

Developmental Authoritarianism in Africa The cases of Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda

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Abstract:

Post-independence Africa saw a rise in authoritarianism; however, this political system was led by malevolent autocrats who ruled with an iron fist, accumulating absolute power, redirecting wealth to small coalitions, and passing policies favouring only a few. However, these ideals and principles have evolved over the past decade, noticeably in countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda, introducing a different variant of authoritarianism, known as “developmental authoritarianism.” Ostensibly inspired by the Chinese authoritarian developmentalism model, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda should be studied to comprehend the objectives and functionality of this school of thought. In these East African cases, this article scrutinises whether the culture ostensibly cultivates the sacrifice of individual liberties for common objectives, countering liberal principles while promoting economic prosperity and development. The political leadership of these political systems is pivotal in achieving socioeconomic development in Africa. Benevolent autocrats like Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, President Paul Kagame, and President Yoweri Museveni, among others in Africa, are critical in bolstering economic growth and ensuring state development for their countries. However, achieving rapid economic growth and robust state development comes at the cost of forgone civil liberties, as human rights violations persist in these countries. Notably, the culture within these countries fosters severed liberties for the common good. This article investigates this fairly new political system in Africa, how it is used by these East African regions, and the ostensible African culture which subdues many into accepting illiberal practices for ostensible broad-based economic prosperity and state development.

Keywords:

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Introduction

After independence, authoritarianism in Africa was characterised by malevolent autocrats that reigned over their countries, resulting in the underdevelopment of their people while enriching small coalitions. According to Kodero (2020), authoritarian systems can emerge from the state's economic foundations, as states with wealthy natural resources can distribute their wealth to secure patronage for political elites. However, when those resources are depleted, coalitions become smaller and political elites become more authoritarian in their pursuit to maintain power. Schoppert (2020) highlights those examples of malevolent African autocrats who reigned over their people, ranging from Idi Amin of Uganda (1971–1974), Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan (1989–2019), to Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (1987–2017). Historically, authoritarianism has been detrimental to Africa, while the legacy of colonialism left inherent challenges ranging from public services to policing. Many African states pursued authoritarianism to enforce policing and regulate public services in light of these challenges. However, authoritarianism did not necessarily result in development but rather regress. Since then, many African states have not successfully implemented sustainable development and economic growth due to incapacity, weak institutions, and corruption (Cheeseman and Fisher, 2019).

However, recently, some African states have innovated authoritarian ideals and principles, leading to a rise in developmental authoritarianism. It is a political system where the state produces substantial public works and services while exercising power over most facets of society, enabling governments to prioritise the development of national interests and cultivate economic prosperity to achieve state development (Matfess, 2015: 182-188). Arguably, developmental authoritarianism in Africa is inspired by the Chinese model of authoritarian developmentalism. Yang (2016: 49) suggests that it is the strategy employed by the ruling elite to establish economic growth, generate employment, and sustainable growth for the state while exercising centralised state power.

In Africa, authoritarianism's evolution has seen a rise over the past decade of progress regarding free and fair elections in 33 out of 55 African states (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2019). However, this has not resulted in a guarantee of significant inclusivity and accessibility to electoral processes. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019) argues that progress in democratic elections is not parallel to significant citizen participation, as African political participation decreased by 0.6 points between 2013–2017. The political participation of African citizens is under threat in the region, as civil participation (playing an active part in political processes or affiliating with a political party) declined by 72.9%. As a result, less civil participation combined with African personhood ideals creates a vacuum that developmental authoritarian political systems can monopolise. African personhood encourages African societies and cultures to embrace collective empowerment and growth over individualism (Molefe, 2019: 313-316).

In contributing to the analysis and nexus between non-democratic states and economic development, this article investigates the impact of developmental authoritarianism in Africa.

It focuses on three East African countries, namely Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda. Although authoritarianism in Africa is no new topic, its variant, developmental authoritarianism, is a relatively recent occurrence in Africa and in these cases. The article analyses the contributions and limitations of developmental authoritarianism in Africa as a political system while noting the Chinese model's influence and inquiring whether developmental authoritarianism capacitates robust state policies for development in Africa while establishing economic relations internationally without compromising their political, economic, or social structures.

The article will use constructivist qualitative methods to explore and interpret developmental authoritarianism as a political system. On the other hand, qualitative methods in the social sciences work well with inductive research design. A qualitative and inductive approach allows new theories/systems to emerge rather than limiting research to previously defined classifications (McKibben et al., 2020: 2). The article analyses and critiques developmental authoritarianism derived from the Chinese model, mainly using Hilary Matfess and Dali Yang to clarify the theoretical framework. The article also briefly highlights the concept of African personhood by Motsamai Molefe. It critically analyses applied developmental authoritarianism in the cases of Ethiopia's, Rwanda, and Uganda, providing positive and negative indicators. Lastly, the study provides its findings with recommendations.

Developmental Authoritarianism: A conceptualisation

According to Puddington (2017), developmental authoritarianism (DA) has thrived where totalitarianism failed because of nuanced and readjusted repression strategies, redefined exploitative measures on civil societies, and disseminating illiberal principles. Modern autocrats in these systems devote themselves to debilitating opposition instead of annihilating them while disregarding the rule of law and projecting ostensible legitimacy, order, and prosperity. The resurgence of authoritarian rule came rebranded, as autocrats ensured a growing number of dependents on state handouts for greater control over the populace. Modern autocrats sometimes ostensibly provide aspects of liberal democracy (e.g., substantial service delivery) as a mechanism to disguise their illiberal traits (e.g., extended terms of office). These autocrats provide basic services for centralised state power. Guriev and Treisman (2019, p. 102) identify these leaders as 'informational autocrats,' seeking to distance the populace from their opposition through covert efforts that censor them, while populists publicly criticise the opposition. Essentially, propaganda is their instrument of choice.

Inglis (2019) highlights several checklist points to identify authoritarianism; however, these also apply to developmental authoritarianism. First, elongated executive power, where autocrats simultaneously accumulate power while weakening state institutions, judiciaries, media, and civil activists that provide checks and balances. Second, centralised repressive state power, lack of accountability, and elite patronage for financial backing leads to citizens' inability to hold those responsible to account. Third, autocrats use populism and nationalism to capitalise on existing social tensions to solidify their support while weaponizing media and



new technologies to regulate domestic news and misinform the international community. Finally, autocrats institute the 'emergency card,' using traditional tactics such as declaring a state of emergency to facilitate repression and elongated executive state power.

