international community will face a region distracted with domestic crises and risk losing established allies. International pressure on African leaders to promote good governance reform would probably create a more conducive environment for the West to pursue other foreign policy priorities.

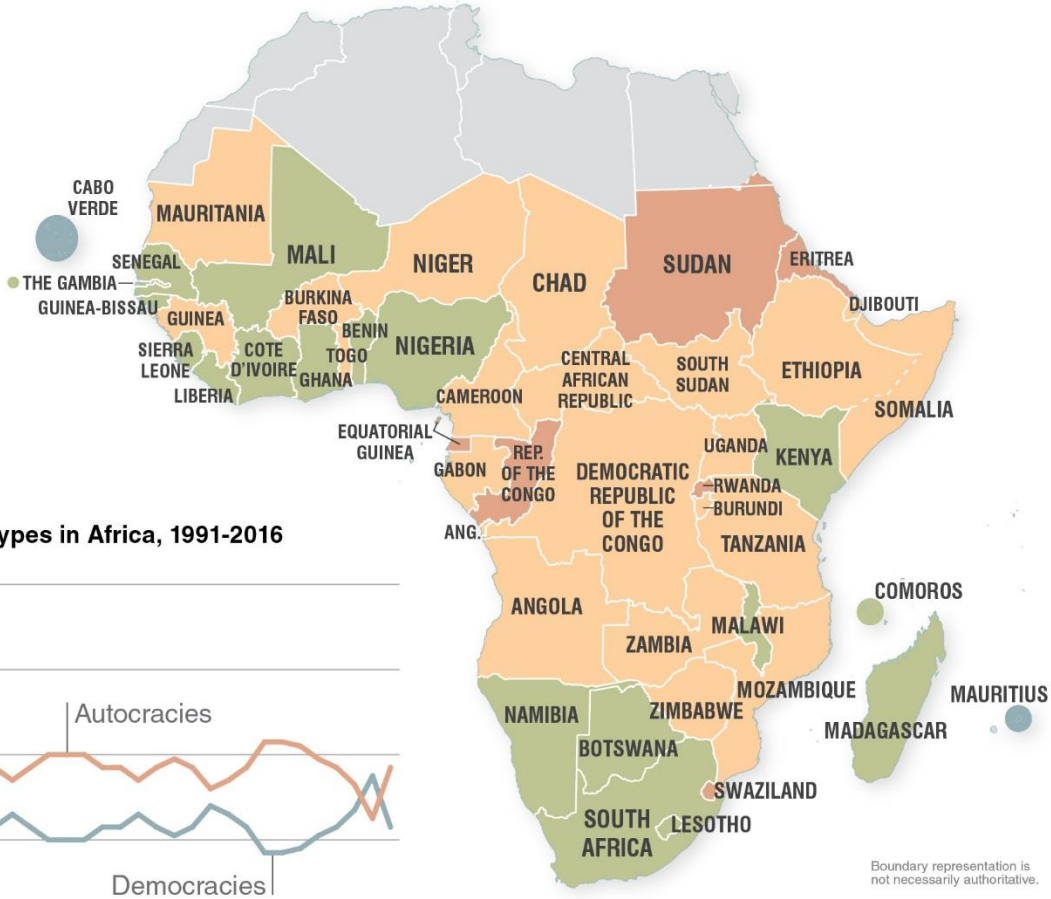
Sub-Saharan Africa: Regime Types, 1991-2016

Full democracy: The chief executive and national legislators are held accountable by and secure office through competitive elections, and political participation is open and well institutionalized.

Partial democracy: The chief executive and national legislators are held accountable by and secure office through largely inclusive and competitive elections, and political participation is broad but may exhibit weak, dysfunctional, or factional party systems that compromise citizen participation. Alternatively, partial democracies may hold elections that are not fully fair or free but are nonetheless not predetermined by electoral irregularities.

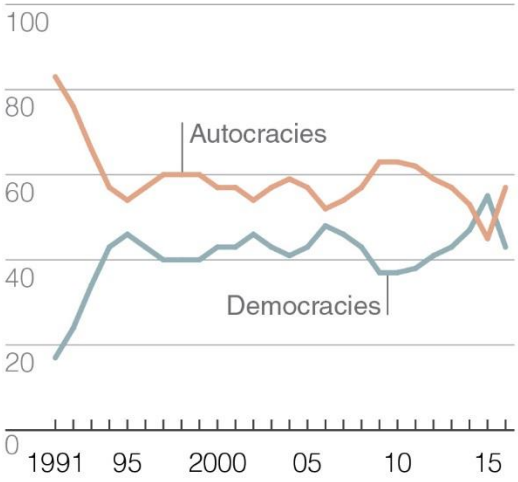
Partial autocracy: The chief executive or national legislators secure office in a manner other than inclusive and competitive multiparty elections, despite allowing some political competition, or political participation is substantially repressed.

