The triple post in Uganda: Thoughts on independence and patterns of critique

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Abstract:
Once celebrated as a new generation of African political leadership, Yoweri Museveni today is one of the longest presidents in power. Interestingly, his regency is justified as a response to the historical atrocities of the post-independence, making Museveni a „post-post-independence“ phenomenon himself. His legitimacy strategy stems from pacifying the country in the 1980s, the economic consolidation since the 1990s as well as the delivering of essential social goods in the 2000s. Since the adaptation of the multi-party-regime in 2005 and rising inflation, the (urban) opposition runs counter to these arguments and calls for an end of the 'imperial presidency', involving society in a triple-post struggle of normative claims.

Different conceptions of democracy are grounding these rivaling claims for political agency; including no-party democracy, “democratic centralism” and/or participatory democracy. In our talk, we would like to present a theoretical framework by which we can analyze these different strategies of appropriation of emancipatory approaches: Agents may translate “democracy” into a contextualized variant that recursively reflects the historical and economical power relations (N'Dione et.al. 1997). Moreover, decolonizing democracy can be achieved by reference to indigenous traditions (Wiredu 1996). Another strategy consists in challenging liberalism’s preference for individual emancipation with collective claims to participation (Siame 2000). Nonetheless, these counter-narratives of democracy run the risk of reifying power if they transmute in distorting justifications of a new status quo that denies any différence within (Hountondji 1986).
Introduction

"It would [...] have been unwise to change the Movement political system to allow those not happy with such a harmonious system to find their own political home (mubaleke bagende) without involving the People. Another way to look at it is to rid the Movement, by opening up the political space, of those that are not happy with unity (kubejjako)." (Museveni 2005)

Museveni argued concerning the no-party Movement system in Uganda, which was ended by a constitutional referendum in favor a multi-party system in July 2005. Debates continue about the adequate shape of democracy fit for the people of Uganda. Recent protest after the election campaign in 2011 triggered new discussion about the role of demonstrations, political leadership, and civic rights that can be read as a follow-up to the Arab spring in North Africa. However, the protest is also object of critique among Ugandan intellectuals: Is the term “democracy” just a convenient buzzword among the rivaling factions of political class, stemming from an urban elite, in their struggle over power? What are the actual driving forces behind this protest? Is a regime change in Uganda the adequate response to rising petrol and food prices caused by inflation?

In this paper, we will explore the different core notions of democracy used in this debate and contextualise them within a short account of the present situation of Uganda read as a “triple post” historical moment. Our conceptual aim will be to investigate the role of postcolonial political philosophy in understanding this third wave of democratisation, and thereby challenging the hegemonic vocabulary, which is used as a parameter of judgement and a terrain for struggles over the legitimacy of rule and leadership.

1. Taking up the challenge to differentiate democracy under siege

The following presentation takes as its core different concepts of democracy and pattern of critique within the political discourse in a postcolonial African context, although this critique is not limited to this particular continent alone. We suggest to take a closer look at the various forms of democracy that political agents adhere to in order to find or reject political legitimacy of a given or prescriptive political system. This preliminary analysis aims at providing an analytical frame to further develop criteria for references to democracy, especially to traditional variants of democracy, as they are used by proponent of the regime and its critics likewise. While democracy as a term is the obvious minimum standard of globalized political discourse nowadays, its conception is left to the local
struggles of opposing parties, in order to find appropriate means to secure the socio-economic and cultural well-being of their constituencies.

We chose Uganda as an illustration for our scheme of different concepts of democracy since it shows in a condensed form their persistence. The incumbent’s ability to gain hegemony (Laclau 2001) over the notion serves as a lens to its polyarchic concepts (e. g. unity, development) as well as to the opposing ideas (e. g. plurality, participation, rule of law). The first part of this paper is hence dedicated to argue for four different topoi within the African postcolonial discourse on “democracy”. Thereby, we are well aware that the issues of economics, gender and human and peoples rights are closely connected if not interdependent with the strand of democracy. The case study will be outlined in the second part of this presentation.

