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# **The African Governance Gap: How Societies Cope When the State Falters**

Kohnert, Dirk

GIGA, Institute for African Studies, Hamburg

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# The African Governance Gap: How Societies Cope When the State Falters

Dirk Kohnert <sup>1</sup>

**Cartoon:** *Poor governance in Sub-Saharan Africa*



Source: © [The Will](#), 11 August 2024

**Abstract:** Economic governance is measured by economic freedom, while political governance is measured by the electoral competitiveness index. How can political instability and poor governance in SSA be coped with? This is often seen as the overarching problem that exacerbates many others. Systemic corruption at all levels deprives the state of much-needed revenue, increases the cost of doing business and undermines public trust in institutions. In addition, weak institutions, such as an inefficient judiciary, inadequate public administration and barely existing public services, hinder development. Conflict and fragility displace people, destroy infrastructure and tie up resources that could be invested in education or healthcare. Without reliable contracts and property rights, both foreign and domestic investments are at great risk. Poor governance, reflected in a lack of rule of law, property rights, a regulatory burden, political violence and ineffective government, impedes growth in per capita revenue. In African politics, neo-patrimonialism appears to be the default setting, described as the 'moral economy of corruption' or the 'economics of affection'. However, bad governance is not culturally specific; it is a universal challenge that affects all nations at some point in their development history. Good governance must be pursued and implemented in all SSA countries. Even with the support of the donor community, governments may develop ambitious plans to improve governance and strengthen institutions, yet fail to improve the standard of living of their citizens. Since the Second World War, Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, has had the poorest economic performance of any region in the world. By the end of the 20th century, incomes per capita had barely improved since independence, and in some cases had worsened considerably. The main problem was the failure to improve the efficiency of resource use. In contrast to many other developing countries, total factor productivity was static or negative for much of the time. With few exceptions, African countries have lacked a sound social and political foundation conducive to growth and development, and this foundation has tended to deteriorate over time. Good governance practices are supported by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Good governance practices are also supported by such institutions. In order to receive development aid, states must apply and accept the principles of good governance. If they neglect to do so, African states risk not receiving financial aid. Accountability is a positive aspect of good governance. However, African states have developed a 'new culture', especially after decolonisation. There is a significant difference in perspective between Africans and Westerners regarding governance. The clientelist forms of politics that define postcolonial states do not stem from a class project, but are a contemporary manifestation of a dynamic national, African and ethnic culture.

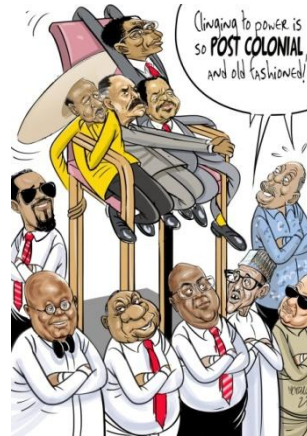
**Keywords:** economic governance, political governance, political stability, corruption, rule of law, accountability, African culture, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya

**JEL-Code:** D72, D73, D74, N17, N37, N 47, O17, O19, O35, O40, O55, P10, Z13

<sup>1</sup> Dirk Kohnert, associated expert, [GIGA-Institute for African Affairs, Hamburg](#). *Draft:* 15 September 2025

# 1. Introduction

**Cartoon 2: clinging to power**



Source: © [Victor Ndula](#), GGA, 2021

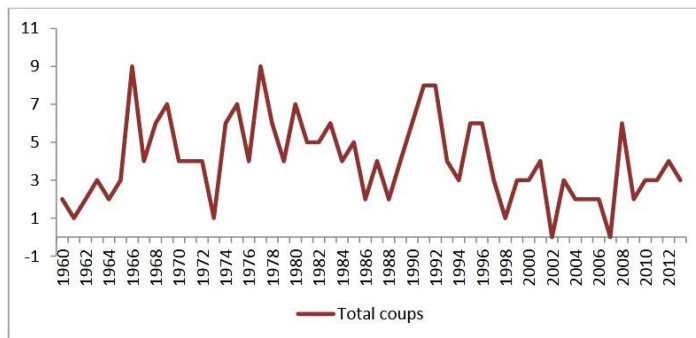
Since the late 1990s, [Africa](#) as a region has substantially improved its [growth](#) and economic outcomes in terms of [per capita income](#), [human development](#) and [poverty](#) (Fosu & Fosu, 2018). Secondly, the data shows that economic and [political governance](#) have improved considerably since the late 1980s/early 1990s.

**Graph 1: Frequency of armed conflicts in SSA, 1960-2008**



Source: Fosu & Fosu, 2018

**Graph 2: Incidence of Elite Political Instability in SSA – Coup d'état, 1960-2013**



Note: Total coups equals the sum of the frequencies of “successful” and “failed” coups d'état

Source: Fosu & Fosu, 2018

If [corruption](#) is widespread, public officials, including both bureaucrats and elected representatives, may design programmes and propose public projects that offer few benefits to the public and many opportunities for private profit (Rose-Ackermann, 2005). Narrow [elites](#) may take control of the state and exert undue influence over policy. Bribery may encourage the lazy to work hard and enable those outside the inner circle of cronies to obtain benefits. However, even in such cases, corruption cannot be confined to 'functional' areas. It will always be tempting wherever private benefits are on offer. While it may be a reasonable response to harsh realities, over time it can facilitate a spiral into an even worse situation (Rose-Ackermann, 2005).

