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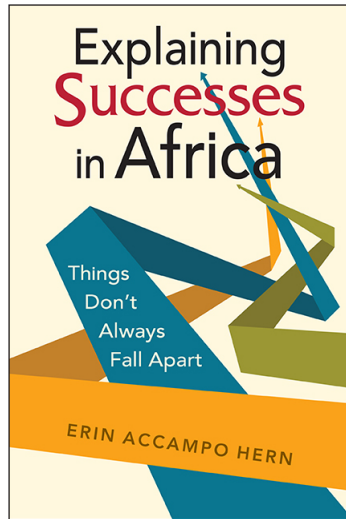
Explaining  
Successes  
in Africa:  
Things Don't  
Always Fall Apart

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# 1

## Explaining Successes in Africa: Why and How

**When I teach undergraduate African politics, I often begin the course by asking my students to write the first thing that comes to mind when they think about Africa. Most students provide terms that have a negative connotation: poverty, famine, war, colonialism. This is not surprising. The media generally portray Africa as an undifferentiated space where bad things happen. African countries typically make the news because something terrible has occurred. Ebola in Sierra Leone, famine and war in Ethiopia, child soldiers in Uganda, kidnappings in Nigeria—these are the stories deemed newsworthy. More than 120 years after Joseph Conrad popularized the notion of Africa as a “dark continent,” many people still think of it that way.**

Academic courses and research do not always offer the best antidote to these media portrayals. In the field of comparative politics, African countries often appear as case studies on corruption, failed economic policy, political instability, or ethnic violence. Countries that do perform well in certain areas are often described as “miracles” or “darlings,” highlighting their performance as the exception rather than the rule (e.g., Bratton 1998; Brautigam 1999; Jerven 2010). There are two problems with this characterization. First, presenting these success stories as outliers suggests that they are so exceptional that other countries cannot learn from their experiences. Second, the label “miracle” creates an unrealistic impression that the country is problem-free. The “exceptional” label then often provokes a rush to find examples of failure to prove that the title is undeserved (see Kasenally 2011; Taylor 2006). While these academic analyses are rooted in fact, their result is to focus on ongoing challenges rather than successes. Thus, the general tenor of work on Africa, to borrow Chinua Achebe’s (1994) characterization, is that “things fall apart.”<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to find things that are going poorly on the African continent, just as it is easy to find things are going poorly elsewhere. However, in the case of Africa, the narrative presented to the public is almost exclusively negative. This narrative belies the dramatic continent-wide progress across multiple fronts over the past three decades. Sometimes things do fall apart—but not always. Since 1990, poverty rates have decreased, driven partly by rapid economic growth.<sup>2</sup> The average quality of governance across the continent has improved, with more countries adopting democratic elections and protecting civil liberties.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of women elected to national legislatures has more than doubled.<sup>4</sup> Rates of malaria and other diseases have plummeted.<sup>5</sup> While the continent will face major challenges related to climate change, rapid technological innovation offers hope.

My goal in highlighting success stories is not to sweep ongoing challenges under the rug. It is critically important to continue to address the economic, social, and political challenges that people living in African countries face—just as it is important to highlight those same issues on other continents. This book is an optimistic complement to the singular attention to places where things fall apart; it is an invitation to focus on countries where things are going well so that other countries might learn from their experiences.

With that in mind, I designed this book around three goals. The first is to present success stories from African countries that have performed very well in certain areas, described subsequently, and inject some optimism into the narrative about Africa. My second goal is to highlight Africa's diversity and showcase African countries that receive less attention. Much of the social science research published about Africa focuses on a handful of countries. Research in the field of economics, for example, is mostly confined to just five countries: Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, and Malawi (Porteous 2022). This book includes case studies of eighteen countries in sub-Saharan Africa, many of which (like Equatorial Guinea and Gabon) are rarely featured in academic work. My third goal is to apply the logic, methods, and theories of comparative politics to African countries. Many dominant theories within this subdiscipline of political science are derived from the experience of European and North American countries, while African countries are underrepresented. Examining these theories through an African lens enables a deeper understanding of how the world works and illuminates which political theories may have universal traction and which are regionally specific.

