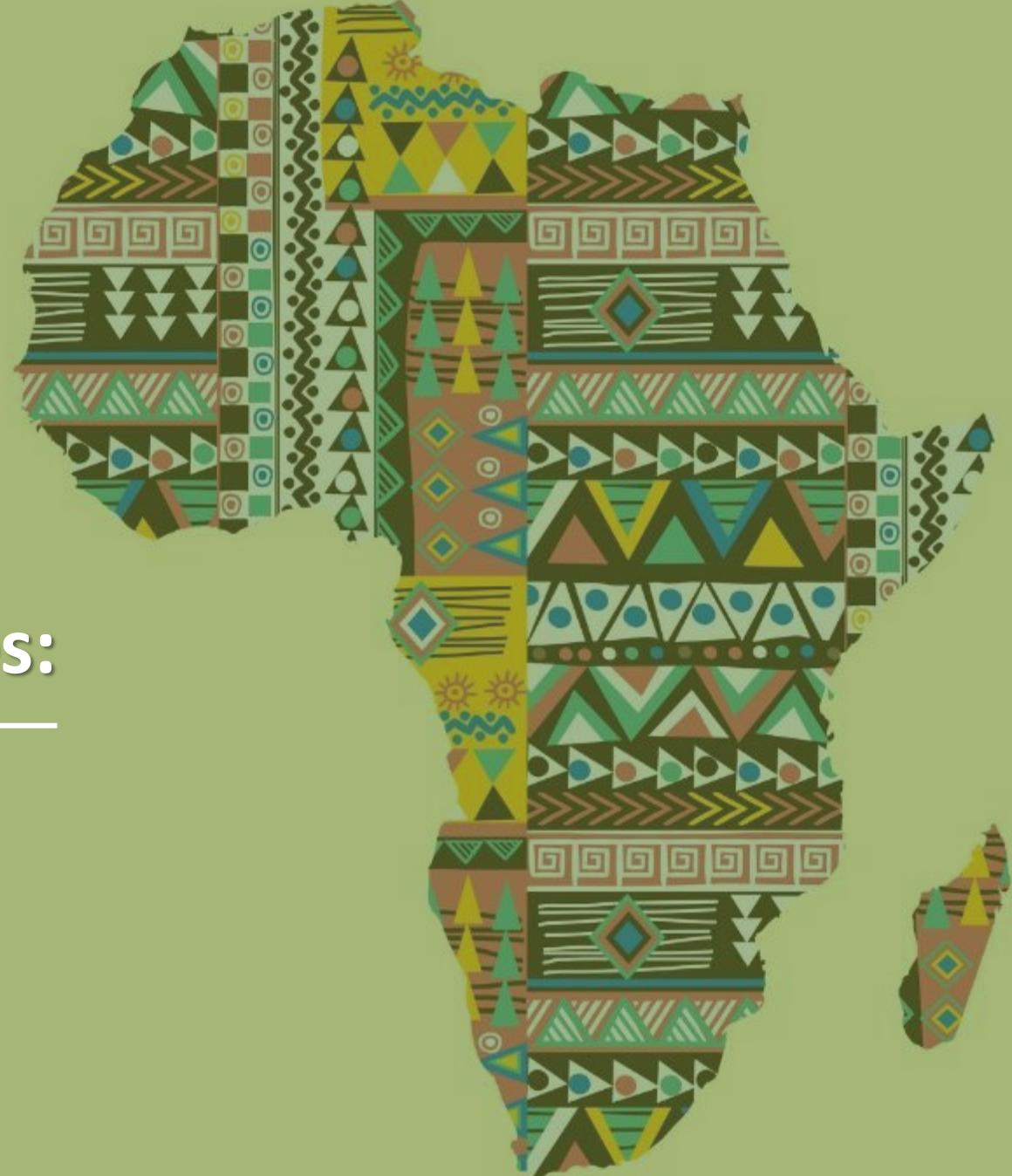


Bridging Good Governance and Traditional African Political Values: Why Youth Matter

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Outline

- 1. Concern of the issue**
- 2. Debate over the value**
- 3. Current argument**
- 4. How Africa's youth think**
- 5. Conclusion**



