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**Manfred Öhm / Sergio Grassi**

**Africa Rising? The Case for a More  
Nuanced Policy toward Africa**

**Adekeye Adebajo**

**The Elusive Quest for Pax Africana**

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**Communications and Media  
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**How to End the Crisis of Social Democracy**

INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY EDITION

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# Editorial

As early as the 1980s, the prominent New York scholar and all-purpose social-democratic intellectual, Michael Harrington, summed up trenchantly one of the fundamental tensions of our age. On a global level, he argued, societies and markets have become deeply intertwined, whereas nation-states have mostly insisted on keeping a tight grip on their political decision-making power. Harrington and his friend Willy Brandt collaborated to create a program for global democratization which would involve the relocation of political decision-making power to the transnational level, but on the basis of equality for all participating nations. In their view, democracy ought to be co-extensive with markets. It should be the supreme goal of all policymaking to bring the global reach of the forces causing the problems into alignment with the political capacity to resolve them responsibly. For Willy Brandt, one important building block in that project was to be the global regionalization of politics, together with an increased capacity on the part of the regions to co-operate with each other internationally.



However, the timing and depth of political regionalization and globalization have lagged far behind what is necessary and indeed even what is possible. The European Union is actually on the brink of relapsing into shortsighted national preoccupations, instead of taking the bold, urgently needed steps toward greater integration of its members' economic and fiscal policies. The Global Climate Summit in Warsaw brought little in the way of progress despite ominous harbingers that the earth's climate continues to warm. Not even the unparalleled devastation wrought by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines galvanized the meeting to take any action. The WTO Summit held in Bali in December of 2011 offers the only slight reason for hope that these continuing endeavors might after all bear fruit. There, the participants at least agreed to global regulation of their trade relations.

In this situation there is even more reason to pay attention to developments in Africa, a continent that has been marginalized for far too long. Quite a few media headlines recently have proclaimed the phenomenon of »Africa Rising«. Some of our articles are devoted to this topic. Our authors suggest that, while the image of this difficult continent is full of contradictions (how could it be otherwise?), recent trends in some places have been encouraging. Are we about to witness a new era of African development and progress? And, if so, will it feature national cooperation in the context of political regionalization intended not only to solve the continent's immense problems, but also to give due weight to its voice in global affairs? These are of course still unresolved issues, but there is certainly reason for hope.

*Thomas Meyer*

Thomas Meyer  
Editor-in-Chief and Co-Publisher

## Africa Rising? The Case for a More Nuanced Policy toward Africa

It is often said that wars, conflicts, disease, and corruption are the chief reasons why Africa has not been able to escape from the poverty trap. During the 1980s political solidarity had aimed to liberate human beings suffering from oppression, but during the 1990s, influenced by the poverty narrative, solidarity metamorphosed into a belief in the need for cooperative development aid. However, initiatives toward renewed cooperation in the development field, coupled with political engagement on the continent, have been eclipsed in recent years by a supposedly altruistic but in fact highly paternalistic charity discourse. That discourse, embodied in the figures of prominent »good Samaritans« like Bono and Bob Geldof, again and again has revived the poverty narrative in the collective awareness of the public outside Africa.

But in the past few years these widely-disseminated but outmoded stereotypes have gotten some competition from a different point of view. The international media have increasingly begun to portray Africa as a continent with up-and-coming markets, a treasure trove of resources, and economic opportunities. *The Economist* and *Time* magazine have both published lead stories during the past two years that coined the phrase, »Africa Rising«. As proof, *The Economist* included some lavishly illustrated graphs to show that six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are in Africa. Ever since then the magazine has been lauding the continent as the »world's hottest frontier for investment.« Consulting firms such as McKinsey and KPMG have seconded this description, whether for benevolent or selfish reasons.

In fact, with average growth rates in the 5-6 % range, sub-Saharan Africa is, in economic terms, the second fastest growing

region in the world, just behind Asia. In addition to high rates of growth, boosters of Africa point to the emergence of a »middle class« numbering several hundred million people as the most important sign that a new trend is underway (although it is not clear how the numbers of this putative middle class are being measured). McKinsey Global Institute predicts that the potential purchasing power of African consumers will reach 1.4 trillion dollars by the year 2020. The continent's upsurge is attributed to a variety of factors, including better governance and macro-economic management, the adoption of more advanced information and telecommunication technologies, and increasing investment, especially from other up-and-coming countries of the global South.

In Africa itself, there is also interest in exploiting this hopeful discourse, which has been propagated both by the media and financial institutions with global reach. Politicians in particular can see the usefulness of the »Africa rising« narrative in persuading potential voters of the success of the policies they themselves have pursued. While such rhetoric may indeed foster greater self-assurance among those who really have experienced an improvement in their standard of living, it leaves the neglected and marginalized feeling disappointed and frustrated.

Even politicians in the global North have bought into this new image of Africa. During his first extended visit there, which took him to Senegal, Tanzania, and South Africa, U.S. President Barack Obama spoke at a rally in Cape Town in August of 2013, emphasizing the new energy he felt stirring on the continent: Africa rising.

Relying on this image, Western politicians can promote the opening of the continent by companies in their own coun-

tries. At a meeting of Germany's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, speakers also lauded Africa as the most promising market in the world after Asia.

China's state-controlled media – which increasingly try to propagate their view of the world abroad – have jumped aboard the Africa bandwagon as well, with just as little altruism as their Western counterparts. They too have chosen to portray Africa as the continent of opportunity and growth, while touting the successful development initiatives China has launched there, in cooperation with the region's governments. For example, China Central Television aired a report about Africa on June 7, 2013 («Africa Investing – the Hottest Frontier») that cited *The Economist's* story word for word. Chinese leaders understood the potential role of African consumers as a market for their own products much sooner than their Western counterparts did, who saw Africa primarily as a niche market for the acquisition of natural resources.

More hotly contested is the assertion that such brisk growth will be accompanied by structural changes in the economy, notably industrialization and the creation of more jobs. The share of the continent's overall economy held by processing industries has decreased since the 1980s. Critics therefore warn that the euphoric rhetoric about Africa rising would be justified only if there were signs that the region had begun to industrialize and diversify its economies. But in fact the raw materials sector has continued to be Africa's engine of growth. According to figures provided by the African Economic Outlook Report of 2013, that sector accounts for 35 % of all economic growth in Africa since the year 2000. The current report of the African Development Bank concurs that growth there so far has depended primarily on the extraction and sale of raw materials. Thus, resource-rich countries are profiting from rising demand in the newly industrializing countries, notably China. Their expan-

sionary drive undoubtedly has affected the nations of sub-Saharan Africa with which they trade. But – apart from the elites – how much do Africans themselves really benefit from the intensified South-South cooperation and increased investment in the extractive sector?

Although economic growth in the past few years has averaged between 5 and 6 %, two-thirds of Africans still live on less than two dollars a day. According to the United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI 2012), 28 of the 30 least developed countries on earth are south of the Sahara. The countries that have the world's highest proportion of inhabitants afflicted by multiple dimensions of poverty include Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone, all except Liberia among the nations singled out by *The Economist* as showplaces of Africa's economic miracle. According to the U.N. Report on Human Development of 2013, average life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa is only 55 years. Moreover, labor markets are distinguished by high unemployment, miserable working conditions, and the predominance of the informal sector. In short, by restricting the new narrative to GDP growth as the most important criterion for evaluating a country's development, proponents evidently have misled many people into drawing the wrong conclusions. This is so because, in the absence of any trickle-down effect so far, the quality of life of the great majority of the population has not improved significantly.

In a nutshell, profits from raw materials sales end up in the pockets of a few individuals and generate too few jobs and too little investment to lift most of the population out of poverty, mainly on account of opaque deals made by international corporations on the one hand and corrupt governments on the other. A study published this year by the African Development Bank in conjunction with Global Financial Integrity showed that 1.4 trillion dollars had gone down the financial drain

between 1980 and 2009. Up until now there have been few indications that African nations will take advantage of the supposed economic boom in coming years to effect a structural transformation of their economies or to improve living conditions. So isn't there a danger that, due to asymmetric trade relationships and distorted investment flows, African countries will miss the opportunity to carry out sustainable reform in the structure of their economies over the long term?

Skeptics have tried to counter the image of an awakening Africa. They argue that, if one considers the middle- and long-term outlook, Africa's growth spurt has not enhanced the continent's prospects, but instead has exposed it to greater exploitation. In their estimation, the image of Africa as a rising economic power has been devised by the financial world and international raw materials firms for their own selfish reasons. As they see it, the older pessimistic and fatalistic stereotypes have been replaced by new ones that focus indiscriminately on the allegedly positive side of things in Africa. This reversal of stereotypes entails peril for Africa, because growth there is still fragile and fraught with challenges. To call Africa the new China is, in their view, a complete fantasy.

When Africa's growth potential is being considered, the key issue is not simply whether the facts are correct or whether one needs to find better ways of evaluating the continent's economic development. Experience teaches that perceptions may have more influence on policymaking in Europe than »rational« policies guided strictly by interests. The new image of awakening Africa, however, does not invalidate the older picture of a continent plagued by poverty and crisis. The latter is still available as needed to serve as a reference-point for the discourse in Germany and Europe about policies toward Africa. The truth is that Africa will continue to be a »crisis continent,« since the Central Afri-

can region, the Central Sahara, and the Horn cannot be stabilized overnight and will keep lapsing into crises that arouse attention abroad. In short, the older perceptions of Africa remain intact, overlain by the »Africa awakens« image. In light of that insight, it would be an important and necessary step – and a foundation for political decision-making – to sketch out a more nuanced and balanced picture of Africa.

But no other continent seems so obviously predestined to have its highly complex realities projected onto hastily constructed world views. One reason for this is undoubtedly the fact that Western media now have very few correspondents on site in Africa. The reduction in reporting staff will contribute to the impression that Western media practice »parachute journalism,« dispatching correspondents only in times of crisis. In contrast, the increasingly high-profile Chinese media so far have restricted their activities to »positive reporting« and »developmental journalism.«

In short, there are relevant trends going on outside the purview of the economy that are overshadowed by »Africa rising«-style reportage and/or are sometimes even partly influenced by it. For example:

By now African nations have become autonomous actors on the international stage, so that African voices are given a fuller hearing in world affairs. The creation of the African Union (AU) and regional economic trade blocs have created new possibilities for coordinated policymaking in the areas of international trade and security policy, conflict resolution, and development cooperation.

Generally speaking, interdependence between Africa and other regions of the globe has been increasing, but this is even more the case within the continent, where bilateral cooperation has expanded dynamically. As a result, political elites there have been gaining self-confidence, partly due to their own efforts and partly buoyed by the wave of economic growth.

