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This article engages the debate on state legitimacy and fragility in Africa. It analyses the historical and empirical challenges to state legitimacy and how they relate to constructions of institutional channels of political participation in Africa.
on the continent. The study challenges mainstream western-centric explanations that sweepingly attribute fragility and legitimacy deficits to virtually all African states (with the possible exception of post-apartheid South Africa). The author argues that within the analytical framework of the fragile state paradigm, problems and challenges of state legitimacy in Africa tend to essentially and variedly affect three different categories of states; (i) conflict-prone, (ii) war-torn, and (ii) post-conflict societies. The paper concludes by critically examining dominant strategies mostly canvassed and pursued by the international community on how to (re-)build state legitimacy in Africa.

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