Full autocracy: The chief executive or national legislators secure office in a manner other than inclusive and competitive elections and suppress nearly all political competition.



Regime Types in Africa, 1991-2016

Percent



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Scope Note

Definitions

For the purposes of this estimate, we use a definition of **democracy** that is consistent with generally agreed-upon principles in political science literature: elected officials rule, civil liberties are protected, elections are fair and competitive, and politics is inclusive. An **autocracy** is a government that falls short on any of these four criteria. See Annex A for a more detailed definition.

- We define a **transition to democracy**—or democratization—as any event by which an authoritarian government cedes power to a chief executive and national legislature chosen through competitive, free, and inclusive elections.

- We define a **transition to autocracy**—or autocratic backsliding—as any event that transfers power over national public authority from elected officials to those not elected in competitive, free, and inclusive elections.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Pitched Contests for Democratization Through 2022

Discussion

A Shifting Battleground

We judge that Sub-Saharan Africa is entering a period of heightened competition between governments and their citizens over the nature of democratic governance that is likely to breed persistent volatility through 2022. African publics will almost certainly grow increasingly vocal in their demands for democracy, while African states will have mixed levels of capacity to insulate themselves from these bottom-up pressures.

- Trends shaping this contest include an intensifying public commitment to democratic governance that is increasingly expressed through street protests, a regional economic slowdown that is diminishing leaders' resources to maintain their traditional bases of support, shrinking international aid for democracy promotion, and the advent of new forms of technology that are expanding the abilities of publics to challenge the state and of leaders to resist those challenges.

- These trends highlight the inadequacy and disinclination of government institutions in the region to respond to popular demands for the political participation and good governance that citizens increasingly expect, setting the stage for a turbulent period of political struggle.

Deepening Commitment to Democracy Pushing Publics to the Street

Across the region, public demand for democratic governance has expanded and deepened in the past decade. Nearly 80 percent of Africans express support for democracy—up from 65 percent a decade ago—and the proportion of those that reject alternative forms of authoritarian rule has risen by 15 percentage points in the past 10 years to 51 percent, according to a reputable US-based poll taken in 2015 in 37 countries.

- African publics are increasingly likely to cite the quality of elections—rather than the performance of the government or economy—as the most important measure of democracy, according to the same poll, indicating the development of an electorate that is likely to grow more vocal in demanding leadership selection and mechanisms for accountability.

- At the same time, public satisfaction with the state is down. African publics express low trust in the formal institutions of power and often turn to traditional and religious leaders to channel grievances against the formal organs of the state, according to the same poll.

This growing gap between the nature of African regimes and the democratic expectations of their citizens is giving rise to a wave of protests across the region. These complaints will almost certainly continue to grow as urbanization, access to communication technology, and activist capacity increase. Nearly half of all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa experienced protests in 2015—a threefold increase over the previous year—and more than two-thirds of those protests called for democracy and governance reform, according to US Government-sponsored data and research. African protests have been surprisingly successful compared to global trends. Among the three dozen large-scale, nonviolent antigovernment campaigns in Africa since the 1940s, two-thirds have removed incumbent leaders and 10 percent achieved major concessions, according to US Government-sponsored research.

- African activists have improved their organizational capacity in recent years, increasing their ability to channel discontent into sustained campaigns, according to academic research. For example, prodemocracy civil society groups across West and Central Africa are forging transnational networks to share best practices, train activists in neighboring countries, and mobilize their support bases. Similar networks played a critical role in spreading protests during the color revolutions in Eurasia in the 2000s and during the Arab Spring in 2011-12, according to academic research.

Economic Woes Undermine Longstanding Autocrats

We assess that the ongoing economic stagnation in much of the region will reduce the traditional bases of support of many governments. Many African countries are facing slower GDP growth rates, in part because of drought, electricity shortages, low commodity prices, and poor fiscal and monetary policies. Several governments are under threat of repeating history. In response to plummeting commodity prices in the 1980s and 1990s, African leaders implemented austerity programs that loosened their grips over key patronage networks and gave rise to a new wave of opponents and political rivals that eventually removed nearly a dozen African heads of state from power.

New Technology, a Double-Edged Sword

We assess that the application of existing and developing communication technologies will enable publics to press governments more effectively while also improving regimes' capacity to crack down on opponents. The number of Africans regularly accessing the Internet more than tripled between 2010 and 2017 from 7 to 22 percent, the fastest Internet growth rate on the globe.