For these reasons, the basic assumptions of Western development aid as it is now constituted are being called into question. The donor-recipient relationships, the strings attached to cooperation, and the cacophony of international aid organizations that claim to speak for Africa have all become anachronisms that will likely disappear within a few years, at least in their current form. The development cooperation that continues increasingly will be shaped by explicitly formulated African interests, especially in an African interpretation of the solidarity principle that is supposed to underlie aid.

Ultimately, demographic trends in Africa will have an enormous impact: The continent's population is burgeoning, while the average age of its inhabitants continues to decline. By 2050 Africa's population likely will have more than doubled, to over 2 billion, which will create the world's largest potential labor force. In light of the ageing of Europe's population and – in certain countries – its falling numbers, it is nearly inevitable that the benefits of African immigration into Europe will move to the forefront of policymaking debates.

How should the E.U. and its member nations such as Germany respond to these changes? Africa's enhanced political significance and the rapid dissemination of the discourse about its economic rise make it urgent to rethink old policy assumptions. The proper foundation for a timely re-evaluation of relationships with the continent would seem to be a synoptic view of Africa that embraces every sphere of policymaking. A blinkered vision that considers only economic ties would be just as inappropriate to the situation as would a narrow focus on current interests in the Europe-Africa relationship. Bilateral rela-

tions have been shaped by history. Hence, it will be impossible to forge a partnership or even a relationship based on mutual respect without confronting anew the legacy of colonialism, but also the subsequent phase of development cooperation. In any case, self-confident African elites will not permit Europe to establish terms of the relationship that focus only on the present.

At the same time, they will demonstrate ever greater skill in exploiting for their own interests the new possibilities inherent in the deepening engagement with Africa shown by rising powers such as China, India, Brazil, and Turkey. It will have to be acknowledged that Europe's role in Africa must diminish, even though it will not fade away entirely.

It is therefore important to draw careful distinctions when one considers portrayals of Africa as the growth continent. German and European policies toward Africa should neither focus too narrowly on a primarily economic image of the continent, nor on humanitarian or development issues. The new political, economic, and social realities in Africa imply that the starting point for policymaking ought to change. Policies should be reset in line with a new, synoptic view of affairs there, so that, in the end, relations between Europe and Africa can be »normalized.« That is, relations should be handled in such a way that Africa is treated like any other continent, i.e., with respect and on the basis of clearly spelled-out interests and mutual expectations. By contrast, the image of an awakening Africa disguises the need for a more nuanced policy toward Africa. Moreover, it remains paternalistic, ignoring the complex realities of Africa and reinforcing the image of a dark and »slumbering continent.«



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## The Elusive Quest for Pax Africana:

### From the »African Personality« to the »African Renaissance«

Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui's concept of *Pax Africana*, coined in 1967, argued that Africans should muster the will to resolve disputes that arise on their own continent. During the same era, Ghana's founding president, Kwame Nkrumah, also championed the idea of an »African Personality« in world affairs, arguing that Africa should make its voice heard on the global stage. Four decades later, South Africa's Thabo Mbeki was promoting the idea of an »African Renaissance« designed to achieve the continent's political, economic, and social renewal. Both Nkrumah and Mbeki were/are Renaissance men: visionary intellectuals committed to pan-Africanism. However, both the »African Personality« and the »African Renaissance« were widely-used but nebulous concepts that lacked a clear definition and road-map of how to operationalise them in practice. This essay will therefore examine the continued quest for a stronger African voice in global politics, focusing particularly on issues of peace and security.

While many long-running conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and Burundi have been calmed through the help of the United Nations (U.N.), Africa's regional bodies such as the African Union (A.U.), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have also sacrificed blood and treasure in a bid to achieve *Pax Africana*. These organisations, however, still remain weak and heavily dependent on external funding and logistical support. They also lack the resources to engage in peacebuilding ef-

forts that can ensure that countries in crisis do not relapse into conflicts.

Africa has often been compared to a gun, with Nigeria as its trigger. On closer inspection of the colonially-inspired map, South Africa would be the muzzle; the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) the barrel; Algeria the grip; and Sudan, the bottom of the hammer, of this gigantic gun. The fate of these five countries could largely determine Africa's future. South Africa is the continent's largest economy; Nigeria its most populous nation; and Sudan, Algeria, and the DRC three of its geographically largest countries. The five states are collectively rich in oil, gas, gold, copper, and cobalt. It is on these five pillars that Africa's future may rest.

Nigeria and South Africa have sought to act as regional hegemons in leading peacekeeping missions and seeking to promote regional integration. South Africa is the only African member of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) economic grouping and the Group of Twenty (G20) major economies. The idea of a liberal South African »Leviathan on the Limpopo« spreading Western values into the heart of »darkest Africa,« however, greatly underestimates lingering, widespread suspicions of post-apartheid South Africa, as evidenced by African reactions to the expansion into the continent of its mostly white corporate sector and the continued lack of transformation of its society. South Africa's attempts to speak on behalf of the continent have often been challenged by other states, which suspect it to be pursuing more parochial national rather than continental interests in multi-lateral fora. It is still too early to tell whether South Africa's role in the G20 and BRICS

could constitute »representation without power.«

African Union leaders established a 15-member Peace and Security Council (PSC) in July, 2004, and this has been its most active body. The PSC's centerpiece project - the establishment of an African Standby Force (ASF) – has, however, not

*Africa's  
evolving security  
architecture*

yet been realised despite a 2010 deadline (now postponed to 2015). The ASF is being built around five sub-regional pillars to undertake peace support operations on the continent. Several of the powerful members of the U.N. Security Council, however, have ignored the advice of the African Union's PSC on issues relating to Sudan and Libya. Though both bodies now meet annually, powerful U.N. members such as the United States have made it clear that they do not consider these sessions to be meetings between equal partners, but rather between the U.N. Security Council and individual African states.

Peace accords that calmed conflicts in Rwanda, the DRC, and Ethiopia-Eritrea between 1993 and 2000 all clearly revealed the military weakness of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/African Union, whose members lacked the resources to implement agreements they had negotiated without calling for U.N. peacekeepers. Africa's sub-regional bodies like ECOWAS and SADC have garnered more peacekeeping experience than the African Union, and the division of labour among these actors still remains undefined. Africa's sub-regional organisations certainly have not accepted the primacy of the A.U. to act on their behalf and speak for the continent in the security field. While the U.N. is widely regarded as having primary responsibility for *global* peace and security, the A.U. is not yet recognised by its sub-regional partners as having primary responsibility for *continental* peace and security. The A.U. has thus often had to share leadership with

these independent-minded sub-regional entities.

The A.U. currently has four conflict-resolution priorities: first, sustaining the 18,000-strong A.U. peacekeeping mission in Somalia; second, supporting the Thabo Mbeki-led A.U. mediation effort between Sudan and South Sudan; third, ensuring effective collaboration within the A.U./U.N. Hybrid Operation in Sudan's Darfur region (UNAMID); and fourth, strengthening the relationship between the A.U. and the U.N. A ten-year capacity-building programme of support by the U.N. to the A.U. authorised in 2005, has not made much progress in establishing sustainable support for regional peacekeeping efforts in Africa. The U.N. has furnished planning, operational, and logistical support to A.U. missions in Sudan's Darfur region and Somalia; the U.N. Office to the African Union (UNOAU) has attempted to coordinate activities between both bodies; and annual meetings are now held between the U.N. Security Council and the A.U. Peace and Security Council. But funding for implementing the ten-year capacity-building programme of 2005 was not approved, resulting in ad hoc support from existing projects.

It is important to highlight efforts by Africa's regional actors to achieve a *Pax Africana*. South Africa contributed to peacemaking efforts in Lesotho, the DRC, Zimbabwe, Burundi, and Madagascar. In two short decades, the country has gone from being the most destabilising power in Africa to being its most energetic peacemaker. Since 1990, a Nigerian-led ECOWAS dispatched peacekeeping missions to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali. The conflict in the DRC saw the first U.N.-led election in 40 years in 2006. However, the country's 2011 election was deeply flawed amidst continuing instability in Kivu and Orientale provinces. SADC members South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi therefore deployed 3,000

troops to the eastern Congo in 2013 to work alongside a 20,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping force. On the volatile Horn of Africa, IGAD played a critical role in ensuring the independence of South Sudan in 2011. The country, however, remains unstable while relations between Juba and Khartoum have seen both countries rattling sabres and supporting rebels in each other's territories. Led by Thabo Mbeki, an A.U. mediation process has sought to calm these disputes.

Many leaders from the »global South« continue to call for the reform of the United Nations' anachronistic and undemocratic 15-member Security Council. The U.N. had emerged from the ashes of the Second World War in 1945, and five permanent veto-wielding powers (P5) – the U.S., Russia, China, France and Britain – were to act as guarantors of the post-war order. Africa has been prevented from playing a greater role on the U.N. Security Council despite the fact that about 80 percent of the organization's nearly 100,000 peacekeepers are currently deployed on the continent. The games that the U.N.'s »Big Five« play often determine peacekeeping outcomes, since the Security Council is the only body that can start or end peacekeeping missions and the only one whose decisions are binding on all 193 member states. Britain and France draft all the UN resolutions concerning 11 of 15 African cases on the Council agenda (with the U.S. »holding the pen« in two others). This has often muted African voices in decision-making concerning U.N. peacekeeping missions on the continent. While the formal use of the veto by the P5 has declined, it is still effectively employed in the closed-door consultations of the Council, which is where much of its serious business occurs.

It is therefore imperative that the U.N. Security Council be reformed, especially

since Africa and Latin America are the only major regions without veto-wielding permanent membership. This is despite the fact that 60 percent of the Council's deliberations focus on Africa. The most sensible solution in addressing the Council's increasingly threadbare legitimacy would be to expand the body to include additional members from countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, India, Japan, and Germany (whose elevation to the Security Council, however, would be contested by other regional powers).

Despite these problems, it is important to note Africa's immense conceptual and practical contributions to the birth, development, and growth of U.N. peacekeeping over the last five-and-a-half decades. The Suez mission in 1956 was the first-ever armed U.N. peacekeeping force, while the Congo crisis in 1960-1964 provided the first case of U.N. peace enforcement. The multidimensional peacekeeping operations of the post-Cold War era were ushered in by the Namibia mission in 1989-1990, while further innovations have been seen in the cooperation of the U.N. with ECOWAS in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire between 1993 and 2004, with the A.U. in Burundi in 2004, and with the hybrid mission with the A.U. in Sudan's Darfur region that started in 2007. Three Africans – U.N. Secretaries-General between 1992-2006, Egypt's Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Ghana's Kofi Annan, as well as Algeria's Lakhdar Brahimi – were also instrumental in shaping much of the U.N.'s post-Cold War peacekeeping architecture. South Sudan's Francis Deng is widely regarded as the »intellectual father« of the »responsibility to protect« concept.