Poor [governance](#), as reflected in the rule of law, property rights, the regulatory burden, political violence and government effectiveness, impedes per capita revenue growth in Sub-Saharan Africa ([SSA](#)) (Dufrenot, Sanon and Diop, 2010). Poor governance and systemic political corruption are responsible for the poverty and [insecurity](#) plaguing African states. This has contributed to [instability](#) in various African states, particularly [Nigeria](#). A lack of selfless, visionary, transparent and accountable leadership, as well as [impunity](#), have crippled the continent's development and inflicted poverty on its people, who in turn resort to [deviance](#) as a survival strategy (Agudiegwu et al., 2019).

Corruption, [militarism](#), [authoritarianism](#), [clientelism](#), [neo-patrimonialism](#) or [tribalism](#) are all evidenced in some form or other from [Cape Town](#) to [Cairo](#), and from [Dakar](#) to [Mogadishu](#). (Cubitt, 2014). Neo-patrimonialism appears the default and natural setting in African politics, described as the 'moral economy of corruption' or the 'economics of affection'. It is a political culture that deadlocks efforts to develop inclusive whole nations. Africa is inhospitable to good governance institutions. Yet, bad governance is not culturally specific, but a universal challenge affecting all nations at some point in their development history (Cubitt, 2014).

**Graph 3:** Regional indicators for Government Effectiveness (selected years)

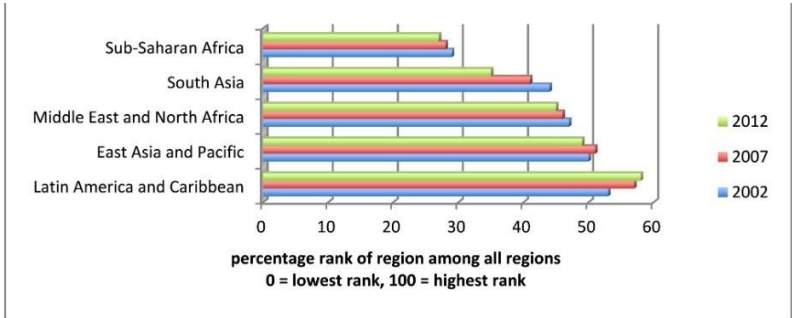


Fig. 1: Regional Indicators for Government Effectiveness. Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators, available online <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc> [accessed 30/01/14].

Source: Cubitt, 2014

**Graph 4:** Corruption perception index and failed states in Africa

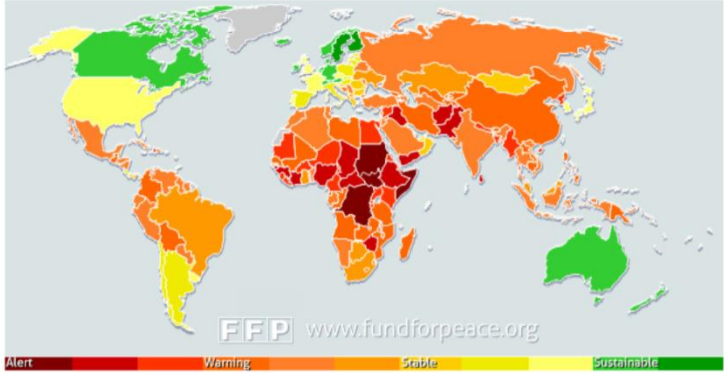


Fig. 2: The Failed States Index 2013 (Fund for Peace, 2013).

Source: Cubitt, 2014

[Good governance](#) is imperative for all countries in SSA. There are formidable challenges that must be considered and overcome in order to successfully implement governance agendas. Even with the support of the [donor community](#), governments may develop ambitious plans to improve governance and strengthen institutions, yet fail to achieve tangible benefits for their citizens. They should also seek to alleviate poverty and empower the disadvantaged to contribute positively to their countries' economic development (Kerandi, 2008).

Developing countries in Africa, as elsewhere on the planet, do not fit the conditions that the good governance model identifies as necessary for economic development (Kahn, 2012). As most African countries face difficult development problems, it has been easy to build coalitions arguing that governance capabilities, as defined by the market-enhancing governance model, were responsible for African misfortunes. In particular, the analysis that the lack of democratic accountability and the presence of patron-client politics, extensive corruption, and weak rule of law had a lot to do with Africa's relatively poor performance found many supporters within and outside Africa. What Africa requires, is a 'big push' in terms of massive investment in infrastructure and disease control before attention to governance can deliver any results (Kahn, 2012).

[Good governance](#) can reduce uncertainty, transaction, search and production costs, ultimately affecting firm performance (Ngobo & Fouda, 2012). Improving good governance in countries with low governance ratings currently has a more positive effect on firm profitability than improving it in countries with relatively higher ratings. Good governance reduces variability in company profitability, leading to high-return, low-risk investments. The impact of good governance depends on a country's income level. When income levels are low, improvements in public governance are more likely to impact firm performance than when income levels are relatively high. Good governance is more important for stabilising the profitability of firms in countries with higher governance ratings than in those with lower ratings (Ngobo & Fouda, 2012).

