

PLS 343

Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa

Week 14:
Recent trends in African politics

Recap

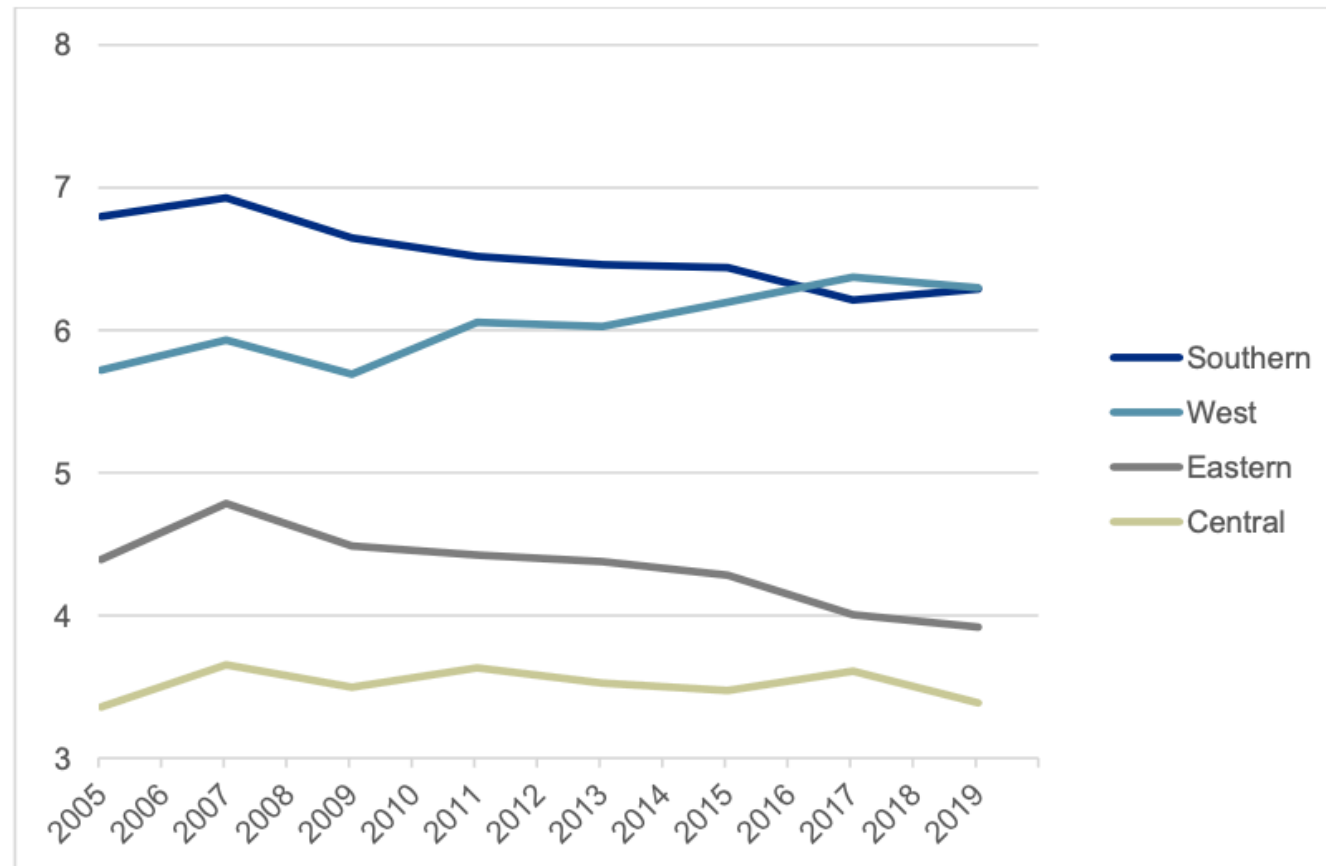
- Expression of societal disaffection and its political ramifications

