

## Focus of the Issue:

# STRENGTHENING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FORMATION OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

*Research article*

## **FUNDAMENTALS OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract.** In the context of the ongoing scientific debate about the essence of state sovereignty and possible directions of its transformation, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of regional specifics. Traditionally, the analysis of sovereignty was based on the historical experience of European states, and the Westphalian model of sovereignty was considered as almost universal. At the same time, this approach does not provide a much-needed framework for the local and regional specifics of sovereignty. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to identify and reveal the main characteristics of the sovereignty of African countries according to four parameters: integrity, immutability, carriers, and direction. Such an analysis will not only allow African political experience to fit into academic research, which still relies heavily on Western (European) cases of sovereignty. An important task of this article is also to show the features of sovereignty and variability of African states. The specificity of the sovereignty of African states is historically determined by the imposition of different types of sovereignty. Most of them were developed on the continent and were introduced from outside. This implies a noticeable variability in the practical implementation of sovereign rights and the specificity of the actual bearers of sovereignty. In contrast to Westphalian sovereignty, Africa has developed a wider range of sovereignty holders, which is not limited by formal state decision-making mechanisms. Due to the peculiarities of supranational integration and external borrowing, African countries have developed some constraints on external sovereignty and have retained the ability to deal with other states, including extra-regional ones. However, this process still has little impact on internal sovereignty due to its heterogeneity, multi-level nature, and complexity.

**Keywords:** sovereignty, agents of sovereignty, negotiated sovereignty, Africa

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the *COVID-19* pandemic, the academic literature has witnessed changes in the perception of the role and prospects of the state in international affairs and domestic politics. Since the 1990s, political and international political science had been dominated by the discourse about the “withdrawal” of the state, the complication of its structure, and the erosion of its ability to act as a whole. In the transition to the American “moment of unipolarity,” it began to seem that states were transforming – becoming more dependent on interest groups, switching to the economic logic of action (instead of the political one), reorienting toward intangible resources and methods of interaction (“soft power,” public diplomacy, etc.), facing network constraints in foreign policy (interdependence instead of direct containment) [Sørensen 2014: 14–21]. However, during the *COVID-19* pandemic, it turned out that it was states that forced interest groups to make concessions and reduce their resource appetites, it was states that began to direct public sentiment and help reduce collective anxiety, it was states that introduced restrictions on international and internal movements [Maggetti, Trein 2022]. In other words, states were able to act as if several decades of the transformation that researchers observed and described in detail had not occurred.

In the scientific literature, the concept of sovereignty does not have an unambiguous definition. In its most basic form, sovereignty means “fullness of power” which is the full and long-term functioning of the branches of government of the state on its territory, not subject to any external influences, except in cases where external interference is carried out as a result of voluntary and express consent [Sergunin 2010]. In practice, such a definition faces numerous contradictions. For example, in conditions where the consent of small states to any actions of external forces may be the result of a lack of choice, rather than a voluntary decision. J. Bartelsen even wrote that it is easier not to ask the question about the essence of sovereignty. In his opinion, it is more important to focus on why we do not understand anything about sovereignty and how we use the concept of sovereignty, instead of directly asking “what?” [Bartelsen 1995: 3].

One way or another, in modern science, the main elements of the debate on sovereignty remain questions of its integrity (or vice versa, fragmentation), immutability (or, accordingly, transformation), outward or inward direction (in other words, sovereignty is, first of all, supremacy over territory or autonomy from other sovereigns), as well as the actual bearers of sovereignty [Malov 2023; Krasner 1999; Krasner 2004]. Increasingly, the responses to these challenges are attempts to consider sovereignty in a sectoral light (legal, information, energy, food) or as an exclusively political project (absolute, full-fledged vs symbolic, vague) [Reut 2007]. An alternative to this may be to highlight the specifics of sovereignty in certain regions of the world, that is, to turn the research focus from one or several cases (industry or country) to a group of related cases.

Taking that into account, this article examines the characteristics of sovereignty in African states. The study is based on neo-institutional methodology, which allows us to consider the connections between inertial political mechanisms and institutional layers. This technique tends to demonstrate the heterogeneity and dynamic nature of sovereignty

in African countries. To do this, four characteristics of state sovereignty are analyzed, which are integrity, immutability, carriers, and direction (outward or inward).