### **Scope of This Book**

This book includes five substantive chapters, each concentrated on an outcome of interest in comparative politics: economic development, governance, gender equality, public health, and climate resilience. This list is by no means an exhaustive accounting of the topics that are important in comparative politics. Rather, as explained subsequently, they are topics that residents of African countries identify as most important to them. Each chapter is dedicated to understanding variation in the outcome it considers. Some countries do well, while others fare poorly. The goal of each chapter is to try to understand what the best-performing countries did to achieve their success.

To approach this question—“What explains success?”—each chapter presents dominant theories in comparative politics that might offer some insight. While each chapter presents a different set of theories, they all fall into familiar theoretical families. For example, some theories address institutions, such as the form of government, while others focus on agency, the role that individuals might play in achieving the outcome. Each theory corresponds to a testable hypothesis, and each chapter evaluates these hypotheses to determine the most plausible explanation for success. The list of theories and hypotheses is certainly not exhaustive, but space does not allow the inclusion of all possibilities. Instead, each chapter applies theories that are dominant and likely to hold some explanatory value.

The chapters evaluate these hypotheses through comparative case analysis, as detailed in the next section. Each chapter addresses a single topic and explores four cases. The main cases are two countries that have achieved a high level of success, while two shadow cases present details from countries that have not performed as well. The chapters use these cases to evaluate whether any of the hypotheses hold for all four cases: Does the theory provide a plausible explanation for the two successful countries, while also explaining what was lacking in the two less successful countries? Such case comparison is good for ruling out the theories that do not match the details of the cases. The remaining theories are plausible explanations for success.

The cases are drawn from sub-Saharan Africa, excluding the five countries of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt). Why exclude North Africa? These countries are often grouped with the Middle East because of their shared history, geographical linkages, and cultural exchange. Ultimately, the dividing lines between sub-Saharan and North Africa are somewhat arbitrary, particularly when it comes to categorizing countries of the Sahel, like Chad and Sudan: the Sahara Desert is not the barrier some imagine it to be (Lydon 2005). While this distinction

between Africa north and south of the Sahara has been characterized as arbitrary, racist, and Eurocentric, it is also very old and has influenced how countries experienced trade, colonialism, state formation, and integration into the international arena after World War II (Lydon 2015). I focus on sub-Saharan Africa not to reinforce this constructed distinction but out of recognition that it has political consequences that shaped these countries' trajectories. These countries share many circumstances, while also exhibiting a great deal of diversity (Englebert and Dunn 2019, 13).

The information for these case studies comes from scholarly publications, government documents, newspaper articles, reports from non-governmental organizations, and publicly available data from sources like the Afrobarometer, the World Bank, the Varieties of Democracy Project, and Interparliamentary Union. Each of these data sources is described in the appendix. The cases are a synthetic analysis and are not based on original data collection; their conclusions are therefore limited by the availability and comprehensiveness of existing work. The analytic leverage behind the arguments thus relies on the logic of the comparative method.

### **The Comparative Method**

In political science, we use theories (broad conceptual explanations) to generate hypotheses (testable propositions that, if true, provide support for the broad theory). In comparative politics, a subdiscipline of political science, researchers often employ the comparative method to test hypotheses and evaluate the plausibility of theories. Derived from John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (2020), the comparative method is a way of selecting and comparing cases in research so that one can be as confident as possible in the conclusions one draws. In any kind of research, if you evaluate theories within a single case, there is no way of knowing which of the factors under investigation contributed to the outcome. For the sake of simplicity, consider the example of training a dog. Let's say you want to know what enables a dog to be trained quickly and effectively. You theorize that three things matter: the dog's age, the dog's breed, and the experience of the trainer. You hypothesize that dogs are trained most quickly when they are under nine months old, they are a hunting breed (like hounds and retrievers), and they have a trainer with at least five years of experience. You get a golden retriever puppy and enroll her at four months old in a class with a trainer who boasts ten years of experience. Your clever puppy is fully trained in six weeks. Based on this single experience (a single case), can you conclude which of your theories was correct?