If Africans are to establish a *Pax Africana* and strengthen their voice in international politics so that an »African Personality« can be manifested, it will be important to address the domestic, regional, and external dimensions of the continent's conflicts. The first challenge is the fragility

of many African states. The fact that fewer than 350 rebels could start civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the early 1990s

*What is to be done?* had already exposed the widespread absence of Leviathans able to monopolise the use of legitimate

force over their territories. The roots of many of these conflicts lay in poor governance as well as meddling by external Cold Warriors like the U.S., the Soviet Union/Russia, and France. These morbid symptoms are still very much present in the three recent cases of the DRC, Mali, and the Central African Republic (CAR). Governments are effectively unable to govern, while their legitimacy remains threadbare.

Assorted groups have filled the vacuum. In the Congo, the M23 rebel group – reportedly backed by Rwanda – temporarily took over the mineral-rich eastern city of Goma in 2012 before Uganda mediated a withdrawal. They were driven out of Goma again a year later with the help of a SADC force. In the CAR in 2013, a motley crew of Seleka rebels successfully toppled the autocratic rule of François Bozizé who had himself acquired power through the barrel of a gun in 2003.

At the regional level, the African Union and Africa's sub-regional bodies are still struggling to establish a rapid-reaction African Standby Force to quell local brushfires. In recent conflicts, SADC deployed a force to eastern Congo, while Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Senegal, and Togo deployed troops as part of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali's (AFISMA) efforts to retake northern Mali from Islamist rebels. In the mineral-rich CAR, regional troops of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) from Chad, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and Cameroon were deployed in the country, though they stood back as Seleka rebels marched on the capital of Bangui. Ethiopia continues to provide the backbone of a UN peace-

keeping mission in Sudan's Abyei region, while Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone form the core of an AU mission seeking to stabilize Somalia.

But the real powers behind some of these African thrones appear to be external actors. France has often acted like a pyromaniac fireman in Africa, propping up or deposing assorted autocrats. It is thus ironic that the Gallic power has taken the lead in deploying troops to Mali, while France also has 7,000 troops stationed across Africa. Though the French presence could help temporarily stabilise these situations, the return of this discredited gendarme underlines the weakness of *Pax Africana*. A better solution would be to support U.N.-led rather than French-led interventions in Africa. Another external military power, the U.S., has deployed 1,700 troops in Djibouti to track Islamic terrorists and sent drones into Somalia. Its Stuttgart-based US Africa Command (AFRICOM) is also coordinating anti-terrorism, anti-piracy, and anti-narcotics policies and training African armies. It was also involved in the Libyan military intervention in 2011.

Concrete actions are required to achieve a *Pax Africana*. Domestically, African governments must observe rules of democratic governance as a condition for obtaining regional and external support. The capacity of well-governed states to provide social services to their citizens and to extend state authority throughout their territories should then be supported by the international community.

Regionally, Africa's rapid-reaction capability must be strengthened through the ASF. African peacekeepers must be provided in a timely manner with logistical and financial resources if such missions are to succeed. An effective division of labour must also be established between the U.N. and Africa's fledgling security organisations. African-led peacekeeping missions must be taken over by the U.N. after six months

to ensure that the burdens of these international conflicts are more equitably shared. To end the current apartheid system of mostly African and Asian UN peacekeepers being deployed to the continent, more medium-sized Western countries must also contribute troops to these missions.

Finally, since in nearly half of the post-Cold War cases, war-torn countries have relapsed into conflict within five years as a result of inadequate peacebuilding, the international community urgently needs to provide the resources to carry out post-

conflict responsibilities, particularly restructuring national armies and disarming and demobilizing fighters. Countries like Liberia, the DRC, Burundi, and South Sudan should be more generously supported by a frugal donor community, as has been done in the Balkans and East Timor. If these tasks remain unfulfilled and a »fire-brigade« approach to tackling conflicts persists, the »African Personality« will remain stifled, the »African Renaissance« will not be achieved, and the elusive quest for *Pax Africana* will continue.



#### **Adekeye Adebajo**

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*Mareike Le Pelley*

## **Nothing New in the South?**

### **Communications and Media in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Civil wars and famines, dictators and corruption: These are some of the headlines about sub-Saharan Africa that the public has been reading for decades. But in recent years an increasingly positive tone has begun to filter into reporting about Africa, one that focuses on economic growth, promising investment targets, and rapid improvement in information and communications technologies (ICT).

Has Africa managed to make the leap from landlines and PCs to cellular phones and mobile internet and, if so, why and with what implications? The data are in fact quite impressive. The market for cell phones in Africa has chalked up the world's highest growth rates and has meanwhile become, in absolute numbers, the second largest for mobile telephone connections on earth, after Asia. There are now 80 con-

nections for every 100 people, continent-wide.

By contrast, landlines remain a significantly underdeveloped segment of the market. While there is at least one landline link in Europe and the United States for every two people, in most African countries the figure is between 0 and 5 connections for every 100 people. Internet access, especially via mobile platforms, has also grown rapidly in Africa during the past few years, with many innovative cellular phone and internet applications originating there. By now around one-third of the population in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa has access to the (mobile) internet, which makes those nations the continent's leaders. In most African countries, growth in these vital areas began from a very low starting-point. The number of internet

connections/accesses per 100 inhabitants is usually around 10, but sometimes fewer than 5, compared to 85 in Germany. The number of cell phone connections per 100 inhabitants varies among the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, but in most cases it ranges between 25 and more than 100.

Nevertheless, the brisk proliferation of (mainly mobile) ICT and ICT services cannot be regarded as indicating the success of African governments' development initiatives. To the contrary, it is a result of government failure on several fronts: the inability of governments to provide infrastructure and public services, to foster competition in the landline sector, and to protect basic social and political rights. In effect, mobile IC services are an innovative initiative taken by business, civil society, and individuals to find alternative solutions that fill the gaps left by government failures. However, several studies assume that a 10% increase in cell phone access accompanies an increase of 0.6-1.2% in GDP. And while high growth stoked by raw materials exports enriches few but a tiny elite, growth due to ICT tends to benefit broad segments of the population.

In 2007, the leading Kenyan telecommunications firm, Safaricom, marketed M-Pesa, the world's first mobile financial platform. For the first time M-Pesa enabled a large group of low-wage earners who had previously been shut out of the regular banking sector to transfer very small sums of money at low cost via cell phone. Many more firms inside and outside of Africa have followed suit. Other mobile financial services were eventually added, including the approval of micro-loans, the issuance of insurance policies, and the ability to open or obtain information about savings accounts. By now there are more than 100 mobile financial or banking services across the globe, of which more than half are in Africa.

In agriculture, cell phone-supported services inform farmers about current

market prices or weather conditions, and make possible the collective shipping and marketing of their harvests as well as joint purchases of the factors of agricultural productions. Other services offer insurance against crop failure and the consequent loss of income, provide growers with valuable tips via instant messaging, and furnish information about diseases and opportunities for inoculation against them. Initial studies in selected countries have found that agricultural incomes have risen between 10 and 36%.

In sub-Saharan Africa the basic human needs of large segments of the population continue to go unmet. Since between 50 and 80% of the population in the region still works in farming, it would be advisable for governments and other actors to maximize the potential of IC services to boost productivity in agriculture by upgrading the physical and organizational infrastructure required for efficient delivery of such services. Coupled with similar improvements in educational, financial, and health-related services, IC could enhance significantly African nations' overall development.

When one turns to the political landscape, it again appears as though shortcomings in governance, restrictions, and repression have stimulated the inventiveness of both individuals and political or civil-society organizations in respect to ICT. Civil-society organizations use ICT to bring information that governments have suppressed to the public's attention and achieve greater transparency concerning governmental operations. Some projects supported by cell phones are designed to oversee public expenditures and the (non-) provision of public services. For example, interactive online maps issued with the help of crowdsourcing informed Kenya's population about violent excesses in the wake of the 2007 elections there, while Zimbabwe's population similarly learned about irregularities in the elections of 2008

and 2013. Other crowdmapping and/or crowdsourcing projects offered information about corruption on Kenya's streets. Numerous bloggers and citizen journalists as well as websites and newsletters issued by human rights organizations are sources for alternative information in Africa, some of it frequently critical of the regimes.

Politicians and political parties increasingly attempt to use social networking and instant messaging to inform and mobilize voters and carry on dialogues with them. ICT offers opposition parties, in particular, the opportunity to get a hearing for their positions, since in many countries they have little access to traditional media. Even outside of political parties, SMS is employed for campaigns and social initiatives. Once votes have been counted at polling places and the results publicly promulgated, civic groups or opposition parties are in a position to photograph the vote totals on their cell phones and send them on to a central location where they can be tabulated and presented as an aggregate total (parallel vote tabulation). The results then can act as a counter to the official vote tally, thereby contributing to a reduction in electoral fraud.

Although it is possible to document selectively the democratic and liberating effects of ICT applications, they have not yet led to significant political transformations in any of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, political and civil-society activists are increasingly integrating social networks, internet platforms, online- and mobile media into the work of their campaigns. ICT offers one more instrument in a diversified toolkit for mobilizing people and effecting political and social change. Moreover, the trend toward innovative use of cell phone services has so far been confined to a handful of African nations. Thus, the potential for change and development inherent in ICT has barely been tapped so far. However, the brief shelf-life of many once-lauded ICT-based

initiatives suggests that we should have more modest expectations about ICT, both in respect to democratization and to its economic and social effects.

Nevertheless, the democratizing potential of mobile ICT in the hands of political activists has not gone unrecognized by African governments, especially in the aftermath of the events of the Arab Spring. They usually regard it as a threat. Still, to date there are still only a few countries in sub-Saharan Africa in which internet and mobile communications have been systematically restricted. Recently, some governments have cut off SMS services or social networks on an ad hoc basis to block protests. Just during the past few years, the technical capacity to control the internet and mobile communications has been improving in some countries. By the same token, the political will to bring the internet and social networks under state control seems to have grown stronger, as indicated by the clear increase in appeals from government circles to control online content more stringently and pass laws regulating online communications. Certainly there are legitimate reasons for ICT legislation and guidelines: data protection, cybercrime, protection of children and youth, the security of financial transactions, e-commerce, and the previously-mentioned creation of a framework conducive to its further development. But in many parts of Africa it is still unclear whether these are the true motivations behind most governments' efforts to regulate ICT.