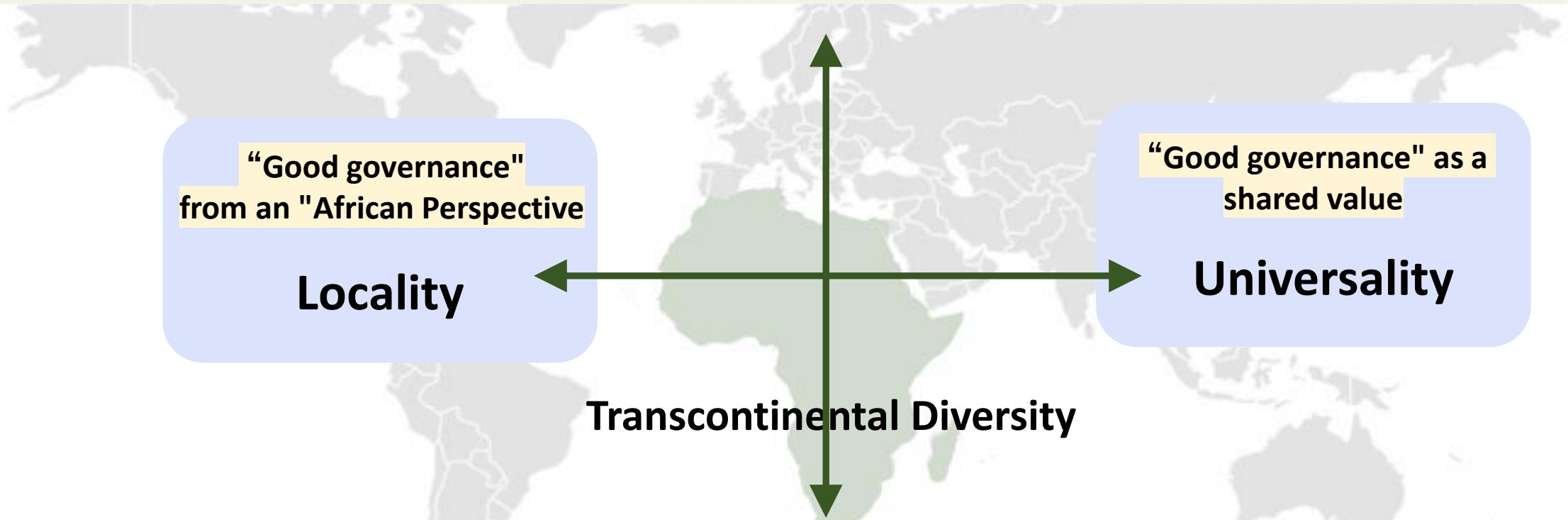
(Kono, Sierra Leone 2009)

1. Concerns of the issue



1. Concerns of the issue

Will African nations achieve political stability and become more peaceful in next 30 years?
What form of governance will have been established by then?



“The main problem with contemporary African democracy is not that democratic values and principles are not almost universally embraced. Rather, it is discovering the democratic values and principles that exist within Africa's political traditions.” (Owusu 1997)



1. Concerns of the issue

“Good governance” as a shared-value

Could the governance structures that embody these various elements within people's living spaces also be universally applicable?



People's local lives



2. The Debate Over Values

What is Political Participation?



Claude Ake (1939–1996)

- ◆ A prominent Nigerian political scientist who profoundly influenced **African political studies**.
- ◆ Made significant contributions to research on democracy, nation-building, and political economy in Africa, **critiquing the limitations of Western models**.
- ◆ Advocated for approaches **rooted in Africa's unique history, culture, and society**.
- ◆ Assassinated in a plane crash in 1996 by supporters of the military regime.

2. The Debate Over Values

What is Political Participation?

Raising the Question: Participation for Whom?

