



THE GLOBAL CENTRE FOR POLICY AND STRATEGY
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GLOCEPS Webinar Series

**Theme: Institutionalizing the Raila Odinga Legacy:
Constitutionalism, Democratic Reform, and the
Realization of African Union Agenda 2063**

Week 2: Wednesday 1st April 2026 | Time: 9:00am - 12:00pm

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81765634300?>

Article 1: Political Decentralisation and the Quest for Good Governance in Kenya: Institutionalising the Raila Odinga Legacy in Democratic Reforms ~ *Samuel Mwiti Njagi*

Article 2: Constitutionalism in an Era of Populism: Lessons from Raila Odinga's Reform Struggles for Strengthening Democratic Institutions in Africa ~ *Isaac Aliowaku & Dr. Japheth Kwiringira, PhD.*



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Abstract

Political Decentralization and the Quest for Good Governance in Kenya

Dr. Samuel Mwiti Njagi, PhD.

The pursuit of good governance has been at the core of many countries since the end of Cold War. In Africa, many countries were forced to undertake many reforms that were considered cardinal in supporting good governance. Kenya in particular undertook several reforms that culminated in the 2010 constitution, which provided the framework for devolution in the country. Devolution was thus considered transformative in restructuring Kenya's administrative and political landscape, and subsequently good governance. This paper therefore examines the effectiveness of devolution in promoting good governance in Kenya. The paper attains this objective by evaluating whether or not devolution has promoted the principles of good governance in Kenya. The study is premised on democratic theory, and adopts a qualitative research approach that underlines non-numerical data. Drawing on the primary and secondary data, the paper offers a nuanced analysis on the extent to which devolution has delivered on its promise of promoting good governance in Kenya. The findings of this study will be pertinent in not only promoting academic discourse, but also in re-examining devolution and good governance in Kenya.



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Abstract

Constitutionalism in an Era of Populism: Lessons from Raila Odinga's Reform Struggles for Strengthening Democratic Institutions in Africa

Isaac Aliowaku & Dr. Japheth Kwiringira, PhD.

Populism has re-emerged as a defining force in African political landscapes, unsettling constitutional democracies and exposing the fragility of institutions tasked with safeguarding the rule of law. This paper examines how Raila Odinga's long-standing reform efforts in Kenya, spanning constitutional referenda, electoral justice campaigns, civic mobilization, and demands for institutional accountability, offer continent-wide lessons for strengthening democratic institutions in the face of rising populist pressures. Although Odinga's activism has been widely discussed in political histories and electoral analyses, a critical scholarly gap persists: few studies meaningfully translate his reformist strategies into a broader African framework capable of reinforcing constitutional resilience. Existing literature often focuses on Kenya's electoral controversies or Odinga's opposition politics, yet rarely interrogates how his decades-long reform trajectory can inform continental responses to the current wave of populist politics. To bridge this gap, the study employs a comparative qualitative methodology using Odinga as a paradigmatic case of post-Cold War constitutional reform leadership. It combines historical-institutional analysis to trace his contribution to constitutionalism from the 1990s pro-democracy struggles through the 2010 constitutional transition and his recent African Union engagements; process-tracing to illuminate how his strategies coalition-building, legal mobilization, and civic engagement have shaped reform outcomes during moments of institutional contestation; and comparative cross-country analysis of selected African cases, including Zambia, South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda, to assess the wider applicability of his reformist approaches to contexts experiencing democratic backsliding or populist capture. The paper argues that Odinga's reform struggles yield three critical insights for reinforcing constitutional democracy in Africa: the indispensability of civic agency in resisting populist overreach; the need for constitutional safeguards to be embedded in political culture rather than merely codified in legal texts; and the strategic role of opposition-led reform coalitions in expanding democratic space and confronting executive dominance. By reframing Odinga's legacy as a strategic, adaptable blueprint rather than a uniquely Kenyan narrative, the study proposes a continental model for institutional fortification, electoral accountability, and democratic resilience. Ultimately, it contributes to global debates on constitutionalism by advancing an African-centred perspective that challenges Euro-American assumptions about how societies withstand and negotiate the pressures of populism.

Key Words: Constitutionalism; Populism; Democratic Reform; Raila Odinga.