The Fight for Democracy

Young Continent, Old Rulers

What Does the Future Hold for Democracy in Africa?

Mathias Kamp

The African 2016 "super election year" made both positive and negative headlines and demonstrated the heterogeneous paths the development of democracy is taking in Africa. Bearing in mind that many elections lacked democratic quality, and given that authoritarian tendencies are on the rise in numerous countries, one cannot speak of progress on the whole. The future development of African democracy will depend on various external and internal factors, which, while entailing certain risks to stability, will ultimately provide opportunities to provide new democratic incentives.

———

In Germany, Africa's public image tends to oscillate between that of a continent in crisis and prospects. Generally the pessimists are in the majority, as is seemingly the case in current discussions about the state of democracy on the continent. Recently, there has been increasing talk of a "democratic recession". Indeed, for all the heterogeneity and contradictions, negative trends predominate in the current development of democracy.

With some exceptions, the search for consolidated democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa[1] remains unsuccessful. Instead, there is a mix of authoritarian regimes, hybrid systems as well as a very few solid democracies. And that is the case although the continent did, in fact, undergo a great democratic awakening from the long-term, historical perspective. Particularly in the 1990s, democratisation and liberalisation made great strides. But the mere presence of superficially democratic institutions and elections being held do not in themselves say a great deal about the quality of democratic governance.

To gain a first impression of the state of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is helpful to examine the main indices. The latest issue of the annual Freedom in the World Report (2016 figures) published by Freedom House only rates nine of the 49 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa as "free". A further 21 are classified as "partly free" and a similar number "not free". Of the

ten countries worldwide whose index rating had declined most significantly, half are in Sub-Saharan Africa.[2]

The "Democracy Index 2016" of the Economist Intelligence Unit only identified one "full democracy" in Sub-Saharan Africa, namely Mauritius. Of the 44 countries surveyed, seven are categorised as "flawed democracies", 13 as "hybrid regimes" and 23 – that is more than half – as "authoritarian regimes".[3]

Both reports have estimated the development of democracy and political freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa to be ranging between stagnation and regression over the last few years. Investigations conducted by the foundation of the British-Sudanese telecoms pioneer Mo Ibrahim have come to similar conclusions. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance has been tracking the democratic development of all 54 African countries since 2006. Once again, the results make rather sobering reading. Although 37 of the 54 countries showed some improvement in overall governance over the period from 2006 to 2016, the average rating for all countries surveyed was a mere 50 out of a possible 100 points. Compared to 2006, this average increased by just one point, indicating stagnation rather than significant progress.[4] The Mo Ibrahim Foundation does, in fact, have another instrument: an annual prize, which includes a highly-remunerated award, for former African heads of state who have excelled in

exemplary democratic governance throughout their term in office and then resigned in a dignified manner. However, the prize has only been awarded four times in the last ten years. For the rest of the years, the jury could not identify a single worthy laureate on the entire continent. This is undoubtedly another telling indication of the state of democracy in Africa.

A great majority of the African population shares democratic values.

——

But what about the people's stance towards democracy? Despite all prophecies of doom, democratic values are also shared by the great majority of people in Africa. Surveys conducted by the Afrobarometer network show that over two-thirds of African citizens (71 per cent) support democracy. However, the same surveys also indicate a discrepancy between demand and supply with respect to democracy: fewer than half (48 per cent) of the population felt they were living in a democracy; even fewer (43 per cent) were happy with the performance of democracy.[5]

"Tunnel Vision" on Elections?

To gain a better understanding of current developments in addition to what can be learned from the general rankings, it is worth taking a brief glance at the events of the "African super election year" of 2016. Presidential elections were scheduled in no fewer than 16 African states for that year. Six new presidents were elected into office, nine incumbents were confirmed in their post. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the election was postponed under controversial circumstances.

In most cases, the elections were influenced by similar developments: harassment against the opposition and critical media, allegations of manipulation, public protests, and the opposition's refusal to accept the results. Such trends

could be observed in connection with the elections in Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger and Chad, among others, as well as, rather surprisingly, in Zambia, a country that had been considered a beacon of democratic development for a long time. Positive examples were the exception, Ghana and Benin were among them. In both countries, well-organised, free and fair elections brought about a democratic change of government.