Furthermore, Gebrekidan (2020) suggested that the covid-19 pandemic is a catalyst for invoking illiberal principles and practices even in democracies worldwide. Governments are exploiting the health crisis to accumulate power, with little regard for preventing the abuse of their newly acclaimed authority. These invasive illiberal measures range from Uganda closing schools, banning large gatherings, and vehicle movement (Biryabarema, 2020) to South Africa enforcing a lockdown alert level 5, suggesting a high covid-19 outbreak and insufficient health system preparedness (South African Government, 2021). Moreover, norms have changed as developmental authoritarian measures pursue invasive surveillance systems previously criticised for abandoning liberal principles and practices.

In the African context, the resurgence of authoritarian rule in the contemporary era has provided a platform for establishing developmental authoritarianism, particularly in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda. According to Matfess (2015, pp. 181-204), developmental authoritarianism is described in five fundamental components. First, the domestic ascension into power after civil dissolution unifies citizens and creates accessible political mobilisation. Second, this political system imposes statutory restrictions on identity, speech, and association, influencing the possibility of civil dissolution and conflict, justifying restrictions. Third, Matfess (2015, pp. 181-204) suggests that these political systems use a significant proportion of the economy, promoting economic and civil development, committed to mercantile capitalism (state development and economic growth that is based on trade, and more significant exports than imports, while the middle-class is dependent on the state).

Furthermore, they exhibit party mobilisation and militaristic association concerning the development of the populace. They caution regional and domestic instability to encourage mandatory participation in political initiatives and development strategies. Lastly, these systems create relationships with the West for the interest of regional security, in exchange for aid, and to foster foreign direct investment. In contrast, they dismiss civil/human rights and democratic legitimacy. Ironically, the United States (liberal democratic state) and Ethiopia (illiberal/non-democratic state) have had diplomatic relations since the early twentieth century and have maintained such relations throughout the changing forms of government. The U.S. recognises that today the country is officially known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and is founded on "developmental democracy". The United States defines Ethiopia's political system as a model that prioritises economic growth over civil rights (US Department of State, 2020).

According to Del Sordi (2018, p. 218), modern autocratic repression occurs primarily in two forms, high and low intensity. High-intensity repression involves outright violence towards prominent opposition, be it an organisation or individual. Low-intensity repression is more covert and subtle, characterised by reduced violence. Thus, developmental authoritarianism

seemingly takes a soft approach, arguably extends its low-intensity repression beyond opposition, and targets the populace, hindering dissenting opinions. Human Rights Watch (2018) suggests that the Chinese government used high-intensity repression against 13 million Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang region, implementing arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torment. At the same time, one million were detained and forced to participate in communist political education and learn Mandarin. This relentless violation of human rights conditions the Turkic Muslims to praise the Chinese Communist Party and its government, also noticeable in Hong Kong with the new security laws protecting national security over local/provincial objectives. Although this example is drawn from Asia, modern African autocrats ostensibly derive their system from China.

The People's Republic of China uses the authoritarian development model in conjunction with the high and low-intensity repression approach. Noticeably, in the events which unfolded in Xinjiang, China used high-intensity repression. According to Li (2015, pp. 130-131), the authoritarian development model is an evolved political system categorised as a political meritocracy, which differs from traditional socialism due to its use of the market system and its redefined Chinese democratic commitment and party leadership. As a result, China's economy has done remarkably well, placing it among the world's fastest-growing economies. The World Bank (2020b) records China's average GDP growth around 10% annually, lifting 850 million people out of poverty in the past three decades. However, it is noteworthy to recognise that the Chinese state is capable, having the skills and professionalism to enforce a state-led development role, unlike African states that seek to emulate the Chinese in this regard. Since the late 1970s, Chinese reforms have been the catalyst for significant socioeconomic transformation, increasing foreign direct investment, industrialisation, and marketisation resulting in economic growth. The Chinese model protects the state-owned economy outside of the Western democratic principles, giving rise to "state capitalism" while strategically monitoring specific sectors of the economy without political competition and implementing restrictions on civil freedoms to achieve national objectives (Li, 2015, pp. 130-131).

Furthermore, in the African context, the notion of ubuntu (meaning I am because we are) plays a significant role in African Personhood, encouraging African societies and cultures to embrace collective empowerment and growth over individualism and self-enrichment, making them susceptible to exploitation by developmental authoritarianism. Motsamai Molefe (2019, pp. 313-316) suggests a distinction between being human as a biological truth and being a person having moral awareness. Therefore, personhood develops an accepted character, where a person's life is shaped by moral virtue. In contrast, African scholars note that personhood is achieved in social relationships, allowing one to achieve moral perfection and personhood through a community. The best method to realise one's humanity is by empowering and contributing to other human beings. The act of ubuntu promotes others' good while promoting one's good, intertwining the individual and communitarian facets, establishing African personhood.



Developmental authoritarianism capitalises on African personhood and ubuntu because it encourages African communities to accept development at the cost of authoritarianism for communal growth and prosperity (Motsamai Molefe, 2019: 313-316). Essentially, this leads to neglecting civil and human rights for collective economic prosperity and state development. Modern autocrats using developmental authoritarianism seemingly latch on to the ideals of African personhood to promote the political system used and subdue the citizenry to compromise liberal principles in the hope of achieving ostensible economic prosperity and state development.

Developmental Authoritarianism: Contributions and Limitations

Developmental authoritarianism enables significant state intervention and control of the societal and economic facets to achieve state development. Raising the question, does it facilitate economic growth? On the other hand, according to Magnus (2018), there are no grounds to suggest that democracy outperforms authoritarianism from an economic argument, and empirically, records illustrate that authoritarian states can reach high economic growth rates, e.g., Singapore and South Korea. Developmental authoritarian systems can organise and distribute labour and capital to achieve economic growth; however, this is generally favourable only in the early phases of economic development. Kroenig (2020, pp. 39-41) notes that autocrats can impose decisions on the system, allowing them to redistribute resources for crucial state objectives while side-lining political opposition in the name of state development.