In Africa, "society" comes first; **participation means involvement as a community**

- Western-style "participation" = **Free choice as an individual**
- African-style "participation" = **Consensus-building within the community**
 - Premise that individuals already exist within "society"
 - **Participation as a community** in goal-setting and decision-making processes
 - Emphasis on **harmony and division of labor** rather than competition and conflict
- Western individualistic concept of participation → **alienates rural populations**
- Inclusion of rural areas → Emphasis on **participation by non-elite groups**

Redefining **political participation** is essential for good governance sustainability

Preserving core values of the participation and **reconstructing institutions adapted to each culture**



2. The Debate Over Values



Richard Sklar (1934–)

What is Political Participation?

- ◆ An African American political scientist and a prominent researcher in the field of **African politics**.
- ◆ Conducted extensive research on **African political systems**, focusing particularly on post-independence political challenges in Africa.
- ◆ Advocates an approach that considers region-specific political cultures and social structures, moving beyond traditional Western perspectives.

2. The Debate Over Values

What is Political Participation?

Reevaluating Participatory Traditions and Institutional Reconstruction

- ❑ Even when compared to Western representative good governance, Africa's traditional institutions contain **unique democratic elements that emphasize people's participation** → These should be reevaluated

"The Renowned Participatory Politics of Africa"

- ❑ Traditional systems that value **autonomy, deliberation, and consensus-building processes**
- ❑ Democracy has no final form → Affirming the attitude of continuous exploration
- ❑ The necessity of **integrating with modern political systems**
→ **Harmony with Africa's unique political culture is indispensable.**

2. The Debate Over Values

The Relationship Between Modern Democracy

The Quest for Good governance in Africa

Recognizing the existence of Africa's unique values regarding democracy

Caution

Elucidating its embodiment within modern institutions and traditional governance

Beware **the intellectual trap** of falsely dichotomizing the modern and the traditional

Conflict or Complementarity?





(Nairobi, Kenya 2025)

Both sides are grounded in **differing values** regarding the legitimacy of governance, political participation, and the nature of citizenship. This is not merely a choice of institutional design, but rather an argument over the very **"form of politics" within African context.**

3. Current argument

People's Expectations for Traditional Governance

Afrobarometer Survey Findings Spark Debate

- Traditional Governance Still Exists and Functions
- People **expect** traditional institutions to contribute to stability and harmony in daily life

(Logan 2009, Holzinger et al. 2016)