The presidential elections in the miniature state of the Gambia made headlines around the world. There, the admission of defeat of the eccentric President Yahya Jammeh, who had governed the country in dictatorial fashion long-time, elicited temporary jubilation about a "signal of strengthening democracy". But Jammeh reversed his decision a few days later and sent the army onto the streets. Ultimately, external intervention by the regional organisation ECOWAS and Senegalese troops was required to remove him from power.

All in all, the events of the 2016 election year suggest that the quality of elections is backsliding in Africa. Apart from a few positive exceptions, the competitive conditions become more difficult for the opposition, the scope of action for the media and civil society is shrinking, and political tensions and conflicts in connection with elections appear to be increasing.

Even where elections meet the minimum standards of freedom and fairness, they do not necessarily translate into a democracy beyond pure formalities. A substantial understanding of democracy includes strong democratic institutions and the separation of powers, the safeguarding of political and civil liberties, social equity, inclusive participation opportunities, and scope for a free and independent press and civil society to operate. But in diplomatic circles and among people involved in development cooperation, there is still a disproportionate focus on elections as an indicator of democracy. Yet this focus does not sufficiently consider the complex dynamics in the African countries. Furthermore, many of the (semi-)authoritarian rulers have

long since become wily and learnt how to influence elections to their advantage and use them as an instrument for retaining and legitimising their power. In many of the so-called "defective" democracies in Africa, the elections are at best controversial, in some cases descending into a total farce.

In its report on Electoral Integrity in Africa, the Electoral Integrity Project states that the degree of electoral integrity is lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa in comparison to all other regions of the world. While the types of problems associated with elections are similar everywhere, nowhere are the threats to electoral integrity greater than in Africa. During the period covered by the report, from 2012 to 2015, over half of the elections organised in Africa (22 out of 38) were either flawed or failed entirely.[6] A view at the elections held in 2016 confirms this picture.

Democracies or Hybrid Regimes?

When you stop focusing entirely on elections and turn to the elements of a substantial democracy, determining trends and characteristics within the heterogeneous group of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa becomes even more difficult. It is impossible to adequately describe the state of democracy in 49 states in all its facets briefly. But as the references to the established rankings have shown, one can at least try to divide the political systems in Africa into several rough categories. It is probably easiest to identify the consolidated democracies and the closed authoritarian regimes. The most difficult task will be describing the many hybrid forms existing in Africa.

The number of consolidated, substantial democracies in Africa is very low. In the various rankings based on governance quality, Africa's smallest states regularly make it to the top: the island states of Mauritius and Cape Verde as well as sparsely populated Botswana are considered models of African democracy.

At the other end of the spectrum are countries in crisis such as Somalia and South Sudan, where there can be hardly spoken of democratic governance due to conflict, a failing state and little prospect of political stabilisation along with obvious dictatorships, such as Sudan and Eritrea.

In most African countries, democratic and authoritarian tendencies mix.

——

In between come the great majority of African countries, where democratic and authoritarian tendencies mix – in varying configurations. These hybrid forms are generally considered lesser variants of democracy and consequently described as "flawed democracies", "façade democracies" or "illiberal democracies". Scientists Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way criticise the use of the term democracy with an adjective in these cases as inappropriate. They believe that instead of speaking about lesser or flawed variants of democracy, one should consider the regimes as more moderate variants of authoritarianism in most cases.[7]

It is interesting to see that more or less authoritarian rulers also are keen to present themselves as democrats to the outside world. In discussions on the performance and acceptance of democracy in Africa – also by comparison with alternatives (in this context eyes frequently turn towards China in Africa) – people often fail to realise that while referring to "democracy" they are really talking about something else in relation to the respective regime. In most cases, it comes down to a combination of a rhetorical allegiance to democracy and the existence of certain formally democratic institutions on the one hand and a fundamentally illiberal or even authoritarian exercise of power on the other. The term "hybrid regime" has become established for such mixed forms, particularly in the Anglophone sphere. This is preferable to the term defekte Demokratien, meaning defective democracies, which German speakers tend to use. This latter terminology leads to an inflationary (and often mistaken) use of the label

"democracy" on one side while suggesting that there are indeed democracies without any flaws (an assumption that is open to dispute in view of the current discussions about the state of Western consolidated democracies).