The shaky status of freedom of both expression and information in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that many African governments are still reluctant to permit open and critical dialogue and unhampered access to information. That is unfortunate, because greater freedom of communications could help make political and economic processes and decisions more transparent and improve the quality of governance.

Although freedom of expression is

protected in the constitutions of African states, many traditional media there find themselves subject to varying degrees of political and economic pressure:

- State-run broadcasters operate in an atmosphere of dependence upon which-ever government happens to be in power. There are no guarantees that their financial or editorial independence will be protected. Hence, censorship and self-censorship are the order of the day.

- Private broadcasters frequently seek either to be as non-political as they possibly can in order to avoid sanctions from the government, or else they are dominated and manipulated by political parties or individuals.

- Print media remain primarily a source of information for the urban elite, because illiteracy remains so high in Africa (between 10 and 78%, depending on the country), distribution is difficult due to inadequate infrastructure, and prices for printed material are high.

- Corruption and self-censorship are quite common in both print and broadcast media due to political and economic pressure (in the latter case, concerns about selling advertisements).

- There is a widespread culture of secrecy that keeps information held by public institutions out of public debates and thus prevents it from enhancing transparency and accountability in politics and administration.

- Some governments buy up – directly or indirectly – media concerns in order to enforce uniformity of opinion, others refuse to issue licenses to independent, private broadcasting stations, while still others simply shut down newspapers and radio stations they dislike.

- Bloggers and other journalists, wheth-

er online or off-line, risk being arrested and becoming victims of physical violence in certain countries.

This situation does not advance diversity of opinion and information, nor does it contribute to ethical professionalism. Because of it, media in Africa are seldom able to play the role of a »fourth estate,« putting democratic checks on government and holding it accountable for its actions.

Online media as well as the judicious use of mobile platforms can offer alternative information and potentially reach larger segments of the population than print media do, especially when they are supported by language services in African languages. In South Africa the share of the population with mobile internet access is already larger than the segment that reads a daily newspaper. Falling prices for data bundling and end-user devices should reinforce this trend. Furthermore, leading media concerns in Africa have an online presence (convergence media) and stage interactive forums as well as cell phone-supported news services. Meanwhile, they are developing models for integrating the material supplied by citizen journalists into their reportage in multiple platforms.

Africa's governments face a choice. As they develop their information and communications capabilities, they will be able to impose limitations on online platforms and expand reprisals against online activists and journalists. Alternatively, they can welcome the potential social, economic, and even the political benefits of ICT. They should be aware that open discussions and access to diverse sources of information not only are indispensable to democratic and social participation; they also represent the optimal climate in which economic innovation can flourish.



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Martina Odonkor

## Gender Equality in Africa

As a woman and a researcher into gender, among other development issues, I was pleased to read in this year's Millennium Development Goals report for Africa that »Progress on Goal 3 (*Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women*) is encouraging, with many countries achieving outstanding performance, especially on gender parity in primary school and on the number of seats women hold in national parliaments.« Indeed, when it comes to policy and legislation, some consider the women's movement to have been the most successful social movement in Africa in recent decades. For the first time in history, the African Union has a female chair, and there are female heads of state in two countries, Malawi and Liberia. In early September, Senegal elected its first female prime minister, and the icing on the cake came just a couple of weeks later, when Rwanda increased its female majority in government with women winning 64 % of parliamentary seats. Since 2008, this small nation, whose name became synonymous with genocide barely two decades ago, has had the only government in the world dominated by women, at the helm of a rapidly expanding economy.

Hard-won progress is always music to the ears, but much as I like to dwell on the positive, I was stopped dead in my tracks by two news reports of a very different kind in recent weeks. The first arrived when I was awakened one morning by the voice of a senior Gambian Muslim cleric on my radio alarm, saying (in an extract from a BBC Newsnight interview) that genital mutilation is good for women, »because I know that women who have a clitoris suffer from an irritating itching. They want to scratch it all the time and what's more, it makes women leak water from their private parts.« I lay in a daze,

wondering whether I was really awake or in the grip of a bizarre nightmare in which a powerful individual could condemn females within his sphere of influence to a gruesome, criminal act of mutilation on the premise of his spurious notions about an anatomical feature he did not and never would possess.

I heard the second report a month later. A 16-year old girl in Kenya had been gang-raped by six men who threw her unconscious body into a pit latrine, breaking her spine. When they were taken to the police, the officers ordered them to cut grass around the police station in lieu of initiating official prosecution. What stuck in my mind was the symbolism of the dumping of the girl's violated body in a latrine and the impunity conferred on the criminal act by the male would-be enforcers of the law.

The complexity of the issue of gender equality in Africa is demonstrated by the fact that the country with the world's highest and most violent rate of rape and sexual offences also has one of the highest rates of female representation on the continent and in the world. Just under 50 % of parliamentary seats in South Africa's government are held by women; yet, one in three South African women is likely to be raped in her lifetime. Clearly, the achievement of gender equality does not only require women to be in government, but to be effective in the political process and committed to the advancement of women's rights. In the words of Lindiwe Mazibuko, parliamentary leader for the opposition (speaking in 2012), »We have a long way to go before we narrow the gap between the gender equality in our constitution and the real lives that South African women lead.«

Indeed, the gap between policy and practice, statistics and textured, human

reality is a spectre that haunts the trajectory of »Africa rising.« It is present in the discomfiting fact that countries like Ghana - declared a middle-income country by the World Bank in 2010, listed in the world's press among the world's fastest growing economies and lauded in June this year for achieving Millenium Development Goal #1 (*Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*) ahead of time - still have huge and widening wealth disparities with detrimental gender implications. According to a 2012 report by the Ghanaian Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, »14.7 % of the population live in 'extreme poverty' and are unable to cater for basic nutritional requirements and suffer from poverty across generations. The rural and gender dimensions of poverty are evident within the rural food crop sector where nearly 35 % of all household heads are female...«

The MDG report for Africa explains further that, »High gender, income and rural-urban inequalities have tempered the nexus between growth and poverty reduction... Wage rates remain unequal by gender, with women making as little as half of what men make for the same work in Mauritania, Algeria and Côte d'Ivoire.« Another important contributor to the disempowerment of African women is the fact that much of their labour goes, unquantified and unwaged, into the informal sector via their contribution to the household economy, primarily through farming. Stark gender, income and rural-urban inequalities have also caused unequal access to quality education at all levels across Africa. While gender parity is improving at the primary level, the school dropout rate by girls at higher levels of education remains high. In addition, many girls are negatively affected by socio-cultural norms including patriarchal attitudes, religious beliefs and traditional customs.

Examples of these that I have encountered through my research include FGM/C, ritual servitude and accusations

of witchcraft. Listening a few months ago to the director of an orphanage in northern Ghana talk about the violence and ostracism experienced by an 11-year old girl accused of witchcraft, I could not help wondering if this was the same Ghana in which I was living: the economically burgeoning, democratic, middle-income country with internet, shopping malls and five-star hotels. I tried to put myself in the girl's shoes. For all our progress towards global development targets, the spectre of wealth disparity means that people like her have no more idea of the Africa in which the mall-shoppers live than they do of her Africa.

It is not for lack of legislation that Africa has not eradicated such rights abuses. However, in order to be sustainable, change must take place not only on paper, but in the hearts and minds of people. Gender abuses are rooted not only in culture and religion, but in a cumulative power imbalance that benefits men and disadvantages women. Thus, in the struggle for political power, we see other forms of aggression and treachery against women. Defamation through the press, typically featuring allegations of sexual misconduct, is a common weapon deployed against female politicians all over the world. An example from Ghana is the case of Beatrice Boateng, a former member of parliament, who went to court over media defamation by members of her own party during her 2004 re-election bid for parliament. »It was not easy,« she said in a 2012 IPS interview. »The men really ganged up against me.... They said I was a teacher and didn't have money, so I was flirting with other party members for it... They thought as a woman they could manipulate me...« Boateng eventually won the court case despite eleven adjournments. Perhaps not surprisingly, Ghana's female representation in parliament is only 8.3 percent.

One of the reasons suggested for Rwanda's impressive female representa-

tion is a gender imbalance created by the 1994 genocide. According to a 2012 article by Palash Ghosh in the *International Business Times*, this was reportedly as high as 60:40 per cent and by 1999, after women had proved themselves adept at operating profitable businesses, crucial property and inheritance laws were amended to permit female ownership of land and other assets. The very perception of women in Rwanda seems to have changed as a result. In 2011, Daphrose Nyirasafali, national program officer for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), told Britain's *Guardian* newspaper: »There used to be a lot of rapes, wife beating, male domination of women, boys sent to school and not girls. That has all changed, even in the countryside.«

It would be a sad world in which men had to die off in order for women to be able to prove their equal worth. Education and advocacy have been the primary tools of women's empowerment in the Western world and, given sufficient political will, there is no reason why they should not do the same for Africa. In the long term, gender equality cannot be achieved without the education of both males and females. In the shorter term, advocacy is the most powerful tool women have.

In my experience in Africa, however, the biggest obstacle to women's advocacy is their lack of faith in their own capabilities. Speaking from mere social observation, even well-educated women often consider alliances with men as primary breadwinners to be more worthy or viable

goals than their own career aspirations. The influence of the growing sexual objectification of women in Western popular culture is not helping, because it is blunting the edge that is enjoyed by the proportionally few African women who are educated enough to carry women's rights forward.

African women need to understand how high the stakes are when it comes to being taken seriously by men. They are as high as men assuming superior knowledge about female body parts and deciding they must be cut off; as high as a girl being gang-raped and thrown into a latrine by men, with impunity. Fighting back begins with women taking themselves seriously, as equals. In her September, 2013 article in the *Guardian*, Minna Salami points out that the Rwandan female majority came about not only due to the genocide or to selfless male leaders, but to the organised women's movement, which ensured, through active mobilization, that equality became a top priority in the post-conflict constitution – »a conscious and coordinated effort, by women for women.« Women in all of Africa need to believe in their own capabilities, pool their strengths, and advocate for their own equality within micro and macro contexts, emphasizing education and affirmative action. The best chance to overcome the formidable obstacles still in the way of gender equality is to follow the positive direction in which Africa's growing legacy of female leaders is taking the continent.