Since the [Second World War](#), Africa, and [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) in particular, has experienced the poorest economic performance of any region in the world (Aldcroft, 2015). Ironically, many African countries began with high hopes after gaining independence, but disaster struck soon afterwards. By the end of the 20th century, incomes per capita had barely improved since independence, and in some cases had worsened considerably. The main problem was the failure to improve the efficiency with which resources were used. In contrast to many other developing countries, [total factor productivity](#) was either static or negative for much of the time. Consequently, while poverty was declining elsewhere, it was steadily increasing in SSA. By the turn of the century, it was estimated that two-thirds of the population were living at or below the [absolute poverty line](#), and nearly half of the world's poor lived in Africa. Africa's great weakness lies in statecraft. By this, we refer to political systems, bureaucracies, administrative organisations, property and legal rights, and general issues of trust and contract enforcement. With few exceptions, African countries have lacked a sound social and political foundation to favour growth and development, and this foundation has tended to deteriorate over time (Aldcroft, 2015).

Although equating corruption in African states with '[failed states](#)' might seem wrong, it is clear that the widespread and, in many cases, systematic nature of corruption in Africa is a symptom of these states' deeper weakness (Ghana, 2013). Several authors have pointed out that the [nation-state](#) should not be regarded as a permanent fixture or the only feasible model of socio-political organisation or the only reference point for designing institutions and practices of good governance. Despite significant evidence that it does not work, the nation-state is still assumed to be the only possible unit of organisation in both theory and practice (Ganah, 2013).

[Good governance](#) practices are supported globally by institutions such as the [EU](#), the [World Bank](#), and the [International Monetary Fund](#) (Coetzee, 2017). Although African countries have made good progress in implementing governance principles, examples of corruption, unethical behaviour, poor policy implementation and poor partnerships are unfortunately

common. In order to receive [development aid](#), states must apply and accept the principles of good governance. If they neglect to do so, they run the risk of not receiving financial aid. [Accountability](#) is a positive aspect of good governance. However, African states have developed a 'new culture', particularly since decolonisation. They have followed the example set by their colonisers by repressing and exploiting their citizens. African states are struggling to cast off the shackles of colonisation and implement the principles of accountability, responsibility and transparency. There is a significant difference in perspective between Africa and the West regarding governance. The clientelist forms of politics that define postcolonial states do not stem from a class project, but are instead a contemporary manifestation of a dynamic national, African and ethnic culture (Coetzee, 2017).

While few dispute the desirability for Africa of [democracy](#) and good governance in theory, many remain sceptical about whether the two necessarily go together in practice. A combination of democratic contestation and institutional restraints on governments' discretionary authority substantially improves developmental governance (Alence, 2004).

Indeed, governance problems are major impediments to economic growth. However, contrary to conventional wisdom, some argue that the well-known governance problems in African countries mainly reflect their low level of development and are the result of failed state interventions and distortions originating from erroneous economic development strategies (Lin & Monga, 2012). This paper, however, argues that the main governance problem is a lack of democratisation. It is true that democracy does not guarantee development but democratic principles can ensure sustainable development more so human development. You can only become a good and effective leader/ruler when you are able to convince your followers with your positive thinking, actions and result oriented mind for uplifting the living standards and protection of rights of your people. A leader without followers is a fish out of water (Fye, 2015). There is a link between poor and bad governance, and sub-national conflicts in Africa to encourage African states and their political leaders to embrace good governance as panacea to peace, stability and development of the continent (Dan-Woniwei, 2020).

[Corruption](#) in Africa is driven by low levels of economic growth, poor governance, weak constitutions, political instability and high levels of poverty and unemployment. Since the end of the colonial era, corruption has increased across the continent, with individuals, including some African heads of state, looting resources intended for the general population. In this sense, corruption diverts resources intended for the poor, limits foreign direct investment ([FDI](#)), and has severe consequences for a continent that is already the least developed in the world. (Mlambo et al., 2019).

## 2. Case Studies

**Cartoon 3:** *Impact of development aid - double talk and corruption*



Source: © [Gado](#), Godfrey Mwampembwa, 2006

Many in Sub-Saharan Africa believe that, once the [decolonisation](#) was over, the power in the region was mostly taken by people whose leadership must be evaluated negatively, represented by such dictators as [Gnassingbé Eyadéma](#), [Jean-Bédel Bokassa](#), [Mobutu Sese Seko](#) or [Idi Amin](#). There is an interconnection between bad governance experienced by Sub-Saharan African countries and state dysfunctionality phenomenon from which they suffer (Kłosowicz, 2018). Bad governance was aided, not least, by the collaboration between selfish Western interests and corrupt African political elites, who were misguided by the IMF and World Bank's [structural adjustment programmes](#) for decades.

The following three case studies of governance in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) — two from [Anglophone Africa](#) ([Nigeria](#) and [South Africa](#)) and one from [Francophone West Africa](#) (the [Ivory Coast](#)) — serve to illustrate the negative implications of poor governance in Africa.

**Cartoon 4:** *misguided structural reform programs of IMF and World Bank and the impact of aid*



Source: © [Gado](#), Godfrey Mwampembwa, 2006.