Typical Characteristics of Hybrid Systems in Africa

Despite all the diversity and complexity, there are several identifiable widespread characteristics of hybrid systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, which may be of help in explaining the weakness of democratic governance in many countries:

- Weak institutions: Democratic and constitutional institutions, particularly parliaments, are frequently too weak in reality to perform their supervisory functions effectively. This is partly due to the manner the mostly presidential systems operate and the fact that the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances are being undermined, but partly also due to the institutions lacking funding and human resources. In some cases, the governing party holds the absolute majority in parliament, turning it into a mere body of "nodding-orders-through".

- Dominance of the executive: In many African countries, the government institutions are characterised by the dominance of the executive and a concentration of power in the president's hands. This is sometimes exacerbated by the principles of the rule of law being undermined. Particularly in countries with long-serving rulers or single-party dominance, the dividing lines are frequently blurred and there are noticeable overlaps between state apparatus, government, party and the military.

- Personalisation of power: In many African states a strong leadership figure is at the head, towards whom the entire state apparatus is adjusted and who is at the centre of a patronage network. Political power is consequently seen more or less as a personal possession. The "strong man" at the top frequently stands above the law, in actual fact or at least in public perception.

- Corruption and lack of transparency: Nepotism, patronage and a weak rule of law pave the way for widespread corruption. In such a climate, state resources are used less to serve the general good and more to enrich the elites and reward political loyalty. This is frequently encouraged by a lack of transparency

Not every vote counts: Free and fair elections are still an exception on the African continent. Source: © Joe Penney, Reuters.

and accountability. The required control mechanisms are usually missing and freedom of information is hardly guaranteed.

- Weak and inefficient state bureaucracies: Nepotism and patronage also have an impact on the state apparatus. There are frequently bloated, inefficient bureaucratic structures in place, where posts are not assigned on the basis of ability but for the purpose of taking care of, rewarding or co-opting people. The

costs for these structures can become a great burden on the national budget. In parallel to the formal structures, informal networks and evasion strategies play an important role.

- Dominance of the military: Long-term instability and experiences of historic conflict frequently form a backdrop to and provide justification for the dominance of the security doctrine and military influence. Many African heads of state and government come

from a military background themselves. Nicholas Cheeseman, a professor of democracy, has calculated that between 1989 and 2016 as many as 45 per cent of 91 African presidents and prime ministers in civilian governments had either served in the military or operated as guerrilla fighters before their political career.[8]

- Weak political parties: Many parties in Africa – with the respective dominant governing party being the exception in many cases – are poorly institutionalised and only fulfil their democratic functions to a limited degree. For one thing, many opposition parties are hampered by the restrictive rules applying to political activities, and then there are a number of internal factors in play. These include the frequently poor promotion of the party's ideology and program, a lack of internal democracy and weak internal structures as well as a high degree of personalisation. Parties also suffer from the same tendency towards patronage and nepotism as other areas of society. The party landscape is also frequently fragmented and strongly dominated by regional and ethnic identities.

**Young Continent, Old Rulers:
The Phenomenon of Long-Serving
Presidents**

Africa is by far the youngest continent. The ten countries with the globally youngest populations are all in Africa. Average age is below twenty. The striking observation: this contrasts with a long line of aging rulers, many of them long-serving presidents.

There are two record holders among the African rulers: at 93, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe is the oldest head of state in office worldwide. He has ruled Zimbabwe since 1980 and has been the country's only president since independence. The record for the longest time in office is held by Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who has been in power in Equatorial Guinea for 38 years. He is followed closely by Eduardo dos Santos, the Angolan president, who came to

power the same year (1979). But several other presidents do not lag far behind: Paul Biya has been ruling Cameroon since 1982 and Yoweri Museveni has been in power in Uganda since 1986. Long-serving presidents are also holding on to power in Chad, the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

On the youngest continent in the world, a number of aging long-serving presidents are in power.

———

The fact that presidents can remain in power for so long is partly due to the above-mentioned weaknesses of the democratic institutions and processes in many African states. It is hardly surprising that the established studies and indices mostly attest those countries a better quality of democratic governance where a democratic handover of power has taken place or has even become the norm. But those countries where elections ultimately only serve to confirm the incumbent ruler in their office also demonstrate blatant deficiencies where the principles and liberties of democracy and the rule of law are concerned.