- Advances in media technology, increased media infrastructure, and decreased cost of media devices and services are providing publics with access to a broader array of communication tools and propelling the diffusion of power to nonstate actors. New social media platforms are being rolled out across the region—such as Kenyan-based Ushahidi that collects crowd-sourced reports of electoral violence across the continent and the Tanzanian-based "Bribed" app that crowd-sources data on corrupt traffic officers—providing activists and citizen journalists with new mechanisms to promote good governance and hold public leaders accountable.

- Social media can also offer users a way to circumvent government restrictions on freedom of the press. During protests in Burundi in 2015, the government shut down most private media outlets and attempted to block access to social media sites, but protesters and journalists used virtual private networks to get around the restrictions.

African regimes have found themselves outmaneuvered in online spaces by citizens, activists, and civil society groups, often relying on blunt tactics such as shutting down media outlets and blocking Internet access. We assess that governments will look to more technologically advanced countries, such as Israel, and those experienced in Internet control, such as China and Iran, to enable them to adopt more nimble and effective strategies for monitoring and controlling online spaces.

Regional and Western Powers Pulling Back From Democracy Promotion

In the face of the mounting pressure on leaders across the region to loosen political control, African states will look to improve their capabilities to resist pressure from below by taking advantage of shifting international priorities. Some regional and Western donors to key African states are likely to consider pulling back from democratization and governance initiatives and focusing limited resources increasingly on security assistance through 2022.

- At least some of Africa's European partners will almost certainly become increasingly inwardly focused through 2022 as they cope with fallout from the UK's eventual withdrawal from the European Union, instability on their borders, domestic terrorism, and ongoing economic woes.

- European interest in reducing the wave of African migration is likely to encourage some European states to bolster their support to authoritarian African leaders capable of controlling population flows within Africa. For example, German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged an increase in military assistance to Niger in October 2016 to stem the migrant influx to Europe, according to press reporting.

African leaders will continue to use the threat of terrorism to press Western allies for security assistance. Regional leaders—particularly in West and East Africa—have increased their appeals for counterterrorism training and funding; many of these leaders in turn are using a more robust security apparatus to circumvent the rule of law and mistreat ethnic groups aligned with political opponents.

China Giving License to African Autocrats, But not Unwavering Support

As Western engagement becomes less certain in the region, China will almost certainly play a more prominent role, which might create a more permissive environment for some African leaders to consolidate or maintain power. China's mercantilist approach to economic investment and reluctance to interfere in other countries' domestic affairs better positions some governments to sidestep sanctions and aid conditionality imposed by the West, potentially extending autocrats' hold on power.

- However, Beijing's generally pragmatic approach to diplomacy suggests that China will be disinclined to shore up faltering African autocrats who prove unable to safeguard its economic interests. For example, Beijing has tightened its lending terms with Zimbabwe and refused to support then President Robert Mugabe during mounting protests in 2016, a sign of its growing disenchantment with Zimbabwe's economic policies and interest in courting support outside of the embattled ruling party, according to an academic expert.

A Rough-and-Tumble Transition

The shifting balance of power between countries' chief executives and Africa's governing institutions will almost certainly present hurdles to democratic consolidation through 2022, leading to dramatic swings between democratic and authoritarian politics. A review of governing institutions in Africa suggests that measured gains in the capacity and independence of nonexecutive institutions have been met with increased interference and repression from executives, producing a tug of war between executive leaders, their governing counterparts, and civil society.

- Historically, cases in which African reformers successfully pushed out autocratic leaders often failed to result in democratic transitions because the state was too weak to enforce the rule of law, the counterweights to executive power were few, and elite turnover was minimal, leaving room for new strongmen to consolidate control.

Chief Executives

Executive power in Africa, although weakening on the margins, will almost certainly continue to eclipse the power of nonexecutive institutions. Most constitutions in Africa provide outsized prerogatives to the president, including control of the national budget and the ability to rule by decree.

- Since 1990, fewer than one out of six African elections produced a change in the ruling party, in large part because of incumbents' access to state resources, electoral manipulation, and often high public approval ratings. The repeal or extension of term limits has helped to further consolidate presidential control in a dozen countries since 2000.

Nevertheless, the growing importance of coalition politics, coupled with economic downturns across much of the region, might help rein in executives. In about a quarter of African states, ruling parties no longer hold legislative supermajorities, forcing presidents to preside over coalitions held together by widening patronage networks. This inflated patronage might outstrip presidents' abilities to continue funding it.

Legislatures

Although legislative performance is uneven across the continent, parliaments are emerging as key players in many African countries. They have begun to initiate and modify legislation more frequently, have stronger bargaining power with the executive, and are increasingly likely to reject presidential nominations for key appointments, according to academic research. African legislatures have been at the center of battles over extending presidential terms, in some cases rubberstamping such demands—as in Chad and Rwanda—but blocking attempts in Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia, among others.