Figure 2: Changes in institutional trust | 14 countries | 2008-2021

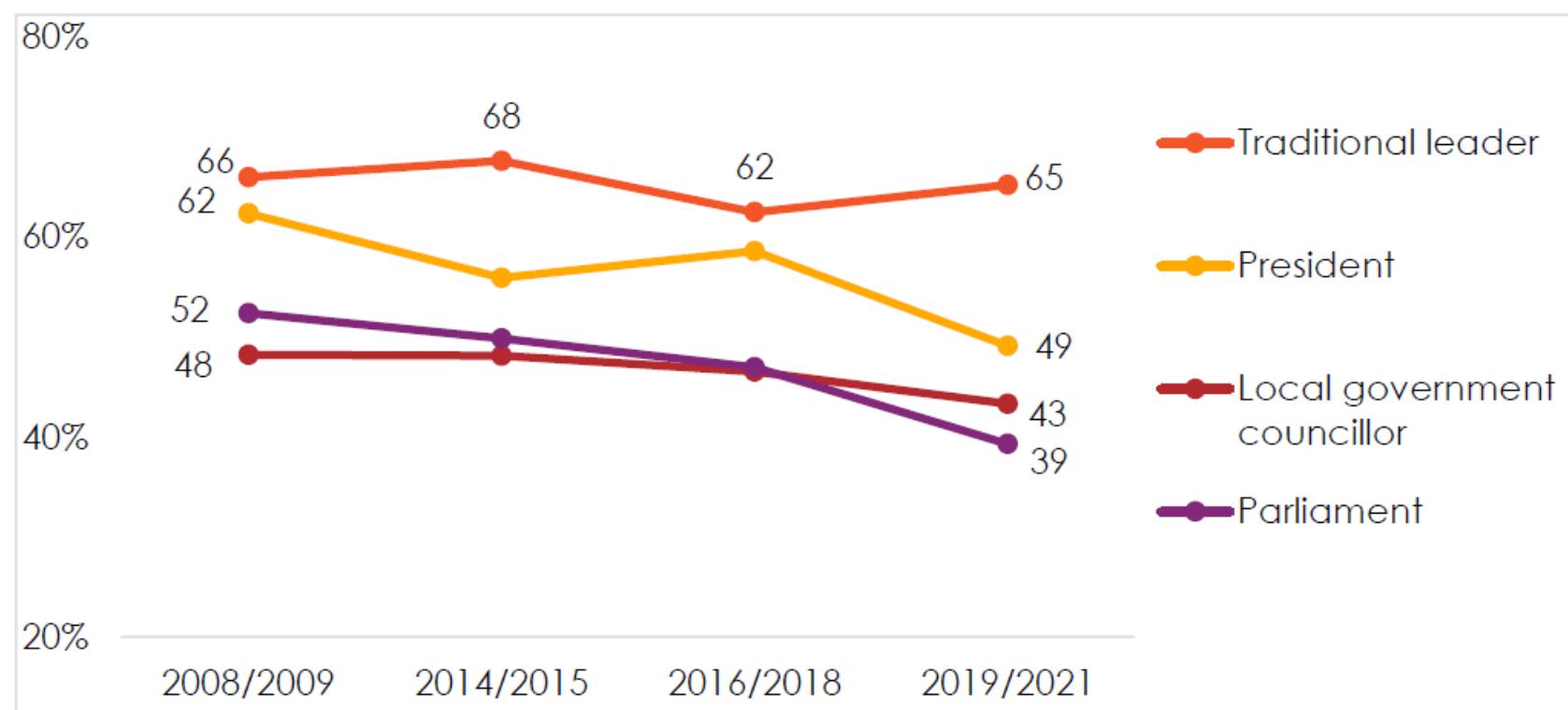
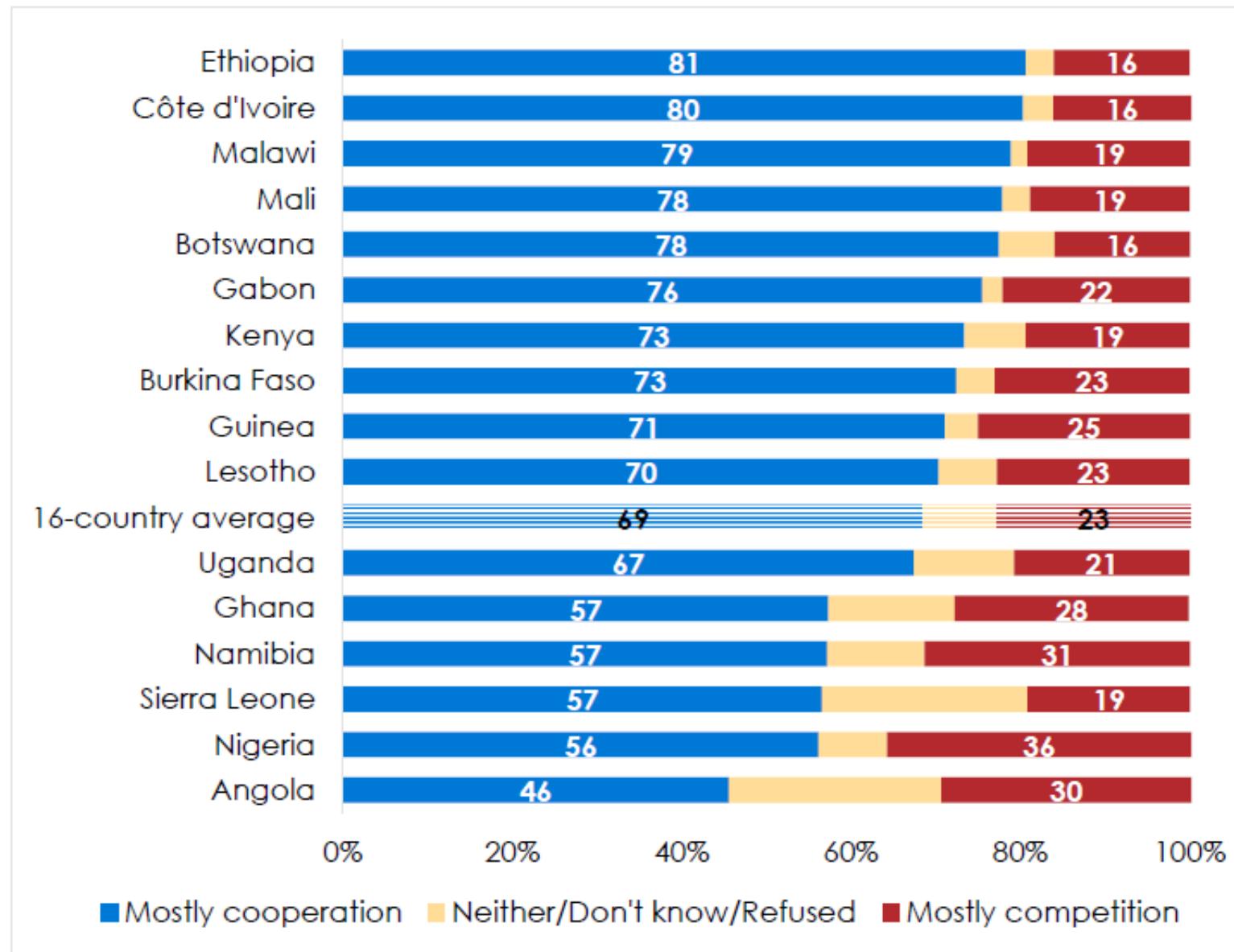