Plan for this week

- Democratic stagnation, backsliding, re-authoritarianization, and their causes

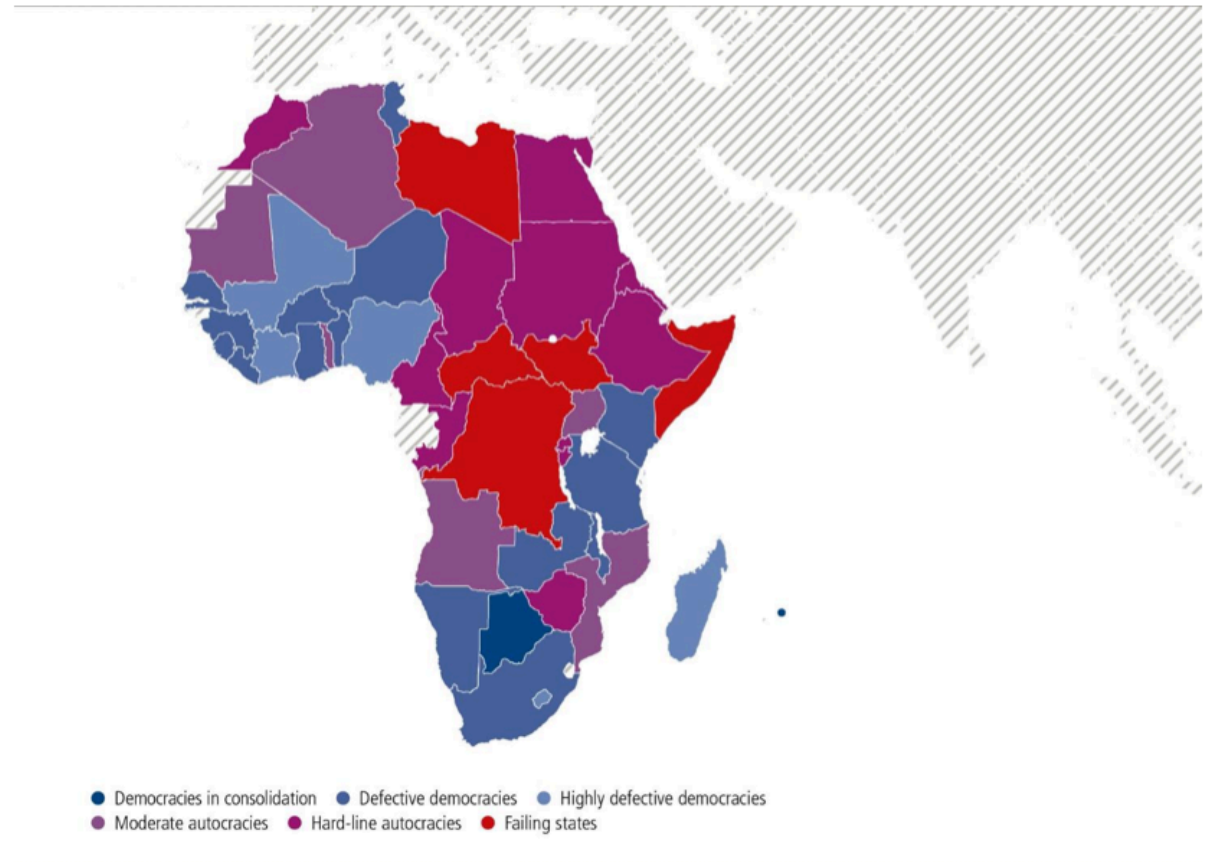
Recent trends

Figure 1. Average Democracy scores for African regions, BTI 2006-2020*



Africa after 30 years of democratization

- Democracies:
 - 5% consolidating
 - 34% defective
 - 11% highly defective
- Autocracies:
 - 36% hardline
 - 14% moderate



Africa after 1 year of COVID-19

Global Democracy Has Grown Weaker during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the coronavirus outbreak began, the condition of democracy and human rights has deteriorated in 80 countries around the world.



