

**WEBINAR
REPORT ON
AFRICAN
ELECTIONS
IN 2024**

Introduction

The year 2024 was widely regarded as an “**elections year**,” with a record number of elections scheduled globally. Over 90 national elections took place across the world, with Africa hosting a significant share—around **25%** of these elections. In just over six months, the African continent witnessed elections in countries such as Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, Chad, and Rwanda. This surge in electoral activity provided a rich learning environment for understanding democratic processes, electoral integrity, and the challenges facing election management bodies. With more elections planned for the second half of the year, this webinar was organized to reflect on the experiences of the first half of 2024, sharing insights and lessons from elections already conducted in Senegal, Chad. By examining these elections, the webinar aimed to generate strategic recommendations for the remaining elections in Africa and beyond, ensuring that democracy is upheld and strengthened across the continent.

The webinar hosted by E-HORN and moderated by Ellen Dingani, Program Director for the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), included panelists the following Aisha Dabo (AfricTivistes)-Senegal, Ibrahim Faruk (YIAGA Africa)-Nigeria, Bonolo Makgale (Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria)-South Africa, and Anne Kathurima an elections expert from Kenya, each panelist covered their regional area where the organization has been directly involved or observed. The discussions revolved around the electoral experiences from elections held so far across the continent, with the goal of extracting lessons from both successes and challenges faced during the elections of 2024.

SENEGAL

In a significant democratic breakthrough, Senegal elected its youngest president, **Bassirou Diomaye Faye**, in 2024, marking a crucial shift toward youth representation in leadership across Africa. Faye's ascent to power is particularly noteworthy given the backdrop of political turmoil that gripped Senegal between 2021 and 2024. During this period, former President **Macky Sall's** attempt to secure an **unconstitutional third term** sparked widespread protests and violent crackdowns, raising alarm over the state of democracy in the nation.

Sall's efforts to extend his presidency not only fueled public dissent but also led to severe accusations of state capture. Critics argued that Sall's administration concentrated power within a small circle, undermining democratic institutions

and stifling opposition. The situation escalated to a political crisis, prompting civil society, religious leaders, trade unions, farmers, academics, and artists to unite in opposition against Sall's regime. This coalition played a pivotal role in mobilizing public sentiment and advocating for democratic principles.

On February 10, 2024, a watershed moment occurred when Sall announced **the cancellation of the elections** he had initially **postponed** to consolidate his rule. This decision came after intense pressure from civil society groups, which had acted as watchdogs throughout the crisis. Organizations like **AfricTivistes**, co-founded by **Aisha Dabo**, were instrumental in this movement. They emphasized the urgent need for legal reforms to amend Senegal's constitution and close the loopholes that enabled Sall's authoritarian maneuvering.

Lessons from Senegal's Democratic Transition

1. **Urgent Need for Legal Reforms:** The events leading up to the 2024 elections underscore the critical importance of amending Senegal's constitution to close the loopholes that allowed former President Macky Sall to attempt unconstitutional maneuvers. Legal reforms are essential to safeguard democratic principles and prevent future abuses of power.
2. **Importance of Civil Society:** The role of civil society in the democratic victory against Sall's regime highlights the significance of grassroots activism in promoting accountability and transparency in governance. Civil society organizations are vital in mobilizing citizens and holding leaders accountable.
3. **Youth Leadership and Resilience:** Senegal's experience demonstrates that even in nations traditionally dominated by older political elites, young leaders can rise to positions of power and effect meaningful change. The election of Bassirou Diomaye Faye signals a broader aspiration across Africa, where the voices and ambitions of youth are increasingly prioritized in political discourse.
4. **Potential for Democratic Renewal:** This remarkable transition in Senegal serves as a powerful reminder of the potential for democratic renewal across the continent. It illustrates how civic engagement can reshape the political landscape, allowing for the emergence of new leadership and innovative governance solutions.
5. **Transformative Impact of Civic Engagement:** The success of youth-led movements in Senegal emphasizes the transformative impact of civic

engagement in fostering a political environment conducive to youth leadership. This engagement is crucial for reshaping the future of governance in Africa, inspiring similar movements in other nations.

