



Metis



Study

Africa – a continent on the rise?

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Summary

The 21st century belongs to Africa. At least that is what the concept of an “African Renaissance” promises. The African continent is going through a phase of transition and new beginnings. It would be in their own best interest for Germany and Europe to continue to support sustainable economic

development and prosperity, political stabilisation, self-organisation and further democratisation as well as environmental protection in Africa. Empowering and supporting African states without fostering neo-colonial dependencies should be the primary objective of German and European Africa policy.

“African Renaissance”?

The concept of an “African Renaissance” was popularised by former South African President Thabo Mbeki in a speech he gave in Johannesburg in 1998. It is not about a revival



Figure 1 *The African Renaissance Monument in the Senegalese capital of Dakar.* (Source: Wikimedia, Peal1903, CC-BY-3.0, colour adjustment)

of the architecture, literature and cultural achievements of classical antiquity, as it was in modern Europe, but rather describes a future-oriented concept for a utopian revitalisation of the African continent. Central elements include increased confidence, autonomy, hope for improved living standards, and economic prosperity of the people of Africa. The 21st century is therefore considered

the African century. Africans must be architects of their own democratisation, economic development and cultural progress. External influences, such as the short-term profit interests of international companies, must be curtailed and internal factors of underdevelopment, such as corruption, nepotism, and bad governance, must be independently overcome. Colonialism and slavery should no longer be used to excuse ineffectiveness, corruption and bad governance. Dedicating material goods as well as cultural and social passions to the pursuit of democratisation provides the foundation for overcoming political and economic backwardness. Pan-Africanism and the “African Renaissance” are considered informal concepts on which African, international and regional institutions and initiatives can be based.

A political inventory

A critical look at the development of Africa almost 20 years after the Pan-African plea and the proclamation of an “African Renaissance” in the late 1990s can at times be very sobering. What was a visionary approach has resulted in little sustainable change in political, economic and social circumstances. Despite its geographic and demographic size, Africa lags far behind the other continents.

The overall number of international conflicts in Africa is on the decline and the conflict intensity we saw between 1990 and 1999, when an average of 70,000 soldiers were killed every year, is currently not reoccurring. A negative trend is nevertheless emerging. In 2018, only 6,500 soldiers and security forces were killed but the

annual number of civilian victims has been rising steadily since 2010 and currently stands at 70,000 dead per year. Outbreaks of violence and sub-state conflicts persist for longer, are increasingly non-governmental in nature and are often targeted directly against certain ethnic and religious groups. There are enormous regional differences and disparities. Whereas southern and western Africa (excluding the Sahel) are becoming increasingly stable, fragility is on the rise in central and eastern African states. The hope for stabilisation of the continent after the great many conflicts of the 1990s has not become reality. The issue of failed states has increasingly become an African problem, with 14 of the 20 least stable states being located on the African continent.¹ Democratisation in Africa is also regressing. According to Freedom House, only 11% of the continent enjoy political freedom. Cautious democratisation efforts have to make way once more for authoritarian models of government formation. There is also a strong correlation between population growth and autocratisation: the more rapidly a population grows, the less democratic the system of government becomes. A number of initiatives and organisations associated with the “African Renaissance” concept have also achieved only limited success. One such example is the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which intends to establish a free trade area. Since 1997, five member states have left COMESA already.

There are some positive developments, though, such as in terms of the self-organisation of African states and regional conflict management. The African Union, for example, is the largest international organisation on the continent and has conducted numerous peacekeeping missions in close cooperation with the United Nations, including in Darfur, Somalia, Sudan and Burundi. There are also glimmers of hope in the fight against corruption. Although the overall development in that regard is poor, several Sub-Saharan countries have made considerable progress. According to Transparency International, Côte d’Ivoire has improved from a score of 27 on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in 2013 to a score of 35 in 2018. Senegal, too, made gains on the CPI, going from 36 to 45 in the same period. The main reasons for this improvement were fundamental institutional reforms in both countries as well as the political will of the government to intensify the fight against corruption. Botswana and the Seychelles are considered African forerunners in this regard. Their development over the last decade in the fight against corruption has been positive and has included the adoption of new laws, structural reforms of government institutions, and implementation guidelines. Changes of

government in Africa are also less often marked by coups d’état or military takeovers. In southern and western Africa, constitutions are more robust and public institutions work effectively.

The African Union supports these positive political developments with strategic projects such as Agenda 2063, which focuses on the socioeconomic transformation of the African continent over the next 50 years. Instead of creating new structures, Agenda 2063 focuses on building on already existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. Existing initiatives to be accelerated and implemented include the Lagos Plan of Action², the Programme for Infrastructural Development in Africa (PIDA)³, the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAAPD)⁴, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)⁵ as well as regional and national plans and programmes. Agenda 2063 intends to implement best practices to counter the poor socioeconomic development of the continent.