### FRAGMENTATION OF SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

In the case of African states, the academic dilemma becomes even more complex. The institutions of statehood in the modern sense were actually imposed on the colonized and subjugated populations of all countries except Ethiopia. African states may have all or virtually all the attributes of modern states, such as passports, customs, currency, parliaments, political parties, and, without a doubt, membership in the UN. However, their historical path to statehood is completely different. As A. Smith noted, modern states began to form around ethnic nuclei in Europe, Japan, and some other parts of the world. In Africa, due to colonization, several such nuclei ended up within one artificially created territory [Smith 1986: 228–263]. Even today, there are only 6 truly mono-ethnic states on the continent (Egypt, Comoros, Lesotho, Morocco, Tunisia, conditionally, Sao Tome and Principe), in which the dominant group makes up more than 90% of the total population. Several other states are close to this indicator (for example, Algeria, Eswatini). However, in general, the countries of the continent are characterized by ethnic diversity: on average, there are at least 8 large ethnic groups per state (over 5% of the population each) [Fearon 2003]. That is, the European states received a formed political unity (a political nation), and African states have to look for ways to form or compensate for the missing link in the externally imposed version of statehood [Smith 1986].

The second aspect of the problem is also related to the historical features of the development of Africa. To put it simply, the former bearers of sovereignty retain influence along with the introduced forms of sovereignty. Before colonization, there were several hundred political communities in the territory south of the Sahara, and their history has not yet been sufficiently studied, but some generalizations can be made. The main factor in the development of pre-colonial statehood was the relatively low population density: in Sub-Saharan Africa, the figure was approximately 2 people per square km by 1500. In this part of the world, political communities (states or proto-states in the African version) were characterized by a weak degree of control over territory: if the ruler tried to seize too many resources, the population simply abandoned him. Due to the weakness of control, jurisdictions overlapped and layered, territories could have recognized dependence on several rulers, and there was often a division between control over the population and control over the territory. Even large political units (the Mali Empire or the Ashanti Confederation) clearly exercised control only over a conditional core around the seat of the ruler, but calmly accepted the nominal subordination of more distant lands. Taking into account geographical and historical conditions, this led to the fact that the very forms of pre-colonial statehood in Africa differed significantly in size, forms of control, adaptability, dependence on foreign trade conditions [Herbst 2000: 37–46].

Some colonial powers at one time resorted to a system of indirect control, tested by the British on the territory of modern Nigeria. As a result, local government actually remained in the hands of those same pre-colonial political units, with an inevitable adjustment of the balance of power in favor of the metropolis. Sometimes (as, for example, in Kenya), the British even created the institution of traditional leaders from scratch in order to level out the administrative situation in different territories. Be that as it may, in this form, pre-colonial forms of political power were able to survive: in the new conditions, traditional rulers became part of the bureaucratic and entrepreneurial class, they have a broad social and cultural base and have the opportunity to influence the

policies of the entire state (for example, through the institution of houses of chiefs) [Bondarenko 2022; Emelyanov 2013]. It is noteworthy that in the acute phase of the crisis around Niger in August 2023, the former Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, arrived from neighboring Nigeria to negotiate with the new leadership of the country, accompanied by Emir Damagaram, the traditional ruler in the Zinder region. As a result of these negotiations, the Supreme Council of Nigeria for Muslim Affairs, led by another traditional ruler, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhamadu Abubakar Saad III, officially opposed sanctions and possible intervention against Niger<sup>3</sup>. It was partly this position of the Muslim traditional rulers of northern Nigeria that forced Abuja to shelve plans for an ECOWAS intervention in Niger.

Thus, the sovereignty of African countries, already at the starting level, is characterized by blurriness and multi-levelness rather than functional integrity. At one time, the colonialists imported statehood in the European version, but, by definition, could not transfer the historical conditions for the emergence of European states into African realities. Therefore, this transfer turned out to be incomplete, which created wide opportunities for competition in the implementation of the functions of the sovereign. Moreover, such incompleteness is fundamentally different from the original European historical experience: pre-colonial forms of sovereignty in Africa did not initially imply any integrity, and it was on this foundation that post-colonial statehood was then built on.