CHAD

The presidential elections in Chad on May 6, 2024, were marked by significant allegations of fraud and violence, reflecting the ongoing challenges to democratic governance in the country. Mahamat Déby, the incumbent transitional president, was declared the winner with 61.00% of the votes, while opposition leader Succès Masra garnered 18.54%. Following the announcement of provisional results, Masra and his supporters claimed the elections were rigged in Déby's favor, citing widespread intimidation and electoral misconduct. Protests erupted in response to the results, leading to violent clashes that resulted in at least ten deaths.

The backdrop to these elections is rooted in Chad's long history of **authoritarian** rule, predominantly under the Déby family **dynasty**. After the assassination of President Idriss Déby, who had ruled for 30 years, his son Mahamat Déby took power in 2021, solidifying the family's grip on power. This transition was characterized by a brutal crackdown on dissent, with security forces killing at least 300 protesters and arresting over 100 during demonstrations against the junta's rule.

The opposition in Chad has faced significant repression, exemplified by the assassination of key figures such as Yaya Djérou just weeks before the elections. In 2021, opposition leader Succès Masra was co-opted into the regime when appointed as Prime Minister of the junta. However, his subsequent candidacy in the presidential election highlighted the systemic barriers to fair electoral processes, as his protests against the election results underscored the difficulties opposition figures face in challenging the regime.

According to **Aisha Debo** this pattern is not unique to Chad; it reflects a broader trend across many Sahel countries, where juntas or dynasties have dominated the political landscape since independence. Citizens often support military coups, perceiving them as alternatives to failed democratic systems, despite the fact that these regimes frequently fail to uphold promises for short-term transitions. The 2024 elections in Chad illustrate the persistent cycles of

repression and authoritarianism that continue to hinder democratic development in the region.

Lessons from Chad's 2024 Presidential Elections

1. **The Need for Electoral Integrity:** The allegations of widespread fraud and misconduct during the elections highlight the critical need for transparent electoral processes. For democracy to thrive, it is essential to ensure that elections are free from manipulation, intimidation, and violence, fostering public trust in democratic institutions.
2. **Challenges Facing the Opposition:** The significant repression faced by opposition figures, including the assassination of key leaders, demonstrates the systemic barriers that hinder fair competition in electoral processes. Strengthening protections for political opposition is vital to promoting a healthy democratic landscape and enabling diverse voices in governance.
3. **Impact of Authoritarian Legacies:** Chad's elections are deeply rooted in its long history of authoritarian rule, exemplified by the Déby family dynasty. Understanding the historical context is crucial for addressing contemporary challenges to democracy, as entrenched power dynamics often resist change and perpetuate cycles of repression.
4. **Public Perception of Governance:** The tendency for citizens to support military coups as alternatives to ineffective civilian governments indicates a broader crisis of trust in political systems. This perception underscores the necessity for governments to engage with citizens and address their grievances, ensuring that democratic governance remains the preferred option.
5. **Importance of Civic Space:** The shrinking civic space in countries like Chad illustrates the urgent need for vibrant civil society engagement in governance. Promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation is essential to prevent military rule from becoming the default response to governance challenges. A robust civil society can act as a counterbalance to authoritarian tendencies and advocate for democratic principles.

MAURITANIA

The presidential elections in Mauritania were held on June 29, 2024, marking a significant political event in the West African nation. Incumbent President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani secured re-election for a second and final five-year term, increasing his vote share by four percentage points from the previous election. Ghazouani, a former military general, initially came to power in 2019 after winning a contested election that followed a decade-long rule by his predecessor, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. Ghazouani's leadership has been characterized by a focus on security, economic reform, and efforts to address national challenges such as unemployment and poverty.

Mauritania's electoral system, governed by Article 26 of the Constitution, employs a two-round system. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first round, a second round occurs two weeks later between the top two candidates. Candidates must be citizens by birth, aged between 40 and 75, and must possess their civil and political rights. The Constitution also mandates that the President be a Muslim and restricts the presidency to two consecutive terms. These regulations aim to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and ensure democratic governance.