No, you can't. The problem, of course, is that since your puppy had all three factors—the right age, the right kind of breed, and an experienced trainer—there is no way of knowing whether one, two, or all three of those factors mattered. To figure out which of your theories offers the best explanation in general, you need to compare. For example, say you found another puppy from the same litter and enrolled her with the same trainer when she was eighteen months old. That puppy does poorly in the class. Based on this comparison, you could conclude that age is the important factor: the younger puppy of the same breed with the same trainer did much better than the older dog. You still wouldn't be sure, however, whether breed and the experience of the trainer matter. Are they totally irrelevant? Or just less important than age? You would need to complete additional comparisons to find out.

Of course, this story about puppy training is overly simplistic. What if different combinations of characteristics matter? What if hunting dogs like golden retrievers are best trained when young, but hyperenergetic breeds like chihuahuas are best trained when they are a little older and calmer? What if the experience of the trainer matters more with older, stubborn dogs than it does with docile puppies? To figure these nuances out, you would need to do many comparisons.

The goal of comparison is to evaluate which hypotheses find support across the most cases, thereby offering evidence supporting the theory. The more structured comparisons a researcher can complete, the more convincing are the findings. However, the real world is messy. Each case has unique features, and there are always outliers that do not behave as expected. With cleverly structured comparisons, however, a researcher can use evidence to determine which theory has the most real-world support. In this book, I use two ways to structure comparisons: most-different case analysis and most-similar case analysis.

### *Most-Different Case Analysis*

Most-different case analysis entails selecting two or more cases that are as different as possible but have the same outcome. What they have in common possibly explains the outcome. Returning to the puppy training example: to apply this method, you would find two dogs that seem to be very different but were both successfully trained. Then, you would try to figure out what they have in common that can explain their shared success. Your theories help you to figure out what features to focus on. For this example, let's say you selected an English pointer that was trained at six months by an inexperienced trainer and a Maltese that was trained at five months by an experienced trainer. These two dogs are very different, but they

**Table 1.1 Example of Most-Different Case Analysis**

Theory	Dog 1: English Pointer (Succeeded)	Dog 2: Maltese (Succeeded)	Conclusion
Breed	Hunting dog	Nonhunting dog	<i>Theory unsupported:</i> being a hunting dog is not necessary for successful training.
Trainer experience	Inexperienced	Experienced	<i>Theory unsupported:</i> trainer experience does not determine successful training.
Age	Less than nine months	Less than nine months	<i>Supports theory:</i> young age may contribute to successful training.

were both successfully trained. Comparison across each relevant characteristic can illuminate which theory best explains their success. In this case, the two dogs are different breeds—the pointer is a hunting dog, but the Maltese is not, so breed cannot explain their training success. The pointer had an inexperienced trainer while the Maltese had an experienced one, so trainer experience cannot explain their shared success. These two hypotheses are unsupported, so the theories are unsubstantiated. The only hypothesis with support was training at a young age, so this is the only theory with supporting evidence. This logic is outlined in Table 1.1.

### *Most-Similar Case Analysis*

Most-similar case analysis rests on the inverse of the logic of most-different analysis. Using this approach, you would select two or more cases that are as similar as possible but have different outcomes. Whatever differs between the two cases possibly explains why one succeeded while the other did not. To apply this method, you would find two dogs that were very similar but had different training outcomes. Then, you would use the theories to generate testable hypotheses to determine what differed between the two dogs that might explain why one was easier to train than the other. The initial example of selecting two dogs from the same litter and sending them to the same trainer is a most-similar case approach. In this case, the dogs are the same breed (and are even siblings) and have the same training experience. Therefore, those hypotheses are unsupported—these theories cannot explain why one dog trained more easily than the other. The only difference between the two dogs was



**Table 1.2 Example of Most-Similar Case Analysis**

Theory	Dog 1: Golden Retriever (Succeeded)	Dog 2: Golden Retriever (Failed)	Conclusion
Breed	Hunting dog	Hunting dog	<i>Theory unsupported:</i> being a hunting dog does not guarantee successful training.
Trainer experience	Experienced	Experienced	<i>Theory unsupported:</i> trainer experience does not guarantee successful training.
Age	Less than nine months	More than nine months	<i>Supports theory:</i> young age may contribute to successful training.

that one was trained at a much older age than the other. That hypothesis finds support and is the theory that we cannot rule out—it is a plausible difference that explains the younger dog’s training success. This example is summarized in Table 1.2.