#### FLEXIBLE SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

By virtue of their institutional design, the African states are aimed at reproducing the practices of sovereignty in its European version, and it is quite reasonable to assume that the sovereignty of African states is in a process of constant refinement and reconstruction. Elements of such refinement can be considered, for example, the declared desire of African states for democracy, “good governance”, and economic prosperity. However, in relation to African countries, the content of sovereignty is largely determined not from within, but from without. Specific characteristics of sovereignty are historically formulated by major powers and fixed for certain historical periods: when the configuration of the leading states in the world changes, “sovereignty regimes” also transform. As S. Grovogui noted, several variants of sovereignty were imposed on the African continent over the course of three or four centuries, which differed primarily in ideological and economic characteristics [Grovogui 2002]. That is, when Europeans began colonizing Africa and limited themselves only to coastal areas, the map of Europe itself did not look like a clearly divided space between states. On the contrary, there was an overlap and blurring of jurisdictions, the intricacy of dynastic ties. In other words, there were many “shades” of sovereignty. The transition from this situation to modern (Westphalian) sovereignty took several centuries (approximately in the 15th–18th centuries): the processes of delimitation and centralization were consolidated by civil and interstate wars, international treaties and dynastic self-restraints (for example, the refusal of the Spanish Bourbons to claim the French throne) [Jackson 1999: 435–441]. All these processes “flowed” onto the African continent, complicating the mechanisms of sovereignty and exacerbating the contradictions between its different options. Each of the options was not completely lost, but was preserved at the level of certain inertial

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<sup>3</sup> Niger: Nigerian Muslim leaders meet President Tinubu, seek mediatory role. *Muslim News Nigeria*. 10.08.2023. <https://www.muslimnews.com.ng/2023/08/10/niger-nigerian-muslim-leaders-meet-president-tinubu-seek-mediatory-role/> (accessed 13.02.2024)

mechanisms, dividing lines in societies. This circumstance in itself implies significant mobility of the sovereignty of African states, competition, and exchange between its different chronological “layers”.

As T. Hagmann and D. Péclard emphasized, statehood on the African continent is inextricably linked to society and social processes; this link is much closer and more diverse than in other parts of the world. Since political dominance and the use of violence have been exercised differently in various types of sovereignty, whether formed in Africa or imported from outside, the goals and means of expressing their intentions among different social groups are extremely heterogeneous. Some of them are transnational actors (Sufi orders, nomadic populations, criminal networks), which do not take into account state borders and the legitimacy of certain forms of violence in their activities. Another center of gravity in social reality is local communities that ensure the survival of their members and accumulate resources to promote interests (self-help groups, neighborhood communities, small ethnic groups, residents of undeveloped suburbs in urban agglomerations). Despite its invisibility at the national level, this group of actors actively acts through its representatives in formal state institutions and exerts influence through actual control over a certain territory. Other important social groups include ethnic and religious minorities, which camouflage their interests in the form of party or rebel organizations, political movements, and regional authorities. Given such a close relationship between governance and the governed, statehood in Africa is largely of a permanently negotiated nature, rather than reflecting some previously agreed upon and fixed “social contract” [Hagmann, Péclard 2010].

Paradoxically, for some political actors in Africa, states matter and play an important role in self-categorization and social construction, but state borders fall out of this equation. In addition to transnational actors, divided and nomadic ethnic groups, this situation also suits some state institutions that formally operate in European (“Westphalian”) logic. In particular, this may be expressed in support of rebel groups or opposition political forces in the territory of neighboring states. For example, the modern armed conflict in Libya has largely turned into a confrontation between Algeria and Egypt: Cairo supports the forces of H. Haftar, Algeria supports the government of national unity in Tripoli (before that, the government of national accord). A similar situation exists in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the Rwandan government appears to be encouraging local separatist movements.

Such a division of statehood and its specific territorial embodiment leads to the so-called “spillover of instability”. To put it simply, problems do not linger in any one state and spread relatively quickly to neighboring countries [DiRienzo, Das 2017]. When armed conflict broke out in the DRC in 1998, at least 7 neighboring states were affected. Similarly, the long civil war in Somalia (1991–2012) led to increased separatism in the Ethiopian state of Somalia (formerly the Ogaden Province), so federal authorities in Addis Ababa conducted repeated law enforcement operations there and long banned foreigners from visiting the region. In the 1990s, political instability practically circulated between Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, and Sierra Leone [Englebert, Tull 2008]. As a result, “spillover instability” causes temporary and territorial discontinuity in the sovereignty of states: the partial sovereignty of one state limits the capabilities of neighboring ones.