In those countries, the main strategic goal of politics is to maintain power (politics of regime survival). On the face of it, this does not necessarily have to be detrimental to the common good. After all, such a strategy can entail efforts to secure voter support by providing decent state services to the obvious benefit of the country's citizens. But things are usually different in practice. Studies have shown that countries with long-serving rulers – with a small number of exceptions such as Rwanda – also tend to decline in areas measured by development indicators.

A study conducted by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), for instance, described the consequences of the growing number of long-time presidencies as "devastating": "This does not only apply

retrospectively in relation to the violent past of many African states. Present-day long-time presidencies are also characterised above all by corruption, poor economic performance, low levels of human development, authoritarianism and structural instability."[9]

Outstanding performance can therefore hardly be the crucial factor keeping long-serving presidents in office. If anything, personal charisma and respect for historic achievements may play a role. Presidents like Mugabe and Museveni still enjoy being celebrated for their status as "liberators".

Besides the general craving for authority and prestige, the aspiration of holding onto power is reinforced by a number of factors in the African context. In many African countries, access to power equals access to economic resources, all the more in the numerous de-facto rentier economies. The concentration of power makes the presidential office the central key. Excessive presidentialism and a majority voting system which fosters the 'winner takes all' mentality render political competition a zero-sum game. Coming to a political compromise, inclusive government configurations, let alone power sharing are thereby made more difficult.[10] In the context of neopatrimonialism, access to power also provides the wherewithal to supply clientelism-networks with positions and material incentives. Supporting the strong leader at the top also benefits an extended circle of the political elite; after all, it guarantees them personal security, offices and privileges and, ultimately, protection against potential prosecution for corrupt practices.

The Toolbox for Regime Survival

The incumbent bonus is a ubiquitous phenomenon during elections, but appears to have a particularly strong impact in the African context. While elections have become part of the norm, they do not generally result in a democratic change at the top in Africa. On average, the incumbent wins in 85 per cent of presidential elections, provided they (are allowed to) stand for election.[11]

Several factors can explain this trend: the massive advantages enjoyed by the current ruler resulting from the configuration of the political system, the structural weaknesses of the opposition, manipulation of the elections or of the political competition as well as general tendencies of authoritarianism and the restriction of political freedoms.

Even without massive vote-rigging on election day itself, the incumbent often has unfair advantages and many possibilities of manipulating the political competition to his own benefit in more or less subtle ways. One particularly helpful advantage is the utilisation of the state apparatus and state resources by the incumbent or the relevant government party in the election campaign and beyond. And the lack of transparency and constitutional control mechanisms in many cases make the misuse of state resources particularly easy.

Important democratic institutions such as the judicial apparatus frequently do not provide the necessary counterweight, while security forces, such as the military and the police, mostly act in line with the incumbent's interests or are deployed by them specifically to crack down on opponents. The electoral commission is usually also under the incumbent's de-facto control, and in many cases he appoints its members.

Media reporting is often biased in favour of the incumbent, not only through their use of the state media but also due to the state actively influencing private and independent media.

Opposition candidates and election campaigners are frequently subjected to massive harassment. This includes campaigning appearances being prevented, opposition activists being arrested more or less arbitrarily, and campaigning materials being confiscated. Occasionally, this goes as far as presidential candidates from the opposition landing in jail on dubious charges – as recently occurred in Niger and Uganda.

The influence of the politics of regime survival can also be seen in general tendencies to restrict

Colourful water cannons: Oppositional powers have to fight in many countries – like here in Uganda – against considerable reprisals. Source: © James Akena, Reuters.

political liberties even outside electioneering periods. This affects critical media and civil society in particular. In this context, the respective governments also make use of legislative means, for example by adopting restrictive laws to regulate media and non-governmental organisations. Many African countries have, for instance, recently adopted laws that massively curb the funding and registration of NGOs. This is aggravated by the fact that there are new laws that restrict freedom of assembly. Examples

include the Public Order Act in Zambia and the Public Order Management Act in Uganda. Both made it easier for the government and security services to prohibit or break up undesirable demonstrations or opposition events.