Democracy, as a minimal definition, may circumscribe the struggle for representation in state institutions and specifically in their leading positions in executive and legislative bodies as well as the economic and cultural conditions that enable democratic politics. Within their contest for representations different political actors (individuals as well as groups) perform their agency through various mechanism. Their central task consists in persuading society of the legitimacy of their claims to hold on government posts. One such claim is often that the national development must be based on national unity, a claim often made since the immediate independence all over postcolonial states. Legitimacy is thus acquired through output as deliveries of the state or the respective political process, as political science has coined it (i.a. Scharpf 1999): Delivering essential services in security and welfare, making the economy self-sufficient and productive as well as securing its formal independence toward other nations. Democracy as a political term may then also be justified by securing the conditions for democracy; securing social rights and services as a ground for the self-determination of a people. Hence, the concept of output-legitimacy merges with narratives of the effective liberties to achieve democracy in the first place.

Other claims emphasise the input of political organisation, arguing for the participation of all affected groups in the decision-making process. This input-dimension has partly allowed for the rejection of Western models of parliamentary systems such as the Westminster model, claiming their inability to effectively represent every part of the nation whilst arguing for other mechanisms for collective decision-making. Democracy may then depend on the ability of minorities to have a voice in the national government to secure
their rights and access to resources as a particular group. In this case the institutional mechanisms of representation are a focal point of the debate.

In the next passage, we will broadly explore different strategies of adaptation and appropriation of the term “democracy” within the postcolonial discourse of African political philosophy.

2. Differentiating the discourse on power and its legitimacy

Looking at the wide literature on African politics, its prescriptive and descriptive analyses, one cannot but capitulate without a heuristic frame to approach the extensive body. Having explored and taught the texts of political philosophy by African authors within academic contexts (literature on post-development, democracy, feminism and human rights) we propose to differentiate four different topics of interest for the debate of how political philosophy is done in the postcolonial context. Thereafter, we shortly outline a “post-postcolonial” critique of such concepts in line with Paulin Hountondji’s critique of ethnophilosophy (1986), as a dialectical revision of these very concepts as a useful lens for analysing more recent developments in the struggles over democracy within the so-called “third wave of democratisation”.

2.1. Preliminary Considerations: Four Dimensions of Postcolonial Discourse(s) on Democracy

First, we propose to analyse the self-perception and self-positioning of political philosophers within a global context. Reframing the intuitive title of Stuart Hall (1992) to 'Africa and the rest' we asked the texts of their specific standing on the political as well as the difference they deem to be positioned in. Especially the diffusion of Western models of socio-economic organisation of societies has led to a number of rejections that build on the specificity of difference. These include the critique of hegemonic notions of (neo-liberal) development and growth, mostly devastating the environment and disconnecting populations from their homesteads (i.a. N'Dione et.al. 1997) as well as presumably “western” origins of democracy and human rights.
Counter-narratives against colonial, racism, expropriation and heavy taxation led to the articulation of a particular African being, perhaps essentially grasped in the terminology of Négritude by Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor and within the African Socialism of Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah. These developments and literature were preceded by the well known authors of the ‘cultural nationalism’ (Mutiso/Rohia 1975), stating a fundamental difference in lifestyle and spiritual expectations between Africans and western concepts. The (strategic) difference clearly pointed at the need to counter-establish a narrative of self-reliance and capability within a contextualised horizon of action. Less of a step in an evolution (toward political nationalism after WWI), these cultural narratives of nativity (Garvey, Hayford et.al.) frequently reappear in the recent political discourse as a heritage of colonialism. While it entails the opposition toward an exterior (neocolonial) agent, it also adds to the conflicts of citizenship and appropriation of land and resources within contemporary African states (i.a. Mamdani 1996, 2001).

Second, zooming into the debate one finds the claimed difference between individual and collective foci of analysis. Representing debates of methodological individualism and holism this theme serves in order to shed light on the philosophical debate around “personhood”. While liberalism and its institutions of representative democracy are often claimed to be individualistic, African concepts of personhood are said to be communal in outlook. What has been debated not only in Africa - see for example the Asian value debate - in the early 1990s, aims at describing as smallest or at least crucial holder of rights (not of action: see coleman’s bath tub) collectives and groups. Both are said to be the principal actors in public life, whose concerns need to be represented in political institutions. At the same time they are modelled as ideal constellations of such deliberations, providing more effective participation as well as access to arbitration (see Wiredu 1996). It is the African Charter for Human and Peoples Rights, that has so far recognized group rights as enforceable rights in international law. Furthermore, it is the ethos of consensus, that makes collective action more appealing in contrast to distorting effects of competitive multipartyism of democracy, that is experienced in almost all African societies after 1957, encouraging the imposition of civil or military autocratic regimes. While one approach could be to debate the influence of consensus ethics on recent choices of voting systems (see for example the debate on consociationalism), it is South Africa that has provided a fruitful ground for such ethics of consensus (Ramose 1999, Metz 2007). The concept of Ubuntu is said to be a translation of such consensus-ethics.
that is not only confined to the spheres of universities but cross-cutting the juridical, economic and political sphere (see Mbeki 2001).