Empirical research shows that despite the fluidity of control over territory and population, the proportion of citizens with a national identity is growing in African states. This does not mean that local, religious, ethnic, professional, and other levels of self-awareness are lost with an additional level formed. Apparently, this is not achieved through the coverage of the population by traditional institutions of state building such as

schools, organized religion, censuses. As D. Koter noted, the very everyday experience of being in any state – with a certain range of goods and services, currency fluctuations and a specific combination of applicants for sovereign powers – forms general social characteristics [Koter 2021]. From a theoretical point of view, this fact captures an important trend: the construction of sovereignty is still dominated by non-institutionalized mechanisms, everyday practices of “being together.” This means that the crystallization of sovereignty in African states in any specific form has not yet occurred, since this requires the emergence of some prevailing institutionalized source of state building [Zarakol 2017].

Such a conclusion may seem bold in the context of the import of European (“Westphalian”) sovereignty into the continent and taking into account the presence of governments, parliaments, armed and law enforcement forces in African countries. However, any government or parliament is limited in its capabilities by the chronological inconsistency of formal political institutions, the weak separation along the “government-society” line, and the negotiated nature of statehood. In other words, attempts to implement the European model of sovereignty continue, but their effectiveness is weak. Therefore, sovereignty in African countries is constantly balancing from relatively hard forms (hyper-sovereignty with a semi-sacred figure of the ruler) to soft forms, where some regions can govern themselves independently or power functions are divided between several social groups.

#### BEARERS OF SOVEREIGNTY

The presence of different types of sovereignty introduced into African political practice in the 16th–20th centuries implies the existence of several types of sovereignty holders. In particular, pre-colonial sovereignty is represented mainly at the local level or within large informal communities that are regulated by religious or ethno-social norms. Dynastic sovereignty was widespread in Europe at least before the Napoleonic wars, and, accordingly, its owners were and remain tribal, clan and family groups that consider the state or individual spheres of government as the object of their economic activity. The popular or modern type of sovereignty is also formally represented in African countries, since almost everywhere there are procedures for voting, party competition, and other forms of political participation, including protests, demonstrations, and defending group interests in court. An important feature of sovereignty institutions in the context of African realities is the constant resistance of competing institutions, the need to adapt, and not displace. As a result, public authorities, rather, become the object of penetration and “development” by groups and networks that belong to different temporary types of sovereignty [Boege, Brown, Clements 2009]. The question, first of all, is which of the groups or networks receives the greatest advantages in this competition and sets the general direction of political development.

With all the variety of options, I will highlight several main types of bearers of sovereignty in African states. Firstly, there are political dynasties, family and clan groups that close within themselves the transfer of power in the country. In some cases (Lesotho, Morocco, Eswatini), this state of affairs is associated with a monarchical form of government. However, in a number of African countries, informal ruling dynasties have actually taken the rule (Gabon, Djibouti, Togo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea). In these states, the transfer of senior positions and the distribution of less responsible positions in government bodies is directly related to ethnicity, region, and family affiliation. In particular, in Equatorial Guinea, a key role is played by the so-called “Mongomo clan” –

people from a small town in the east of the country, belonging primarily to the Fang (Fon) ethnic group. This clan serves as the support of the Nguema family, which has ruled Equatorial Guinea since 1968. Formally, the country has held seven presidential elections and two constitutional referendums, which contributed to the preservation and consolidation of the status quo. Similarly, representatives of the Massaman sub-clan have dominated Djibouti since independence in 1977. In Gabon, the ruling Bongo family relied on people from the Bateke ethnic group from the Haute-Ogooue region in the east of the country. But since the Bateke make up just under 5% of the population, the Bongo family began to expand the ruling coalition quite a long time ago, primarily at the expense of representatives of the Fang ethnic group (about 20%) [Turinskaya 2022; Yates 2017]. In the conditions of such dynastic sovereignty, even coups are confined within the family group: in 1979, a successful coup was carried out by the nephew of the current president, T.O. Nguema Mbasogo, and in 2023, the head of state in Gabon was overthrown by his cousin, Army General B. Oligi Nguema.

It is noteworthy that political dynasties were not always able to monopolize power. In the context of ethnic and religious diversity, systems of competition between several political dynasties have formed in a number of African countries. In particular, in Kenya, the main struggle is between the Kenyatta (Kikuyu) and Odinga (Luo) families, who attract to their side several dozen families with less economic and political capital (Moi, Saitoti, Nyachae) [Bedasso 2015]. It has been suggested that the victory of W. Ruto (Kalenjin) in the 2022 presidential elections ended the period of dominance of political dynasties in Kenya. However, it must be borne in mind that, despite all the disagreements and public conflicts with the main political families, W. Ruto's career is largely connected with the Kenyatta family, and his victory became possible in the context of the non-nomination of ethnic Kikuyu candidates.