Of course incumbents also benefit from the weakness of the respective opposition parties as is frequently in evidence. The parties suffer not only from funding problems (there is usually no or only rudimentary party or campaign

funding provided by the state) but also from weaknesses in terms of organisation, strategy, personnel and policy content. Added to this is the fact that there are hardly any ways for the parties to promote themselves at a local level because of the centralist structuring of most of the African states. A survey by Afrobarometer from 2014/2015 showed that opposition parties received the lowest trust ratings of all essential democratic institutions.[12]

The proliferating use of the Internet and social media represents a new challenge. While these offer opportunities to network, exchange information, organise opposition and reach out to the public, many African governments appear to respond with apprehension. Last year, there were, for instance, no fewer than four cases (Uganda, Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Chad) where access to the Internet or social media, as e.g. Facebook and Twitter, was blocked during election time. Cameroon is cur- Recently Cameroon was in the headlines due to weeks of a total block on Internet access in the Anglophone regions of the country after the outbreak of anti-government protests there.

Term Limits vs. Permanent Hold onto Power

One important tool to curb the above-described tendencies to hold onto power at any price consists of term limits, which are also common in many presidential democracies outside Africa.

Term limits minimise the described advantages of incumbency and prevent elected presidents from holding onto power indefinitely in view of the tendencies towards abuse of power and manipulation of political competition. The point of limiting the terms in office is to ensure a healthy rate of regular change at the top. At least theoretically, it is also meant to prevent corrupt and networks of clientelism from becoming entrenched. In the course of the period of liberalisation and democratisation during the 1990s, corresponding clauses were enshrined in the constitutions of over 30 African countries. Generally, the time in office is restricted to two terms. But over time,

these rules have come increasingly under pressure. More and more incumbents are querying the constitutional barriers to a third term. Between 1999 and 2016, there were a total of 18 attempts by incumbents to amend the constitution to be able to extend their time in office. Twelve of these attempts were successful – and in all twelve cases, the incumbents did, in fact, go on to win the elections.

In some countries, the incumbents found it relatively easy to secure the constitutional amendments to remove the term limits, particularly as the respective governing party usually had the majority in the country's parliament. In some cases, as most recently in Rwanda and the Republic of the Congo, the relevant constitutional amendments were legitimised via a referendum. In Uganda, on the other hand, the removal of the term limits was "piggy-backed" onto the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in 2006. In other countries, the attempts proved more difficult and even triggered some serious political crises. One case in point is Burundi, where President Pierre Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third term led to massive protests, ethnic tensions, an election boycott and a failed coup attempt by the military, taking the country to the brink of civil war.

But there are some positive examples, too. In Malawi (2002), Nigeria (2006) and Zambia (2001), the respective parliament opposed a constitutional amendment. In Senegal, voters punished President Abdoulaye Wade, who had to relinquish his office after standing for a third term without a constitutional amendment, which he was able to do because of some legal loopholes despite term limits being in place. The downfall of President Blaise Compaoré, who had governed Burkina Faso for 27 years, aroused particular attention. Contrary to many of his colleagues on the continent, he miscalculated when he attempted to ease the term limits via a constitutional amendment in 2014. Country-wide mass protests and demonstrations ultimately resulted in the army removing the president from office, a civilian transitional government being put in his place and the election

of a new president in 2015. The elections, which were peaceful and attracted praise from observers, marked a turning point in the country's democratic development.

Many observers regard the – sometimes more, sometimes less successful – protests in many countries against attempts to remove the term limits as an indication of an increasing political awareness among the population. The growing pressure on Africa's long-serving presidents does indeed predominantly come from the people themselves rather than from outside. Surveys conducted by Afrobarometer have found that in Africa, three-quarters of the population on average are in favour of term limits.[13]

Even though they represent an important tool, term limits alone, of course, do not guarantee democratic change. Mozambique and Tanzania, for instance, demonstrate that the upholding of term limits does not necessarily prevent single-party dominance. In these countries, the same parties have been in power continuously since independence, namely FRELIMO in Mozambique and *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) in Tanzania.

Main Trends and Influencing Factors: Where Does the Journey Take Democracy in Africa?