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Thomas Meyer

## The Social Democratic Compromise and its Limitations

However matters turn out, one thing is clear: a Grand Coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD would mean a grand compromise. Is that automatically a bad deal for Social Democrats? Is it the compromises the SPD has made – so repugnant to the German soul – that prolong and deepen its suffering? These are certainly obvious questions that demand answers. Otherwise, a hue and cry will greet any such governing coalition from its very first day in office, as a kind of musical accompaniment that will rise to a crescendo within the party and in broad sections of the electorate. Wouldn't it be better to draw clear lines and go into opposition? Even there, as Kurt Schumacher, the SPD's leader in the nineteen-fifties, never tired of emphasizing, there is plenty of opportunity to earn a laurel wreath in national policy-making. And in the bargain the SPD can polish its profile as the unimpeachable alternative to the governing party, storing up popularity for the next election or even the one after that. One way or another, it certainly presents a dilemma.

The word »compromise,« the twin of »coalition,« has different associations, depending on which language one is speaking. In many Anglo-Saxon countries, compromise has long been considered to be the model of successful policymaking. A pragmatic spirit traditionally has defined the political culture in those nations. Yet even in the United States this equation has never quite worked. Indeed, the Tea Party fundamentalists there are currently twisting the word »compromise« so much that it almost means the opposite of reasonable accommodation. They think it is better to let the country go to the dogs than to meet their opponent halfway. In the ancestral land of modern democracy – of

all places – this high-profile political group has come to regard compromise as the devil's work. John Dewey, the New World's mentor in matters of democracy, must be turning in his grave right now. Zealotry is poisoning the political culture of co-operation, the mother's milk of any democracy. The zealots call it the »politics of values« and claim to be defending and preaching »the truth.«

Of course, we Germans have no reason to congratulate ourselves. In this country above all – and this holds true in large measure even today – compromise has also often been dismissed as the devil's work, along with conflict and contradiction. All have been condemned as acts of treason against the cherished »harmony« ordained from on high by whichever elites happened to be ruling the country at any given time. Most people automatically associate the noun »compromise« with the adjective »shabby.« This »un-political« culture has infected even German Social Democracy since the beginning of its history, both from within and from outside. It was not until the advent of the Weimar Republic that its ill effects upon the party's internal affairs could be eliminated. And not until the 1960s, years after the establishment of the Federal Republic, did its external influence noticeably diminish. Yet the most recent elections have surely reminded us that the ill-repute surrounding compromise in Germany has not faded away. The self-righteous element of the left, mainly outside the party today, has never broken with the fundamentalist origins of the socialist movement. Its adherents like to make a smug display of their disdain and even outright contempt for social democracy, which to them is little more than a series of compromises. It must be admitted that

their contempt really does take aim at the heart of the party, because it is compromise – not just any old compromise, but a quite specific one, the »social democratic compromise« – that defines the party. What is it and what is it good for? Even the most cursory historical retrospective suggests that this passionate compromise is two things at once: a resource that can make possible great victories and a risk that can bring on painful defeats.

That compromise was in no sense the birthright of social democracy; rather, it had to be learned through hard experience. Prior to World War I, any kind of participation in government (known then as Millerandism after the French Socialist Party had been the first to try it) was considered a betrayal of the social democratic cause. Only when the party's very existence was in jeopardy during the war did this attitude begin to change. The Patriotic Auxiliary Service Law, passed in 1916, embodied a bargain in which the SPD would support the government, albeit selectively, in exchange for significant movement toward worker codetermination, which was a core demand of the Party. The law, and the tradeoff it implied, symbolized a shift in the Party's thinking about issues of cooperation. This was also the era in which the ethical socialist and godfather of the Bad Godesberg Program, Leonard Nelson, who was known for the rigor of his moral principles, proclaimed that »compromise is the form in which the ideal is made real on earth.« He reasoned that, if somebody were to forgo even one potential element of the ideal to keep it unsullied, in truth s/he would have betrayed the ideal completely. This is an inconvenient doctrine that recently has been rehabilitated brilliantly and given renewed luster by Avishai Margalit's ethic of the good compromise. Still, the most vexing questions are left unanswered: Exactly where is the tipping point at which a compromise becomes »shabby,« and – assuming that compro-

mises are constantly being made – what repercussions will this have for the long-term credibility of the actors?

During the Weimar Republic, Social Democrats began to understand that compromise would have to become their Party's rule of thumb if it hoped to defend democracy effectively. And that is something it would indeed have to do, since democracy was an indispensable way-station on the road to fulfilling the movement's more elaborate dreams. However, compromise often meant that Social Democrats had to abandon progress toward their own goals and, in some cases, even accept some painful rollbacks. Under the circumstances that emerged, defense of the Republic became the supreme goal, although in vain as it turned out. In those years several questions had to be confronted. Was the Social Democratic Party too committed to good ends, too ready to subordinate its own agenda, too prone to defensive self-denial? If the Party had been more willing to fight at the right moment, could things have turned out differently? Had the Party gotten hopelessly stuck on slippery ground between »good« and self-destructive compromises?

But it was in these very dark times that one could discern the dawn of something quite different, a trend that only came to full fruition once fascism had been defeated and the war lost, and that eventually caused the physiognomy of the economy, society, and state to bear a closer resemblance to social democratic ideals. There is a good but seldom understood reason why, as Ralf Dahrendorf remarked, the second half of the twentieth century became »social democratic.« The social democratic compromise acquired the compelling power of a *social fact*, a *fait accompli*. Its undeniable historical success depended upon two dramatic experiences. The first of these came to light near the beginning of the SPD's first inclusion in government during the years 1918-1919. If one hopes to live up to the rigorous requirements of a

politics of equal liberty, it is not enough to invent worthwhile projects unless they are matched by an equally advanced social consciousness and can be made to work in the real world. No program is even worth the paper it is printed on without a three-way compromise that knits together the ideal, public opinion, and economic realities. The second condition for the »social democratic century« was more precarious and has remained so, because it depends on a consensus with refractory social forces, those that hold the commanding heights of the capitalist economy. Attainable only under quite specific historical conditions, it is not easy to institutionalize. In fact, it was only the Great Depression of the 1930s that laid the foundations for the social democratic compromise in Europe and the United States (though only temporarily in the latter), a bargain which insured that capitalism would be regulated politically and a social welfare state created. Under the circumstances, when capitalism faced a systemic crisis that endangered its very existence, the credible option that the workers' movement presented – to create a socialist economic order if need be – played a crucial role in sealing the deal. Also, the »threat« of a communist option gave the social democratic compromise added weight, even though the SPD consistently rejected that option in principle.

The content of this social democratic compromise, implicitly or explicitly reached to fend off the communist threat nearly everywhere in the world of modern capitalism, became the foundational document of welfare-state democracy. The workers' movement would accept the basic outlines of a capitalist economic order, private property in the major means of production, and the market economy. In return, the trustees of that economic system would agree to waive a substantial – though negotiable – part of their property rights in favor of co-determination, a share in financing the social welfare state, wage

increases, and better working conditions. Of course, all this happened in Germany and Italy only after the end of World War II, because both societies had previously chosen to accept the National-Socialist/Fascist responses to the crisis. After 1945, the acceptance of »social citizenship« became the cornerstone of democracy and had a regulative effect on the political economy of Europe. Up until quite recently, the social democratic compromise seemed to have taken deep root in our societies, affecting the expectations of both of the social antagonists who had to negotiate its details. Moreover, it was linked to a feeling for the inviolability of the cultural and moral standards that had apparently been made permanent by social democracy.

Today, in the wake of globalization's triumphal march, the disgraceful collapse of the communist model, and the socio-economic shocks triggered by the crisis in the financial markets, the erosion of the social democratic compromise is evident. The most influential trustees of the interests of capital now believe that they can operate according to a new set of assumptions. They suppose that they will be able to dismantle substantially the historically achieved standards of social democracy in Europe without fear of adverse political consequences, just as has apparently happened in the United States, the original homeland of libertarian democracy. Where will this end? The conditions that favor successful social democratic policymaking are passing away, just at a time when such policies are needed more than ever.

Are we in for an era of social austerity in the aftermath of the »golden age of social democracy« during the early postwar years and the ensuing years of long-drawn-out crisis? As long as it still worked, the social democratic compromise operated almost below the threshold of perception. However, it was always a crucial power resource available to society, a fact that is again becoming noticeable as

it crumbles. This is the point of the legacy, usually profoundly misunderstood, that the eminent British historian and social democratic visionary, Tony Judt, bequeathed to left-wing debates: If we do not support social democratic policies out of conviction any longer, then we ought to support them out of fear. If their foundations are weakened, then the foundations of democracy itself will start to develop cracks. While it may be true that the social democratic compromise itself lacks a dark side that jeopardizes its ideals, it does have a built-in tendency to weaken itself. The longer it hums along quietly and successfully, the more we tend to forget that it establishes the conditions within which modern democracies can flourish. This forgetfulness saps the vitality of the compromise. The lower the price that its opponents seem required to pay for its demolition, the more ruthlessly will they try to demolish it.

The Social Democrats are the party of the grand historical compromise of European democracy, but it is not necessarily loved for this achievement. Hence, under the present circumstances it is crucial for the party not to mince words in its outlook, speech, and actions, to leave no lingering doubt that it is committed to stay the course for greater social democracy, and that – above all – the substance of its campaign promises still hold good. This is simultaneously a question of how its policies are determined and how they are presented to the public, i.e., the content of the compromises and the way they are justified. By the time the next election rolls around (at the latest) the bill will come due for every »shabby« compromise entered into, and it won't be cheap. In a democracy, the time factor plays a complicated role in determining what sorts of compromises a party should make when it considers joining a coalition government and seeking public approval of its choice. During the Weimar era, the Social Democratic Party twice joined Grand Coalitions, dis-

regarding its own party interests, in order to pull a stuck cart out of the mud in nearly hopeless situations. It did so in 1923 to tame runaway inflation and again in 1928/1930 to save democracy itself. Both times it leaped into the breach, bearing the power of a saving compromise. But its sacrifices did not enable it to accumulate the capital of trust among the electorate that it would have needed in 1933 to insure democracy's survival, on the occasion of the last free elections held during the Weimar era. In short, the Social Democrats showed integrity by entering into compromises that served the interests of the state, but those very compromises wore them down as a party.