Secondly, the bearers of sovereignty in African countries are often army structures, which are either associations of officers or broader groups united by their rejection of other contenders for the exercise of sovereign state functions. After decolonization, the army in many states turned out to be the most integral structure, capable, by definition, of carrying out violent actions and achieving set goals. Often, due to the policies of the colonialists, representatives of certain ethnic and religious groups were recruited into army units, which further strengthened the esprit de corps and the special identity of the armed forces. In particular, by the time of independence, the army largely consisted of representatives of the Gurunsi (Grusi) and Fanti in Ghana, in Uganda – from the Acholi, in the DRC – from the Zande, the Tetela, and people who spoke Lingala [Bayo Adekson 1979]. Given the high degree of consolidation of the army and the greater range of resources at its disposal, other political structures simply could not compete with the military. Accordingly, any attempt to harm the interests of the army (in particular, to reduce the military budget) led to the politicization of the military and to its direct participation in politics in the form of military coups, mutinies, and open insubordination [Jenkins, Kposowa 1990].

Although sovereignty in the army is often characterized as “praetorian” and archaic, in African countries, the army is primarily an institution of Modernity. Ensuring territorial integrity and sovereignty in the Westphalian version implies the presence of an armed unit that is capable of subjugating or eliminating competing forces. Moreover, the military units were created by the colonialists, operate according to European regulations (or their equivalents), and have the most modern types of weapons. In addition, in conditions of civil wars and internal conflicts, army units often have to take over the functions of the civilian government, which also provides a competitive advantage for the

army [Luckham 1994]. Finally, cooperation between the military (joint exercises, exchange of experience, training programs) leads to the fact that in Africa, the position of the army as the most modern institution in society is often reproduced.

If the reproduction of political dynasties is carried out through such modern political institutions as elections and referendums (for example, on the term of office of the head of state), then for the army, the main institution remains the military coup in the form of the use of force or the threat thereof to remove the top leadership of the country. In Africa, military coups have occurred in at least 20 states throughout the history of independence. The leaders in terms of the number of successful and failed military coup attempts are Sudan (14), Burkina Faso (7), Niger (7), Chad (7) and Guinea (5). Apparently, competition within the army and with other social groups in African states was gradually increasing. There was a steady trend towards an increase in the proportion of failed coups in 1956–2001 [McGowan 2003]. On the contrary, since 2011, there has been an increase in the proportion of successful coups, which may indicate a long-term adaptation of army structures to competition from the so-called “civilian sector” or the weakening of the army’s political opponents [Chin, Carter, Wright 2021].

Finally, the bearers of sovereignty in a number of African states are party and bureaucratic groups. In comparative politics, there is an unfortunate confusion: when formally analyzing the composition of parliaments and regional representative bodies, it turns out that there are “authoritarian” party systems with a dominant party [Mozaffar, Scarritt 2005]. However, under the guise of party organizations, forms of clan or ethnic representation, political projects for a specific political leader, as well as criminal associations, are often hidden [Emelyanov 2015]. This is why illogical scenarios are possible in elections in Africa, such as the absolute defeat of the ruling party in the elections. For example, in 1997, Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhele left the ruling Lesotho African Congress (ACL) party and created a new political force, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy. At that time, the AKL had 65 of the 65 seats in the National Assembly, the country's parliament. In the 1998 elections, the AKL did not win a single seat in the new parliament, and Ntsu Mokhele’s party won 79 of 80 seats [Kuenzi, Lambright 2001].

At the same time, in a number of African states, party-bureaucratic groups clearly go beyond ethnic, regional, clan, and economic interests. By maintaining dominance in the political system through regular elections and the selection of charismatic leaders, such groups keep competition and debate on public issues within themselves. For example, in Botswana, the Democratic Party has remained ruling since independence and regularly wins parliamentary elections. Initially, this success was based on the special social position of President Seretsa Khama (1966–1980), who was also the traditional leader for the population in the central regions of the country. However, the party’s base gradually expanded, attracting the educated population, residents of non-central regions, and representatives of the large Kalanga ethnic group (now up to 10% of the population). As a result, factional groups began to form that sought to increase their role in the leadership of the party and actively criticized opponents within the ruling party since the 1980s. The two main factions were “Team A” and “Barata-Fati” (“Lovers of the Party”) by the 2000s [Poteete 2012]. Due to periodic changes in the dominant faction in the Botswana Democratic Party, the possibility of access to elected and bureaucratic positions by different groups remains, which increases the motivation for dissenters to maintain their place in the party. Either way, it is within the ruling party that political competition occurs, which at the same time makes it possible to maintain control over the main state institutions. This was confirmed during the 2019 elections: the country's former president (2008–2018) and ex-leader of the ruling party, Ian Khama, led the opposition Botswana



Patriotic Front, which achieved just over 4% of the vote and won 3 seats in parliament. On the contrary, the Democratic Party regained the majority in the National Assembly, increasing its representation by 1 seat [Brown 2020].