## 4.1 Nigeria

**Cartoon 5:** *The Government Deals Arms as Masses Suffer Hunger!*



Source: © [Popa Matumula](#)

Over a decade ago, the practice of democracy in [Nigeria](#) did not yield the much-needed good governance that was required (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012). This is because the practice of democracy has scared away responsible and competent people. [Democratisation](#) in Nigeria is characterised by electoral violence, the manipulation of election results, and constraints on political participation. Democracy is a catalyst for accountability, transparency, and responsive government, all of which are necessary for good governance. The collapse of governance in Nigeria reflects the perfunctory role of political actors, as evidenced by the adoption of elite theory (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012).

Since 1960, bad governance, including corruption, in Nigeria has cost the country hundreds of billions of pounds (Folarin, 2021). The immediate impacts of this are economic hardship and infrastructure decay, but the long-term effects include a slow pace of national development and a loss of integrity in the global system. Corruption and related acts inevitably undermine the benefits of democratic governance, pollute the political landscape and create a parallel economy, leading to the impoverishment of large sections of society. Nigeria's politics and government have suffered for too long at the hands of habitual, unrepentant treasury looters, political jobbers, and beneficiaries of endless orchestrations of scandals and fraud (Folarin, 2021).

Despite this constitutional provision and the country's enormous financial resources and huge potential, good governance remains elusive for Nigeria (Dunu, 2013). The media has the potential to contribute as [Fourth Estate](#) to good governance insofar as it reflects and enforces the principles of good governance as an institution. For the media to contribute effectively to good governance, it must apply the basic principles of patriotism, accountability, transparency and objectivity in the discharge of its duties, and uphold the sanctity of truth and fairness at all times (Dunu, 2013).

The Peoples Democratic Party ([PDP](#)) and its main rival, the All Progressives Congress ([APC](#)), are two of the major contemporary political parties in Nigeria. However, they have both performed poorly in their management of the Nigerian state (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009). Consequently, Nigerians have experienced a profound crisis of expectation, with a significant erosion, impairment, and debasement of governance values, as evidenced by macroeconomic instability, widespread corruption, a deepening democratic crisis, human rights violations,

insecurity, profound frustration and disillusionment, and an escalating loss of confidence in the PDP government (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009).

As a result of leadership failure in the Nigerian political system, which has caused acute poverty, political instability, insurgency and the collapse of governmental institutions, there have been calls for resource control by those in the south-south, for secession and a state of [Biafra](#) by those in the south-east, an [Oduduwa](#) state by those in the south-west, and fiscal federalism based on population and the institutionalisation of [sharia law](#) in Nigeria by those in the north (Ogunmilade et al, 2017). Genuine leadership will need an honest, courageous and credible followership, which is less vulnerable to the manipulation politics of the ruling elite. The pursuit of people based economic programmes has the potential to foster democratic governance within the context of quality followership. This class should secure democratized access to economic resources and political objects to foster trust, confidence and commitment (Ogunmilade et al, 2017).

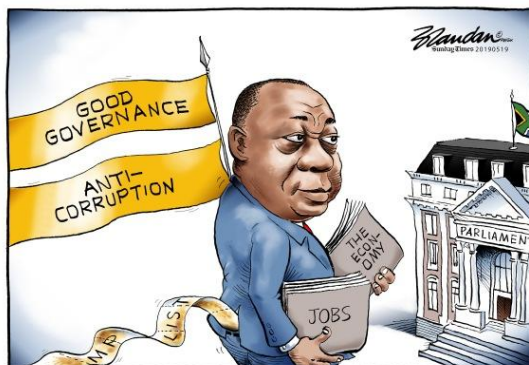
[Religious organizations](#) are important power players in Nigerian politics (Nolte, et al. 2009). Relationships between the Nigerian state and religious organizations are often asymmetric and unstable. Whilst both [Islam](#) and [Christianity](#) in Nigeria provide moral frameworks for people and groups to articulate their demands and critiques of the state, they also challenge institutions provided by the state: the Muslim critique of secular law has led to the introduction of Shari'a penal law in twelve states, while Christian demands for a re-privatization of former mission schools currently under state control might reinforce Muslim disadvantage in the educational sector. The ability of religious organizations to participate in politics and governance is strongly related to patterns of inclusion and exclusion based on linguistic, ethnic and regional identity, as well as on intra-Nigerian struggles to limit the political participation of certain groups through the requirement of 'indigeneity' at State level. Given the close links between ethnicity and religion, religious competition is interwoven with the other rivalries that dominate Nigerian local politics (Nolte, et al. 2009).

The constituent ethnic groups in Nigeria's federal society form the basis for the organisation, mobilisation and legitimisation of [prebendalism's](#) ethno-clientelistic networks of [patronage](#), [corruption](#) and [rent-seeking](#) (Suberu, 2013). According to the innovative Nigerian principle of 'federal character', the country's ethno-regional diversity must be reflected in all governmental appointments and disbursements. This has effectively transformed prebendalism (the personal, factional and communal appropriation of public offices) from an informal norm of political competition into a directive principle of state policy (Suberu, 2013).

Purpose corruption within the Nigerian government, at all levels, is endemic and a major problem. It is having a negative impact on the government's ability to meet its [UN sustainable development targets](#), as well as on its credibility (nationally and internationally) and its capacity for quality governance (Shenkoya, 2023). Digital transformation, brought about by the [Fourth Industrial Revolution](#), is a proven way of improving transparency and accountability in governance. However, Nigeria's current technological infrastructure is too weak to support this innovation. Essential infrastructure such as high-speed internet, harmonised data storage systems and communication between government organisations is rarely in place (Shenkoya, 2023).