Until 1994, the final liberation of South Africa through the ballot box, the external as well as internal frontier-state-constellation of Southern African States have produced another reference to group rights: It is claimed that even local authoritarian regimes are to be preferred to benevolent colonial masters. Engaging in a debate with Isaiah Berlin’s essay on liberty, Chisenga Siame (2000) argues for the recognition of group rights to independence that have priority to the criteria of legitimate political systems and the protection of (negative) rights of the individual. Thus, leaders can misbehave as long as they are ‘one of ours’. This difference to liberal thought is not necessarily referring to traditional concepts of communities but is situated (a posteriori) in the struggle against colonial occupation. At the same time it historicizes the connections between “Africa and the rest”.

Thirdly, our typology focuses on the intellectual decolonisation that is taking part since the early engagement with foreign concepts. Criticizing the “epistemic violence” (Spivak 1988) of western education and prescriptions on nation-building as well as “good governance”, this dimension adds to the understanding of the creation of strategic differences, generating new insights or at least providing platforms to debate methodologies and preferable contents of research and their implicit evaluative dimensions beyond the hegemonic vocabularies. The early approaches of Kwasi Wiredu have concentrated on the decolonisation of languages and notions of daily life and have subsequently turned from the semiotics to the politics (1980, 1996). Distancing itself from neo-liberal concepts of democracy and entailed narratives of legitimacy, the project of intellectual decolonisation practices the difference while building new resources. Kwasi Wiredu’s Biography and academic interest might serve as an illustrating case in point: Educated in Oxford and deeply familiar with analytical and continental philosophy, he criticised the one-party-regime of Nkrumah as a self-described ‘social libertarian’ (see Wiredu 1980). His critique of ethnophilosophy and the regimes of representation within philosophy he was eager to show not only the content but also structures of Akan thought and language, that predetermine the character of philosophical ideas valid for a specific societal context. In the 1980s, he subsequently turned to the models of indigenous political system, intervening from abroad into the debate of a failing state and alternative modes of stability, integration and representation (see Wiredu 1996). Interestingly, the
main point of integration in deliberation served against the autocratic regime of the early 1960s as well as against the multi-party-systems of the short-lived second and third republic of Ghana. Intellectual decolonisation thus encompasses several moves to disconnect the perceived model of economically motivated democracy (social democracy) from the content of socio-economic welfare for the population of African states. It may function within the traditional paradigm based on indigenous precolonial social practices as well as within adapted concepts of radical democracy.

Finally, our fourth dimension centers around emancipatory narratives as a descriptive category. This follows our observation that the state and its structures are often appropriated by different groups, using them for liberation from oppressive authoritative regimes. It is Mamdani, who has early pointed out that for example constitutionalism per se is not the problem in question, but the number of people it affects. His critique of the early democratisation movement in Uganda has sharply asked what class has the capacity for constitutionalism and which groups will be excluded (1990: 373). While some authors have rejected constitutions and rule of law as capitalist überbau (i.e. Shivji 1991), others are reflecting upon these issues more carefully. Already earlier, concepts of the majority (over the colonial minority) as well as the right to participation have been narratives to use the metropolitan political language against the colonial powers themselves. Thus, aspects such as rights to protection from arbitrary actions by public officers are also part of the discourse, although mainly brought forward by an urban elite. Yet, also in postcolonial states democracy is used as emancipatory narrative against the predominant conception of democracy: As Sklar pointed out in the 1980s, the discourse on democracy in postcolonial Africa has been adapted by the imperatives of modernization claims. As a result, “developmental dictatorship” by a “modernizing oligarchy” (Sklar 1986, 686-7) oftentimes undermined political conceptions of democracy. From this angle, indigenized visions of democracy, that predominantly stress national unity and social progress have to be criticized also “from within” and analysed as justifications for the elites in power.
2.2. Beyond Strategic Essentialisms? Post-postcolonial discourse on Democracy