Considering the complex dynamics, it is difficult to provide a clear prognosis for democracy in Africa. That said, a number of key trends and influencing factors are becoming apparent, which will all have a significant impact on future developments:

1. Demographic Development

Population growth in Africa is continuing unabated. According to forecasts, the population number of roughly one billion is set to double between now and 2050. Consequently, the population is becoming ever younger. Over half of all Africans are under 14 today already.

This trend entails opportunities and risks. On the one hand, the young population offers a great deal of innovative strength. And the younger generation may exert stronger pro-democratic pressure; there are definitely signs of the necessary political awareness growing. At the same time, many countries will reach the limits of their capability to guarantee their growing population appropriate developmental progress. If this progress fails to materialise, the relevant political systems may come under increasing pressure and ultimately suffer a legitimisation crisis. If the people's frustration were to boil over, that would inevitably make for political instability. To prevent this from happening, job opportunities and opportunities for participation must be provided for the young in particular. Youth participation will increasingly become a key issue for democratic development in Africa.

2. Economic Development

After a phase of euphoria about the supposed "African economic miracle", disillusionment makes itself felt. Declining demand from China and falling natural resource prices have had a serious impact on African economies, many of which are overly reliant on the export of a limited range of natural resources. But the growth forecasts for the continent as a whole remain positive, albeit seen with a view that focuses rather on the long-term perspective than has been usual to date.

These circumstances are not necessarily detrimental to democratic development. As African governments become more aware of the need for economic diversification, this could result in more inclusive growth. Most Africans have felt little benefit from the economic upturn to date as the focus on natural resource exports has hardly generated any added value or jobs domestically. Instead, it is first and foremost a small elite that has benefited financially. Diversification could also mean that the currently still rather small African middle class would grow significantly. Experiences from other countries have shown that a growing middle class can have a positive

Old presidents: The growing number of long-term rulers has devastating consequences for the continent – some have been holding on to their power for decades. Source: © Carlo Allegri, Reuters.

impact on democratic development. Growing prosperity favours democracy. Conversely, the rule of law and democratic governance encourage sustainable and inclusive forms of economic activity. In an ideal scenario, growth and diversification on one side and democratic progress on the other could reinforce one another in Africa. But in many countries, it is unlikely that this will materialise without greater pressure from their own populations.

3. Urbanisation

Not only is the African population undergoing dramatic growth, it is also set to become increasingly urban in future. The growth of cities and the rural exodus will mean that around half of the African population will probably live in urban areas within twenty years from now. That may make it more difficult for many governments to hold onto power by dint of the usual

methods. The urban population is generally better informed, better networked and more critical. It is therefore no wonder that there is considerably more support for opposition forces in the cities in most countries.

4. Digitisation

Of course, rapid technical progress and digitisation have not bypassed the African continent. People are increasingly better informed thanks to mobile communication and the Internet – and this includes global developments. The diversity of methods and sources for obtaining information raises political awareness and makes it more difficult for governments to manipulate public perception. Social media also offer networking opportunities that civil society, social movements and opposition forces in particular can use to their advantage. The potential in this area is still nowhere near being fully exploited in Africa. With the impending increase in Internet penetration and decreasing costs for online access and smart devices, the proliferation and utilisation of the possibilities will expand massively. This entails huge opportunities for democratic development. Yet, African governments are adapting to this trend as well, for instance by increasing investments in digital monitoring and by adopting laws to impose stronger regulation. In extreme cases, online access and social networks are simply blocked, as was recently the case in Uganda, Cameroon and some other African countries.

5. The China Factor

China's influence in Africa has grown significantly over the last decade. Making rapid and massive investments, China has outstripped Western actors in many areas and has risen to become the continent's most important trading partner. In doing so, China is not very discerning in its choice of partners when it comes to matters of democracy and human rights and, in line with its sovereignty doctrine, applies few political conditionality. Being able to turn to China as an alternative has strengthened the self-confidence of many African governments in their dealings with Western donors. And yet, China's dominance and particularly its political influence should not be overstated. It is not in China's interest to become the first port of call for authoritarian regimes seeking an injection of funds. Instead, it is taking a pragmatic stance and looking for investment opportunities and sales markets. Also, there is growing criticism in many African countries about the rapid investments from China as people become more aware of the growing debt these involve. And reservations against cheap Chinese imports and Chinese-led infrastructure projects are increasing among the population as these generate little added value or jobs locally.