These are simple examples, and there are many other things that might be theoretically important for explaining a dog’s training success. When applying any version of the comparative method during research, it is important to consider as many theories as are plausible. Otherwise, you might unintentionally omit the most important factor, such as the owner’s commitment to training.

Additionally, pay attention to the language used here and in the conclusion columns of the tables. The comparative method allows a researcher to evaluate hypotheses to determine whether theories have support. However, it does not allow a researcher to claim that any theory is confirmed. The distinction between supporting and confirming a theory is important. Using the comparative method in this way allows the researcher to narrow down which theories remain plausible explanations of the cases. But additional methods—which I do not deploy in this book—are necessary to provide more evidence that a theory is definitively correct or that one thing causes another. There is always the possibility that something omitted from the analysis is the true cause of the outcome. Social sciences are a process, and each study or analysis builds evidence that can support or undermine theories, while new information makes researchers reconsider old findings.

*The Comparative Method in This Book*

In each chapter in this book, I employ a two-step comparison to evaluate hypotheses and determine which theories most plausibly explain the outcome on which the chapter focuses. First, a most-different case analysis features two African countries that have had success in a particular area. This most-different analysis is the main case comparison of the chapter. It serves to determine what these very different countries have in common that might explain why they were both able to achieve success. However, in a most-different case comparison, there is always the risk that something held in common by the two successful countries also occurs in countries that were less successful. For example, two countries that achieved economic success may have both implemented structural adjustment as prescribed by the International Monetary Fund. One might thus conclude that structural adjustment contributed to these countries' success. However, if other countries experienced massive economic declines after structural adjustment, it cannot be the cause of success. It may even be that the two success stories achieved economic growth despite structural adjustment.

To address that issue, I pair each most-different case analysis with a most-similar case analysis. The most-different case analysis tests hypotheses and finds support for one or a few theories. These factors may have contributed to these countries' shared success. It is important to ensure that those factors do not also appear in countries that did poorly, in which case the theory would be undermined. An extension of the dog training example illustrates this idea.

Let's say you repeat the pointer/Maltese most-different comparison, but this time you also want to consider whether the owner's commitment to the training process is important. You find that, in addition to being close in age, both the pointer and the Maltese had owners who were committed to the training process. As Figure 1.1 summarizes, this most-different comparison allows you to conclude that to explain training success, the theories about breed and trainer experience have no support, but the theories about the dog's age and the owner's commitment to the process do have support. However, it is possible that other dogs train poorly even at young ages or with committed owners. To check, you complete a set of most-similar analyses: one with another puppy from the pointer's litter that used the same trainer, and another with a puppy from the Maltese's litter that used the same trainer. In this case, the second pointer and the second Maltese both struggled with training. You find out that they both trained when they were young, but they both had owners who did not keep up with the training process. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, by adding this second set of comparisons, you realize that the age of the

puppy is not as important as you had thought. Some young puppies still struggle with their training. Instead, owner commitment is the only theory that finds support across all four cases.

Each chapter in this book completes a two-step comparison. First, a most-different case analysis examines two very different countries that were both successful in the given area. The goal of the first analysis is to determine which theories find support to explain their joint success. Next, each of those countries is matched with a most-similar country that was less successful. The goal of this second step of analysis is to see whether any of the theories that found support in the first stage also find support in the second stage. This approach cannot prove a theory correct, but it can determine which theories lack support and which remain plausible. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 provide an example of this two-stage analysis.

### *Selecting Cases: Theory vs. Practice*

In practice, selecting appropriate most-similar and most-different cases can be challenging. Sometimes, in the pool of countries available for comparison, few countries are obviously “most similar” or “most different.” In this book, in each chapter I identify a pool of relevant countries (based on performance on each indicator) and then select countries that are as different or as similar as possible given the pool. When the available country pairings are less helpful for eliminating theories, more case analysis is required.