While we have proposed four dimensions so far to interrogate the political discourse on democracy within African postcolonial discourse, we will now turn to a mode of critique of these postcolonial strategies of appropriation, that has been forwarded by Paulin Hountondji (1986). Because the aforementioned counter-narratives of democracy run the risk of reifying power if they transmute in distorting justifications of a new status quo that denies any différence within Africa in its totality, the main question is how to anticipate the frontiers of politically turned “strategic essentialisms” (Spivak 1988). A strategic adaptation of a signifier like “democracy” in order to decolonize political thought from Western experience and imperial images necessarily represents a temporal tactics. A counter-narrative still depends on its Other in order to function as a liberatory concept. On the other hand, signifiers borrowed from the Western powers can also be re-described as “enabling violations” (Spivak 1988) which are used as means against the “Master’s weapons” as well as for internal critiques of postcolonial “comprador” elites (Poulantzas 1977: 12). Paulin Hountondji has argued that most references to a precolonial past have disturbing effects insofar they are hiding existing cleavages and asymmetries in order to confront an external concept of (mostly liberal) democracy. On the one hand, he points out, how rhetorics such as human rights are a “Master’s discourse” which is used to control and dominate other societies (Hountondji 1986). On the other hand, he moves beyond this anti-colonial critique by applying his scepticism also towards ruling elites within African countries and their justification for not granting individual (human) rights and liberties. He identifies several dominant “ideological” narratives within African political discourse that are used as a justifications against claims in the name of human rights, such as the claim that capitalist economic development, nation-building and state unity make it temporarily necessary to abstain from civic rights - just as in industrialised countries today have done previously. Hountondji encourages African political philosophers to analyse the repressive elements within one’s own culture. Furthermore, he cautions to abstain from nationalist discourse as a mystifying discourse to legitimate leadership, for example by denying individual rights in the name of collective rights (Hountondji 1986, 320-332).

This (post-)postcolonial critique can be used as a stencil to look as current democratic protest movements against postcolonial elites. We would like to exemplify this analytical
frame by an analysis of the present situation of protest in Uganda. President Museveni, himself a liberator of the people from the dictatorship of Idi Amin in 1986, continuously justified a lack of civil rights and effective political participation by a broader population by reference to necessary economic consolidation and a discourse of national unity beyond ethnic cleavages. As a reaction to protesting parts of the population, which since the early 1990s demanded more political democracy, he introduced a multi-party system in 2005 and offered an “inter-party dialogue” (Fisher 2011) as a response to calm the oppositional movement after the election campaign in 2011 that held him in office. We will start our discussion of the present situation in Uganda with a brief historical account of the different paradigmatic shifts of liberatory struggles and their respective narratives.

2.3 Uganda and the “triple post”

Following the early days of independence in 1962, the first prime minister, Milton Obote, introduced a one-party system in Uganda after 5 years of multi-partyism after a veritable constitutional and legitimacy crisis, following a move made by many post-independence regimes. Stressing self-determination in resistance to the colonial powers, this first “post”-era of the state of Uganda was influenced by what is now called “African socialism” and (rhetorically) stressed social equality as the ground for a democratic nation. The scoop of Idi Amin in 1971 ended this period of an ever more repressive and violent social democracy, based on an indigenized version of socialism, by establishing a dictatorial regime with violent suppression of any opposing party. Idi Amin’s rule itself was overturned by a Tanzanian-backed revolt and brought back to power - after apparent rigged elections - Milton Obote. After a short time of being Minister of defense after 1979 in the transitional cabinet, Museveni returned to the underground rebellion against the Obote-Regime, finally reaching Kampala in 1986.

