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Title

Political Leadership in Africa: Leaders and Development South of the Sahara

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2cn6c4k6>

Journal

JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY HISTORY, 52(2)

ISSN

0022-1953

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Publication Date

2021

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Peer reviewed

neocolonial context, French power was dominant, but African agency posed obstacles that frequently thwarted Paris' best laid plans. The source base for this ambitious project, however, is problematical. Unable to conduct research in Chad, Powell had to rely primarily on sources from official French archives—those of the French Foreign Ministry (for political affairs), the Cooperation Ministry (for military and economic assistance to former colonies), and the secretary general of African and Malagasy affairs, which contain the papers of Jacques Foccart, who, from 1960 to 1974, shaped France's Africa policy and oversaw the activities of the French intelligence agency in Africa. In Nigeria, Powell consulted the papers of General and Vice-President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, whose government attempted to mediate between the warring parties. He also used materials available online from the United States, including documents from the National Archives and Records Administration, the CIA, and the Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

These sources, though critical, have several weaknesses. First, as Powell himself notes, they are incomplete. Much of the official documentation concerning French activities in post-independence Africa remains classified. The government has released only the materials that it is willing to expose to public scrutiny. Second, Powell's inability to conduct research in Chad meant that he was unable to weigh French official records against those kept by the Chadian government and rebel movements. Third, because most of the research was conducted in France, Chadian perspectives could not be ascertained through oral interviews with political and military personnel and local people affected by foreign intervention and civil war. These constraints have resulted in a source base with an admittedly French/elite African bias. Nonetheless, Powell does an admirable job of reading between the lines, interpreting, and challenging the official record. The outcome is a pioneering study that makes a significant contribution to our understanding of this important region and opens the door to further investigation.

An important addition to the sparse English-language scholarship on Chad—and the first detailed narrative of French political and military intervention in that country after independence—this book deepens our understanding of Chad's complex and tragic history. It also offers trenchant insights that external powers would do well to heed as they wage a similarly myopic “war on terror” in the Sahel today.

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Political Leadership in Africa: Leaders and Development South of the Sahara. By Giovanni Carbone and Alessandro Pellegata (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2020) 377 pp. \$34.99

What impact do political leaders have on the countries that they govern? And how have political leadership patterns in sub-Saharan Africa evolved

from the era of mass independence in the mid-twentieth century through the post–Cold War period? Utilizing an original data set about leadership change, *Political Leadership in Africa* addresses these questions through an extensive array of statistical analyses and case anecdotes from situations around sub-Saharan Africa.

Carbone and Pellegata demonstrate how sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a shift from primarily autocratic leaders (who often took power at independence or through coups) and those lingering in power during the early postcolonial period toward a post-1990 predominance of elected leaders—whether in genuinely democratic or competitive authoritarian regimes. The characteristics of these leaders, as well as their strategies for entering and persisting in office, had significant effects on peaceful transitions of power, economic growth, social welfare, and state capacity. Multiparty elections, even in imperfect democracies or competitive authoritarian regimes, have on average led to greater senses of accountability and improved outcomes. With its focus on political institutions and development outcomes, the book provides a good complement to Roessler’s more security-focused book on how African leaders gain power and seek to protect it.¹

The authors provide good literature overviews of their topics, and their underlying data set is a great resource about sub-Saharan African political leadership. The data will have major benefits for quantitative scholars of African politics, political economy, and security, as well as for scholars of political leadership more generally. Yet, because of the focus on presenting the data set and showing its usefulness, *Political Leadership in Africa* often feels more like a series of articles than a book manuscript, though this feature allows individual chapters to stand alone, for instance, to examine the decline in coups d’état over time or effects of leadership on social-welfare spending.

As with any cross-national quantitative study, readers and analysts should closely scrutinize the definitions and coding decisions underlying the authors’ data set and the data sources used for dependent and control variables. Carbone and Pellegata provide helpful descriptions and checks on statistical robustness to address concerns about the utility of their own data set and the other data that they muster for quantitative analysis. But they do not provide details in the book or online codebook about additional data sets and encyclopedias that they consulted in constructing their own data set, which would allow “for a closer examination of individual cases” (68).

Political Leadership in Africa is geared toward quantitative political scientists and economists. More qualitatively oriented scholars may want to jump among the hypotheses and findings. Interpretivists may find little of interest in the book or may have serious concerns about conceptualizations and cross-national comparability. Although replete with statistical

1 Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016).

analyses and anecdotes, the book lacks case studies of a few countries over time to illustrate the impacts of different types of leadership, whether in Uganda (Carbone's primary subject area), or in countries like Ghana, Liberia, or Madagascar that show more substantial post-independence variation in leadership transition and regime types.

The book's biggest substantive problem arises when it turns from statistical patterns to broader conceptual findings. The empirical discoveries about the importance of leadership and the ways in which leadership trends have shifted since 1990 in sub-Saharan Africa are convincing. The authors' attempt to update Jackson and Rosberg's typology of African political leaders, however, is flawed.² Despite the authors' acknowledgment that the character and basis of individual leaders' rule may evolve, they give individual leaders time-invariant categorizations (256–260), coded as an *autocrat*, *hegemon* (elected in a competitive authoritarian regime), *democrat*, or *transient* (briefly in office). Maintaining a single coding based on the greatest number of years a leader spent within one category during a stint in office avoids multiple ratings, but it seems arbitrary and imprecise when some leaders move from democratic election toward hegemonic or autocratic rule, and vice versa (258–259).

Moreover, the classification of people as leaders per se rather than as types of leader, suggests that particular leaders were *hegemons* rather than people who *exercised hegemonic leadership*. The latter construction strikes a more accurate balance given the potential evolution in leadership and the possibility that leaders with autocratic aspirations might encounter institutional constraints or that more democratically minded leaders may feel compelled to seize greater control to counter reactionaries.

These concerns aside, *Political Leadership in Africa* is a significant achievement. Carbone and Pellegata's granular data about political leadership and leadership change provide new baselines for future analyses at a time when many sub-Saharan African countries, like others around the world (280), confront a new era of worries about democratic erosion and autocratic entrenchment.

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Anatomy of the ANC in Power: Insights from Port Elizabeth, 1990–2019. By Mcebisi Ndletyana (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2020), 338 pp. \$35.00

All-powerful political parties largely dominate the electoral democracies of sub-Saharan Africa. Over time, they tend to lose their first-mover legitimacy. South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) is a telling case of that phenomenon. No longer is it the unblemished political

2 Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, 1982); *idem*, "Personal Rule: Theory and Practice in Africa," *Comparative Politics*, XVI (1984), 421–442.