Figure 7: Traditional leaders' relationship with local government | 16 countries | 2019/2020



Source: Logan and Katenda (2021)

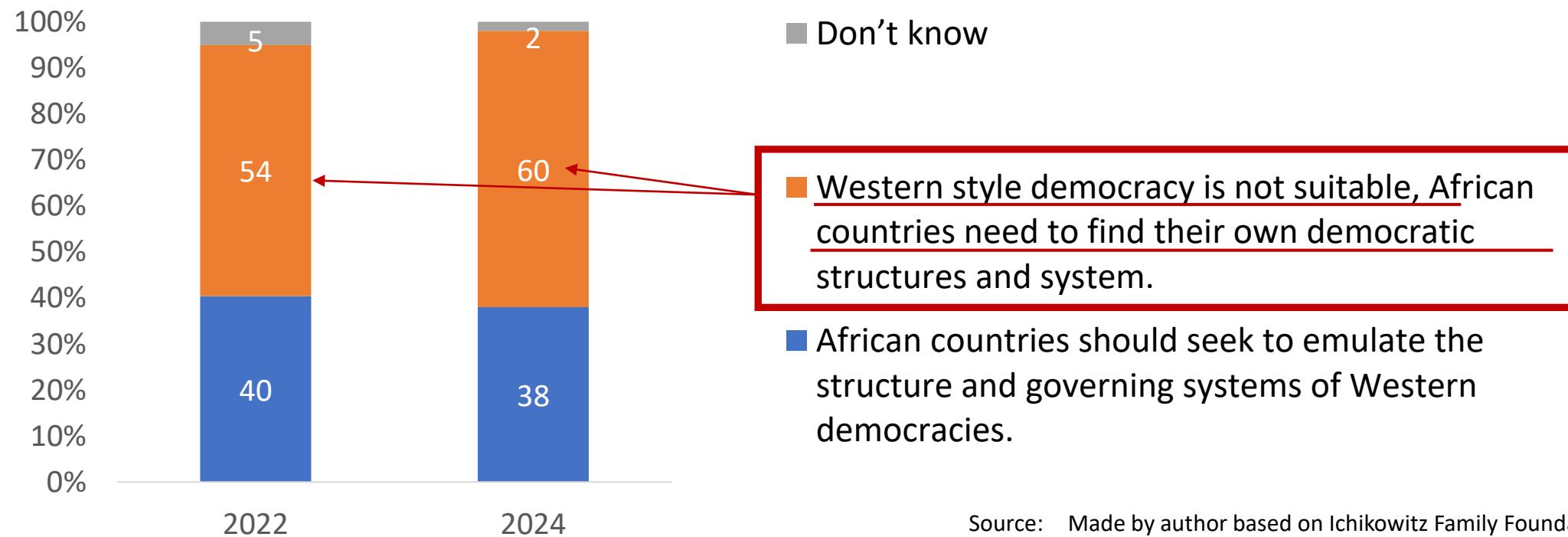
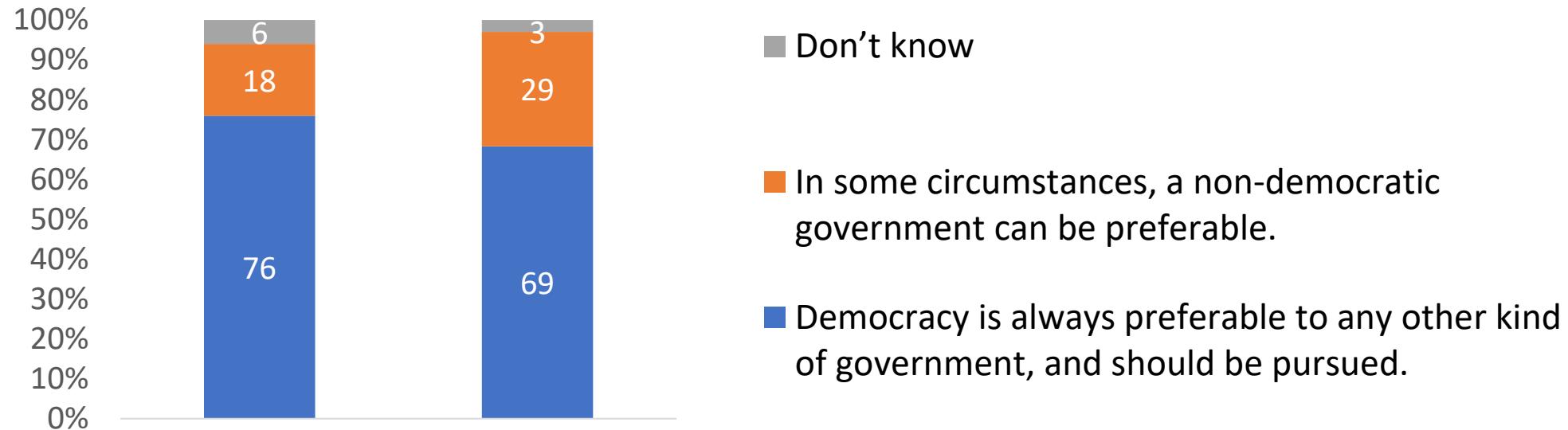
4. How Africa's Youth Think

Youth: Central to Understanding Africa Today and Tomorrow

**Including Youth Is an Essential Agenda for
Advancing Africa's Future Good Governance.**



Figure Appetite for Democracy & Suitability of Western Style Democracies in Africa



4. How Africa's Youth Think

Afrobarometer data also reinforces this point:

Across 22 countries, **63% of youth** aged 18–30 say they trust traditional leaders.

(Logan and Katenda 2021)

Implying reconsidering the idea of **“African participatory democracy”** as argued by Ake and Sklar, is **inevitable for the future of democracy in Africa**.



(Kono, Sierra Leone 2010)

5. Conclusion

- ◆ Traditional institutions and good governance are not necessarily in conflict.
- ◆ Rather than replacing institutions through external intervention, we need to suggest strengthening them through internal deliberation.
- ◆ African good governance may emerge not from "importing institutions," but from participatory processes rooted in cultural practices.
- ◆ "Youth" inclusion is an essential condition to enhance "African good governance".



What do you think?

(Freetown, Sierra Leone 2008)

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a calm ocean. The sky is a gradient of orange, red, and purple. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of several people are scattered across a sandy beach, some walking and some standing. The horizon line is low, meeting the ocean.

Thank you very much!

(Freetown, Sierra Leone 2008)