The electoral campaign period ran from June 14 to June 27, 2024. Ghazouani's campaign was largely centered on security and stability, addressing concerns over terrorism and regional instability. However, his opponents accused his government of corruption and inefficiency, highlighting issues such as unemployment, poverty, and inadequate access to basic services like water and electricity. Observers from the African Union and the United States monitored the elections to ensure fairness and transparency.

The elections saw a total of seven candidates vying for the presidency, with notable figures including Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid and Hamadi Ould Sid'El Moctar Ould Mohamed Abdi. Despite calls for reform and an emphasis on governmental accountability, the elections were marked by discontent from opposition parties, particularly from Abeid, who announced plans to contest the results and hold protests in response to what he termed the "Ghazouani's Ceni" electoral commission's integrity. The political atmosphere was tense, culminating in protests that led to clashes with security forces in various cities.

In the aftermath of the election, the Constitutional Council officially confirmed Ghazouani's victory on July 4, 2024. However, the electoral commission reported no anomalies or complaints regarding the voting process. The ongoing political unrest, particularly in areas like Kaédi, where protests resulted in fatalities, raised concerns about the stability of Mauritania's political landscape and the government's response to dissent.

Lessons Learnt from Mauritania's 2024 elections

1. **Importance of Clear Communication:** Disputes over election results highlight the necessity for transparent communication from electoral bodies. The lack of clarity can lead to unrest and mistrust among the electorate.
2. **Need for Conflict Management Mechanisms:** The violent protests following the elections underscore the need for effective conflict management strategies to address public dissent and prevent escalation into violence.
3. **Strengthening Electoral Oversight:** Ensuring that electoral commissions are perceived as impartial and effective is critical. This perception can be bolstered by independent monitoring and transparent processes.
4. **Engagement with Civil Society:** Proactive engagement with civil society organizations can help address grievances and provide platforms for dialogue, thereby mitigating tensions during and after elections.
5. **Preparation for Unforeseen Events:** The authorities' response to protests, including internet shutdowns, suggests the need for a comprehensive crisis management plan that balances public safety with the rights of citizens to express dissent.

BURKINA FASO

In July 2024, Burkina Faso was scheduled to hold elections aimed at restoring a democratic civilian government. However, in September 2023, the military junta led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré declared that these elections were "not a priority" and indefinitely postponed them. This decision marked a significant setback for Burkina Faso's democratic aspirations, following a turbulent political landscape characterized by military coups and governance crises.

The path to the current junta's rule began in January 2022 when President Roch Kaboré was ousted by a coup led by Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba. Under Damiba's leadership, a transition timetable was negotiated with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that outlined a 24-month period leading to elections. However, in September 2022, Captain Traoré overthrew Damiba, establishing unilateral control by superseding the constitution with a charter that granted him sweeping powers. Despite initial agreements to adhere to the transition timetable, Traoré's refusal to proceed with the July 2024 elections raises concerns about his intention to cling to power indefinitely.

Burkina Faso's political history is fraught with military interventions, with the armed forces having held sway over the country for 51 of its 64 years of independence. This history is crucial to understanding the significance of the democratic opening between 2014 and 2022, which followed mass protests against the long-standing rule of Blaise Compaoré. Kaboré's subsequent election in 2015 represented a turning point, leading to reforms aimed at enhancing military professionalism and establishing a National Security Strategy. However, the junta's recent actions threaten to undermine these hard-fought democratic gains.

The junta's decision to postpone the 2024 elections is emblematic of Traoré's erratic rule, characterized by arbitrary governance and a lack of accountability. The military has employed forced conscription tactics, targeting journalists, political party members, and civil society activists, which has led to widespread human rights abuses. This includes the conscription of notable human rights defenders, like Daouda Diallo, indicating a crackdown on dissent that threatens the open media environment that had developed in Burkina Faso.