And then: the SPD emerged stronger from the first Grand Coalition of the Federal Republic only because Willy Brandt's charisma added brilliance and appeal to the social democratic message. In fact, Brandt's personal qualities overshadowed and negated the sober judgment of Herbert Wehner, that, in order to disseminate a consistent und unambiguous message, the country should be told only about the successes of this compromise government. And let it be noted that no Left Party existed in those days eager to vacuum up the disappointments. Yet a significant extra-parliamentary opposition did arise then, which persistently sapped confidence in the party. Much later the end of the second Grand Coalition brought the party back to its absolute historical nadir, in spite of its noteworthy accomplishments in government. That is of course a cause for concern, yet it suggests that a party's supporters and voters by no means always measure its performance in light of the substantive compromises it has made. The latter are generally imbedded within certain underlying compromises: principled pragmatism and antagonistic cooperation with the powers of a market capitalism that will never be wholly domesticated. The party's sympathizers and members may overlook these deeper compromises while pre-

ferring to assay the purity of the party's performance in government by placing it on a gold scale. It almost seems as though people want to judge the party of the grand compromise by casting a skeptical eye on each one of the little compromises it has felt compelled to make. And, in contrast to the CDU, it will never be enough for the SPD to administer the country competently. It will always have to do more than that. Compromises that allow other parties to flourish cause the SPD to wither on the vine.

Thus, should the Social Democrats again join a Grand Coalition, they can expect to earn high marks from the electorate only if they keep pointing out the social democratic »surplus« in the coalition's accomplishments, above and beyond

the terms of the coalition agreement, even when the latter is »good.« Furthermore, they will have to make a credible case for themselves from a power politics perspective, i.e., they must show exactly in what ways they will be able to achieve still more of the social democratic elements of the compromise agreement after the next election. Little compromises turn out to be an especially delicate matter for the party of grand compromises, since it must always worry about a danger that awaits it on the side of the Grand Coalition highway. Goethe, who was a minister of state as well as a poet, summarized that danger in a very German way when he remarked: »healthy compromises turn conflicts into chronic illnesses.«



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## **Utopia, Technocracy and Struggle**

### **How to End the Crisis of Social Democracy**

The crisis that besets social democracy is closely linked to a shift in the relative vitality of markets and states. Both technocratic and struggle-oriented policy approaches are less likely to succeed than they once were. To restore the ability to accomplish its aims, social democracy will have to reflect on its original commitment to a utopian project: reconciling its universal mission with the particular interests of capital. To enhance its political capabilities, then, social democracy should pay closer heed to a good resource: the utopian vision of a *good society*.

Although the current crisis of social

democracy does involve a diminished capacity to accomplish its objectives, it goes deeper than that, reaching down into the roots of the social democratic project itself. During the »golden age« of the post-war era, social democracy was quite successful in domesticating capitalism. However, most people nowadays do not really expect social democrats even to desire any kind of reconciliation between its broader mission and the interests of capital.

A project aimed at human emancipation would have to alter the structures and power relationships within political economy in order to create equal life-

opportunities for all. But this is resisted by those who have an interest in maintaining the status quo. Hence, a project of emancipation must be able to mobilize certain instruments of power to carry out progressive policies against the resistance of those who control capital, ideology, the means of production, and the means of violence. Historically, the power of the labor movement has depended on its ability to mobilize the masses. Victories at the polls enabled social democratic parties to use the democratic state to bring about greater equality of opportunity for all. Strikes and mass demonstrations permitted labor unions to negotiate with the representatives of capital on a level playing field. But today, both wings of the labor movement, parties and unions, are less and less successful at mobilizing the power resources they need to achieve equality in life-opportunities. Both of these political strategies still work, but only to a certain extent. There are two reasons for the movement's diminished ability to »get its way.« First, fundamental changes in underlying social conditions have occurred that undermine both of the strategies noted above: gaining power for negotiations and using the democratic state for social democratic ends. Moreover, social democracy has grown weaker politically due to self-inflicted mistakes.

There have been important changes in the nature of the constraints affecting social democracy. One of the most crucial of

*Exogenous causes that explain social democracy's diminished ability to achieve its goals*

these has been a shift in the balance of power between democracy and capitalism. Spurred on by an ideology that demonizes the state and glorifies markets, Western democracies have deregulated their markets and taken a wrecking ball to the social welfare state. Four decades of neo-liberal policymaking have led to a historic shift in the primary distribution of income, i.e., income

distribution before transfers by the state are taken into account. These shifts have polarized society and deprived the state of many of its core functions. By the time that the internal instability of financial capitalism could no longer be ignored, it was already too late to reverse course. Concerns and Banks have distorted markets, while global financial flows are no longer subject to control by democratic nation-states.

The marriage between capitalism and democracy seems to be falling apart. In the liberal version of economics, the market must assert its primacy over politics if we are to have growth and prosperity. Accordingly, the state gets demoted to the role of service-provider and repair shop for markets. If the democratic sovereign disrupts this relationship (cf. the Irish »no« vote on the E.U. Treaty or the initial refusal by the United States Congress to bail out the banks), its »wrong« decision is either revisited or simply overruled (cf. the referendum in Greece). Thus, hostile takeovers of the Greek and Italian regimes by technocratic trustees of financial market interests have had something like the effect of fire accelerants, hastening the erosion of the legitimacy of representative democracies.

This trend has had dramatic consequences for social democracy. For one thing, it erodes the nation-state, a crucial instrument in social democracy's effort to shape events. Relying exclusively on their own resources, nation-states can no longer deal effectively with global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and the power of financial markets. Yet the political answer to these new global challenges – the creation of forms of supra-national governance – has problems of its own. The European Union demonstrates that it can be put in the service of neo-liberal ideology. Moreover, the transfer of responsibilities to the level of inter-governmental cooperation hollows out nation-state democracies even more.

At the same time, the shift in the balan-

ce of power between markets and democracy intensifies disparities in social power. Whoever controls the means of production and violence is inherently always a political actor. By contrast, the weaker elements in society have to organize themselves before they can become actors. Accordingly, the political capital – i.e., organization plus broad support – necessary to enact progressive policies must be recreated over and over again. To enact progressive policies, a social democratic government must be able to mobilize majorities, even between elections. However, the disappearance of the social milieus that once sustained social democracy has made such mobilization more difficult. For a while, the defection of the loyal social democratic voter base could be compensated by promises to guarantee a more socially conscious variant of capitalism. Anticipating unfavorable trends, social democrats have tended to concentrate on what is »achievable«; but in so doing they make it seem self-evident that their party and movement should beat a retreat from the struggle for a just primary distribution of income.

Post-industrial societies ramify into a variety of strata and subcultures, which coexist alongside one another in distinct life- and discourse-worlds. Lacking a cohesive »class consciousness,« the neglected »precariat« or precarious class is not well-suited to become a political actor. For that reason, those who advocate class struggle have lost not only their optimistic belief in historical progress, but even the very protagonist that was to carry history forward. Political parties and labor unions, the traditional instruments of class struggle, are fighting strong headwinds of social transformation. Mass organizations that promoted standardized regulations emerged from the collectivist logic of industrial society. As societies become more pluralistic and economies ever more complex, even governance becomes a challenge. Law implicitly lays claim to general validi-

ty as expressed in standardized solutions. Yet the latter frequently fail to jibe with the realities of contemporary life and its plural identities. At the same time, politically sophisticated citizens are less and less willing to accept top-down problem-solving decreed by an exclusive circle of experts. Their dissatisfaction reflects less the concrete content of the solutions offered than the (insufficiently) participatory quality of the decision-making process itself. The phenomenon of the »angry citizen« as well as the emergence of new social movements both suggest that periodic elections by themselves are no longer sufficient to ensure legitimation. The growing strength of the far-right fringes in Europe also serves as a warning signal that the lack of genuine democratic alternatives plays into the hands of misanthropic elements. Thus, we must once again dare to seek more democracy. Still, direct democracy and civic participation are not an easy pill to swallow for the self-styled experts who rule us.

It is still not clear how the fragmented, pluralistic societies of the post-industrial era will organize their interest-aggregation process. Initial experiments and experiences, however, do suggest the direction that process might take: more local, direct, participatory, and reflective. Yet new movements either refuse altogether to create common programs (e.g., Occupy, World Social Forum), or else they run into serious difficulties when they try to do so (e.g., Los Indignados). Hence, they are stuck with mere gestures of protest devoid of any ambition to redesign society and politics. Currently fashionable approaches like the *Multitude* (Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri) and *Resistance by Inaction* (Slavoj Žižek) replace strategies to accomplish real change by a kind of neo-voodoo faith. What is lacking here is a bond of solidarity that might unite these diverse protest movements within and between societies into powerful agents of change. The protest movements usually fade away after

a short time without ever having wrought any real change in the social structures.

Nevertheless, social democracy faces a still more basic problem: the erosion of its philosophical foundations. As the offspring of Enlightenment rationalism, it is confident of its ability to reshape social relationships along reasonable lines. All modern institutions – the market, the state, and democracy – are based on a certain image of human beings: namely, that they are individuals guided by their own interests. But scientific advances are increasingly calling that image into question. Psychologists demonstrate the power of instincts and mass hysteria over our behavior; linguists reveal the limits of our language; deconstructionists unmask our ideological blinders. Wars, crises, and catastrophes prove that it often is an illusion to imagine that we can plan everything. Moreover, they make us realize that technical progress always entails costs as well as advantages. If one considers the cumulative impact of all these insights, it becomes clear that they undermine faith in the technological assumption that rational control alone is enough to ensure a better society. It should not be surprising, therefore, that there are more and more people who have grown »sick of politics« and who believe that technological thinking, far from being part of the solution, has become instead part of the problem.

Considering the new equilibrium of forces between markets and the state, the compromise formula agreed upon by the SPD at its Bad Godesberg convention in

*Social democ-  
racy's self-  
inflicted mistakes*

1959 – »as much market as possible, as much state as necessary« – does not go far enough. A broad-gauged debate has already

begun that will attempt to evaluate these power shifts and determine what conclusions ought to be drawn from them. For some, the recent unleashing of capitalism offers proof that this predator can ne-

ver be domesticated successfully. Yet little heed is typically paid to the issues of how capitalism might be overcome and what sort of society might be put in its place. Others acknowledge the recent predominance of economic factors, and believe that one must seek accommodation with it to prevent anything worse from happening. But the latter faction does not usually talk about whether and to what degree such accommodation might work, given the new balance of power between markets and the state.

Today two issues have to be resolved: what kind of society should social democracy strive to create, and how can it realize its vision in light of the changed ratio of forces alluded to already? But the crisis debate now going on in social democratic circles largely ignores both of these challenges. Instead, it has followed the ancient fault lines between two factions: those who see politics as struggle between irreconcilable foes and those who understand it to concern gradual reform of the status quo. The Marxist tradition of class struggle is the ultimate source of the former interpretation (»politics as struggle«). Of course, it must be recalled that the »final victory« of the proletariat that Marx hoped for has failed to materialize. Consequently, the struggle faction has adopted an interpretation of the political inspired by Antonio Gramsci, according to which politics involves a ceaseless battle between mutually exclusive projects of social predominance. The struggle faction attacks the technocrats for having betrayed the cause of social democracy and having »administered to death« what little remains of that project. It would like to return to the »pure doctrine« of an emancipatory project carried out in the struggle for social hegemony.