A socioeconomic inventory

Economically, Africa has not been able to gain much ground compared with other continents. Both in 1980 and in 1990, the African share of the global GDP was approximately 1.5%. Today, Africa contributes 2.3% to the global GDP, which is only a marginal increase given Africa’s geographic and demographic size. Asia, for example, was able to increase its share in the global GDP from 13% to more than 37% over the same period. While almost every country in the world recorded positive GDP growth, Sub-Saharan Africa suffered from recurring phases of negative economic growth (see Figure 2). On a positive note, this trend has not occurred again since the mid-90s.

Economic power as reflected in the nominal GDP is centred on Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Angola. If the GDP per capita is used as the

¹ See “Fragile, failed and quasi states – who are we dealing with?”, Metis Study No. 05 (May 2018).

² The aim of the **Lagos Plan for Action** is to implement collective measures in order to reduce the vulnerability of African economies through diversification. The main objectives are to decrease reliance on raw materials, to promote industrialisation and to achieve global equality in trade relations.

³ **PIDA** is a continental initiative for mobilising resources to transform Africa through modern infrastructure. The programme features four main infrastructure sectors: energy, transport, transboundary water, and information and communication technologies.

⁴ **CAADP** is Africa’s policy framework for agricultural transformation, wealth creation, food security and nutrition and economic growth and prosperity. To foster agricultural development, 10% of public expenditures are allocated to the agricultural sector in order to generate 6% annual growth in agricultural GDP.

⁵ The objective of **NEPAD** is to provide a common vision and a political framework for the acceleration of economic cooperation and integration between African countries.

benchmark, the Seychelles, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Gabon and Botswana lead the way. The situation is similar when it comes to sustainable economic and social development. Although the last decade has seen ongoing improvements, African states still mostly rank near the bottom of the Human Development Index (see Figure 3).

unemployment rate is higher than the global average of 5.7%. As a result of the population growth in Africa, more and more young people will foreseeably enter the labour force while fewer and fewer new employment opportunities will be created. The labour market situation will thus remain tense in the long term.

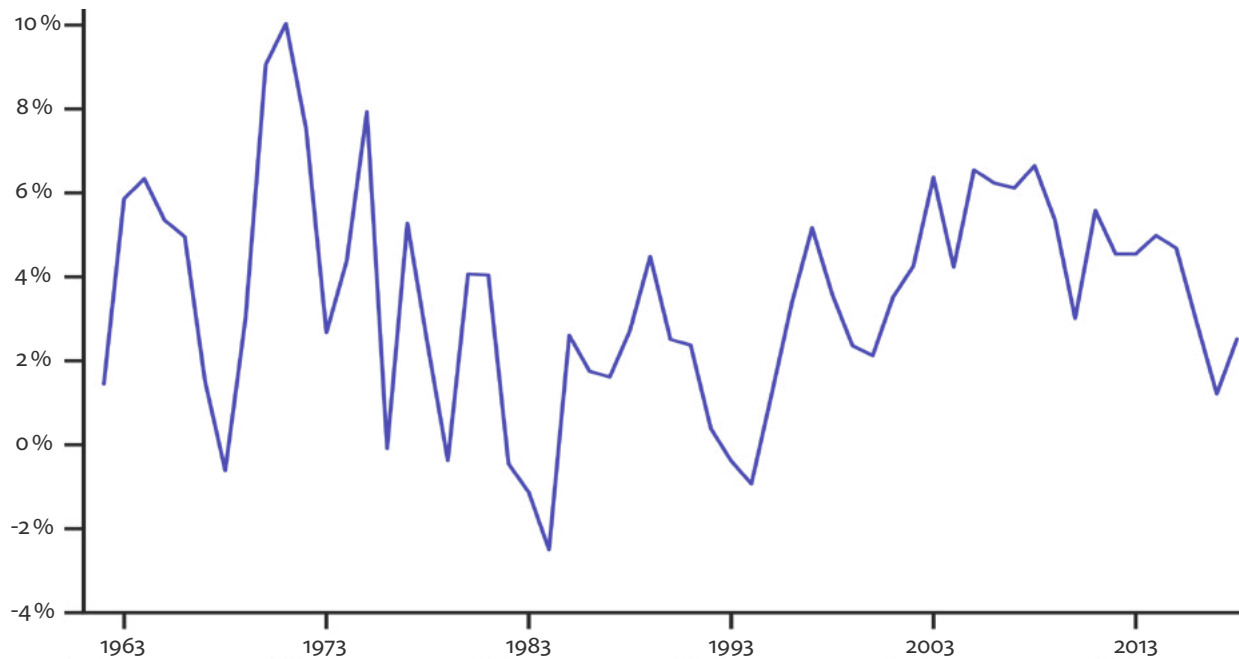


Figure 2 GDP growth in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1960 and 2017 (Source: World Bank) (Source: World Bank)