- African legislatures are increasingly independent of the executive branch for funding, according to the global dataset on governance, a key measure of legislative autonomy.

This increased legislative assertiveness has been met by pushback. For example, when members of the ruling coalition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) called on President Joseph Kabila to adhere to the electoral calendar and step down at the end of his term, Kabila forced their resignations from the National Assembly. Kabila also sidetracked their campaigns with politically motivated criminal

charges and used his extensive patronage network to pry away rank-and-file members from the newly formed opposition coalition.

Multilateral Institutions Inconsistent in Democracy Promotion

Africa's regional institutions, including the African Union (AU) and eight UN-recognized regional economic communities (REC), have a mixed record advocating for democracy. They often reflect member states' national sovereignty concerns, leaders' political ambitions, and the institutional weaknesses of the organizations. Since 2007, the AU has consistently condemned flagrant violations of democratic standards, such as coups d'état, by suspending member states and in some cases imposing sanctions. However, AU officials have struggled to counter more furtive violations and have fielded election observers that often validated even the most problematic elections.

- The AU and many of the RECs most often rely on shuttle diplomacy and public messaging to press governments to honor constitutional provisions or respect the rule of law. However, they frequently fail to agree on punitive measures—such as sanctions—to enforce compliance. In 2015, the AU took several steps to dissuade President Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi from running for a third term but backed off in 2016 when Nkurunziza affirmed he would stand his ground.

- Likewise, the Economic Community of West African States ruled against Burkina Faso's law disallowing supporters of the past regime from participating in the 2015 presidential election. However, it lacked a mechanism to enforce its decision, enabling officials in Ouagadougou to ignore the ruling.

- Individual African leaders are often able to derail regional political initiatives that threaten their interests. In 2012, Zimbabwe's then President Robert Mugabe successfully convinced members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to indefinitely suspend the SADC tribunal because the tribunal had ruled that Harare violated the rule of law when it seized land from white farmers.

Judiciaries

African judiciaries are showing signs of growing assertiveness, but their boldness has been accompanied by intensified levels of political scrutiny. Courts are frequently deciding core political questions, including presidential election disputes, corruption trials of former presidents, third-term disputes, and the constitutionality of antiterrorism statutes, according to academic research.

- Kenya's courts have shown increasing independence from the executive since 2010, culminating in the Supreme Court decision in 2017 to annul the reelection of President Uhuru Kenyatta, citing the poor performance by the electoral commission, according to a leading scholar of the region.

- Since 2010, African courts have increasingly ruled against the executive branch, a trend particularly striking in authoritarian regimes. For example, Swaziland's High Court struck down

sections of the Suppression of Terrorism Act in September 2016 on the grounds that it limited rights to freedom of expression and association.

This growing judicial assertiveness has come at a price, however, as leaders in both authoritarian and democratic states have ratcheted up pressure on the courts, and governments are increasingly unwilling to abide by court rulings, according to a global dataset of democracy measures. Judges in Botswana and Zambia have faced politically motivated charges in attempts to push them off the bench, and those in Burundi and the DRC have faced physical intimidation and threats of coercion.

Civil Society

Civil society in Africa is increasingly vibrant, driven in part by an explosion in communication technology that has enabled citizens to organize, mobilize, and communicate outside of government-controlled institutions and across ever-expanding geographic lines. Youth-inspired civil society organizations in several West African countries have put increased political pressure on their leaders in the past five years to improve transparency and governance.

- Both Senegal's Y'en A Marre and Bukina Faso's Le Balai Citoyen movements have mobilized increasingly frustrated and social-media-savvy youth. The Malian campaign, Ante-Abana Touche Pas A Ma Constitution ("We Don't Want It Anymore" in Bambara; "Do Not Touch My Constitution" in French), has cultivated a broad coalition and used traditional social media to block a constitutional referendum in 2017 that would have significantly broadened the president's powers.

Governments are pushing back, however, by curbing civil liberties and restricting the operating space for civil society. The adherence to civil liberties by partial democracies in Africa is at its lowest point since the early 1990s, according to a widely used measure of democratic quality.

- Liberian security services arrested activists for criticizing the ruling party ahead of the 2017 elections. In South Africa, the ruling party has called for a government-run tribunal to police journalistic standards, according to Western and local press reporting. Zambia has interrupted opposition demonstrations, arrested activists, and censored media content.

- Government moves to limit foreign funding have had a particularly detrimental effect on NGOs' abilities to operate, according to a leading expert. Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Uganda have drafted or passed legislation placing restrictions on external funding for NGOs.