Furthermore, consideration of the Chinese way as an alternative development and governance model is rather a rhetorical exercise in most cases; in practice, it is only seen as a genuine option for serious implementation in very few exceptional cases.

6. Western Influence

Western actors remain important partners for Africa although they may have lost in credibility and partly also in influence. Generally, the West is considered too complicated in its development cooperation, too incoherent and inconsistent in the exertion of political influence and too restrained where investments are concerned. The handling of the financial crisis, the problems within the European Union and the Brexit decision as well as the rise of populist and illiberal forces have in African perception resulted in a loss of credibility and raised doubts about Western democracy as a model of success. Of course, Donald Trump's early days as US president were watched with particular interest in Africa as well. To date, there is still no indication as to what the future Africa policy of the United States will look like; but one can hardly assume greater engagement in the areas of democracy and human rights. The numerous African autocrats and pseudo-democrats would no doubt be relieved to receive less pressure and interference from Washington.

7. Security and Terrorism

The security risks resulting from terrorism and armed conflicts on the continent exert considerable impact on democratic development. Not only do conflicts and violence affect political stability directly and undermine the exertion of democratic governance. The dominance of security aspects can also weaken democracy indirectly. In a number of African countries, the fight against terrorism is thus used as a pretext for restricting personal and political freedoms. Conflicts and instability further the already strong dominance of the military in many countries on the continent. And the rightly increased focus on security policy and the fight against terrorism on the part of the Western partners sometimes results in contradictions, for instance when lower democratic standards are accepted in dealings with partners who are strategically relevant in these areas.

The Western partners have lost credibility and influence in Africa.

—

Coherent Advocacy for Democracy

Despite the importance of numerous external factors, the development of democracy in Africa ultimately depends on the population of the respective countries. The population will become increasingly younger as well as generally more prosperous and urban, better educated and better networked; but probably also more critical and more frustrated. This is bad news for many governments and above all for the "old guard" of the long-serving rulers, but good news for democracy – at least in the long term.

The situation is clear: there is a great demand for democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, and there is no adequate supply. The majority of the African population supports universal human rights and democratic standards – and not a "special African way". This important fundamental truth

should not be ignored. There are numerous different ways for external partners from Europe and particularly from Germany to promote democracy. These include measures to foster the free media and civil society and to strengthen citizenship through political education as well as specific measures to foster important democratic institutions: strong parliaments, an independent judiciary, political parties. The latter have been sorely neglected all too frequently in the efforts to further democracy, apart from the work done by the political foundations. But especially where young people are concerned, one must take into account that they tend to seek participation increasingly via non-traditional means and appear to shy away from involvement in political parties, for example. In this scenario, new options must be explored, such as the use of social media and the dynamics of social movements. For external actors, however, engagement for the purpose of promoting democracy and political rights and liberties is becoming increasingly more difficult. Such efforts are a thorn in the side of many (semi-) authoritarian regimes, which are increasingly developing counter-strategies. It is therefore no surprise that recent measures to limit the scope of political action – for instance through stricter regulation of civil society engagement – are no longer aimed just at domestic targets but increasingly also at external actors such as international human rights organisations and political foundations.

It will therefore become all the more important to develop and consistently apply stronger coherent approaches to further democracy. This is not incompatible with a pluralism of measures and instruments. Instead, there is a need to not only recognise the links between foreign, economic, development and security policies, but to utilise them systematically – not only out of idealism and a feeling of responsibility but also in the interests of Germany and Europe entirely.

Promoting democracy as the key element of engagement in Africa is based on the conviction – and empirical findings – that democracies are better guarantors of peace and prosperity in the long term. Warnings of potentially destabilising

effects of democratisation should not serve as an argument against promoting democracy. It is the above-described hybrid regimes forming the majority on the African continent which harbour the greatest risks to stability. That is also where the fragility of the state and the threat of conflict are most immense. At the same time, they are also the countries where there are the greatest possibilities for measures to further democracy. Such measures should above all be aimed at encouraging social pluralism and political participation while simultaneously strengthening capabilities in the area of conflict resolution to prevent escalations.

Promoting democracy is becoming more difficult in Africa for external actors.