Resistance against the junta persists, with at least 15 civil society organizations denouncing the postponement of the elections. Despite restrictions on protests and public dissent, opposition parties and civil society groups continue to challenge the junta's authority. This ongoing resistance reflects a growing realization that the junta may have no intention of relinquishing power, transforming what was initially perceived as a transitional government into an indefinite military rule.

The deteriorating security situation exacerbates the complexity of Burkina Faso's political landscape. The escalation of violence attributed to militant Islamist groups has surged since the coups, leading to significant civilian casualties and the displacement of over 2.1 million people. The military junta's dissolution of regional security partnerships further complicates the already precarious security situation, undermining efforts to combat the insurgency effectively.

The postponement of the transition to a civilian government poses severe implications for national and regional security. Without a legitimate authority in place, Burkina Faso risks missing the opportunity to mobilize a cohesive response to the rising insurgency. A democratically elected government would have the potential to rally political and international support necessary to confront the insurgent threat, which has outstripped the capacity of Burkina Faso's armed forces. The junta's continued hold on power could also lead to

increased instability, with repercussions that extend to neighboring countries like Benin, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana.

As Burkina Faso navigates this tumultuous period, the international community and regional organizations like ECOWAS face the challenge of engaging with the junta while advocating for a return to democratic governance that prioritizes human rights, security, and stability in the region.

Lesson learnt from Burkina Faso's deferred elections

Impact of Military Rule: The indefinite postponement of elections underlines the risks of military governments undermining democratic processes and the importance of civilian governance in achieving stability.

MALI

Presidential elections in Mali were initially scheduled for February 27, 2022, but following a coup in 2021, the timeline has been significantly altered. After several delays, the elections were rescheduled for February 4, 2024. However, in September 2023, the ruling junta announced that the elections would be "**slightly postponed for technical reasons**," further extending the already uncertain political timeline in the country.

The backdrop to these elections is a series of military coups that have profoundly destabilized Mali's political landscape. The latest coup occurred on May 24, 2021, when the Malian Army, led by Vice President Assimi Goïta, seized power by capturing President Bah N'daw, Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, and Minister of Defence Souleymane Doucouré. This event marked Mali's third coup d'état in just a decade, following similar military takeovers in 2012 and 2020. Each of these coups has been driven by discontent over the government's inability to effectively address the growing security challenges posed by extremist groups and to manage national governance.

Following the 2021 coup, the military junta promised to adhere to the election schedule set by the previous government, which included elections by February 2022. However, both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union responded to the coup by suspending Mali from their organizations, while also issuing warnings about potential sanctions should the military government fail to follow through on its electoral promises.

In December 2021, a national conference was convened to discuss the timeline for elections. During this conference, it was proposed that the elections initially planned for February 2022 be delayed for a period ranging from six months to five years, citing ongoing security issues. This plan faced significant backlash from a coalition of political parties in Mali, which rejected the junta's proposed slow transition to democratic rule. The military's roadmap suggested that constitutional referendums and legislative elections would not take place until 2023 and 2025, respectively, with the presidential election postponed until 2026.

ECOWAS responded firmly to the junta's plans, asserting that the proposed timeline was unacceptable and would effectively "take the Malian people hostage" under military rule. As a consequence, ECOWAS implemented sanctions, including border closures and the freezing of Malian state assets in regional financial institutions, to pressure the junta into adhering to a more acceptable electoral timeline.

The junta eventually committed to holding elections by February 2024 during an ECOWAS summit in July 2022, in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. However, this commitment was further complicated in September 2023 when the junta announced an indefinite postponement of the elections, citing "technical reasons" related to the adoption of a new constitution and a dispute with Idemia, a French company responsible for conducting a national census.

This ongoing instability underscores the challenges Mali faces in transitioning to a stable and democratic government. The military's repeated delays and the implications of unresolved security issues raise concerns not only about the future of governance in Mali but also about the broader stability of the West African region.

RWANDA

In the 2024 Rwandan general elections held on 15 July, President Paul Kagame secured a fourth term with an overwhelming 99.18% of the votes, reflecting a voter turnout of 98.20%. This election was marked by significant public engagement and a communal celebration of democracy, particularly poignant given Rwanda's tragic history, including the 1994 genocide.