Each chapter follows the same decision rules for selecting countries. First, I identify the pool of countries that are most successful. For some topics, a clear group of countries stands out relative to the rest of the continent. For others, performance is distributed more evenly, in which case I

**Table 1.3 Example of Stage One Most-Different Comparison**

Theory	Dog 1: English Pointer (Succeeded)	Dog 2: Maltese (Succeeded)	Conclusion
Breed	Hunting dog	Nonhunting dog	Theory unsupported
Trainer experience	Inexperienced	Experienced	Theory unsupported
Age	Less than nine months	Less than nine months	Supports theory
Owner commitment	Yes	Yes	Supports theory

**Table 1.4 Example of Stage Two Most-Similar Comparisons**

<i>Most Similar Pointers</i>			
Theory	Successful Pointer	Failed Pointer	Conclusion
Breed	Hunting dog	Hunting dog	Theory unsupported
Trainer experience	Inexperienced	Inexperienced	Theory unsupported
Age	Less than nine months	Less than nine months	Theory unsupported
Owner commitment	Yes	No	Supports theory
<i>Most Similar Maltese</i>			
Theory	Successful Maltese	Failed Maltese	Conclusion
Breed	Nonhunting dog	Nonhunting dog	Theory unsupported
Trainer experience	Experienced	Experienced	Theory unsupported
Age	Less than nine months	Less than nine months	Theory unsupported
Owner commitment	Yes	No	Supports theory

consider the top ten. Within that group, I eliminate countries that already appear in other chapters and then select countries that are as different from each other as possible based on region, colonial history, ethnodemographic characteristics, and political institutions. Sometimes there is more than one pairing that could be considered most different within the pool. In those cases, my selection is based on the goal of including countries across a broad geographic spread and highlighting those that appear less often in the academic literature on Africa.

Next, I select two cases that are most similar (or as similar as possible) to the cases in the most-different country pair. To do so, I identify a pool of regional neighbors (or other islands, for the island countries) with similar colonial histories, ethnodemographic characteristics, and political institutions. From that pool of most-similar countries, I select the one that has the poorest performance in order to accentuate the difference in outcome between it and the more successful comparison country. In some cases, all regional neighbors perform similarly, requiring me to relax that criterion and look more widely to find a state that has poor performance but is as

similar as possible to its comparison state. The decision criteria for each chapter are detailed in the appendix.

### *Limitations of the Comparative Method*

While the comparative method is effective at highlighting which theories have support across multiple countries, it also has shortcomings. First, it only enables researchers to test the theories they think of (or deem most important). There is no such thing as a comprehensive case analysis—there will always be factors a researcher failed to consider, which may turn out to be important for explaining an outcome. In this book, each chapter presents theories that are prevalent in the literature, but I do not claim to include every theory that exists to explain each outcome. Continuing to develop and test new theories (and retest old ones) is an essential part of the ongoing project of social science.

Next, the comparative method as employed in this book is not adept at identifying the way different factors may interact with each other. Other social science methodologies (for example, statistical analysis with interaction terms, or case analysis employing Boolean algebra) have tools that can assess complex interactions, determining whether a certain factor is necessary or sufficient for an outcome, or whether a factor is more likely to lead to an outcome when other conditions are in place. Qualitative analysis of the comparative cases can suggest the way different factors may interact with each other, but the methods employed here do not systematically test interactions.

Similarly, as noted previously, the comparative method as employed here can provide evidence that supports or undermines a theory, but it cannot provide definitive proof that a factor causes an outcome. Rather, it can provide evidence that a factor tends to be present when an outcome occurs (correlation). Again, other methods in social sciences (e.g., experiments and process tracing) are more adept at identifying causal relationships between variables.

Finally, a note on measurement: In each chapter, determining how well each country performs requires making decisions about how to measure the outcomes and other variables involved. Because this book is a synthetic analysis, I rely on datasets compiled by experts (detailed in the appendix) that produce indicators. These indicators are useful because they allow comparison across countries. However, scholars have reasonable disagreements about the best way things should be measured. While cross-country datasets are useful for comparison, they do not replace the thick, contextualized information that comes from in-country study. In this book, I am transparent about the measures I use, understanding that

other scholars may make different decisions about the best way to measure concepts.

To say that a method is limited, however, does not make it useless. All methods are limited, and social science advances most fruitfully when researchers approach questions from different angles, applying different theories, with different methods and measurements. Each well-designed study improves our collective knowledge. The comparative method enables researchers to ask big, important questions, take on broad comparisons, and seek generalizations—even if the conclusions are necessarily tentative.

