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Democracy in Africa

Past, Present and Future

Introduction

1. A brief overview of the impact of European intervention in Africa
2. The struggle of the African peoples for self-determination
3. The challenges of democracy in Africa
4. The prospects for democratic governance

Impact of European Intervention in Africa

Europe and Africa have been in contact since ancient times.

This relationship has not always been positive:

- The slave trade
- The colonial project
- The Cold War



Map 1: Colonial partition of Africa

**Berlin Conference (1884-5)
divided Africa among:**

1. Belgium
2. Britain
3. France
4. Germany
5. Italy
6. Portugal
7. Spain

Europe-Africa Strategic Partnership

1. Peace and Security
2. Democratic Governance and Human Rights
3. Trade, Regional Integration & Infrastructure
4. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
5. Energy
6. Climate Change and Environment
7. Migration, Mobility and Employment
8. Science, Information Society and Technology

2. Struggle for Self-Determination

The principles of self-determination signifies the political right of:

1. A nation to independence
2. A people to a government of their choice
3. Diverse groups within a nation to cultural autonomy

Nature of the Postcolonial African State

1. Former colonies became independent States
2. An implant of the European State system in Africa
3. New national political elites:
 - Replicated the colonial State
 - Entrenched its centralised, authoritarian and predatory features
 - Were “*Black Skin, White Masks*” (Frantz Fanon)
 - Abandoned initial goals: focused on self-service and staying in power at any cost
 - Failed to deliver *freedom, democracy and prosperity*

3. Challenges of Democracy in Africa

Two paradigms dominate the debate on the nature of the State in Africa:

The 1st rationalises the relevance of the European State system

The 2nd attributes the cause for the crisis of the African State to its European origin

Need for a 3rd paradigm that locates the cause of the crisis on State policy & practice.

Untenable to blame the colonial legacy after 60+ years of independence.

Only ownership of the problem would enable ownership of the solution.

Meaning of Democracy

No “one size fits all” formula: democracy means many things to many people.

For example:

- Traditional African democracy, liberal democracy, socialist democracy, communist democracy, or guided democracy.
- Liberal Democracy: political right vs. political left: Liberal State vs. Social State

Essential Principles:

1. Rule of law
2. Respect for fundamental freedoms
3. Protection of basic rights, inc. minority rights
4. Popular participation in the governance process
5. Transparency and accountability in public policy and decision making, inc. in the management of State assets and national resources.

Three Basic Attributes

Democracy is an end and a means

Democracy is a process

Democracy is a form of politics based on universal principles

Prospects for Democratic Governance in Africa



54 Countries

Difference colonial legacies

Varied political systems

Area of 30.3 million km²

> 2,000 languages

> 8,000 traditional polities

Map 2: Contemporary Africa

Conclusion

Key Elements for Democratisation in Africa

1. Economic development with deconcentrated distribution of national resources.
2. Universal secular civic education to nurture an enlightened citizenship
3. Home-grown, inclusive and people-centred national pro-democracy effort
4. Proactive international support for national pro-democracy forces

Thank you!