By contrast, the technocratic understanding of politics counts on carrying out gradual changes in existing circumstances by relying on the aid of the state, but *without political struggles*. Politics is regarded

primarily as a program for long-term planning, rational steering, and efficient implementation, whether in the case of the five-year plans preferred by state socialism or the neo-liberal bureaucracies typical of the European Union. The social basis for this kind of thinking is to be found in segments of the middle class, whose members would like to lead lives free of the passions stirred up by political mobilization. From this perspective, sober technocratic procedures are our best guarantee that a long-term commitment to the common good will counterbalance the populist aberrations of electoral democracy. The truth, however, is that the technocratic understanding of politics is also rooted in a vision: the enlightened ideal of the modern age: »Progress is subject to rational control.« As far as the technocrats are concerned, the struggle faction is composed of romantics who glorify the nation-state and do not understand the world as it is today. Its adherents allegedly refuse to admit how dramatically the balance of power has shifted in global financial capitalism.

In spite of – or perhaps because of – their contrary instincts, today both the struggle faction and the technocrats are increasingly in the same boat. Even if it were possible to resurrect the electoral

### *Utopia as a source of power*

success of the Third Way, legitimization via elections will not be enough in the future to enable social democrats to enact new policies. Reform-minded technocrats must recognize that they will have to develop their mobilizing capabilities in order to accumulate the political capital necessary to turn their electoral base into an effective political actor. Furthermore, they need to establish discursive sovereignty in order to stand up to the forces behind the status quo. Interpretive power can only be gained when programs are inserted into a narrative that offers well-founded hopes for a better society. Hence, political communication

remains ineffective when it refers only to technical matters and their possible solutions. For its part, the struggle faction needs to recognize that, by this time, only broad social coalitions can mobilize the requisite power resources to enact progressive policies given the current alignment of political forces. Even though elections are no longer the whole ball game, social struggles would be hopeless without a democratic mandate, considering the current state of power relationships. Digging trenches on the left edge of the political playing field is counterproductive.

To manage the balancing act between growing challenges and shrinking capabilities, advocates of social democracy should think about the times in the history of their movement when it has been most successful. Social democrats have always acted with panache when they were able to mobilize their political capital and then put it to reasonable use in a political project. A common goal is necessary to fuse these two elements. The factor bridging the two approaches is utopia. Utopia describes a better tomorrow, the good society with full and equal opportunities in life for all. Utopias are not detailed blueprints that lay out a real future; they are a fixed point depicting a desirable goal around which many citizens can rally. It is not that important how much of the utopia is actually achieved in the end. As long as people are convinced that it can be achieved, that is enough to motivate them. Utopias are a normative compass that provides orientation for those seeking to shape politics and society. Only the vision of a better society enables citizens to judge whether concrete policies are headed in the right direction. The utopian compass legitimizes progressive projects when elections alone are not sufficient to provide a source of legitimation. This is the case because progressive policies have to be justified. Anyone who demands »progress« is obliged to answer the questions: progress toward what, and

for the sake of what? Yet utopia is more than a compass; it is also a crucial prerequisite for developing progressive political capabilities. Without the capacity for mobilization, progressive politics cannot hope to overcome the inertia of the status quo. Without the passionate belief in a shared vision, people cannot be mobilized in great numbers. The positive vision of a better world takes away the paralyzing fear of the collapse of the old order. Only when a sufficient number of people believe that another kind of life is possible, will they be ready to commit themselves to fight for it. And actors with differing interests will only be able to unite in solidarity when they share a vision of a better tomorrow. The common bond of utopia alone can forge solidarity in struggles that extend beyond social and national boundaries. Belief in a better tomorrow gives people the courage to fight for it today. The willingness to struggle for it in the here and now is the crucial power resource that emancipatory projects require.

Thus, the crisis of social democracy is also rooted in the abandonment of a vision that transcends the pure market society. To restore its political capacities, social democracy needs the positive vision of a post-capitalist world. Right now, numerous attempts are being made to formulate a new social democratic utopia. In this spirit, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation is collaborating in the Good Society project in Europe and supporting a model for the *Economy of Tomorrow* in Asia. The normative vision behind this utopia is a good society that offers equal chances in life to everyone. Political and economic systems have to be reconstructed in such a way that they serve this end. That entails taking a different path, one that leads to socially

just, sustainable, and dynamic growth. The Economy of Tomorrow model is committed to the development of all talents, fair incomes, stable financial markets and current accounts balances, sustainable social and natural support systems, green innovation, and the de-coupling of productivity from the consumption of resources. A scientifically well-founded model is important, but it is not enough. Its recommendations for action must be translated into powerful images and narratives in order to gain interpretive power in society. In the final analysis, discursive alliances that join forces to fight for a change of path will have to be forged. That effort can only succeed when political projects make possible the building of bridges between different discursive and experiential worlds.

All this cannot be accomplished without arguments. And the Gretchen question is unanswered. Does an emancipatory project have to try to alter the primary distribution of income, or can it be content to contain capitalism via regulation and redistribution? In other words: is it enough to switch to an eco-Keynesian path in order to create equal opportunities for all? Or does the progressive movement have enough power to fight for and win at least a moderate change of course?

Only passionate debates about these basic issues can justify renewed confidence in the actors fighting for progressive policies. Only confidence in the seriousness of those actors bestows credibility on the utopia. And only a credible utopia, functioning as a common bond, can weld together today's diverse protest movements behind a political project. Only a utopia can mobilize the power resources that are necessary to effect a change of course in the direction of the good society.



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Frank Swiaczny

## How Much Influence Can We Have on Demographic Trends?

For decades, demographic shifts were the province of experts, but today they have entered the social and political mainstream. There are scarcely any spheres of life left that appear substantially untouched by the demographic change. It follows that economies and societies will face new, far-reaching challenges that have no precedent, at least in this particular form. Such changes pose risks that have sparked considerable controversy and debate. However, political strategies are also increasingly being designed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by new demographic realities. Still, a preliminary question must first be answered: to what extent is it possible for us to direct or influence the challenges posed by demographic change?

To be in a position to answer questions concerning risks and opportunities, the first step is to take a look at the laws governing demographic processes. To what degree can political decisions affect the outcomes of the demographic change? And – assuming the latter can be controlled to some extent – how do we go about it?

The kind of demographic change that Germany is currently undergoing, with an aging population and a burgeoning birth deficit, is neither new nor inherently unpredictable. Both trends, aging and a declining population, have their origins in structural changes in the population process that began as early as the nineteenth century, and which population science has called »the demographic transition«.

Demographic change is a direct consequence of long-term changes in fertility and mortality, i.e., the ratio between births and deaths. From a historical perspective, there is evidently a great deal of inertia in demographic processes: population pat-

terns established in the past continue to produce effects far into the future. For example, low birth rates in the past mean that the successor generation will have fewer mothers; hence, fewer children will be born in the present. In this way low fertility develops a demographic momentum that carries on into the future.

The prelude to the »demographic transition« was a secular decline in the high mortality levels of pre-industrial society. This trend was both an expression of and a precondition for steadily improving living conditions. Moreover, life expectancy at birth in Germany also has risen markedly. Of course, this increase in life spans is good news, and there are no indications at present that the trend toward longer lives is going to lose momentum anytime in the foreseeable future.

On account of medical advances, older people can now expect to live longer, a trend that contributes still more to the aging of society. Even the fertility decline had already become apparent by the beginning of the twentieth century. Within just a few decades, women finally tended to have fewer children than were needed to replace the numbers of their parents' generation. Since the beginning of the 1970s, the fertility rate in many industrial societies has fallen still more in the wake of social modernization and changing roles within the family. In Germany since 1983, the total fertility rate has consistently been fewer than 1.5 children per woman. In the eyes of many contemporary observers, this seemingly permanent decline in fertility to a point below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman signaled a »second demographic transition«. The theory of

*Demographic change is neither new nor unforeseeable*

the demographic transition implicitly gave rise to the expectation that a shift from high to low birth and mortality rates would necessarily usher in population stability. However, that expectation has not been borne out in most countries.

As early as 1972, the number of deaths in Germany already exceeded the number of births. Meanwhile, the birth deficit has been steadily increasing on account of persistently low fertility. Germany's population would have shrunk by roughly 140,000 inhabitants per year since 2000 were it not for immigration from abroad, which has partially offset the decline. And Germany is not alone in this situation. The fertility rate has fallen below replacement levels in other Western countries and indeed even in some developing and middle-income countries as well. In the latter a demographic change either is already underway or soon will be. Nevertheless, Germany does rank among the countries in which the demographic change is especially far advanced due to its high and continually increasing life expectancy and its low fertility.

Comparative analysis makes it plain that demographic change is not a historically exceptional state of affairs, something characteristic only of Germany. As a rule, populations undergo continuing variations in fertility, mortality, and immigration/emigration, but they do so to differing degrees. Hence, a stable population would be the exception rather than the rule, both in space and in time. The key to the theory that projects stable populations is the assumption that there will be a constant fertility rate that results in the replacement of each generation. That assumption is theoretically significant because it suggests an answer to our earlier question: To what extent can political choices influence or guide demographic change? Relevant calculations based on modeling indicate that fertility must persist at replacement level for a very long time before it can

result in a population with a constant structure and size, i.e., one in which the age pyramid would then depend solely on mortality.

Initially, higher fertility fails to show positive effects either on the potential labor force or on the dependency ratio – so crucial to social security systems – between those in their working years and the children, youth, and senior citizens whom they have to support. There is a time lag of around twenty years between, on the one hand, higher fertility and larger birth cohorts, and, on the other, positive effects upon labor markets and social security systems. Therefore, in the short run higher birth rates do not entail any relief from the impacts of aging and a declining population.

The same thing is true when it comes to raising the age limit for the economically active population. For example choosing an upper age limit of 67 instead of 65 as a basis for calculating the dependency ratio would indeed contribute to a reduction in the future aging-related increase. But on account of the baby boom, a large number of people will be reaching that age range in the coming years; thus, extremely high age limits would have to be set to fully compensate for the underlying demographic trend. A similar relationship may also be observed in the case of immigration from abroad. Immigration can slow the trend toward an aging population. Yet in order to counteract that trend completely, unrealistically high and ever-increasing immigration levels would be required.