## 4.2 South Africa

**Cartoon 6:** *Good governance in South Africa*



Source: © [Brandon Reynolds](#), 2019

The Republic of [South Africa](#) has continuously experienced challenges of poor governance from all spheres of government, which has resulted in the poor delivery of essential public services (Masuku, 2019). The poor performance of the public sector, on national, provincial and local levels, has always been a cause for concern in South Africa and one which has cast the issues of governance in South Africa in a poor light. The lack of appropriate systems and mechanisms that promote and enforce effective governance continues to impact development negatively. Poor governance has resulted in wasted public resources, weak institutions, decreasing investment and growth and it has entrenched corruption. [Corruption](#) is a consequence of the failure of accountability in the governance system (Masuku, 2019).

Corruption in South Africa has seriously hindered the development of the national economy and significantly impeded good governance in the country (Pillay, 2004). The country's complex political structure has contributed to the rise of corruption, which has had an adverse effect on stability, trust, and the ethos of democratic values and principles. Although the South African government has introduced systems to combat corruption, practical problems have emerged over the years. The most notable of these are insufficient coordination of anti-corruption work within the South African public service and among the various sectors of society, poor information about corruption and the impact of anti-corruption measures and agencies, and the impact of corruption on good governance (Pillay, 2004).

To understand governance in South Africa today, it is necessary to consider the region's long and often troubled history of governance over the past 400 years (Picard & Mogale, 2015). There is a recurring theme of grassroots and participatory values, beginning with the hunter-gatherers of the [Western Cape](#) and continuing through [Afrikaner](#) nationalist demands and the township and mobilisation models of the [ANC](#) and other African nationalist movements of the 20th century. However, a patriarchal authoritarian trend also runs through South Africa, from traditional hierarchical authority and the colonial prefect acting as a 'tutor' to locals, to the apartheid regime's authoritarianism. The [apartheid](#) regime created a system of dependent appendages as intermediate governance mechanisms which have yet to be fully integrated into the political system. This hierarchical model remains firmly in place through the continuing ideological lens of some within the ANC and the South African Communist Party, as well as the collectivist approach that South African leaders refer to as '[cooperative government](#)'. It is also important to note that South Africa is an African state, and though many South Africans do not like to hear it, there are lessons, both good and bad, that South Africans can learn from their neighbours on the continent (Picard & Mogale, 2015).

Clearly, the international conceptions of [good governance](#) have not yet been accepted or measured properly in South Africa. While the Presidency theoretically has the status, organisation and mandate to coordinate a systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) programme within the government, it lacks the capacity and concrete plan to implement it (Cloete, 2005).

The end of apartheid and the beginning of democratisation in South Africa coincided with several significant global events. These included the rise of [globalisation](#) and [economic liberalism](#) based on market fundamentalism, as well as the emergence of the '[third wave](#)' of democratisation, which spread from the former socialist bloc to many developing countries in Africa and beyond. Consequently, South Africa faces the significant challenge of promoting democratisation, good governance, and sustainable human development within the context of substantial domestic socioeconomic inequalities and a history of conflict (Mhone & Edigheji, 2003).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) played a crucial role in promoting good governance in South Africa. The Department of Social Development ([DSD](#)) performed well against the mandatory M&E benchmark (Naidoo, 2011). Mandatory M&E also provided the legal basis for, and supported, other forms of M&E. However, it was not always evident that compliance alone leads to good governance. Civic M&E revealed that the DSD considered and acted upon the results of the non-governmental sector when revising its policies. Nevertheless, there was no effective civic M&E at community level, largely due to uncoordinated or weak NGOs, many of which were contracted by the DSD (Naidoo, 2011).

[Good governance](#) and service delivery depend on the ethics, legislation and enforcement of good conduct by public officials (Ababio & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2010). The 1994 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service identified the need for a [code of conduct](#) in South Africa as essential to enhancing high ethical and professional standards. Local government legitimacy is based on the same ethical and professional principles as national government. It is therefore imperative to implement an ethical framework for social and economic development at grassroots level. Although there is some state-of-the-art legislation regulating the conduct of public functionaries in the local government sphere, the practical application of ethics is rather unethical and elusive (Ababio & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2010).

In fact, [participatory development](#) in South Africa is increasingly controlled by the state (McEwan, 2003). South Africa's system of local government is unique in many ways because it requires creativity and participation from all levels of society to be successful, and this is embedded in legislation. However, even though local government has followed IDP guidelines, it is failing to foster meaningful participation, particularly among black women. These women have not been involved in development projects and also perceive local government as having failed in its duty to encourage participation. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of local government. [Public-private partnerships](#) have been promoted as a means of achieving effective, participatory local government. In reality, however, these partnerships focus more on outsourcing service delivery to the private sector due to a lack of financial and institutional capacity within local government than on fostering partnerships between communities and government structures. These discrepancies effectively disempower black women by making them recipients of development, rather than participants (McEwan, 2003).