The struggle for a new leadership put Museveni into power in 1986 mainly as a response to this post-independence period of violence and broad suffering by large parts of the population. We would describe the following period and entailed political discourse as second post-independence, using this description to mark the apparent rupture with the past. Museveni insisted on a no-party system (Kasfir 1998, Museveni 1987, 1997) as a means to fight the ethnic sectarianism. In his early speeches after 1986 he repeatedly
draws the link between the need for democratisation on a no-party-base as a mean to secure accountability, a condition for development of the impoverished country. Having developed a mode of conflict resolution during the warfare against Obote’s second regime (1981-86), he institutionalised local Resistance Councils as the mean to secure local participation of the population (see The Ten Point Programme of the NRC/M, 1985). At the same time, the regime had to reject foreign and local calls to return to a multiparty-system of governance. It used the fora of the UN (1987) as well as the OAU (1990) and insisted that its commitment to social justice, rule of law and human rights would not need to be realised by multipartyism: “The decision of whether to use the strategy of democratic mass movements or multiparties should be the business of each individual country.” (Museveni 2000: 220)

While earlier post-independence leaders have recurred to indigenous forms of governance to legitimise their claim for development under a non-western form of governance, such references are a rare event in the speeches of Museveni. Especially after 1986 his claims are based on the experience of a prolonged guerrilla warfare against a tyrannical regime, claiming to secure the integrity of Uganda by its movement. This would also entail classical liberal values. His comment on the constitution-making process (1989-91) illustrates it:

“This, to us, is a democratic way of tackling the governance of Uganda. Ugandans are, for the first time ever, engaged in this important exercise, and this should count as a fundamental change. Whichever way is defined, it must incorporate the rule of law, social justice, and the observance of basic human rights.”

However, in the field of law reform, Museveni early refers to the procedures of indigenous practices as in opposition to the elite and western institutions of courts, that protract cases by complicated technicalities and thus only serve the elite to escape sentences. To assure the access to courts not only the procedure must change, legal aid is to be provided but also the adaption of (colonial) law to the social needs of the society, such as in cases of marriage law and land law (Museveni 1987: 21-32).

Museveni was influenced by the ideas of Nyerere and his vision of African socialism as an emancipatory script particular to the African continent. It assumed that there has not been any class formation in Africa and that therefore there was no ground to form diverse parties according to the specific interest of each social group (i.a. Museveni 1997: 195,
Museveni 2000: 245-6). Instead, Museveni cautioned, parties would run into ethnic lines and entrench existing rivalries and identity formations based on lineage, an observation that is partly based on experience of party formation in the late colonial period and struggle for power after independence. This democratic centralism, based on one party - in this case an encompassing Movement system - and one strong leadership figure was added to the idea of social democracy and the restoration of national unity. This form of government was secured in the constitution by legally allowing political parties to exist but not to practice their mandate to campaign for popular support and to establish a nationwide basis. After the 1994s Constituent Assembly the question for the return to multiparty-system was postponed until 2000. After some remarkable initial non-partisan governments (1986-1994), Museveni however relied on ethnically and regionally defined in-groups himself for central position in the government (military, central bank et.al.) (see Griffiths/Katalikawe 2003: 107).

The regime justified this hold on power by means of his astonishing efficiency: Bringing peace to a conflict-torn society after 20 years (except the enduring conflict in northern Uganda), successfully fighting the HIV epidemic in the 1990s, lowering the poverty rates, making Uganda less dependent on development aid (from over 50 to 25 % of the government budget each year), and investing in infrastructure helped make Uganda an economically relatively stable state in the region. Turning away from socialist ideas towards a neoliberal approach towards a free market system, Uganda recently attained growth rates of over 5 % in 2010 and 2011 and made efforts to diversify its economy which is still mainly based to agrarian production (73,3%) through further industrialisation (Munzinger 2011). However, large parts of the population are still cut off from this economic success and experience destitution. Since oil has been discovered in the territory, strategies have been developed of how Uganda can profit from their own resources in partnership with international oil firms from 2012 onwards. At the same time Uganda has turned into another a so called best-practice example of IFIs, enforcing the country’s inclusion in world economy. However, it were also the IFIs, who criticized the regime’s move to extend presidential term limits and the persisting closure of the political arena.

