

Are african traditional political institutions and system of governance relevant ...

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



The nature of underlying traditional political values is a factor that contributes to Africa's journey to democracy. It is probable that the more habitual political qualities joining with governmental standards concerning administration, the more potential there would be to transform the democratic position of Africa. Some of these values include decentralization of power, direct participation by the public in decision making, conflict resolution by narrowing differences, group consensus by respecting minority, narrowing the gap between the ruler, and the ruled, shortening term of service and equitable access to land. Decentralization of power refers to generating more than one governing body to share the burden of responsibilities of the main central body. This can be beneficial since if the load is shared between parties of lesser obligation, the problems of locality can be faced and understood on a larger scale thus dealing with these issues more quickly and efficiently. Participation by the public can also benefit political structures since not only does it adhere to democratic principles, but it can also create more substantive choices and results. This is because public involvement presents access to more information (which includes scientific information and knowledge about the context and history), more perspectives and mutual understanding. This falls parallel with consensus on decision making since more perspectives expand options and enhance the value of the ultimate decision, thus the more views taken into account results in a decision which will be most likely to meet most needs and concerns of the public. It is also important to respect the opinions of the minority in order make them feel included and valuable, as this will result in a more close knit society, minimizing outcasts and boundaries between

society. Maintaining group consensus will in turn bridge the gap between that of the leading government and the public being lead. This in turn will generate more respect and trust between governing bodies and the public, since there will be transparency of government decision making. This in turn results in a more peaceful and harmonious civilization. I also think that limiting the term of service will allow for leaders to learn from previous leaders mistakes and positives, as well as empowering the current leader to act efficiently to make a difference in his/her allocated time as an authority. It also makes sure to have a law in place, in the case of a debauched leading body.

On the other hand, some of these traditional values are not compatible with modern day political state functionality. For example, although the African traditional values included the participation of the public, this was mostly aimed at male contribution since men were seen as the greater sex with regards to power, thus only men were included in decision making and enforcing these decisions. This is completely out of date in modern society since the movement of feminism has clearly shown that both men and women are capable of being in power as well as discrimination being against human rights. First of all it brings in diversity in decision making since men may act of impulse whereas women may tend to think will more of a level head involving emotions and consequence. The public also includes women, therefore to have women involved in the decision making process will result in the likelihood of the majority needs and wants being met, rather than just that of the male gender.

Another value that may be seen as incompatible is the value of public participation due to the fact that it is rather impractical to have direct participation in every decision being made on a national level, since this will be inefficient and can result in conflict if your opinion was overridden during the public consensus period. One should also take note that many of these values are inconsistent with Africa in terms of pre-state-building. For example, it is obvious that allowing majority electoral voting to take place whilst South Africa was still in Apartheid will simply not solve any conflict or benefit the country. This is because although people may vote, races other than white are still not able to run in elections. Therefore, these values benefits rely a lot on the nation itself and its state building in order for the values to converge more fully.

There are many values upheld by traditional structures, which can add to the establishment and advance the way the African states functions. The development of the African states is extremely important since not only will it result in a happier more peaceful society, but it will also result in economic advancement which in turn decreases poverty thus giving the state a greater chance to partake in globalization in a positive manner. I therefore think that the African values and traditional governing structures are relevant in society today and should be practiced due to the following reasons.

One avenue that can benefit from African political values is the action of state-building. As seen in the past, most civil wars began due to the absence of broad agreements between ethnic groups and other sub-state entities. These groups of people that are unhappy with the authority, then challenge

the state and this is often handled in the wrong way, which can therefore create further conflict and tension within the state. This referring to the fact that the state governing body will often suppress the challenges with force, whether if be by means of threats or violence; and this in turn creates further consequence and results in fail in state-building since this autocratic force opposes modern day human rights in both a social and moral manner. These consequences may include resentment and resistance, which may further result in violence and protests, forming a greater divide between the states. However, if sub-state interests were considered and accommodated as well the interests of the minority protected, state building would therefore improve. As we have seen, incorporation of traditional values such as power sharing arrangements, decentralization of decision making and adhering to leader time limits, contributed to the to the transition to post-Apartheid South Africa, thus if African Political systems practiced African moral mechanisms such as public conflict resolution and consensual decision-making, this would break the hostile cycle of resentment and anger, in turn building the state towards a peaceful and harmonious future. These values and traditional African political structure can also help with border conflicts, which are being intensified by the growing need for resources in the way that communication, and consensus will take place, thus making a democratic and fair decision involving all parties. This results in people feeling important and worthwhile, thus again ensuing state building and the building of relationships between states. This also applies to the relationships between nations on a global scale, thus if relationships are respected and peaceful,

globalization will therefore become a positive thing since trade agreements will be easier to make and states will not be exploited.

Another aspect of the state that can be improved upon by the implementation African traditional ways is the reconstruction and accountability of leadership. As one can see, Most African states face the crisis of postcolonial state leadership. This means that the state has inherited extractive production relations as well as repressive security, which results in the advancement of private interests at the expense of the public. This causes a greater divide between the general public and the elite since the elite see leadership in the form of control, power and self-enrichment, whereas the general population perceives themselves to be exploited and oppressed thus social development and citizens being disempowered. Therefore in order transform the state into an apparatus of economic and social advancement as well as citizen empowerment, the inheritance of African conducts will be beneficial. This would include decentralizing decision-making, resolving conflicts by reducing disparities, making significant decisions by means of consensus and establishing power-sharing provisions of governance. This means that globally, people will be treated equally thus undoing the wrongs of the past regarding hierarchy. Therefore reconstitution of the State and incorporation of traditional standards are thus corresponding procedures that encourages a positive form of globalization.

The expansion of public facilities can also be improved upon by the implementation of tradition since the lack of political will, regarding the government and the lack of participation of the public in the design and

operation of service delivery, are major influencing factors adding to the poor state of public services. This means that involving local communities in political participation will empower the public to play an active role in influencing policies and thus operation of public services. These customary values will therefore not only help directly, but also act in parallel with the mechanisms of modern democracy in the way that traditional authorities also have the possibility to support government service delivery by justice management participation as well as monetary supplies used for extending health and educational amenities. Furthermore, if the public participates, their wellbeing will be hold a lot more relevance to the government and other states, which on a global scale can only result in positive relations.

Therefore I believe to a large extent that African traditional political institutions and system of governance are relevant today since their ways were very fair and democratic before colonialism, thus incorporating these ideas, coinciding with new ideas based of historical mistakes, can only right the wrongs of the past and furthermore create better relationships between nations on a global scale. This is because there will be mutual respect for the way in which countries choose to present themselves and look after their countries civilization as well as group decisive laws in place to protect not only the elite, but also society as a whole; thus opening the door to honest trade relations and peace on a global level.