Causes

- Causes of democratic backsliding
- Causes of authoritarian resurgence:
 - 'Autocrats' toolkit'
 - Appeal of (developmental) authoritarianism

Causes of democratic backsliding according to Gyimah-Boadi

- Illiberalism
- Elite unwillingness to relinquish control
- Government (and elite) control over the economy
- Reduced dependence on aid
- Western reluctance to promote democratization amid the rise of China and the War on Terror



Other causes of democratic backsliding

- Dominant party systems
- Presidentialism
- Neopatrimonialism
- Ethnic politics
- Civil society weakness
- Nature of the state and states-system

Democratic backsliding in Kenya



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RNxjcNtHbY>

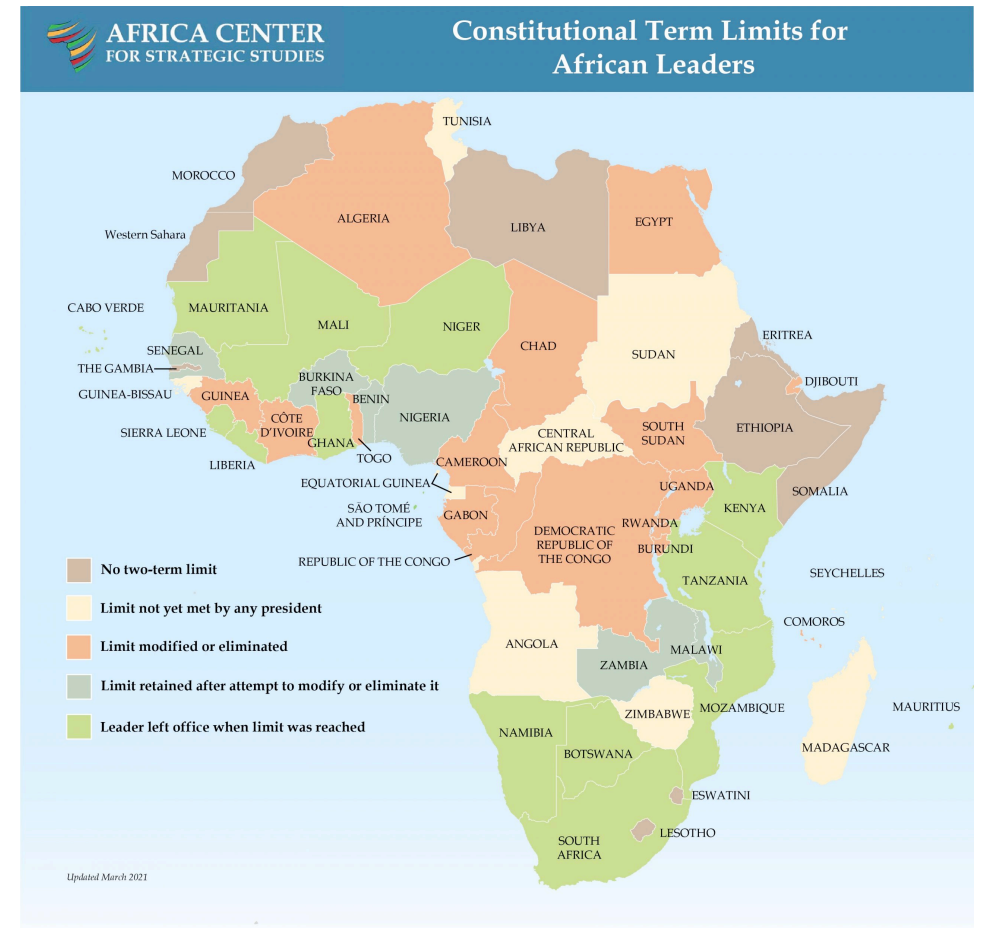
'Autocrats' toolkit' according to Albaugh

- Electoral fraud
- Cooptation of opposition
- Intimidation
- Manipulation of electoral boundaries
- Electoral access restrictions
- Opposition fragmentation through decentralization and political manipulation of minority language rights protections



Other tools in the autocrats' toolkit

- Skewed playing field
- Press manipulation
- Opposition as stooges of foreign interests
- Limited concessions
- Control over NGOs and internet
- Surveillance
- Removal of term limits



Autocrats' toolkit in Uganda



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5DMXa2thwY>

Developmental authoritarianism

- (Apparent) developmental success of consolidated authoritarian regimes in Ethiopia and Rwanda



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Takeaways

- Authoritarian innovations in the service of elite dominance
- Weak elite commitment to democracy facilitated by the nature of contemporary African political systems