Political Parties

Political parties across the region tend to be organizationally shallow and more apt to use personal networks than formal party structures to challenge incumbents. This lack of strong organizational structures hobbles many opposition parties facing tilted electoral playing fields and ruling party repression. Opposition parties in the region are responding by recruiting ruling party defectors and aligning with rivals, tactics which in part explain opposition wins in Nigeria in 2015, Senegal in 2012, and Kenya in 2002. Many opposition parties are also adopting populist platforms and employing confrontational tactics, including street protests, to pressure ruling parties.

The Gambia: A Lesson in Strategic Surprise

Gambian opposition candidate Adama Barrow's surprise victory over longtime dictator Yahya Jammeh in December 2016 offers a case study in unexpected liberalization. Full autocracies—such as in The Gambia under Jammeh—rarely transition to democracy, suggesting there is little historical guide for the postelection fallout.

- **Information-Poor Environments.** Autocrats often deliberately distort mass information and public opinion to play down dissent and hamper opposition coordination, but low-information environments can backfire by encouraging leaders to overestimate their strength, according to academic research. Jammeh's confidence probably led him to miscalculate the degree to which he needed to rig the election; his decision to allow votes to be counted at local precincts in the presence of opposition observers prevented him from manipulating the results.

- **Unpredictable Decisionmaking.** Strongman leaders typically have few constraints on their decisionmaking and sideline competent advisers in favor of loyalists, increasing the potential for unpredictable choices. Jammeh's yes-men fed his belief that he had sufficient public support to win the election, according to Western press. His loss at the polls led him to quickly concede defeat before abruptly changing course to reject the results.

- **Quick Reversals.** According to academic research, during uncertain times of potential political liberalization, elites' overestimation of the opposition's strength has occasionally led them to initially offer concessions only to systematically roll back promised reforms once the government crisis had passed and they could more accurately gauge their ability to repress. Jammeh's move to challenge the results and retain control collapsed under domestic, regional, and international pressure but highlights the fragility of democratic openings.

Implications for the International Community

The West will almost certainly face continued pressure from African publics to referee this contested arena for democracy, even as a growing number of African governments—including traditional partners—would respond to such engagement by lashing out at Washington and the West for perceived interference in their domestic affairs. A further expansion and deepening of democracy would probably be associated with enhanced human rights and quality of life and greater long-term economic prosperity, judging from academic research. However, the spread of democracy is also likely to create challenges for Washington and other Western powers, including disruption of existing power dynamics and political volatility.

- Democracies are generally more likely than autocracies to have predictable economic policies and produce steady economic growth, and political liberalization is associated with higher subsequent quality of life, according to academic research. Democracies tend to be more accountable to the public rather than to parochial elite interests, and their respect for the rule of law creates conditions necessary for economic growth.

- Historically, democracies have seldom gone to war with one another and have generally supported one another during international wars, probably because democracies tend to advocate for global public goods, such as open sea lanes and respect for international borders, rather than territorial conquest, according to academic studies.

Messier Policy Process

An expanding democratic presence on the continent would almost certainly complicate Washington's efforts to advance its policy priorities. Transitions to democracy typically broaden the group of stakeholders to include newly empowered legislatures, courts, and civil society watchdog groups. Washington and other foreign capitals will find new democracies in many cases more difficult to engage with than their authoritarian predecessors, given their tendency to be more deliberative and consultative.

- Democratic governance in countries with low public support for Western-backed initiatives would complicate Washington and other foreign capitals' ability to fast-track some bilateral initiatives. With publics more willing to take to the streets to pressure decisionmakers, political leaders might also have fewer options to implement difficult policies and less time to show results.

Populist Initiatives Threaten LGBTI Protections

As African leaders become more sensitive to popular opinion and legislatures become more independent, Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to see calls to enact new or enforce existing legislation that penalizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. Public scrutiny of LGBTI issues in Africa in the past several years—especially in the wake of Uganda's controversial Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA)—has emboldened officials of some governments to make populist statements condemning homosexuality as "un-African" and a Western import. Ninety-nine percent of Africans disapprove of LGBTI lifestyles, according to Pew polling from 2014, prompting public officials to use the issue to demonstrate their commitment to communal values.

- In Kenya, a cross-party group in the legislature had attempted as of mid-2015 to amplify punishments for violations of anti-LGBTI laws—similar to the AHA—including a provision to stone LGBTI foreigners to death, according to African and Western press reports.

- The AHA—passed in the Ugandan Parliament in February 2014 but annulled by a court in August 2014—would have imposed severe sentences for certain same-sex behavior, including life in prison and punishment for those who did not report violators.