The World Bank highlights the considerable progress made between 1990 and 2015 in the fight against extreme poverty. In 1990, 36% of the global population lived in poverty, i.e. on a daily income of less than USD 1.90. By 2015, only 10% of the global population lived in poverty. In absolute numbers, this is a decrease of more than 1 billion people. Compared with the Pacific region as well as south and east Asia, Africa's progress in the fight against poverty is slow. The number of people living in poverty even increased, from 278 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015. Since 2015, most of the world's poor are thus living in Sub-Saharan Africa. The average poverty rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is approximately 41%. Of the 28 poorest countries in the world, 27 are in Africa – all of them with a poverty rate exceeding 30%. According to estimates by the World Bank, there are almost no signs of a decrease in extreme poverty and affected countries will most likely not be able to eliminate it by 2030. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), employment opportunities are also stagnating as a result of low productivity, which in turn is a result of insufficient economic diversification in the region. At 7.5%, the average

Germany and Europe must focus their efforts

At its core, the Africa concept of the German Federal Government supports the ideas that form the basis of the African Renaissance. The main focus is on Africa taking on greater responsibility for peace and security, economic development, fostering open societies, and the fight against poverty, unemployment and other reasons for migration. In support of these goals, Germany invests in education, science and research and promotes agricultural projects, the establishment of medium-sized enterprises and the sustainable mining of raw materials as well as environmental protection in Africa.⁶ The Bundeswehr supports African partners by providing training, advice and equipment for armed and security forces. At their core, projects such as the "Marshall Plan with Africa" and reform partnerships with selected key states share some of the same ideas as the African Renaissance and are

⁶ See "Food and water scarcity - A key factor in future conflicts?", Metis Study No. 06 (June 2018).

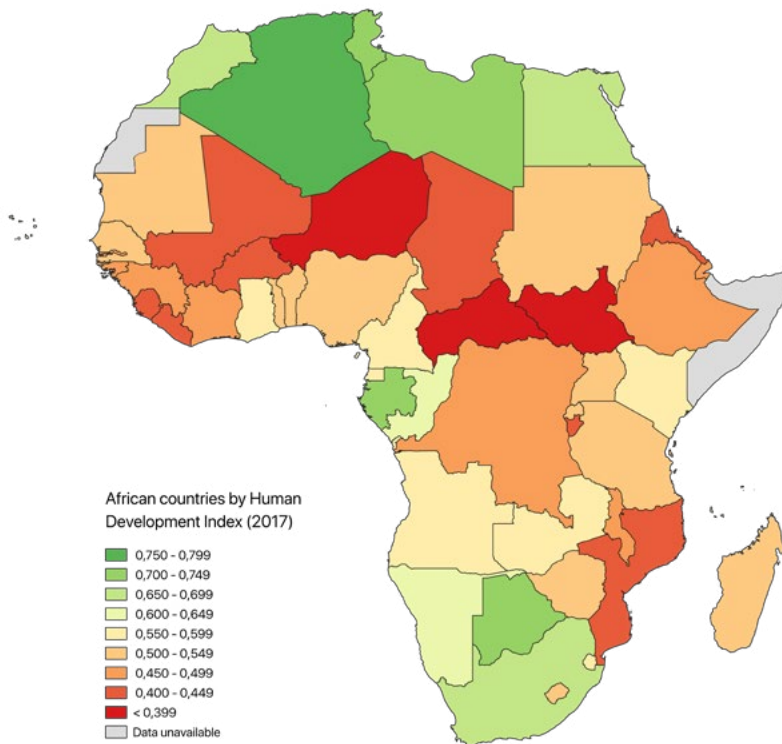



Figure 3 2017 Human Development Index (Source: United Nations)

indicative of a fundamental change in thinking since the development policy of the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

The EU is Africa's most important partner in terms of trade, foreign investments and development. About 36% of Africa's trade is conducted with EU states and 40% of foreign direct investments in Africa originate from the

EU. Africa also receives an average of EUR 22 billion in development aid per year – a contribution that, between 2021 and 2027, will increase to EUR 40 billion. China makes up for around 16% of Africa's trade relations and has in recent years become an essential investment and trade partner. Chinese development aid and investments in Africa have been increasing by about 20% per year since 2000 and, since 2010, at times by as much as 40%. At the 7th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation alone, China pledged a further USD 60 billion in loans for development and infrastructure projects.

A competition for Africa seems to be developing and its outcome will influence the future political development of the continent. On the one hand, Europe is offering development aid and support – but often tying them to political and economic reforms. On the other, China is granting strategic loans and making investments without such high demands. Through national debts and infrastructural measures

with long-term leases, however, China increases Africa's dependency. All of this should be reason enough for Europe to consider initiating mega projects of its own in Africa. A Euro-African Silk Road, for example, could serve to consolidate and intensify the partnership between the two continents in the long term. 

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