Additionally, benevolent autocrats in these systems can facilitate economic growth through property rights reform by redistribution of land across marginalised communities (Riley, 2018, pp. 7-8). The facilitation of higher and faster economic growth can be achieved, establishing a potential transition into democracy. Developmental authoritarian systems arguably facilitate economic growth easier than democracies, as they can implement policies and practices efficiently to achieve their objective because no one can oppose such decisions. For example, anti-rights authoritarian states such as the Chinese government promote state development and economic prosperity over human rights. These systems hold centralised and coercive power to be deployed purposively and systemically to establish capitalist transformation in their societies while establishing a class system that draws in higher wage employees (Harrison, 2019, pp. 281). An added advantage used by modern autocrats in these political systems is that they do not necessarily implement the maximum tax rate permissible in their states; thus, curbing the norm of taxing citizens the maximum rate until productivity decreases, providing these states with a competitive edge regionally, e.g., China, the United Arab Emirates, and Kenya (Fuller, 2017, p. 73).

Furthermore, according to Rough (2020), developmental authoritarian systems are more likely to impose draconian laws with relentless efficiency and suppress information that triggers mass panic or dissenting opinions. The covid-19 outbreak of 2020 became a catalyst

for draconian practices even in democracies, normalising illiberal principles for the common good. Modern autocrats in these systems have the competitive edge of immediately addressing an issue like the Covid-19 crisis, implementing nationwide lockdowns or a state of emergency, as fewer veto participants need to consent. Ailoaiei (2020) suggests that a state of emergency encompasses reducing civil liberties instituted during war or national security threats to the state, entrusting more power to the state to protect its citizenry from imminent threats. During this public health crisis, lockdowns and travel bans have ensued to curb the spread of Covid-19; draconian regulations are seemingly the opted tactic by democratic and non-democratic countries.

Developmental authoritarian political systems can efficiently enforce decisions, achieving this through delineating authority and politicking behind closed doors. Simultaneously, they portray a unified, stable, and reliable image to the nation (Kroenig, 2020, pp. 39-41). For example, the Chinese government built two hospitals within days to combat Covid-19, presenting a high level of control and outbreak response, which the World Health Organisation commended. Kavanagh (2020, p. 135) notes that a strategic component to curb the pandemic is reliable information and acting swiftly to hinder the continued spread of Covid-19 before introducing emergency measures, which developmental authoritarian systems can use.

On the contrary, according to Riley (2018, p. 7), the lack of economic growth in developmental authoritarian states can be caused by power struggles. The lack of succession planning provokes political rivalry for that position, like Rwanda's case, where the political system is closely identified with the President, Paul Kagame. However, in a capacitated state like China, leaders use precise succession planning interchangeably, allowing the political party to govern and be associated with the political system, not an individual.

As a result, economic growth weakens due to autocrats reallocating funds to preserve their position of power while losing legitimacy with weak succession planning. Autocrats cannot govern alone, and a focal point of research on authoritarianism suggests that controlling most of the populace while excluding them from power is challenging (Brosché et al., 2020, p. 113). Across the range of political systems, political leaders rely on maintaining ruling coalitions, whose patronage is crucial to their longevity. In developmental authoritarian systems, ruling coalitions are greatly dependent on the discretion of the elite. In Africa, developmental authoritarian systems establishing prominent coalitions require stabilising the need for ethnic inclusion to ensure cooperation, otherwise risking violent protests from excluded groups, e.g., identity politics between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groupings during the Rwandan genocide.

Furthermore, the lack of property rights is a catalyst for lack of investment, as banks directly contribute to economic development. Bastiaens (2016, pp. 142-144) suggests that feeble government infrastructures, significant intervention in business operations, expropriations or nationalisations, and lack of property rights in developmental authoritarian systems classify political risks. Waning institutions reduce the credibility of the state for foreign direct investment. Also, autocrats may use these policies for personal interest, as they hold little



accountability to the public, thus benefiting themselves the most and providing them with direct access to state resources and revenue. According to Bellinger and Son (2019), international markets find civil unrest distasteful, especially when the government violently constrains its populace. Foreign direct investments tend to depart, primarily when little opposition exists to check the government on economic growth and property laws.

In contrast, history associates authoritarian systems with inadequate provision for social goods and services, which can occur in developmental authoritarian systems too, reallocating their budget meant for social welfare (e.g., education and health) to purchase weapons and fund their military sectors (Khan et al., 2016, pp. 657-659). Autocrats do this because they do not need support from the public, resulting in lower economic growth. Bove and Brauner (2016, p. 610) suggest that developmental authoritarian systems lack popular legitimacy and rely on the military to support their power. These systems tend to be more susceptible to violent insurgency, making them more likely to use mass-scale force, causing dependency on the military and increased military expenditure. Notably, this occurs in the absence of economic growth and state development, which is in the 'social contract' between the state and its people.

Moreover, high censorship in developmental authoritarian systems places them at a disadvantage during world crises like the covid-19 pandemic. Censorship hinders the media from broadcasting and promptly conveying essential information to the public (Kavanagh, 2020, p. 135). Arguably, developmental authoritarian political systems are susceptible to falling victim to their propaganda and censorship. These systems use what is called 'digital authoritarianism' (networked cyber tracking to spy on citizens) for surveillance, censorship, and suppression of their people. Sherman (2019) mentions that these systems start by introducing artificial intelligence into their surveillance systems to enhance authoritarian governance. Rather than provide an open approach to internet governance and online content, these systems insist on 'cyber sovereignty' (state control of the internet as a facet of state sovereignty and self-governance) in the name of police control, responsiveness, and crime prevention, e.g., China, Singapore, and Russia (globally). Nevertheless, these developmental authoritarian systems use artificial intelligence technology to enforce mass censorship, filter and influence online content, and ban virtual private networks within their borders while instituting internet shutdowns when necessary.

Lastly, developmental authoritarian systems fail to protect fundamental civil rights; thus, malevolent autocrats are not held accountable for their arbitrary actions. These political systems cripple civil society organisations and restrict civil activists from criticising them, particularly African governments (Smidt, 2018, pp. 1-3). They constrain international donations to civil society organisations in their countries, as foreign donors tend to advocate enhanced civil rights for the populace. These restrictions prevent the further establishment of independent civil society organisations prone to critique the system's policies, making them susceptible to supporting the system's political opposition. In 2009, the Ethiopian government implemented a regulation that hinders civil society organisations from accepting more than

10% of their total funding from foreign donors. As a result, out of the 2 275 civil organisations in Ethiopia (in 2009), only 1 701 were still operational by 2011. Although these organisations can engage in human and civil rights programmes, their capacity to radically foster transformation is constrained through limited funding (Include, 2018).