Cyclical Instability

A generally positive but volatile democratic trajectory characterized by movement toward and away from democracy would increase regional risks of political instability. Transitioning countries that mix elements of democracy with autocracy are at highest risk for instability, according to US Government-sponsored research, because their governing institutions can neither fully address public grievances in a democratic fashion nor repress them in an authoritarian fashion.

- New democracies are also likely to have less coercive capacity to suppress armed challengers, particularly if predecessors packed the security services with loyalists and kept rebel and extremist groups in check with harsh counterterrorism campaigns.

- In the long term, countries that ultimately gain the political, societal, and cultural attributes of full-fledged democracies are likely to evolve into stable states. Autocratic systems, by contrast, tend to be more brittle and prone to severe forms of instability such as state failure, according to US Government–sponsored research.

Tradeoffs in Strategies To Influence Trajectory

The West will probably have opportunities to both navigate and shape the changing governance landscape in Africa, but Western democratization efforts will be in tension with other strategic goals, including counterterrorism. Although many African autocrats have proven effective security partners for the West, they tend to rule countries more prone to violence, and more often provoke anti-Western backlash, compared to their democratic counterparts. Continuing international pressure on African leaders to promote good governance reform would probably create a more conducive environment for the West to pursue other foreign policy priorities in the region.

Security Assistance Versus Democracy Assistance

As the frontlines against terrorism have expanded beyond Somalia and northern Nigeria to much of West Africa and the Greater Horn, international partners have been quick to respond to regional leaders' appeals for counterterrorism assistance. The enhanced security capacity of governments probably helps new or weak democracies to deter terrorist threats and appear responsive to public concerns. Security-related issues are among the leading concerns of African publics in countries that have faced terrorist attacks, according to opinion polls. Nonetheless, many African leaders are taking advantage of a more robust security apparatus to consolidate their hold on power.

- If regional leaders perceive that the West has recalibrated its balance of priorities toward security and away from democratization, they will be less likely to respond to international pressure for governance reform. Western democracy assistance has negligible effects on encouraging good governance in countries that also receive large amounts of counterterrorism assistance, according to academic research and a USAID-sponsored study.

- Several African countries—including Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe— in recent years have passed antiterror laws that define terrorism broadly and emphasize anti state activities, and they have used these laws to stifle political opposition.

- Security services in Kenya, Niger, and Nigeria—among others—have engaged in mass arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and torture as part of those governments' heavyhanded counterterrorism campaigns, according to a respected Western human rights NGO.

Horizontal Versus Vertical Accountability Mechanisms

Western democracy promotion efforts have largely focused on mechanisms to improve the "vertical" accountability between citizens and their elected representatives by safeguarding the freedom and fairness of elections. However, the shortcomings of African democracies in recent years often reveal weak "horizontal accountability," the inability of state institutions to check abuses of other branches of government.

- As election observation has become a near-universal feature of Africa elections since the early 1990s, leaders looking to game the system have stacked the deck well ahead of election day by shrinking opportunities for civil society, consolidating control over state resources, and co-opting opposition leaders. Improving the capacity of legislatures, court systems, and election management bodies might help safeguard democratic practices between elections. (See Annex C.)

Annex A
Definitions

The definitions of democracy, autocracy, and related concepts are a matter of debate in scholarly studies and intelligence analyses. The definitions in this paper are consistent with generally agreed-upon principles in political science literature. A country must fully adhere to the subcriteria in all four conditions to be considered a full democracy. A partial democracy must at least minimally adhere to all subcriteria. A country that falls short on any of the subcriteria is considered an autocracy.

Elected Officials Rule

Representatives chosen by citizens actually make policy, and unelected individuals, bodies, and organizations cannot veto those representatives' decisions.

- The chief executive must be chosen directly or indirectly by popular election; be chosen according to law by the legislature or an electoral college, the delegates to which were chosen through popular election; or, according to law, replaces an elected one who died while in office, was incapacitated, or resigned for personal or legal reasons.

- All seats in the lower house of the national legislature must be filled by popular election, and all sitting members must be chosen by election or, according to legal procedure, replace elected ones who died while in office, were incapacitated, or resigned for personal or legal reasons.

- No unelected entities—such as monarchs, military leaders, religious or tribal councils, or foreign governments—wield veto power over national policy. Judicial review by a supreme or constitutional court whose members are appointed by elected officials should not be construed as veto power.

Civil Liberties Are Protected

Freedoms of speech, association, and assembly give citizens the opportunity to deliberate on their interests, organize in pursuit of those interests, and monitor the performance of their elected representatives and the bureaucracies on which those officials depend.

- The state by law guarantees freedom of speech and in practice does not restrict political speech beyond standard prohibitions on attempts to incite violence.

- The state does not control or distort mass media content, and it impartially fulfills its role in licensing media outlets and administering media access to public resources.

