

# ernment Power in Africa

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## **Abstract:**

This article argues that formal institutions have always mattered in African politics. It contends that because the legal-rational domain in Africa is characterized by broad swaths of discretionary power, law is an important instrument in political contests. These broad grants of formal power facilitate informal and unaccountable governance. The article calls upon students of African politics to pay closer attention to the nature and use of formal law, and legal processes, in African politics. Further, it sees a need for empirical studies of the interplay between formal and informal institutions in African politics. It suggests that there is a need to democratize legal processes with a view to empowering the citizenry to participate effectively in, and hold to account, the use of law in political contests. This task of democratization, the article suggests, can be facilitated by administrative-law reforms.