Ethiopia: Positive and Negative Indicators

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who started his tenure in 2018, introducing a wave of reforms in his first year in office. According to the committee for The Nobel Prize (2019), Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed received a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to establish peace and international cooperation, especially for his efforts to resolve the border conflict with Eritrea. Moreover, Ahmed's wave of reforms granted him international praise as he released tens of thousands of political prisoners his predecessor had detained. He also instituted civil rights reforms while publicly acknowledging past grievances and allowing previously banned opposition groups to return home (Bader, 2019). In contrast, Ahmed's peace agreement with Eritrea remains moot, as the Eritrea border is still closed, while his government faces regional tension over the Nile with Egypt.

These unresolved tensions are fuelled by a lack of reciprocity from the respective heads of state. Noticeably, in July 2021, Ethiopia increased tensions on its nearly decade-long diplomatic standoff with Egypt and Sudan over the Nile river, allegedly making a unilateral decision to fill the Renaissance Dam (Aljazeera, 2021). Since Ethiopia is landlocked, Ahmed's economic-led model (striving for development) requires neighbouring ports, like Somaliland's Berbera and Port of Djibouti on the country's southern shore, to increase exports for economic growth. As a result, peace and regional cooperation are essential in increasing international trade for Ethiopia, making matters increasingly difficult for the Prime Minister.

On the other hand, in 2020, the outburst of violence after the murder of Hachalu Hundessa (Ethiopian singer, songwriter, and activist) resulted in at least 239 deaths, leading Ahmed to shut down the internet and insinuate that Egyptian security agents carried out Hundessa's murder to instigate unrest, under the command of Cairo. Some claim that Ahmed uses the tension with Egypt to unite Ethiopians against a common enemy and divert citizens, as he postponed the national elections and continues to shut down the internet (Hairsine, 2020). Although Prime Minister Ahmed seems amiable, his senior military and intelligence background, coupled with the lessons learned from the Rwandan genocide, make him ferocious at suppressing dissenting voices (Aga and Plaut, 2018). As a result, he implements internet shutdowns, media censorship and elongates his executive power in the name of avoiding civil unrest, which is closely associated with the common traits of developmental authoritarianism.

In comparison to Ethiopia's social ills, Jeffrey (2019) highlights that rapid economic growth (defined by Agarwal (2020) as a brisk increase in the value of goods and services produced in



an economy over time) has not meant much for Ethiopia's unemployed youth over the past decade. Although this political system seemingly follows the Chinese authoritarian developmentalism model, whereby civil rights are forgone for economic growth and poverty reduction, many are yet to benefit. At the same time, the country's Tigray conflict risks deterring foreign investment and impedes domestic production, thus reducing the capacity to create employment. In Addis Ababa, over 23.5% of households have an unemployed adult (in 2017), while underemployment, low income, unemployment, and inadequate working conditions are high among youth, especially in rural areas (World Bank, 2017).

However, the World Bank (2019a) also recorded positive trends in poverty reduction in Ethiopia's urban and rural areas in recent years. Citizens living under the national poverty line decreased from 30% in 2011 to 24% by 2016. Although this growth happened before Ahmed's administration, Ethiopia exhibited high-intensity developmental authoritarianism as the government explicitly violated human rights, detained dissenting voices while it drove state-led economic development. The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), later implemented by the Ahmed administration, increased infrastructural development through public investments and converted the country into a manufacturing centre.

The GTP aims to average 11% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth annually, bringing about a 20% expansion in the industrial sector and resulting in more job creation. According to Green Growth Knowledge (2020), the GTP aims to stimulate economic structural transformation and sustainable fast growth towards lower-middle-income status by 2025. The GTP (second phase) focuses on establishing expedited, sustainable, and broad-based growth through strengthening the productivity of the agricultural and manufacturing industries, enhancing production and the market. The GTP focuses on state development and exhibits aspects of African personhood, as it fosters communal prosperity over individual growth.

Additionally, the World Bank (2019a) highlighted Ethiopia's economic performance in the 2016/17 financial year as robust, establishing the path to rapid economic growth and reducing poverty among the Ethiopian society. Economic growth has affected the country's stable inflation rate, although it is still in double digits. Ethiopian reforms support growth, aiming to achieve an average of 8% annually, and these economic reforms encompass the private sector's support for faster growth, resulting in private-led and export-oriented economic policies for Ethiopia's Agenda 2025. The World Bank (2020a) notes that Ethiopia's reform agenda has fostered more significant investment in the economy, receiving a US\$312.2 million grant and US\$187.8 million credit from the International Development Association. Ethiopia also implemented energy sector reforms to advance efficiency while protecting the indigent. These enable the private sector to provide value-added services like exports, imports, and logistics, thus stimulating the economy. Although these reforms would be possible in a democracy, developmental authoritarianism expedites them by suppressing dissidents, whereas democracy requires parliamentary and popular support.

However, developmental authoritarian systems have their woes, and even potentially prosperous systems like Ethiopia face many challenges in achieving their goals. According to the World Bank (2019b), Ethiopia faces several developmental challenges, particularly sustaining its positive economic growth and continued poverty reduction, which requires significant job creation (such as the additional 14 million jobs target by 2025) and improved governance. Additionally, the government faces challenges related to limited competitiveness (which is detrimental to manufacturing, job creation, and exports), an underdeveloped private sector (limiting foreign investment and industry growth), and finally, political instability (social unrest, lowering economic growth, tourism, and exports), among other challenges.

DuPée (2017) suggests that Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) Agenda 2025 is set back by an ongoing surge of civil unrest and instability in the East-African region. For instance, in 2017, the government instituted a six-month-long state of emergency and later added four months more due to domestic instability. Although Ethiopia has a potential mining sector, the economic vision is undermined if the government does not ensure infrastructure maintenance or build a new transportation and mineral-processing site; the GTP Agenda 2025 will be in vain. Although the transportation project between Addis Ababa and Djibouti is complete, landlocked Ethiopia is at a disadvantage. The country relies heavily on neighbouring states' ports to ensure international trade (imports and exports).