- Citizens are guaranteed rights to peaceful assembly and association and, in practice, the state consistently protects those rights.

Elections Are Fair and Competitive

The process by which citizens elect their rulers provides voters with meaningful choice and is free from deliberate fraud or abuse.

- Elections for legislature and chief executive must be multiparty, and no parties are selectively or categorically banned, with the exception of legal prohibitions on parties that openly advocate the violent overthrow of the government.

- The use of state resources in national-level political campaigns is free from partisan abuse.

- The polling process in national-level elections is free from partisan abuse.

- The vote-counting process is free from partisan abuse.

Politics Is Inclusive

Adult citizens have equal rights to vote and participate in government and a fair opportunity to exercise those rights.

- All adult citizens by law may vote in national elections, and any legal restrictions on the franchise extend only to some small groups defined by acts of choice (such as convicted felons) or mental incapacity.

- The voter-registration process is free from partisan manipulation.

- The process of registering parties or candidates is free from partisan manipulation.

Annex B
Effects of Decentralization on Democratic Trajectories

Sub-Saharan African governments have traditionally resisted devolving power away from the central government out of concern over secession and a desire to maintain authority over political and economic resources. However, this trend began to change in the 1980s and 1990s, according to an academic and a USAID study of decentralization in Africa.

- Democracies are likely to be decentralized states, particularly if they have a great deal of ethnic or linguistic diversity. Every longstanding democracy in a multilingual state is a federal system, according to a prominent political scientist.

A decentralized government can be more responsive to citizens and civil society where localized conditions vary and can give a political role to traditionally underrepresented or excluded groups, according to the USAID study.

- Drawing subnational boundaries carefully can prevent any ethnosectarian group from dominating national politics, increasing incentives for minority groups to participate in government.

- Particularly contentious issues can be decided on a province-by-province basis rather than at the country level. In Nigeria, controversial issues such as adherence to sharia have been decided on the state level rather than for the entire country, reducing the stakes of disruptive policy decisions.

- Decentralization boosts the significance and authority of provincial-level judicial and executive offices, giving political parties and politicians the opportunity to build governing and policy skills at the provincial level that might enable them to compete in national-level politics.

Federal systems have been less likely to endure when federal institutions exacerbated intergroup conflict or economic disparity between regions and when federal institutions failed to be representative, usually because they were developed under authoritarian rule.

- Political considerations can also undermine the benefits of decentralization, according to the USAID study. For instance, in the DRC, a long-delayed decentralization program was instituted swiftly to help President Joseph Kabila install allies as provincial governors and as a justification to delay elections.

- Decentralization does not necessarily increase calls for secession from minority groups, but the risk of empowering an ethnic group is more severe in states where minority groups are highly geographically concentrated or where decentralization fails to address underlying political or economic discrimination, according to experts in ethnic conflict. Likewise, decentralization established under authoritarian rule or at the end of a colonial regime has often led to instability because these systems tended to favor certain groups.

Annex C
Opportunities To Improve Key Governing Sectors

Most African political systems are characterized by a dominant executive branch that operates with weak checks and balances on its power, diminishing the prospects for democratic breakthrough and consolidation. International support for building the capacity of nonexecutive institutions could improve African countries' adherence to democratic principles and more effectively constrain executives.

Legislatures

The strength of a country's national legislature is the single institutional factor most important to prompting democratic openings, according to academic and US Government-sponsored research. This conclusion suggests that international efforts to boost legislative capacity and institutional independence might have an outsized impact on democratization prospects.

- ***Promoting Institutional Independence.*** International pressure could encourage movement toward greater legislative independence, including the power to control the national budget, confirm presidential appointments, question and investigate executive agencies, call legislative sittings at will, and override presidential vetoes.

- ***Training for Legislators.*** Technical training for African legislators and their staffs—including on the setting up of departmental committees, the technicalities of policy analysis, and the principles of public finance—could strengthen the organizational functioning of legislatures.

- ***Bolstering Financial and Human Resources.*** Most African legislatures face severe shortages of infrastructure and resources. The professional staff also tends to be small and often recruited through patronage rather than merit. By contrast, legislatures that have the ability to set salaries and are provided adequate staff and infrastructure tend to be more effective.

Judiciaries

Judicial independence and effectiveness are important in safeguarding against democratic deterioration, according to comparative and case-study research.

- ***Promoting Institutional Independence.*** Long-term gains could include guaranteed terms of office and restricted executive ability to remove judges, ensuring that judicial decisions are final, fiscal autonomy for the courts, and strict limits on military courts.

- ***Making Courts More User Friendly.*** Developing case-flow management strategies and streamlining rules of procedure would probably contribute to a more efficient court system and build public trust in the institution.