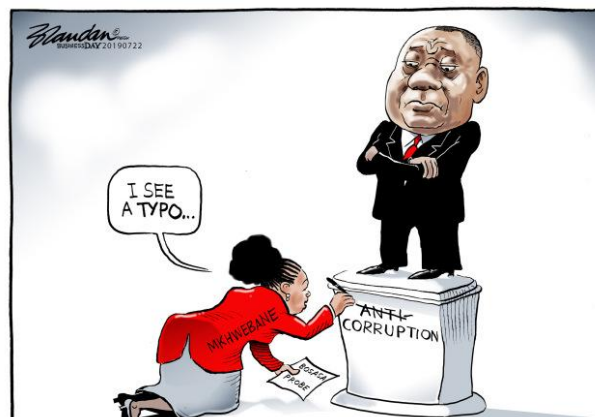
Roles of [access](#) and [transparency](#) are crucial elements of good governance (Cloete & Auriacombe, 2007). The capacity of the state to transform society is constrained, particularly in the rural hinterlands. The incapacity of the state to extend its grip, both economically and

politically, has provided [traditional leaders](#) with an opportunity to both recast themselves as intermediaries between state and society and elevate themselves to decision makers on behalf of large communities (Koelble & LiPuma, 2011).

Corruption, poor governance and lacklustre leadership exacerbate social turbulence (Cilliers & Aucoin (2016). More than forty years ago a combination of frustration against local government, the enforcement of [Afrikaans](#) language policy, trade-union activism and the politicising impact of the black consciousness movement culminated in the [Soweto uprising](#) of 16 June 1976. In the weeks and months that followed, tens of thousands of South Africans from townships across the country took to the streets in a violent confrontation with the apartheid state. Although the National Party government was eventually able to restore a semblance of order by force of arms, several thousand young South Africans fled the country, largely to join the [Pan Africanist Congress](#), then moving on to the African National Congress ([ANC](#)) when the former proved absent to fight apartheid. These events – combined with international activism, the [fall of the Berlin Wall](#) in 1989 and internal revolt within the governing National Party – would eventually force a historical compromise when [Nelson Mandela](#) was released from prison in 1990 and, in 1994, elected president of South Africa (Cilliers & Aucoin (2016).

### 4.3 Ivory Coast

**Cartoon 7: Future Leaders**



Source: © [Brandan Reynolds](#), 2019

[Good governance](#), when implemented in Africa and the [Ivory Coast](#), faces a world where political games are influenced by clan, family and tribal links (Zadi, 2013). These links prioritise the interests of groups over the general interest, resulting in the decay of the state. There is an absence of ethics and responsibility in decision-making in societies where the quest for democracy is marked by demagoguery and a preference for opacity in public management. This quest for efficiency is counterbalanced by the weight of traditions and practices inherent in the [Third World](#), which make effective management of public affairs difficult. However, the political arena is not immune to the influence of the outside world, with public actors often subject to the orders of the capitalist world in a globalised world (Zadi, 2013).

For example, [rebel governance](#) in northern Côte d'Ivoire is based on the excessive use of violence (Förster, 2015). However, insurgents often engage in regular exchanges with

civilians under their control. Such an exchange affects both sides. It transforms rebel governance into a more civilised system based on past experiences and incorporating long-lasting modes of communication, obliging both sides to respect underlying cultural norms and values. Analysis of the movement from its inception reveals the 'post-modern' characteristics typical of such rebellions (Galy, 2007). For instance, Western media coverage sympathetic to marginal movements such as the MPCCI led to the formation of political and military movements involving professional military personnel, politicians, and human rights activists who were not critical of the situation. For example, they refused to recognise the 'mandengue ideology' as being as valid as 'ivoirité', and they also justified the use of violence for conquering purposes in advance (Galy, 2007).

Rebel responsiveness is a function of whether local elites control [clientelist](#) networks that allow them to mobilize local citizens (Baalen, 2021). Such networks are characterised by local elite control over resources and integration into local authority structures. These networks then shape the capacity of local elites to mobilise support for or resistance against the rebels, thereby influencing their bargaining power in negotiations over rebel governance. The strength of local elites' clientelist networks influences rebel responsiveness. Furthermore, this provides support for the theorised civil resistance mechanism and demonstrates that this mechanism is further enhanced by ethnopolitical ties between civilians and rebels (Baalen, 2021).

### Cartoon 8: *New Partnership ?*



Source: © [Gado](#), the Kenyan cartoonist Godfrey Mwampembwa

It seems that Ivorian [political 'entrepreneurs'](#) have chosen power over the interests of the nation (Traoré, 2014). (Traoré, 2014). The causes of the Ivorian crisis are deeper and more structural, rooted as much in the nation-state's genealogy as in its trajectory, which is still unfinished. The Ivorian reality is marked by the dual weakness of the private sector and civil society, which gives the state sphere and its immense resources a neo-patrimonial importance. The use of rebellion and weapons to compete in the conquest of power and partition emphasises the collapse of the nation-state, a collapse that was exacerbated by the post-election crisis of 2010/11 (Traoré, 2014).

Reforms have been imposed as conditions for official development assistance and economic recovery (Nahi, 2019). This situation of dependence has resulted in imported and grafted reforms, which, in terms of reception and appropriation, have been influenced by actors, social and cultural structures, and national socio-economic conditions (Nahi, 2019).