Furthermore, Ethiopia's economic strides are arguably not sustainable, and if the expected government spending is reportedly fruitless, it will merely grow the economy without improving productivity. The Ethiopian government is at risk of not increasing tax revenues, although receiving significant investments resulting from fruitless spending and a lack of good governance (Kopf, 2020). At the start of the twenty-first century, Ethiopia ranked as the third-poorest country globally, and by 2011 averaged a GDP per capita of US\$620. According to the World Bank (2020a), Ethiopia moved from third-poorest ranked country to twenty-fourth globally, and the GDP increased from US\$620 to US\$857.5 per capita. Although the country has made great strides to improve, productivity has been chiefly replaced with capital investment, particularly by government and state-owned enterprises.

Negative Ethiopian indicators also include undermining democratic principles through civil rights violations and the postponement of general elections, scheduled for the end of August 2020, then later to July 2021 (due to the 2020 state of emergency against Covid-19). Developmental authoritarianism and its modern autocrats have readjusted their repressive methods, and this recently enforced state of emergency in Ethiopia proves as an example of low-intensity measures. According to Human Rights Watch (2019), the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front holds all the seats in parliament, which results in little to no regard for the opposition, causing a higher number of violent protests within the country. Although the general elections have taken place, the International Crisis Group fears that the ruling party's recent victory and blatant disregard for the opposition will lead to more violent protests and boycotts. National politicking between elites fuels the current land dispute in northern Ethiopia's Amhara and Tigray regions. The dispute has escalated into conflict. The



confrontation led to military intervention and exposed the ethnic tension within the Ethiopian army (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Rwanda: Positive and Negative Indicators

According to Cascais (2020), Rwanda's benevolent dictator Paul Kagame marks over twenty years of his tenure. Kagame's rise to power is accredited to his contributions to economic recovery and peace in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide (between the Tutsis and Hutus), paving the path to his presidency in 2000. Some have commended Kagame for his contributions to women's rights and environmentalism in the country and many Rwandans admire Kagame's contributions to progress in the country over the past two decades. However, he does not go without criticism, as some suggest that he runs the country with an iron fist. He has been criticised for suppressing dissenting voices across Rwanda, earning him the title 'benevolent dictator,' as some perceive him as a leader who "pursues unselfish objectives for the state's development". A benevolent dictator is an autocrat who rules with absolute power, deciding on the objectives and executing them (often quicker than in a democracy) while being perceived to be civic-minded (Mkhondo, 2019).

Kagame once commanded the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi militia group based in Uganda, which ended the Hutu's slaughter campaign against the Tutsi. As such, Kagame became socialised in war, and his militance is evident in leading Rwanda, as bodies like the Human Rights Watch (2020) suggest that he is aggressive, violent, very emotive, and prosecutes dissidents. The Rwandan president can suppress opposition because of developmental authoritarianism. He is suggested to have been involved in many murders, arrests, and the disappearance of dissenting voices. Developmental authoritarianism fosters the notion that freedoms and democratic practices should be subdued by the intention to achieve collective economic growth, development, and prosperity. Kagame encourages Rwandans to embrace communal empowerment and economic growth, but he also violates many human rights, typical of any developmental authoritarian system.

The Rwandan capital, Kigali, is home to the Kigali International Financial Centre (KIFC) headquarters, an initiative of the Kagame administration. According to Mwai (2020a), KIFC is a government initiative established in 2019 that intends to position Rwanda as a business and financial hub in Africa while reforming financial services. Although the surge of Covid-19 has slowed the initiative, attracting investment into the country is crucial during this time. The government agency Rwanda Finance Limited, managing KIFC, has readjusted its delivery approach to attract more investment, leveraging technology to render services. Moreover, the Rwandan government's response to Covid-19 and Kagame's leadership reputation gives foreign investors' confidence during this time of uncertainty.

Certainty established by the Rwandan government is admired in the country and across the continent. The KIFC and many other businesses use this to attract investment, as investors

look at stable markets to manage their capital. In 2019, foreign private capital increased by 2.4%, from US\$463 million in 2018, driven by investment in electricity, gas, ICT, manufacturing, and finance sectors, among others in Rwanda's economy (National Bank of Rwanda, 2019: 16). Providing such certainty and mobilising funds to bolster initiatives like the KIFC would be difficult for Kagame without developmental authoritarianism; unlike democracies, he does not have to consider various opinions that would sway him to mobilise funds for other initiatives. Moreover, foreign direct investment means that he can fulfil objectives like economic growth, development, and job creation, resulting in improved socioeconomic conditions for many Rwandans, especially the youth in rural areas.

Another positive economic indicator is the project to process Coltan ore costing RWF1.3 billion (US\$1.4 million), providing a professional wash plant that processes 25 metric tons of minerals every hour. Mining investments in Rwanda include collaborating with the Mining Board on over 5 500 hectares and another in exploration. Rwanda aims to generate US\$800 million annually from mineral exports by the end of this year, raising the figure to US\$1.5 billion by 2024. Thus, the Rwandan Mining Board is tasked with conducting exploration projects across the country, obtaining geological data, and using that to attract more private investment to stimulate economic growth (Kingsland, 2019). Kagame's leadership and developmental authoritarianism enable him to provide stability and speedily implement drastic policies in the country, subsequently attracting foreign and private investment. Moreover, projects in the Western Province have an immense socioeconomic benefit, creating jobs, fostering economic growth, and establishing development zones that bolster business activity in the community highlighting the notion of African personhood.

According to Mwai (2020b), Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation (NST) received support from the World Bank Country Partnership Framework (CPF), providing a six-year support plan on its strategic priorities while also supporting Rwanda's recovery from the impact of Covid-19. The framework is based on the CPF's analysis of opportunities to achieve poverty reduction and collective prosperity in Rwanda. In light of such, it suggests that the World Bank acknowledges Rwanda's developmental authoritarian system. The World Bank seemingly supports the notion of collective prosperity and poverty reduction outlined in the system; however, it does not address the subversion of democratic principles, particularly civil/human rights.

The programme focuses on five strategic objectives. They are enhancing human capital, improving conditions for private sector development, broadening access to the digital economy and infrastructure, increasing agricultural productivity and commercialisation while intensifying urban agglomeration (World Bank, 2020c). These five strategic priorities are imperative in accomplishing Rwanda's middle-income status by 2035. The World Bank has eighteen projects, four regional operations worth US\$1.9 billion in Rwanda, ranging from providing access to basic infrastructure to electricity for rural households. The partnership enables the government to address numerous socioeconomic issues in the country that resonate with the critical objectives of a developmental authoritarian political system.