The Rwandan community, being relatively small, encouraged strong accountability among voters. Traditional leaders at polling stations took on the responsibility of ensuring community members participated in the elections, while neighbors motivated each other to cast their votes. Polling stations were festively decorated, and the use of a calabash—a traditional symbol—welcomed voters, creating a vibrant electoral atmosphere.

On the final day of campaigning, Kagame delivered his closing remarks to a full house, with many citizens dedicating their day to hear him speak. The Electoral Management Body increased voter participation by allowing individuals to vote even if they were not on the initial voter register, provided they presented their Rwandan ID. This policy significantly boosted voter turnout.

Additionally, Rwandans living abroad were able to participate in the election by voting at 70 embassies and consulates worldwide a day prior to the election. The church also played a crucial role in monitoring the elections, deploying observers in their congregations and local communities, which facilitated civil society organizations (CSOs) in conducting civic education and outreach.

The elections were characterized by the presence of only three candidates: Kagame of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), Frank Habineza from the Democratic Green Party, and Philippe Mpayimana, an independent. While the electoral process was deemed free and fair by some, it was also criticized for the barring of serious opposition candidates, with reports of ballot stuffing, political intimidation, and the suppression of dissenting voices.

Kagame's rule has been described as authoritarian, with concerns raised by organizations such as Freedom House and Human Rights Watch regarding political repression and a lack of genuine competition. Nevertheless, the Rwandan constitution allows for a seven-term limit, which theoretically reflects a commitment to democratic governance. Overall, the 2024 elections

underscored both the complexities of Rwanda's political landscape and the vibrant community engagement surrounding the electoral process.

Lesson learnt during the 2024 Rwanda election

1. **Community Engagement is Crucial:** The strong emphasis on community participation demonstrated that local engagement can significantly boost voter turnout. Traditional leaders and neighbors played pivotal roles in encouraging electoral participation, showcasing how grassroots involvement can strengthen democratic processes.
2. **Civic Education Matters:** The deployment of church observers and the involvement of civil society organizations in civic education highlighted the importance of informing citizens about their voting rights and responsibilities. Effective voter education can empower citizens and enhance the legitimacy of the electoral process.
3. **Inclusivity in Electoral Processes:** Allowing individuals to vote even if they were not on the initial voter register increased participation and underscored the importance of inclusivity in elections. Policies that facilitate broader access to voting can lead to higher turnout and a more representative electorate.
4. **Addressing Electoral Integrity Concerns:** While the elections showcased a high turnout and celebratory spirit, criticisms regarding the fairness of the electoral process highlight the need for ongoing reforms to ensure genuine competition. Upholding democratic principles requires transparency, accountability, and a commitment to addressing political repression and opposition suppression.

COMOROS

The recent elections in Comoros, held earlier this year, garnered significant attention due to the incumbent president's role as the Chair of the African Union. This context added a notable layer of interest to the electoral process. A pivotal moment occurred during a 2019 referendum, which resulted in a constitutional change that eliminated the requirement for the presidency to rotate among the three islands of Comoros. Previously, this rotation was designed to ensure representation and inclusivity among the islands. The removal of this provision marked a significant shift in the political landscape, raising questions about governance, representation, and the future of democracy in the archipelago.

From these elections, several lessons emerged. First, the impact of constitutional reforms on political stability became evident. The removal of the presidential rotation system in the 2019 referendum highlighted the need for balancing governance structures to ensure political representation and inclusivity among

the islands. Future elections should engage citizens in discussions about governance to foster greater trust and stability.

Second, the vital role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and independent media in monitoring the electoral process and promoting transparency was reinforced. Their involvement in advocating for fair practices and informing the electorate about their rights is essential for safeguarding democratic processes. Strengthening these entities can enhance accountability in the political sphere.

Third, the elections underscored the importance of civic education and voter engagement. There was a noticeable need for enhanced civic education to empower voters and encourage participation in the electoral process. Ensuring that citizens are well-informed about the implications of constitutional changes and the importance of their votes is vital for a healthy democracy. Outreach programs targeting youth and marginalized communities can help increase voter turnout and engagement.

