

## **Democracy, the State and Development in Africa: "Competing Commitments in Global Engagements"**

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The thrust of the paper rests on the need for further reflection on the efficacy or otherwise of existing models for gainful engagements between Africa and Europe. It focuses on issues surrounding democracy, the state and development in Africa.

Following the wave of democratization in Africa that began in the early 1990s, it was hoped that the State in Africa would grow to become a tenable vehicle that can spur engagement with Europe in the effort to bring about development to the continent. Such hope was based on the assumption that democracy would transform the previous authoritarian and exclusive state structures and institutions into a more response-accountable and inclusive systems. It was also expected that the transformation would release multiple capabilities and energies around it, foster legitimacy to an otherwise previously transplanted neo-colonial foreign institution assumed to have no interest in the development agenda of a society it imposed itself on.

While these transformational impacts of the democratization process cannot be underrated and may be well appreciated, this paper would like to suggest that it has given rise to the emergence of a rentier state, which is one "for itself" facilitated by control and use of resources through a myriad extortionate and patronage channels. Such a state is indifferent to the main agenda of its assumed constituencies that is to constructively engage in consultations that yield development results to its constituency.

The paper also postulates that on the other side of the engagement regime, contrary to the spirit underling the engagement, foreign companies and states take "pleasure" and comfort in engaging with such a state irrespective of the consequences to respective societies' aspirations and the spirit of the engagement.

While the reasons for the behavior of the state in Africa can be framed under tendencies of a rentier state as above, to explain the reasons for the behavior of the European side one can suggest a combination of the following thus: Response to demands by domestic constituencies, response to policies of individual countries, realism around which a country orders its priorities: assisting a partner or paying all attention to domestic concerns. The paper will call for further reflections on how to harmonize the competing commitments of parties to the engagement.