Although Rwanda's developmental authoritarianism shows promise for economic growth and state development, many criticise the system's tactics for addressing socioeconomic challenges. According to Kendunga (2020), skills development through higher education and work experience does not align with labour market needs, as the students' quality is low because of a weak secondary education. Since these institutions are ineffective, only 50-65% of graduates are employed after their tertiary studies. Only a limited number of high-level skills are developed through direct work placement programmes, while no high-skilled sub-sector accounts for more than 5% of employment; this showcases Rwanda's low quality of skills.

The World Bank (2015: 9) suggests that low-income Rwanda has a high unemployment rate, with a 19% unemployed working-age population. In 2020, Rwanda's unemployment rate fluctuated between 16% and 20.3%, primarily due to the impact of Covid-19 (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021). The rise in inactivity from 2011 caused by a larger proportion of youth that remains in the schooling system and unemployment indicate Rwanda's low-income status and significant dependence on the agricultural sector. Although the official unemployment rate is low, underemployment and low-quality employment are prevalent. In 2015, almost 70% of employed Rwandans worked less than 35 hours a week, and a substantial number of youth and women are unpaid employees on farms or small enterprises. Also, when considering the 19th Conference on Labour Statisticians, the working-age population unemployment in Rwanda rises to 42%.

The Rwandan government realised its shortcomings in achieving vision 2020, so it extended the development deadline to 2035. However, the pandemic's impact, although partial to the shortcomings of vision 2020, is two-fold. Firstly, Rwanda's economic regress is expected to cause a revenue shortfall of 4% of the GDP, while Rwanda's Economic Recovery Plan argues the shortfall to be only 3.3% of GDP (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Secondly, the pandemic allows for an easier transition into draconian policies in the name of fighting the invisible enemy. Thus, Rwanda's unsustainable development and economic growth strategy, coupled with other invasive draconian practices, are to the detriment of ordinary citizens of Rwanda. In this regard, African personhood is subverted as elites and capitalists absorb most of the economic growth and development, leading to the opposite intent of the concept, individual prosperity, and selective benefit, among others, instead of communal.

The African Development Bank (2020) also notes Rwanda's concessional loan of US\$97.675 million to strengthen the state budget and cushion the impact of Covid-19, commending the country on its swift, decisive response and countermeasures. However, like any other developmental authoritarian system, funding and policies at play have a centralised agenda, as Rwanda calls for bolstering surveillance and contact tracing of infected persons in the country. Subsequently, Rwanda will equip itself with surveillance and monitoring abilities in the name of combating the siege of the pandemic. Unfortunately, these capabilities will not disappear at the end of this troubling time but instead continue and be used to enforce despotism.

Uganda: Positive and Negative Indicators

Over three decades, Uganda has been defined by Museveni's leadership. Noticeably, his tertiary education depicts much of his leadership today. In university, Museveni studied economics and political science, focusing on the ideas of Franz Fanon and violence as the most efficient form of political mobilisation (The New Humanitarian, 2006). Known as a Marxist and pan-Africanist, Museveni also received military training in Mozambique during his youth. Today, he continues to reign over Ugandans on the notion of economic development and security, winning him support over the decades. According to Kwesiga (2020), Museveni's rise to power was obtained through the gun and is maintained by the gun. He commanded 55 000 troops in his youth after Idi Amin fell from power, leading them through the Ugandan Bush War. The National Resistance Army, led by Museveni, was lauded for overthrowing the previous government without looting citizens' property. Since his presidency, the military continues to actively participate in Uganda's political and institutional affairs, producing the Ugandan constitution of 1995 and holding parliamentary seats.

However, Freedom House's global freedom scores Uganda 34 out of 100, meaning it is "not free" (Freedom House, 2021); this is primarily attributed to election violence, limited political rights, and constrained civil liberties. According to the International Crisis Group (2017), Uganda's security sector, especially the police, functions beyond preserving law and order, but instead acts as the presidential defence against opposition and dissidents. Along with disrupting the opposition's activities, the police are allegedly involved in criminal activities, from officers turning a blind eye to racketeering to participating in organised crime. Police failure to effectively fulfil their duties increased violent crimes and murders. Furthermore, informal security groups like Crime Preventers (un-uniformed militia) mobilise pro-Museveni voters while intimidating opposition during elections. The Museveni administration governs with decayed accountability and pro-government police while weakening the security sector by reducing well-trained and disciplined officers from the police force. Typical of developmental authoritarian systems, their modern autocrats debilitate opposition while disregarding the law and project ostensible legitimacy, order, and prosperity.

In contrast, Ahluwalia (2021, pp. 121-122) suggests that elections in Uganda are merely a legitimising mechanism for the political system and reaffirms its grip on state power. Museveni received 58.6% of votes, although predictable, much protestation by the Wine supporters caused unrest. Wine's campaign was stung by shootings and intimidation, alongside mass detentions and over 50 murdered during the campaign. After the reinstated president, Wine was placed under house arrest due to the violence during his campaign. Before Wine's arrest, Museveni shut down the internet a day before the elections to limit opposition and election observers. Although the United States and the European Union condemned the act, nothing was done. Arguably, international donors to the Museveni administration are concerned with the security of their interests which take precedence over values instilled in their societies like democracy and human rights. Furthermore, Wine alleged fraud against Museveni, encouraging voters to disregard the election results. 5.85 million voters reinstated



Museveni, and although Wine was defeated, he received 3.48 million votes, 34.8% votes (France 24, 2021). Although Wine suggested he had proof of his allegations, the internet was still shut down, and a blackout occurred in certain areas. In developmental authoritarian systems, elections are not free or fair, and small coalitions or individuals exercise state power.

In comparison, Tripp (2021) notices that throughout Museveni's three-decades-long presidency, women representation became critical, as Vice President Jessica Alupo, and Prime Minister, Robinah Nabbanja, are among other leading women in Uganda. Recently, Museveni's cabinet increased women representation from 27% to 43%, while Alupo serves as the second woman vice-president. Former Vice President, Specioza Kazibwe, served from 1994 to 2003. Women representation in government invoked much debate regarding women's rights in a developmental authoritarian political system. Women's movements have made noteworthy gains in the country over the years. Today, 33% of parliamentarians are women, 43% are cabinet members, and over 46% hold local government posts. Wang and Yoon (2018, pp. 300-301) highlight that Uganda has reserved legislative seats for women representation over the years, which led to rising women representation in parliament. Although these seats are not permanent, Uganda reserves parliamentary seats for women to promote growth, experience, and an opportunity for women to contest for seats against men and prove themselves to their constituency.