Finally, the presence of international observers during the elections highlighted the significance of external oversight in promoting electoral integrity. Continued international support, both in terms of technical assistance and monitoring, is essential for strengthening the electoral framework. Such collaboration can help foster confidence in the electoral process and encourage adherence to democratic norms.

SOUTH AFRICA

One of the key outcomes of the elections was the decline of the African National Congress (ANC). While the ANC remained the largest party, it lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since 1994, reflecting a significant decrease in public support. This decline was particularly underscored by the ANC's poor performance in the 2021 municipal elections and was anticipated by pre-election polls that suggested a hung parliament.

Additionally, the newly formed left-wing populist party Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), led by former president Jacob Zuma, made a notable entry into the political scene, finishing in third place. The emergence of MK highlights the changing political sentiment among voters and raises questions about the ANC's ability to maintain its historic dominance. Following the elections, a coalition was formed, resulting in a national unity government comprising the ANC, the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and the Patriotic Alliance (PA),

with Cyril Ramaphosa re-elected as President. This formation underscores a growing trend toward coalition governance in South Africa, reflecting the diverse political landscape and the need for collaboration among various parties to address the country's pressing challenges.

Lessons from South Africa's 2024 elections

1. **Shifting Political Landscape:** The decline of the ANC highlights the necessity for traditional parties to adapt their strategies and messaging to maintain relevance in changing political dynamics.
2. **Emergence of New Political Forces:** The formation of new parties, such as Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), demonstrates that political landscapes can change rapidly in response to voter discontent, emphasizing the importance of being responsive to public sentiment.
3. **Value of Coalition Governance:** The establishment of a national unity government underscores the significance of collaboration among diverse political entities to effectively address complex governance issues in a pluralistic society.
4. **Need for Voter Engagement:** The decline in voter turnout to 58% reflects growing apathy among the electorate, indicating a pressing need for political parties to actively engage citizens and foster trust to encourage higher participation in future elections.

PLENARY

1. Effective Handling of Electoral Dispute Mechanisms

Question: What are the most effective ways to handle electoral dispute mechanisms?

Response: Strong institutions and independent election management bodies are critical for reducing electoral disputes. In Senegal, the Constitutional Court's robust independence allowed it to make clear rulings, free from government influence. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, collaboration among the ruling party, opposition, and international partners helped resolve post-election disputes effectively. Ensuring that election management bodies operate independently and receive adequate funding without political interference is essential for fostering trust and reducing disputes.

2. Restoring Civilian Rule in Mali and Burkina Faso

Question: What are the prospects for restoring civilian rule and holding credible elections in Mali and Burkina Faso following recent coup d'états?

Response: The situation in Mali and Burkina Faso poses significant challenges, as recent unconstitutional changes have led to regional instability. The President of Nigeria, as chair of ECOWAS, faces the difficult task of re-integrating these nations into the regional framework. Sanctions imposed by ECOWAS have prompted a breakaway alliance among Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which complicates the pathway to restoring democratic governance. Soft diplomacy and negotiations will be crucial for addressing the terms of their return to ECOWAS and adhering to agreed timelines.

3. The Role of Political Parties vs. Active Citizenry

Question: Does Africa need political parties as a vehicle for elective politics, or is an active citizenry more important?

Response: A participatory democracy requires both political parties and an engaged citizenry. The failures of governance that have led to military coups often stem from a lack of active citizen involvement. Recent reforms in various African countries have allowed independent candidates to participate in elections, reflecting a shift towards greater citizen representation. Encouraging an active citizenry is vital for political accountability and democratic resilience.

4. Civil Society's Role in Electoral Reform in Senegal

Question: Following the recent elections in Senegal, how is civil society leveraging their mobilization to advocate for systemic changes?

Response: Civil society in Senegal plays a crucial role in ensuring that electoral reforms are people-centered and uphold human rights. Their participation in judicial reform dialogues exemplifies their influence. While Senegal's electoral system has minor adjustments, civil society organizations are focused on advocating for a truly independent electoral commission, as the current electoral directory is overseen by the Ministry of Interior, which raises concerns about impartiality.