### **Theories in Comparative Politics**

As described previously, the comparative method enables researchers to examine whether theories that explain a certain outcome find support across multiple cases. In each of the chapters that follow, I present theories grouped into categories. These categories are an organizational tool that indicate what type of factor the theory highlights as important in leading to an outcome. However, while theories within each category focus on a different type of explanation, they are not mutually exclusive (more than one type can be true for explaining an outcome). The boundaries between these categories are blurry, and I present them primarily as an organizational tool. Each chapter includes theories from several of the following categories.

Agency-based theories are those that focus on the power of individuals, usually leaders or key decisionmakers. These theories indicate that the decisions and will of these individuals have a disproportionate impact on outcomes. Theories that focus on civil society highlight the importance of people acting in a coordinated manner through groups to make an impact on society, politics, or policy. Sociocultural theories examine the way features of society as a whole—such as religiosity, ethnic demographics, or belief systems—might shape outcomes. Policy-based theories look at how government policies can change outcomes. Institutional theories examine the impact of broader institutions—the formal “rules of the game,” like constitutions, the legal system, or form of government—on outcomes, often by shaping the incentives that face leaders, constraining the policy that can be enacted, or shaping the possibilities for civil society activity. Structural theories focus on the broad, underlying structures that are impossible (or very difficult) to change, such as geographical or climatic features. Sometimes, historical legacies are treated as structures. Finally, international theories consider the way that international actors—other countries, multilateral institutions, donors—shape outcomes within countries.

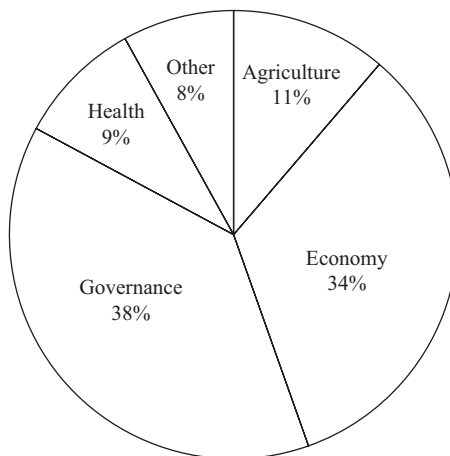
## Outline of the Book

### *Areas of Focus*

In each of the five substantive chapters of this book I focus on a different topic: economic development, governance, public health, climate adaptation, and gender equality. These topics are areas of importance in comparative politics, but they are also issues of primary concern for people living in African countries. Within each topic, each chapter focuses on one or two indicators that measure performance related to the topic: the Human Development Index (for economic growth), the World Governance Indicator (for governance), malaria incidence (for public health), progress under the Global Covenant of Mayors (for climate adaptation), and a combination of the V-Dem’s Women Political Empowerment Index and the United Nations Development Program’s Gender Inequality Index (for gender equality). Understanding variation in these outcomes—why some countries do better than others—is critically important both as an academic question and as a quality-of-life issue for hundreds of millions of people.

The Afrobarometer, a massive survey that collects nationally representative samples from over thirty African countries, asks people to identify the most important problems facing their country. The question is open ended, and people can identify up to three problems, which the Afrobarometer then groups into categories such as “poverty” and “drought.” Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of these responses, with the categories grouped by theme.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1.1** Distribution of Categories Identified as “Most Important” in Afrobarometer



The most common theme in these responses is the economy, the focus of Chapter 2. Africans are worried about unemployment, stagnant wages, and other economic issues affecting their daily lives. Chapter 3 addresses the second most common theme, governance, which includes political issues like corruption and rights, as well as a country's ability to develop a political system that is responsive and effective at providing basic public goods. Health care, the most frequently cited public good, is the subject of Chapter 4. This chapter focuses on the specific public health challenge of malaria, which takes hundreds of thousands of lives in African countries annually, mostly those of young children. Chapter 5 concentrates on adaptation to climate change. While "climate" was not a common response to this Afrobarometer question, many respondents listed agricultural concerns that will be dramatically affected by a changing climate, including food shortage and drought. Finally, Chapter 6 addresses gender equality. Like climate, this issue was not one that many people directly identified in the Afrobarometer survey. However, gender inequalities mark every other area of importance: women in Africa hold less wealth (McFerson 2010), are underrepresented in government (Tripp 2016), bear the brunt of public health failures through their caring responsibilities (Hunter 2012), and will be disproportionately affected by climate change (Makina and Moyo 2016). This is far from an exhaustive list of the important topics in comparative politics, but it reflects the issues that are of greatest importance to Africans.