### Cartoon 9: Ethnicity voting



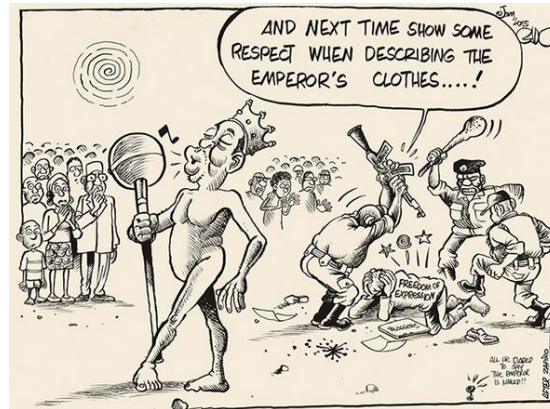
Source: © [Victor Ndula](#), 2016

[Decentralisation](#) is widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to modernise a centralised state, promote citizen participation, and encourage good governance (Tanoh, 2019). Together with [good governance](#), it could shed light on how incumbent authorities manage the state's resources. However, decentralisation in [West Africa](#) failed because it remained locked in its customary culture and ancestral rites (Tanoh, 2019).

The [West African](#) state is a complex social entity, based on empirical data collected through rigorous observation and investigation procedures combining socio-anthropological methods and political science themes (Olivier de Sardan, 2004). This reveals a convergence of characteristics common to the states, despite their varied economic contexts, diverse pre-colonial histories, and varied trajectories since independence. These characteristics include [clientelism](#), a gap between the formal and the real, 'every-man-for-himself-ism', 'areas of suspicion', 'privilegism', contempt for users, a culture of impunity, and systemic corruption. The emergence of modern bureaucracy in Africa during the colonial period shows that many of these traits date back to colonial bureaucracy but have been exacerbated since independence. These traits testify to the complexity of the relationships between the public and private spheres and highlight the necessity and challenges of an internal reformist impulse (Olivier de Sardan, 2004).

### 3. Conclusion

**Cartoon 10:** *The emperor's new clothes*



Source: © Gado, [GGA](#), Yunus Momoniat, 6 December 2018

This article examines the pervasive phenomenon of weak or absent state governance across many African nations and the innovative, often informal, coping mechanisms that societies develop in response. It argues that while state institutions may be fragile or unable to provide basic services, security, and justice, social and economic life does not simply collapse. Instead, a complex ecosystem of alternatives emerges to fill the void.

The piece identifies several key areas where this "governance gap" is most apparent and how it is bridged:

**Service Delivery:** The state's failure to provide electricity, water, sanitation, and education has been supplanted by a vibrant private sector, from small-scale water vendors to low-cost private schools. This creates access but often at a high cost and with variable quality, exacerbating inequality.

**Security:** Where state police are corrupt, absent, or predatory, communities turn to vigilante groups, neighborhood watches, and traditional justice systems to maintain order and resolve disputes. These systems are often more accessible but can lack formal oversight and sometimes perpetuate their own forms of violence or exclusion.

**Economic Livelihoods:** In the face of limited formal employment, the immense informal sector becomes the primary engine of survival and entrepreneurship. This demonstrates remarkable resilience but often without the protections, regulations, or support that formal state recognition provides.

The article concludes that these coping mechanisms are a double-edged sword. They are a testament to the incredible resilience and ingenuity of African societies, providing essential services and maintaining order where the state cannot. However, they also let failing states off the hook, allowing them to abdicate their core responsibilities. The real challenge for development, therefore, is not to replace these informal systems but to find ways to engage with, regulate, and integrate them into a more effective and accountable social contract between citizens and the state.

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**Résumé :** *[Le déficit de gouvernance en Afrique : Comment les sociétés réagissent face aux défaillances de l'Etat]* La gouvernance économique se mesure par la liberté économique, tandis que la gouvernance politique se mesure par l'indice de compétitivité électorale. Comment faire face à l'instabilité politique et à la mauvaise gouvernance en ASS ? Ce problème est souvent perçu comme le problème primordial qui en aggrave bien d'autres. La corruption systémique à tous les niveaux prive l'Etat de recettes indispensables, augmente le coût des affaires et sape la confiance du public dans les institutions. De plus, la faiblesse des institutions, comme un système judiciaire inefficace, une administration publique inadéquate et des services publics quasi inexistantes, freine le développement. Les conflits et la fragilité déplacent des populations, détruisent les infrastructures et mobilisent des ressources qui pourraient être investies dans l'éducation ou la santé. Sans contrats fiables et sans droits de propriété, les investissements étrangers et nationaux sont gravement menacés. La mauvaise gouvernance, qui se traduit par l'absence d'Etat de droit, de droits de propriété, un fardeau réglementaire, la violence politique et l'inefficacité du gouvernement, freine la croissance du revenu par habitant. Dans la politique africaine, le néo-patrimonialisme semble être le paramètre par défaut, décrit comme « l'économie morale de la corruption » ou « l'économie de l'affection ». Cependant, la mauvaise gouvernance n'est pas spécifique à une culture ; il s'agit d'un défi universel qui touche toutes les nations à un moment ou à un autre de leur histoire de développement. La bonne gouvernance doit être recherchée et mise en œuvre dans tous les pays d'Afrique subsaharienne. Même avec le soutien de la communauté des donateurs, les gouvernements peuvent élaborer des plans ambitieux pour améliorer la gouvernance et renforcer les institutions, sans pour autant parvenir à améliorer le niveau de vie de leurs citoyens. Depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale, l'Afrique, et l'Afrique subsaharienne en particulier, a enregistré les plus mauvaises performances économiques de toutes les régions du monde. A la fin du XXe siècle, les revenus par habitant s'étaient à peine améliorés depuis les indépendances, et dans certains cas, s'étaient considérablement dégradés. Le principal problème résidait dans l'incapacité d'améliorer l'efficacité de l'utilisation des ressources. Contrairement à de nombreux autres pays en développement, la productivité totale des facteurs est restée statique ou négative pendant la majeure partie du temps. A quelques exceptions près, les pays africains n'ont pas bénéficié d'une base sociale et politique solide propice à la croissance et au développement, et cette base a eu tendance à se détériorer au fil du temps. Les pratiques de bonne gouvernance sont soutenues par des institutions telles que la Banque mondiale et le Fonds monétaire international. Les pratiques de bonne gouvernance sont également soutenues par ces institutions. Pour recevoir une aide au développement, les Etats doivent appliquer et accepter les principes de bonne gouvernance. S'ils négligent de le faire, les Etats africains risquent de ne pas recevoir d'aide financière. La responsabilité est un aspect positif de la bonne gouvernance. Cependant, les Etats africains ont développé une « nouvelle culture », surtout après la décolonisation. Il existe une différence significative de perspective entre Africains et Occidentaux en matière de gouvernance. Les formes clientélistes de politique qui définissent les Etats postcoloniaux ne découlent pas d'un projet de classe, mais sont une manifestation contemporaine d'une culture nationale, africaine et ethnique dynamique.