Apparently, such a party-bureaucratic group recently took shape in Ethiopia. The ruling Prosperity Party carried out rebranding and personnel purges after 2018. As a result, the dominance of representatives of the Tigrayan ethnic group in party bodies disappeared, new local coalitions took shape at the state level, and new channels for recruiting party activists received support. Until 2018, there was also formal diversity: for example, representatives of the Oromo ethnic group were traditionally appointed to the positions of president and minister of defense, and one or two ministerial positions went to representatives of the Amhara and Wolaita ethnic groups. But in fact, the functions of governing the country and, in particular, the security forces were in the hands of Tigrayans, who were comrades-in-arms of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. After 2018, the positions of technocrats, military men, and people from the southern states strengthened in the top leadership of the country and the party [Loshkariov, Kopytssev 2021; Demerew 2022]. Although the new party structure has been criticized for a possible bias in favor of representatives of the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups, due to the reorganization, it was possible to preserve different interest groups within the party and consolidate its control over state institutions, which was shaken during the political crisis of 2016–2018.

The control over sovereignty by party-bureaucratic structures is mainly characteristic of the region of Southern Africa (Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia), where political structures fought for independence and derive additional legitimacy from their historical merits. These structures are often headed by former leaders of partisan units who have undergone specific military training and had experience of conducting combat operations under difficult conditions [Shubin 2010]. However, in contrast to military groups as bearers of sovereignty, partisan leaders willingly expand the reach of party organizations, involve different professional groups, co-opt their competitors in various forms, and maintain the appearance of electoral procedures.

#### DIRECTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

The most important element of the modern discussion about sovereignty remains the thesis that the ability of states to independently determine their way of behavior in the world is declining. Firstly, at the level of international organizations, a significant number of procedures, standards, and norms have been developed that reduce the number of possible options for states. This applies not only to foreign policy, but also to domestic policy, from the protection of human rights and exchange rates to the conservation of biodiversity and the climate agenda. Second, the level of interdepartmental and inter-governmental coordination has increased significantly over the past century. Even when there are no specific norms and standards in the industry, “transgovernmentality” binds the initiative of states, since the exchange of information, a certain level of trust between performers, and common approaches to political problems are maintained at the departmental level. Finally, thirdly, transnational networks – non-governmental organizations, think tanks, diaspora structures – have grown greatly in importance. Although they cannot make decisions on their own, they monitor approved documents on issues that interest them, put forward their own initiatives, and contribute to the development of discussion in society (often unconstructively). Typically, these arguments are countered by the fact that cooperation between states and their compliance with norms and standards can be superficial and imitative, which allows states to maintain a high degree of

independence in determining their priorities and specific steps. In addition, the result of participation in international organizations and transgovernmental networks partly serves to strengthen states, since it provides them with new tools of control and expands their presence in previously untapped areas [Sørensen 2014: 60–71].

In the case of African states, the thesis about the reduction of opportunities for states has more justification. Due to financial problems in the 1980s, African countries began to borrow heavily from international organizations (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), which promoted structural adjustment programs as a condition for receiving funds. These programs implied the withdrawal of the state from the economy, such as the reduction of government spending, a free exchange rate of the national currency, the privatization of large enterprises and the removal of barriers to the import and withdrawal of capital [Emelyanov 2015: 106–107]. As a result, both the internal and external sovereignty of African states were eroded: within countries, the state apparatus turned out to be unable or partially unable to provide the basic needs of the population (that is, it could not demand any significant loyalty in return), and in foreign policy, much began to be determined by lending international organizations, investor corporations, and associated donor states.