- ***Enhancing Judges' Professional Reputations.*** Publicizing promotion criteria, publishing legal decisions in a publicly accessible venue, and empowering national law societies would work to improve the professional reputation of the bench and reduce its susceptibility to executive influence.

Civil Society

Democratic transitions in Africa have historically been initiated from below, suggesting that efforts to support civil society could build on the region's record of grassroots change. As with support to political parties, however, direct Western support to civil society groups can undercut the domestic credibility of recipients and goad governments into preemptive crackdowns.

- ***Preventing Spillover From Counterterrorism Policies.*** Western engagement with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)—an intergovernmental body that has encouraged restrictions on foreign NGO funding—could help to refine the FATF's guidance to governments on safeguarding civil society space while enacting counterterrorism measures. Most African states are members of FATF-styled regional bodies and probably would adopt any revised FATF guidance.

- ***Leveraging Credible Interlocutors.*** Foreign leaders in countries that have demonstrated progress on civil society protections are often eager to showcase their positive records. For example, Senegal's dynamic civil society sector and extensive regional ties suggest that Dakar could serve as an effective interlocutor with regional and Muslim-majority nations seeking to balance internal political and security challenges with freedom of assembly and association.

- ***Engaging International Business.*** Business associations will be affected by some of the NGO legislation restricting foreign funding in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania. International business and trade associations could help influence governments to ease such restrictions.

Political Parties

Political parties play a critical role in channeling citizen interests, but direct support to opposition parties can backfire by compromising their legitimacy. International, nonpartisan assistance that focuses on improving the conditions under which parties operate will probably be more effective in mitigating regime fears.

- ***Party System Aid.*** Programs to address the legal framework for parties—such as streamlining party registration and operation processes, reforming the legal system, promoting interparty dialogue, and reforming party finance—would help to open up space for opposition parties to credibly compete while avoiding the perception that Western support is partisan.

- ***Bridging the Civil Society Gap.*** Expanding the scope of the civil society actors included in training programs—particularly to include those with wide membership bases, such as teachers organizations, indigenous persons groups, church networks, agricultural cooperatives, and trade unions—could help to better latch opposition parties to grassroots constituencies and build organizational capital.

- ***Strengthening Intraparty Competition.*** Encouraging opposition groups to adhere to intraparty democracy—including transparent primaries, issue-based rather than ethnic appeals, and transparent accounting of party finances—would probably support long-term democratic practices, with academic literature suggesting increased focus on youth in politics.

Annex D
Reducing the Western Face of Democracy Promotion

African scholars and political leaders have long argued that Western democracy does not fit the social and historical context of Africa, noting that the African tradition of consensus building sits uneasily with the Western emphasis on individual rights and majoritarian rule. However, several African countries have fused core democratic principles with traditional African governing practices:

- Ghana's House of Chiefs incorporates traditional leaders into decisionmaking processes by giving the body the authority to weigh in on issues related to chieftaincy and customary law. In Botswana, Mozambique, and South Africa, local chiefs play a critical role in arbitrating local disputes and representing citizens in interactions with the central government.

- The founding conference of self-declared Somaliland produced a charter in 1993 that blended traditional practices with elements of modern democratic systems. This blend includes a collectively negotiated contract, a clan family system of government, and an upper legislative chamber composed of elders responsible for security issues.

- Several governments have championed traditional justice systems that help underscore local rule while maintaining adherence to global human rights standards. USAID brought together Kenyan High Court judges and traditional leaders in 2012 to discuss how the customary justice system could help implement reforms envisioned in the 2010 constitution.

Several African leaders have looked to non-Western democracies for advice and capacity-building assistance. Many rising democracies, such as India and Indonesia, are uniquely positioned to address the economic and security challenges that accompany democratic transitions in Africa. Others such as Japan and Chile actively promote democracy and development agendas without being dismissed by African governments as unsuitably Western.

- **Japan** and **South Korea** have strengthened their democracy promotion programs in recent years. They are oriented toward helping states embed better governance standards in the delivery of economic development programs, a key concern among many African governments.

- **India** and **Indonesia** have successfully managed diverse populations by enacting protections for minority rights. India has conducted outreach on managing complex elections and interethnic diversity. Indonesia has emphasized projects on decentralization, peace mediation, and the local management of natural resources through traditional community structures.

- **Brazil** has shown the political will to defend against coups in Lusophone countries and has significantly expanded its diplomatic presence in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years; Brasilia established 19 out of its 37 embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa between 2003 and 2014, and its Foreign Minister visited 10 countries in 2015. **Chile** has increased human rights activism in its international engagement and has used its role in the Community of Democracies to promote greater civil society involvement in government decisionmaking.

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