———

In the short term, the current trends could definitely mean greater instability, particularly if autocratic governments see themselves confronted by a frustrated and protesting population and respond with greater repression. This may make some Western observers uncomfortable, but in view of the dominant issue of refugees and migration, promoting stability is a central concern. How things will develop depends above all on the ways in which the frustration will be vented and on whether pro-democratic pressure can be guided into constructive channels. The motto should be: less revolution, more (democratic) evolution.

The African continent is currently attracting special interest in connection with the ongoing refugee debate. This attention is important and offers great opportunities. Interest in promoting democracy on the one hand and aspects such as the fight against terrorism and curbing refugee movements on the other only appear to entail conflicting goals when seen from a very short-term perspective. Germany's Africa policy appears to be in a state of re-orientation. The pressing problems and the observed lack of success of development cooperation in the past seems to bring about a desire for a new comprehensive approach. This is reflected in the rhetorically ambitious "Marshallplan with Africa" of the German Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ) and the "Compact with Africa" -initiative of the German Finance Ministry. The latter is connected to the current G20 presidency, during which Germany is making "Partnership with Africa" a key point on the agenda. This focus provides a good opportunity to generate some important impulses for the international engagement to further democracy in Africa. In the "Marshallplan" of the BMZ the aspect of democracy and rule of law is highlighted as one of three key pillars. But just like in the "Compact with Africa", the emphasis is mostly on the relevance of political framework conditions for private investment. Creating this linkage is right and important. However, it also comes with the risk of a narrow understanding of the complexity of democratic development. Democracy promotion should not just be seen as a short-term means to economic ends, but rather as an integral and long-term oriented component of development cooperation with African states.

———

Mathias Kamp is Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's office in Uganda.

1   The following text relates to the 49 countries
    in Sub-Saharan Africa (i.e. excluding the Arab
    countries of North Africa).
2   Cf. Puddington, Arch / Roylance, Tyler 2017:
    Freedom in the World 2017: Populists and
    Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy,
    in: http://bit.ly/2r1OjeJ [26 Apr 2017].
3   Cf. The Economist Intelligence Unit 2016:
    Democracy Index 2016. Revenge of the "deplorables",
    in: http://eiu.com/topic/democracy-index
    [26 Apr 2017].
4   Cf. Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2016: A Decade of
    African Government 2006-2015. 2016 Ibrahim
    Index of African Governance (IIAG), in:
    http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag [26 Apr 2017].
5   Cf. Bratton, Michael / Houessou, Richard 2014:
    Demand for democracy is rising in Africa, but
    most political leaders fail to deliver, Policy Paper
    11, Afrobarometer, 23 Apr 2014, in: http://bit.ly/
    2r8I7FN [24 Mar 2017].
6   Cf. Grömping, Max / Martínez i Coma, Ferran 2015:
    Electoral Integrity in Africa, Electoral Integrity
    Project / Hanns Seidel Stiftung, in:
    http://bit.ly/2rTjWs5 [24 Mar 2017].
7   Levitsky, Steven / Way, Lucan 2002: The Rise
    of Competitive Authoritarianism, In: Journal of
    Democracy 13: 2, pp. 51-66, here: p. 52.
8   The Economist 2016: The march of democracy
    slows, 20 Aug 2016, in: http://econ.st/2t1uBA1
    [26 Apr 2017].
9   Simons, Claudia / Tull, Denis M. 2015: Grenzen der
    Macht? Amtszeitbeschränkungen in Afrika, SWP-
    Studie, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Mar 2015,
    p. 6, in: http://bit.ly/2slmIsR [9 Jun 2017].
10 Cf. Zamfir, Ionel 2016: Democracy in Africa. Power
    alternation and presidential term limits. European
    Parliamentary Research Service, Briefing April
    2016, in: http://bit.ly/2s3GyIa [26 Apr 2017].
11 Simons / Tull, n. 9, p. 10.
12 Bratton, Michael / Logan, Carolyn 2015:
    Afrobarometer: The viability of opposition in Africa:
    Popular views. Policy Paper No. 26, August 2015, in:
    http://bit.ly/2s3nsCa [26 Mar 2017].
13 Cf. Dulani, Boniface 2015: Afrobarometer: African
    publics strongly support term limits, resist leaders'
    efforts to extend their tenure. No. 30, May 2015, in:
    http://bit.ly/2sbfjMK [26 Apr 2017].