The impact of structural adjustment programs on African states continues to this day. However, under such conditions, we can still talk about African agency. Firstly, African states, even under conditions of credit dependence, continued to work on alternative proposals for economic recovery. In 1980, the session of heads of state of the Organization of African Unity adopted the Lagos Plan of Action, which called for increased industrialization efforts and supported a policy of import substitution. The position of the countries of the continent was developed in the 1989 African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), which was approved by the UN General Assembly. This document emphasized that investors should not determine the content of development programs, that liberalization of foreign trade should be accompanied by measures to support local producers, and that, in addition to the domestic market, an export-oriented sector of the economy should be formed. Subsequently, these priorities were developed in the documents of the African Union, in particular in Agenda 2063. Secondly, structural adaptation programs often had vague evaluation criteria and included simplified and obviously impossible recommendations. Wanting to bind African states more tightly with obligations, the international financial institutions actually turned a blind eye to violations of some of the terms of the loan agreements. This state of affairs is called the “three-monkey policy”: “see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing.” Thus, the bearers of sovereignty in Africa (primarily at the state level) received a considerable amount of financial resources, thereby strengthening their position, and, to some extent, imitated the concession of part of their sovereignty in foreign affairs [Taylor 2010: 116–127].

Another potential direction for limiting the sovereignty of states is the deepening of supranational integration. On the African continent, there is both a pan-African regional organization (the African Union, or AU) and sub-regional organizations (ECOWAS, IGAD, EAC, SADC, and others). The key element in limiting sovereignty on the part of these structures is considered to be the policy of promoting “democratic governance”, within the framework of which supranational organizations receive the right to assess the quality of elections and the legality or illegality of other forms of change of power, as well as introduce restrictions on states that do not comply with the demands of supranational bodies. In other words, states are limited in their ability to independently determine the method and timing of the transfer of power, as well as the degree of permis-

sible political competition. This mechanism of limiting sovereignty began back in 1991 (the so-called “Kampala Document” of the OAU), but it was within the framework of the African Union that the policy of promoting “democratic governance” received a significant impetus. The rules for democratic turnover of power were included in the Constitutive Act of the AU (2000) and then supplemented and enshrined in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007). At the same time, due to the vagueness of the criteria, supranational structures may or may not use mechanisms for promoting “democratic governance” in their own interests. For example, in a number of cases, the African Union did not approve decisions to suspend the membership of states where non-standard changes in government bodies occurred (Egypt in 2014, Zimbabwe in 2017). On the contrary, after the coup in Guinea-Bissau in 2012, the AU not only imposed sanctions and suspended the country’s membership, but also opposed the formation of a transitional government there, thereby preventing the speedy restoration of constitutional order [Morozova 2019; Abebe, Fombad 2021]. In general, this policy of promoting “democratic governance” can have an impact on the international contacts of states, their foreign economic transactions, and trade relations. However, internal sovereignty – control over territory and population, as well as the choice of forms and institutions of governance – is affected rather indirectly by the activities of supranational structures, without undermining the basic foundations of sovereignty.

Thus, the thesis about the reduction of opportunities for states in Africa is partially confirmed. Due to the intensification of regional integration processes, the intensification of rule-making by international organizations, and the pressure of donor states in the field of relations with external partners, African sovereignty holders are forced to make concessions, partially imitate the actions expected of them, and agree to legal obligations that contradict their position and interests. At the same time, the multi-level and blurred nature of sovereignty plays into the hands of African elites, since responsibility for failure to fulfill what is stated is also blurred, expectations from external partners are reduced, and the possibility of maneuvering between different levels of interaction and major global players increases. Moreover, external pressure is still poorly converted into changes in internal sovereignty. That is, the orientation of sovereignty in African states is more clearly expressed than in Western (modern, Westphalian) countries. With restrictions on external sovereignty, the holders of sovereignty strive to expand, strengthen, and maintain their ability to act independently within states, relying on various mechanisms, from direct violence to the co-optation of opponents and electoral procedures.

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that any attempt to describe what is common in a large number of cases is doomed to simplification and the essentialization of differences. That is why it is important to emphasize that within the identified characteristics of the sovereignty of African states, significant variability remains, and some features are more of a transitional rather than permanent nature. However, the analysis of the sovereignty of African states allows us to identify a number of features that differ from the sovereignty of modern (Westphalian) states (*Table 1*). In other words, the Western model of sovereignty, in all its variations since the 15th century, only partially took root on the African continent, giving rise to a special group of states with unique characteristics.