Thus, there is only limited leeway for exercising political control over the demographic consequences of decades-long low fertility. Because of the inertia built into demographic processes, higher fertility or increased immigration cannot prevent

*The demographic impacts of lower fertility are subject to political direction only to a limited extent*

aging and population decline in the short run. Model-derived calculations done by the Federal Statistical Office show that even an increase in the total fertility rate to 1.6 children per woman by 2025, plus an additional 200,000 immigrants per year from 2020 onward, would still yield a population decline in Germany to fewer than 75 million inhabitants by 2060. The share of persons between the ages of 20 and 64 in the total population would fall from 61 % in 2010 to 51 % in 2060. According to the models, lower fertility and smaller increases in immigration would result in still more striking population drops and more pronounced aging. To be sure, unfavorable trends in the dependency ratio due to the aging of the population would not continue indefinitely.

Thus, the demographic challenge facing Germany can be subdivided into two components. On the one hand there is striking growth in the dependency ratio, a trend that will continue into the 2030s until it culminates in a fairly stable pattern. On the other hand, if one assumes a fertility rate that falls short of the replacement level, the population will continue to decline. The depth of that decline can only be affected by adjusting immigration levels. Both impacts of the demographic change have distinct consequences.

The accelerated aging that Germany is currently experiencing evidently seems to many an enormous and unparalleled challenge. This is the case, above all, because demographic trends entail wrenching

*Inevitable  
adjustments can  
be understood  
as opportunities*

social and economic adjustments that are perceived by those affected either as unreasonable demands or as threats to vested interests that they had believed to be secure. The focus of debate here is not simply on how generational justice might be achieved, although the successor generation is certainly going to be hard-pressed. It is also about equity be-

tween potential winners and losers in the necessary processes of adjustment that must occur in the labor market and social security systems. Higher educational attainments may contribute to making people in an aging society more productive and keeping them in the work force longer. Yet investments in higher education and productivity are only two among the many possibilities we have for counteracting the decline in the pool of employed persons. The requisite processes of adjustment also can be understood as opportunities to overcome the inertia that retards the transition to a more sustainable kind of economic development. In an aging society, a longer yet healthier life can serve as a model for moving away from defining the standard of living exclusively in terms of quantitative consumption and instead measuring it by reference to improvements in the quality of life. The latter do not arise from economic growth alone; they also involve issues of relative distribution and participation.

Yet long-term population decline poses special challenges for another reason. Together with aging it threatens to undermine the regional capacity to maintain public and private infrastructure. As a result, declines in the attractiveness and quality of life in affected regions can trigger emigration, further reinforcing the regional disparities between areas that are demographically and economically prosperous and those facing a host of problems. Numerous examples from thinly populated regions such as those in Scandinavia show that smaller populations and lower population densities per se do not necessarily jeopardize prosperity and sustainable growth. Nevertheless, the transition from a growing to a shrinking population, which many regions cannot avoid over the medium term, does indeed represent a paradigm shift, one that can be seen as the price of entry into a phase of reduced consumption of resources. And yet we have only just

begun to acknowledge and discuss the most important challenges facing people in their everyday lives: how to manage aging and population decline *in situ*, and to do so in ways that are both economically

and ecologically sustainable and socially defensible. We have already mentioned the risks and conflicts imbedded in these demographic trends, but they also conceal great opportunities for the future.



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*Dorle Gelbhaar*

## **Chile Today**

### **40 years after the military coup d'état**

In Chile today internal peace reigns, even though just forty years ago the country's presidential palace, La Moneda, was bombed and democracy was swept away in the wake of a military coup. Most of the Chileans who fled the bloody terror instigated by the dictator Augusto Pinochet have since returned home and found new economic niches for themselves. People can speak freely again. The economy is flourishing. Chile is Latin America's wealthiest country and South America's biggest exporter. The share of exports in the broader economy, one third of GDP, is comparable to that of Germany. Everything is stable. Germans who have cultivated long-lasting friendships with former emigrants and their children, some going back to the time right after the coup, can sometimes be heard to say: »Nothing is stirring there anymore.«

There is no reason to expect the economy to go into a tailspin. On the contrary, by the end of 2013 this Andean nation will have recorded yet another year of GDP growth. By the same token, a newfound diversity marks Chile's cultural landscape, especially in the Santiago metropolitan

area. The old bards such as Quilapayun and Inti-Illimani continue to sing their songs, while younger artists like the singer Ilabaca are taking inspiration from the Andean nation's revolutionary past. This sultry young musician sees herself as a successor of Victor Jara, who was brutally tortured and murdered in Santiago's Central Stadium. For example, in her songs she takes up the cause of the country's forgotten people, the indigenous Mapuche. What she creates is really roots music. The spirited Latin American sound is interwoven with psychedelic overtones that seem far removed from this world. Her songs about the discriminated-against Mapuche, the miners, and the agricultural laborers who sow and reap in the northern deserts of this Andean country have a visionary quality that is attracting attention abroad as well.

The capital, Santiago de Chile, has started to look much more attractive during the last ten years. The people there are seeking ways to spend time out of doors. They eat, drink and debate in open-air restaurants. Even the conservative policies of the former President, Sebastian Pinera,

did not go unchallenged despite the successful course the country has recently steered. Of course, elections were held on November 17 of last year, but that was not the only reason for political ferment. The country's strict abortion law, which does not even make exceptions in cases of rape or when the mother's life is in danger, has been the target of protests. There has been especially heated public debate about this law ever since it came out that an eleven year-old girl had been raped by a family member and then gotten pregnant.

However, Alberto Mayol, Assistant Professor at the University of Chile in Santiago, thinks that a crisis of legitimacy is emerging in politics and the economy. The fact is that the gap between rich and poor in Chilean society is not closing at all. And the dominant neo-liberal policies offer no real way out of that dilemma.

In December 2013, the Socialist candidate Michelle Bachelet won the presidential runoff election. She defeated the nominee of the center-right Alianza, Evelyn Matthei. Mrs. Bachelet had already won the first round of the election in November with 47 % of the votes cast as against her rival's 25 %. She has been president once already, from 2006 until 2010, the first woman in her country's history to hold the office. During those years she was also Chile's most popular politician. Until recently she has been working as the head of the United Nations' women's organization.

It is undeniably true that one can speak freely again in Chile. But does that necessarily mean that the most urgent social issues are being discussed seriously? And are those issues being debated with an awareness of the goals once proclaimed by the left-wing alliance, the Unidad Popular, headed by President Salvador Allende?

After she returned from exile, Allende's daughter Isabel, today a senator and Vice-President of the Socialist Party, had to get used a strangely circumscribed way of tal-

king. To most people it still seemed too dangerous to call things by their right names. Fear and reticence still powerfully shaped people's behavior patterns. No wonder, because Pinochet still held the office of Senator when the process of democratization began; hence, he was able to influence the ways in which the country would reclaim its past and the image of those past events that would be presented to the public.

When Pinochet was visiting London in 1998, a Spanish judge rendered a verdict against him *in absentia*, which meant that the former dictator had to spend several months in England as Chile's past was being unearthed. That must have had a liberating effect upon public discussions. Still, the fears and insecurities that affect language are not easy to overcome. Once the Allende-led Unidad Popular was dissolved, new language rules were approved between 1970 and 1973 that equated the movement and its leader with chaos and violence and portrayed Pinochet as the man whose coup d'état had saved the country from these scourges. In the speech of those days, murder, torture, and concentration camps were depicted as merely temporary infringements justified by the situation at hand. In the meantime, the Chilean Truth Commission has done much to create a clearer picture of actual events, a service for which it deserves special commendation.

There are undoubtedly very few people who would like to see a return of the severe polarization of those times, which could again end in the use of force. But it is precisely for this reason that it makes sense to investigate what really happened in 1973, as well as in the years before and after the coup. Young Chilean journalists and historians have dedicated themselves anew to this very task in the last few years. Moreover, they are trying to find out what prospects for success Allende's path actually had. Toward that end they will soon be able to use papers recently declassified by the CIA and the United States Department

of State, radio communications among the rebellious generals on September 11, 1973 and Chilean military documents that were until recently also strictly classified. And of course they will sift through press reports of the day. In short, research on Chile's past is on the verge of a new beginning.

In 1970 many people who hoped to find something like a »third way« in politics staked their hopes on Chile. Inspired by similar ideas from the 1920's, as well as by those of the New Left and the Prague Spring, they wanted an entire society in which the free development of and equal opportunities for all could be put into practice by democratic means. This was a vision doomed to fail.

Even in the Chile of the twenty-first century, positive economic developments have not led to a closing of the gap between rich and poor. In this day and age, it is imperative to seek ways of establishing greater equality of opportunity on both the national and international level. As we know, when impoverishment begins to affect specific social strata, a reduction in mental and productive capacities will make itself felt rather quickly. Thus, reality calls for utopia, simply in order to avoid falling back behind standards already attained.

The dreams of those days turned into nightmares. At a Friedrich Ebert Foundation-sponsored event, Isabel Allende expressed her gratitude for the solidarity extended to Chileans persecuted after the coup by both halves of a Germany then divided into two states. But she also wondered out loud whether the coup could have been prevented if Europe had granted loans to Chile after the United States had refused to do so, precipitating a drop in global copper prices (copper mining is the industry most central to the country's

prosperity). Ms. Allende thought that the expropriation of the copper mines without compensation was the one move for which the U.S. could not forgive her father.

In his book, *Political Man*, Oskar Negt, a German sociology professor emeritus, criticizes the fact that politics is getting depoliticized and turning into administration, so much so that it now seems to lack any vision. He adds that democracy does not develop of its own accord; instead, it is the only form of government that has to be learned.

A person who was 20 back in 1973 would now be reaching retirement age. Younger people, who have never had to be cautious in their personal communications or to practice the art of silence, are on the verge of taking over. But for now it is Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria, born in 1951 and forced to flee with her mother to the German Democratic Republic (via Australia) in 1973, who is running for high office. In the GDR she studied medicine, then returned home in 1979 despite having endured torture there, so that she could become a pediatrician and do something to reduce the misery in Chile. She has a lot of sympathizers – not just the youth, but certainly including them.

Michelle Bachelet's first order of business will be to carry out a restructuring of the economic system, which has long bestowed unparalleled advantages on the wealthy. Bachelet has already announced some of the points in her program, including a reform of the educational system that would feature qualitative improvements as well as the elimination of fees for all students. In addition, she would push for a more just system of taxation, mainly to be achieved by raising the capital gains tax, and attempt to amend the constitution.



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