**Zusammenfassung :** *[Die afrikanische Governance-Lücke: Wie Gesellschaften mit dem Versagen des Staates umgehen]* – Wirtschaftliche Governance wird an der wirtschaftlichen Freiheit gemessen, politische Governance dagegen am Index der Wahlwettbewerbsfähigkeit. Wie können politische Instabilität und schlechte Regierungsführung in SSA bewältigt werden? Dies wird oft als das übergreifende Problem angesehen, das viele andere verschärft. Systemische Korruption auf allen Ebenen entzieht dem Staat dringend benötigte Einnahmen, erhöht die Geschäftskosten und untergräbt das öffentliche Vertrauen in Institutionen. Darüber hinaus behindern schwache Institutionen wie eine ineffiziente Justiz, eine unzureichende öffentliche Verwaltung und kaum vorhandene öffentliche Dienstleistungen die Entwicklung. Konflikte und Fragilität vertreiben Menschen, zerstören Infrastruktur und binden Ressourcen, die in Bildung oder Gesundheit investiert werden könnten. Ohne verlässliche Verträge und Eigentumsrechte sind sowohl ausländische als auch inländische Investitionen stark gefährdet. Schlechte Regierungsführung, die sich in fehlender Rechtsstaatlichkeit, Eigentumsrechten, einem Regulierungsaufwand, politischer Gewalt und ineffektiver Regierung widerspiegelt, behindert das Wachstum des Pro-Kopf-Einkommens. In der afrikanischen Politik scheint der Neo-Patrimonialismus die Standardeinstellung zu sein, beschrieben als „moralische Ökonomie der Korruption“ oder „Ökonomie der Zuneigung“. Schlechte Regierungsführung ist jedoch kein kulturspezifisches Phänomen; sie ist eine universelle Herausforderung, die alle Nationen irgendwann in ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte betrifft. Gute Regierungsführung muss in allen Ländern SSAs angestrebt und umgesetzt werden. Selbst mit Unterstützung der Gebergemeinschaft können Regierungen ehrgeizige Pläne zur Verbesserung der Regierungsführung und Stärkung der Institutionen entwickeln, ohne den Lebensstandard ihrer Bürger zu verbessern. Seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg weist Afrika, insbesondere Subsahara-Afrika, die weltweit schlechteste Wirtschaftsleistung auf. Bis zum Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts hatten sich die Pro-Kopf-Einkommen seit der Unabhängigkeit kaum verbessert und in einigen Fällen sogar deutlich verschlechtert. Das Hauptproblem war die mangelnde Verbesserung der Ressourceneffizienz. Im Gegensatz zu vielen anderen Entwicklungsländern stagnierte die totale Faktorproduktivität über weite Strecken oder war sogar negativ. Mit wenigen Ausnahmen fehlte den afrikanischen Ländern eine solide soziale und politische Grundlage für Wachstum und Entwicklung, und diese hat sich im Laufe der Zeit tendenziell verschlechtert. Gute Regierungsführung wird von Institutionen wie der Weltbank und dem Internationalen Währungsfonds gefördert. Um Entwicklungshilfe zu erhalten, müssen Staaten die Prinzipien guter Regierungsführung anwenden und akzeptieren. Andernfalls riskieren afrikanische Staaten, keine finanzielle Unterstützung zu erhalten. Rechenschaftspflicht ist ein positiver Aspekt guter Regierungsführung. Allerdings haben afrikanische Staaten, insbesondere nach der Entkolonialisierung, eine „neue Kultur“ entwickelt. Es gibt erhebliche Unterschiede in der Perspektive von Afrikanern und Westlern in Bezug auf Regierungsführung. Die klientelistischen Politikformen, die postkoloniale Staaten definieren, entspringen keinem Klassenprojekt, sondern sind eine zeitgenössische Manifestation einer dynamischen nationalen, afrikanischen und ethnischen Kultur.