Among these features are the structural and temporal fuzziness and multi-levelness, which implies different forms of control over the territory and population, variations in relation to administrative and state borders, as well as the heterogeneous legitimacy of

“facade” state institutions. In such a situation, a fixed set of political rules of the game practically cannot exist, which determines the negotiated nature of sovereignty. Even under tough political regimes (including military ones) in African countries, intensive communication continues between local, trans-border, and national political forces, which “frames” the implementation of sovereign rights. The dynamic nature of the rules of the game causes the emergence of the opposite: relatively static structures competing for resources and influence. Among such structures, in addition to ethnic and religious groups, whose significance has been studied in detail in the scientific literature, political dynasties, party-bureaucratic organizations and professional military associations stand out. Due to the characteristics of decolonization and the economic situation of the 1980s, the external sovereignty of African states has undergone some erosion, while internal sovereignty, despite the complexity of country-specific balances between different groups, has been less affected by this process.

Table 1. **Differences in the sovereignty of modern (Westphalian) and African states**

	Westphalian (modern) sovereignty	Sovereignty in Africa
Degree of fragmentation	Functional integrity	Fuzzy and multi-level (including temporal/temporal)
Degree of flexibility	Fixation of control over territory and population (“negotiable nature of sovereignty”)	Mobility of control over territory and/or population (“negotiable nature of sovereignty”)
Carriers (bearers)	Formally, a nation, in fact –renewed elites	Formally, a nation, in fact – static structures (political dynasties, military groups, party-bureaucratic organizations)
Orientation	Approximate balance between internal and external dimensions	Predominantly inward

For each of the identified political structures, the object of control may differ significantly. For example, something that is controlled autonomously or relatively independently of external forces. In some cases, the object of control is the state institutions themselves and personnel movements within them; in other cases, key economic resources and mechanisms for distributing external assistance; in third, a specific set of territories that is slightly or significantly smaller than the entire territory of the state. For ethnic groups settled in an enclave, the object of control is the entire set of used resources and territories, which creates potential points of tension between state sovereignty, exercised through formal structures (regardless of the presence of ruling parties or political dynasties), and local (“popular”) sovereignty, which is based on tradition and informal agreements. Due to the different levels of sovereignty on the African continent, local sovereignty can remain functional, unlike the situation in countries with integral “Westphalian” sovereignty.

Nowadays, new types of states and their sovereignty are being formed. In particular, there is a partial absorption of political institutions by large corporations, and the merging of states along regional and civilizational lines [Kharin 2012]. Under such conditions, the identified characteristics of the sovereignty of African countries are likely to undergo some transformation in the coming decades. Among the possible directions of such

changes are an increase in the multi-level nature of political interactions (the formation of a “postmodern”/digital level), the emergence of new types of sovereignty carriers (in particular, youth associations, new religious sects), and the strengthening of external sovereignty due to the growth of national self-awareness and positive economic dynamics.

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## ОСОБЕННОСТИ СУВЕРЕНИТЕТА ГОСУДАРСТВ В АФРИКЕ: ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЙ РАКУРС

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**Аннотация.** В условиях продолжающейся научной дискуссии по поводу сущности государственного суверенитета и возможных направлений его трансформации возникает потребность в комплексном анализе региональной специфики. Традиционно анализ суверенитета опирался на исторический опыт европейских государств, а вестфальская модель суверенитета рассматривалась как едва ли не универсальная. В то же время, такой подход не обеспечивает должного внимания к локальной и региональной специфике суверенитета. Поэтому цель данной статьи состоит в том, чтобы выявить и раскрыть основные особенности суверенитета стран Африки по четырем параметрам – целостность, неизменность, носители и направленность. Подобный анализ позволит не только вписать африканский политический опыт в академические изыскания, которые все еще сильно опираются на западные (европейские) кейсы суверенности. Важная задача данной статьи еще и в том, чтобы

показать особенности суверенитета и вариативность африканских государств. Специфика суверенитета африканских государств исторически обусловлена наложением разных типов суверенитета – как выработанных на континенте, так и привнесенных извне. Это подразумевает заметную вариативность практической реализации суверенных прав и специфику реальных носителей суверенитета. В отличие от вестфальского суверенитета, в Африке сложился более широкий круг носителей суверенитета, который не ограничен формальными государственными механизмами принятия решений. Из-за особенностей наднациональной интеграции и внешних заимствований в странах Африки сложились некоторые ограничения внешнего суверенитета, способности вести дела с другими государствами, в том числе внерегиональными. Однако этот процесс пока слабо отражается на внутреннем суверенитете – в силу его разнородности, разноуровневости и сложности.

**Ключевые слова:** суверенитет, носители суверенитета, переговорный характер суверенитета, Африка

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