5. Impact of Digital Democracy on Civil Society

Question: Will the rise of digital democracy diminish the influence of civil society in the electoral process?

Response: The surge in digital engagement among previously apathetic electorates indicates a shift toward greater involvement in politics. For instance, youth-led fundraising initiatives in Kenya illustrate how civil society can control narratives and mobilize support independently. While digital platforms enhance engagement, civil society's role remains vital in shaping discourse and ensuring that political processes are inclusive and representative.

6. Lessons from South Africa for Coalition Governance

Question: What lessons can African nations learn from South Africa's experience with coalition governance?

Response: South Africa's history of coalition governance highlights the challenges and potential benefits of such arrangements. While coalitions can lead to instability, they also offer opportunities for inclusive governance. Successful coalition management requires political expediency and effective communication among parties. Other nations can draw from South Africa's experiences to navigate their coalition dynamics, focusing on building trust and accountability among diverse stakeholders.

7. Embracing Military Leadership in Burkina Faso

Question: Is the desire for democratic processes waning in Burkina Faso, where military leadership is favored?

Response: In Burkina Faso, public sentiment appears to favor military leadership due to perceived failures of democracy to deliver economic benefits. This trend raises concerns about the erosion of democratic values. Civil society organizations must enhance civic education to help citizens understand the importance of democracy and the rights it affords them. Promoting democratic ideals is essential for fostering long-term stability and governance.

8. Elections in Disputed Boundary Regions

Question: How will nations with disputed boundaries, like Mauritania and Western Sahara, navigate elections this year?

Response: Mauritania's electoral landscape is complicated by issues of identity and ethnicity, as historical grievances related to race and nationality persist. The elections are intense and fraught with challenges, particularly concerning the inclusion of marginalized groups. Addressing these issues is vital for establishing a fair electoral process and ensuring that all citizens feel represented.

9. Media Freedom During Elections in Rwanda

Question: How free was the media during the recent elections in Rwanda?

Response: In Rwanda, media freedom is significantly restricted, with the national broadcaster often acting as a government mouthpiece. Journalists self-censor to avoid repercussions, limiting their ability to report on electoral realities. This situation contrasts sharply with countries like Kenya, where media suppression also occurs, but with a different dynamic of public dissent.

10. Collaboration Between Civil Society and Electoral Commissions

Question: How effective is the collaboration between civil society and the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in ensuring free and fair elections?

Response: Collaboration between civil society organizations and the NEC is crucial for promoting voter education and trust in the electoral process. While the NEC allocates a minimal budget for voter education, civil society fills this gap through outreach and awareness campaigns. Their presence and resources enable them to build community trust and promote credible elections, especially in contexts where new technologies are introduced.

11. **Balancing Public Order and Citizen Rights in West Africa**

Question: How do we maintain public order while protecting citizens' rights to express political frustrations in West Africa?

Response: In West Africa, particularly in countries facing insecurity, balancing public order and individual rights poses a significant challenge. Governments must ensure that security forces are trained to manage protests without infringing on citizens' rights. Constructive dialogue between law enforcement and civil society organizations is essential to establish guidelines that uphold freedoms while promoting public safety.

Closing remarks

In the closing remarks, speakers encouraged civil society organizations and youth groups to remain steadfast in their efforts despite the challenges they face in their environments. They emphasized the importance of resilience and the need to continue advocating for democracy, which holds the promise of improving living standards and delivering tangible benefits to citizens. The importance of active participation in the electoral process was highlighted as a crucial first step.

There was a strong call for organizing, advocating, and holding leaders accountable to ensure that democracy functions effectively. Additionally, the need to strengthen institutions that protect democracy, promote transparency, and ensure accountability was emphasized. Innovative approaches to building strong movements that extend beyond traditional academic and political spaces were also deemed essential for fostering democracy.

These remarks collectively reinforced a commitment to democratic engagement and underscored the vital role of youth and civil society in shaping a better future for the region.