In contrast, the Republic of Uganda, in partnership with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), embarks on the construction of strategic roads to improve trade and commerce among the two countries (Xinhua, 2021). The roads will connect the Mpondwe border in Uganda's Western Region and the DRC's Kalindi in the North-Kivu province. Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and the DRC's Felix Tshisekedi believe these roads will bring rapid socioeconomic development for the two countries through the export zone. The construction and upgrading of 223 kilometres in eastern DRC will bolster trade and reduce insecurity amid the security situation in the region. Woof (2021) notes that the new road and trade link will cost over Ush1.187 trillion (US\$334.5 million), boosting trade between the two countries. The project's funding will be split between the two countries, surfacing and maintaining 89 kilometres of road in linking Bunagana, Rutshuru, and Goma, while 54 kilometres from Beni to Butembo, and another 80 kilometres between Kasindi and Beni. Not only will ordinary citizens benefit from this development, but the two countries will achieve state development. Seemingly, foreign policy and diplomacy can be positively impacted by the notion of African personhood existing within developmental authoritarian systems.

Comparative to other developmental authoritarian systems, Uganda hosts regular elections; however, their credibility becomes increasingly questionable since autocrats like Museveni rule for over three decades. Today, the ruling National Resistance Movement continues its grip on power by manipulating national resources, politicising the prosecution of opposition, and intimidation orchestrated by state security forces. It is no surprise that Uganda scored 34 out of 100 in 2019 for its global freedom score (Freedom House, 2021). In 2020, the freedom score increased to 36 out of 100 (still ranking "not free"), while its internet

freedom score is 56 out of 100 (ranking "partially free"). Political rights were scored 11 out of 40, and civil liberties scored 23 out of 60. Uganda's civil society and media sectors remain active, albeit challenged with state violence and legal harassment. Opposition rallies and protests are disrupted by police, detaining opposition leaders. In contrast, the media regulators suspended dozens of journalists, albeit courts blocked the directives later. Noticeably, even social media accounts with a large following are mandated to register and submit to state monitoring.

In contrast, one of the significant setbacks of developmental authoritarianism is that laws can be readjusted to favour only a few, and Uganda is no exception; this comes with ramifications, especially regarding property laws. Matovu (2021) suggests that land acquisition in Uganda is dreadful, navigating the uncertainty of the rules before and after purchasing a property. In Uganda, land tenure refers to the systems that govern land ownership; however, the ownership of property may differ in some regions of the country. Ownership may speak to a vested interest in property rather than owning it. Uganda's 1995 constitution and the Land Act provides four terms of land ownership; freehold, leasehold, Mailo, and customary tenure. Unfortunately, questionable property rights in developmental authoritarianism are a catalyst for low investment, as banks directly contribute to economic development.

Additionally, the International Crisis Group (2017) argues that Uganda's governance system is deteriorating, hindering infrastructure and agriculture, among others, that have increased demand amid a rapidly growing population. Ramifications include the delay of the start of oil production and stagnant foreign investment. Government initiatives, masked as economic stimulus, come in the form of handouts to secure political support. The strategy used by Museveni's government is not isolated. Typically, developmental authoritarian systems ensure increased state dependency to foster larger voter support and leverage for campaigning against the opposition. Furthermore, Museveni's administration established new administrative districts. However, their efforts have not amounted to many improvements for local service delivery, instead causing communal tensions over mineral resources and land.

According to the World Bank (2021), in the 2020 financial year, Uganda's real GDP grew at 2.9%, significantly less than the 6.8% growth of the 2019 financial year, albeit mainly caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Not much is expected to change in 2021, as the country still battles the ramifications of its lockdown regulations, closing borders that disrupted the Ugandan economy. Public investment was reduced while private consumption followed, leading to catastrophic ramifications for informal, industrial, and service sectors. Additionally, Uganda's GDP per capita also shrunk by 4.5%. Even if the GDP spikes from 2022 onwards, the GDP per capita will probably retain its low trajectory. Over the past five years, before Covid-19, even higher productivity jobs and real GDP per capita growth declined to 1.3% from 2.2%, while the population grew by 3.7% annually. As such, the poor remain significantly vulnerable to economic shocks (e.g., the 2016 drought, which temporarily increased poverty). The economic shocks caused by Covid-19 left households with less income, coupled with the high



vulnerability of poverty and limited social security. Uganda needs to create 700 000 jobs annually to balance the labour force growth and the economy. Unfortunately, the country currently averages 75 000 jobs annually.

In comparison, Uganda is seemingly regressive and exclusionary in the socio-political realm. In 2014, the Ugandan parliament passed the Sexual Offences Bill that prevents and punishes sexual violence, also criminalising homosexuality and sex work within the country. The Sexual Offences Bill penalises homosexuality by up to 10 years imprisonment while also discriminating against people living with HIV/AIDS and sex workers (Akullo and Kagumire, 2021). Although Museveni signed this bill, enacting it to penalise even Ugandans residing outside of the country and permitting a death penalty for specific sexual offences, the constitutional court repealed the bill due to irregular legal procedure and subverted human rights. The bill would result in security, economic, and health challenges for the LGBTQI community.

Conclusion: Findings and Recommendations

Arguably, authoritarianism has not been explored thoroughly in Africa, which has left room for establishing developmental authoritarianism. Matfess (2015, p. 182) describes it as a government model that instils certain democratic practices, such as public goods and services, while also exercising central control over many societal facets. Authoritarianism in Africa has been detrimental to its states and people. Consequently, African states have been unable to establish sustainable development and economic growth due to their incapable governments, weak institutions, and corruption. African systems have benchmarked other regions without comprehensive insight into their internal functionalities, flaws, and accolades. Although this article urges African states to review East Asian systems' achievements regarding developmental authoritarianism, they must establish capable states through technocracy, meritocracy, and benevolent leadership. Many African states find the Chinese model appealing in two aspects; establishing the greater influence of the state on the citizenry through the military and police, and for the ruling party's survival.