### *Country Cases*

Chapter 2 focuses on economic development as measured by the Human Development Index. The most-different analysis features Seychelles and Gabon, both of which have achieved impressive levels of economic growth, though in different ways and with different resources. For the second stage of analysis, Seychelles is paired with the most-similar case of Sao Tome and Principe, and Gabon is paired with Equatorial Guinea. The analysis highlights that both Seychelles and Gabon pursued policies of directed development that may explain their shared success, while Sao Tome and Principe and Equatorial Guinea did not.

Chapter 3 examines governance, as conceptualized by the World Governance Index. This chapter examines Botswana and Mauritius as the most-different successful countries. The second stage of analysis pairs Botswana with Uganda and Mauritius with Comoros. Through these comparisons, the chapter provides evidence that Botswana and Mauritius achieved strong governance because of their modes of historical institutional development and the quality of leadership in the countries' early days of independence.



Chapter 4 examines public health through countries' ability to respond to malaria. The two most-different countries that have done well at reducing malaria incidence are Guinea-Bissau and Malawi. The second stage of analysis compares Guinea-Bissau to Sierra Leone and Malawi to Mozambique. The chapter concludes that the most plausible explanation for Guinea-Bissau and Malawi's shared success is that international agencies were able to engage local actors with a national reach more effectively there than they were in Sierra Leone and Mozambique.

Chapter 5 addresses climate adaptation. This chapter differs from the others in that, instead of using countries as cases, it focuses on cities. This chapter conceptualizes success as a city's progress through the Global Covenant of Mayors program, which issues badges to cities that achieve planning benchmarks related to climate mitigation and adaptation. Two most-different cities that have excelled in this program are Lagos, Nigeria, and Durban, South Africa. The second stage of comparison pairs Lagos with Abuja, Nigeria, and Durban with Bloemfontein, South Africa. The chapter concludes that the most plausible explanation for Lagos's and Durban's shared success was that climate-related focus events put climate issues on the agenda, and a local champion within the government was able to promote adaptation policies over a long duration.

Chapter 6 focuses on gender equality, as measured by the United Nations Development Program's Women's Empowerment Index. Rwanda and Senegal are the most-different countries that have demonstrated success in this area. The second stage of analysis pairs Rwanda with Burundi and Senegal with Guinea. The chapter concludes that in Rwanda and Senegal (but not Burundi and Guinea), women in the legislature, supported by the president, were able to advance legislation that supported women and changed people's minds about women in power.

Finally, a concluding chapter synthesizes the thematic and theoretical lessons across these five topics.

## **Notes**

1. Title taken from William Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming."
2. World Bank's "poverty headcount ratio," which estimates the percentage of the population living on less than \$1.90/day (purchasing power parity; PPP), declined from 55.1 percent in 1990 to 40.4 percent in 2018.
3. The Varieties of Democracy Project's Additive Polyarchy Index, a measure of the quality of democracy, increased from 0.41 in 1990 to 0.65 in 2020.
4. According to the Interparliamentary Union, the average percentage of women in parliament rose from 10.2 percent in 1997 to 25.6 percent in 2021.

5. The World Bank estimates that the incidence of malaria decreased from 350 to 219 per 1,000 people from 2000 to 2018.

6. “Economy” includes the categories economic management, wages, unemployment, poverty, taxes, and credit. “Governance” includes the political categories of corruption, political violence, political instability, discrimination, gender issues, and democracy, as well as the public service categories of infrastructure, education, housing, electricity, water, homelessness, services, and agricultural marketing. “Health” includes health, AIDS, and illness; “agriculture” includes agriculture, food shortage, drought, and land. “Other” includes assorted categories including security, communication, and other.