African states must be wary of China's emphasis on its party-army model, as it reaffirms the ideological relations between China and Africa, which date back to China's support for liberation movements on the continent. Although China and developmental authoritarian systems in Africa align ideologically, China is a capable state and an emerging superpower; thus, African states will need to ensure bilateral relations without exploitation or at least avoid China's debt trap diplomacy.

Democratic values are undermined within developmental authoritarianism; however, the state must fulfil its social contract duties if citizens succumb to that. These systems in Africa must establish themselves as capable states, ensuring solid institutions and a responsive government. Although they are less open and competitive than Western democracies, these

hybrid political systems must ensure prosperity for the livelihoods of their people. In addressing the unsustainability of development and economic growth, developmental authoritarian systems must diversify their economies, invest in emerging sectors, manufacturing, and move away from their dependency on the low-productivity agricultural sectors. Developmental authoritarianism does capacitate states with robust development policies; however, this political system is doomed to end in catastrophic tyranny without benevolent leadership and precisely planned succession.

Ethiopia presents positive economic indicators, but much is still flawed and needs to be addressed. Ironically, Ethiopia has strong ties with the United States government (a traditional Western democracy) through foreign direct investments, and although Ethiopia exhibits much repression, the United States mentions little about subverted democracy and human rights. Instead, the United States lauds Ethiopia for its state-led economic development. Ahmed, unlike his predecessor, exhibits low-intensity repression, silencing dissidents. Mainly, Ahmed's economic-led governance model aims to achieve economic growth and development, peace, and cooperation in the region and allows him to focus on his reform policies and increased international trade. His efforts led to the establishment of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). The World Bank (2019) highlights that the GTP increased infrastructure development through public investments and converted the country into a manufacturing centre.

The sustainability of Ethiopia's system, like many developmental authoritarian systems, is questionable. Ethiopia faces several developmental challenges, sustaining its positive economic growth and continued poverty reduction, requiring significant job creation and improved governance. The country also relies heavily on neighbouring states' ports to ensure international trade. If Ethiopia fails to foster peacebuilding and cooperation in the East African region, detrimental consequences will emerge. Ahmed's leadership within developmental authoritarianism achieves rapid economic growth and state development; prosperity is broad-based; however, low-intensity repression is quite evident. The sustainability of this system in Ethiopia is unlikely; although the system is seemingly supported by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, there are insufficient succession planning and volatile fluctuations of intensity repression with each Prime Minister.

In Rwanda's case, mining projects (particularly Coltan ore) provide positive economic prospects for the country. With his developmental authoritarian system, Kagame's leadership allows him to provide stability and speedily implement drastic policies, attracting foreign and private investment. Projects in the Western Province have an immense socioeconomic benefit, creating jobs, fostering economic growth, and establishing development zones that bolster business activity in the community. It is crucial to note that although Rwanda is a development-led authoritarian system, institutions such as the World Bank acknowledge its political system, seemingly supporting the notion of collective prosperity and poverty reduction. However, these international institutions and, at times, democratic states, do not address the issue of subverted democratic values and human rights violations under Kagame's



leadership, noting that the World Bank established eighteen projects, four regional operations worth US\$1.9 billion in Rwanda (World Bank, 2020). As Rwanda aims towards middle-income status by 2035, patronage from the World Bank in Rwanda increases the likelihood of Kagame's vision.

Rwanda has made great strides towards attracting private and foreign investment to achieve its 2035 middle-income status by providing fiscal incentives like preferential corporate tax rates, tax holidays, or exemption of capital gains tax, among others. Typical of these political systems, they intend to maintain support amidst neglected democratic principles. Moreover, Rwanda is an emerging technology hub within central and east Africa, and the pandemic fosters greater integration of technology for many Rwandans. Consequently, surveillance and monitoring will become more prominent. Like any developmental authoritarian system, funding and policies are a centralised agenda, as the Rwandan government calls for bolstering surveillance and contact tracing of infected persons in the country. These capabilities, however, will not disappear after these troubling times but instead continue being used to enforce despotism. Although Kagame's leadership within developmental authoritarianism achieves rapid economic growth and state development, prosperity is not broad-based, favouring bureaucratic elites, foreign and private investors. The sustainability of developmental authoritarianism in Rwanda is unlikely, as the system is solely driven by the autocrat, with insufficient succession planning.

In Uganda's case, Museveni's leadership defined the country with his military training and role during the Ugandan Bush War, making him a relentless autocrat and entrenched his existence in the history of Uganda. Notably, Museveni's rise to power through the gun results in his elongated presidency through the gun Kwesiga (2020), causing significant military involvement in the state and a high cost to Ugandans. Sadly, Ugandans encounter election violence, limited political rights, and constrained human liberties, among other social ills and foregone liberties. According to the International Crisis Group (2017), Uganda's security sector, especially the police, functions beyond preserving law and order as the presidential defence against opposition and dissidents. As such, increased violent crimes and murders occur concerning mobilising pro-Museveni voters while intimidating the opposition.

Over the three decades of Museveni's rule, women representation has become critical, as his cabinet increased women representation from 27% to 43% (Tripp, 2021). However, women representation in government invoked much debate regarding women's rights in a developmental authoritarian political system. Some Western democracies believe that increasing women representation in government is merely a ruse to ensure elongated state power, typical of developmental authoritarian systems. Although Uganda's efforts to empower women have resulted in some women representation in the legislature, this aids the prolonged autocratic rule and maintains the legitimacy of Museveni's grip on state power and ordinary Ugandans. Seemingly, African personhood ostensibly subdues citizens to accept Museveni's rule since it fosters women empowerment more than ever before in Uganda.

Furthermore, the International Crisis Group (2017) argues that Uganda's governance system is deteriorating, hindering infrastructure and agriculture, among others, that have increased demand amid a rapidly growing population. Ramifications include the delay of the start of oil production and stagnant foreign investment. Some government initiatives, masked as economic stimulus, come in the form of handouts to secure political support. Noticeably, supportive Western democracies and international financial institutions have failed to fully democratise Uganda, with some noting women representation as a reason for non-interventionist relations. In contrast, the government's response to the public health crisis is questionable, as reports suggest that billions went to irregular spending. Although much of Uganda's stagnant economic growth is due to the Covid-19 pandemic, low agricultural productivity negatively impacts the livelihoods of many Ugandans. Therefore, Uganda must solve environmental and governance challenges while broadening economic prosperity to achieve a successful macroeconomic recovery.

Conflict of interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on contributor

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