Museveni’s strategy of output legitimacy nonetheless did not prevent new forms of claims for democracy, introducing the call for a third independence, which we would like to call the triple-post-independence. In response to claims for more participation of a broader
public as well as pressure from donors, Museveni formally lifted the ban on political parties in 2005. In the more recent protest, which is oftentimes interpreted in line with the Arab Spring (Mamdani 2011), claims have been made for more political participation (procedural democracy), rights to form a vivid and free public space, minority group rights (indigenous democracy) and economic justice (a revised version of socialists’ social democracy). Particularly, northern ethnic groups, where new reservoirs of oil have been discovered, claim more participation in the formal decision-making process of the regime and show the rivaling modes of politics between the kingdoms and the parliamentary system (i.a. Tacca 2010). Although the “Traditional and Cultural Leaders Act” (2011) imposed a mere cultural role to the kingdoms, traditional leaders still demand a federalism of political decision-making and political autonomy for their regions. One cause is that oil companies are more and more buying off land in Northern Uganda in a dubious manner and hence undermine regional autonomy and the scarce resources to self-determination of these ethnic minorities (Garrison 2012; Oil in Uganda 2012).

This third wave of democratization criticizes the clientelism of Museveni’s regime: Most of the important offices in power have recently been held by family members of the president, his wife being minister of the state and his brother having hold the foreign minister’s post (The Transparency Index scored Uganda with 2,5 points out of 10). Moreover, the opposition criticized Museveni for using public revenues to finance his huge election campaign and his exaggerated celebrations for swearing into office ($1,3Mio). Besides, he invested huge amounts into military war jets without parliamentary approval (approx. $750 Mio). This last scandal led to an appeal to remove Museveni from office through several members of parliament in March 2012.

Journalists complain about the lack of freedom of the press through recurrent experiences of threats and informal pressure. According to the opposition, the right to demonstration is often obstructed by police forces, which needs to be asked for permission beforehand, and hence prevents the emergence of a functioning multi-party system. And last but not least the judicial system, though formally independent, is said to be still politically influenced in its decision-making. Claims to end corruption and clientelism within the still-dominating democratic centralism by the political class were expressed by a “Walk to Work” after the election campaign in 2011 that had confirmed President Museveni as the president in power. The opposition leader and former fellow in his struggle for power against Idi Amin, Dr. Besigye, motivated the public to stand up against rising food and oil
prices and justifies the call for democracy as the abolition of Museveni’s “imperial presidency” (Okoth-Ogendo 1991). However, critics claim that also Besigye’s appeal to democracy is just another rival in the self-interested and corrupt struggles over power among urban political elites - leaving behind the agrarian populations in the rural areas:

“How can it be that some of the same opposition that only yesterday saw Parliament as passport to patronage and licence to pillage, are discovering resolve and moral courage even though there is no election in sight and the times are, if anything, hard?” (Mamdani 2011)

Hence, the hegemonic struggle over the legitimate definition and operationalisation of democracy remains to be analysed in terms of which parts of societies profit from a certain claim to democracy (Mamdani 1990) in order to grasp and evaluate the present situation as a struggle over legitimacy and the semantic content of democracy.

**Conclusion:**

How do we adequately assess the current third-wave’s struggles for democracy in postcolonial Africa and how do we grasp and evaluate the paradigmatic shifts and respective interpretations of democracy?

We suggested that a “post-postcolonial discourse” should critically analyse the repressive elements within African “democratic” regimes whilst taking the specific postcolonial context seriously. Hence, this kind of political theory moves beyond the decolonization discourse as well as the mainstream liberal emphasis on specific procedural norms as a condition for social progress. Instead, in recent times, people put forward diversified claims to democracy, such as social democracy in the name of economic justice (against the negative effects of neoliberal reforms as well as in favor of participation in a global market), political democracy as a claim to broader participation, indigenous democracy demanding group rights within the national states, and transnational democracy (considering Uganda as a player within the global order - e. g. considering the growing Oil industry, its affiliations within the international struggle against terrorism, in ending aid dependence on OECD countries, in fighting Kony with AU forces etc.) - as a condition for internal democracy.

Consequently, the post-postcolonial political discourse shifts emphasis away from a counter-narrative to Western interpretations of democracy that stressed in the post-
independence era national unity, socialist values and a politics of authenticity in favor of negotiating positive and negative effects capitalism, a strengthened effort to build South-South economic relations, accompanied by civic claims to press rights, freedom of assembly and balanced election campaigns among rivaling factions.

Conceptually, we therefore suggest to draw the following conclusions from these preliminary observations: Firstly, political theorist should pay more attention to the semantic struggle over the content of the term “democracy” as hegemonic ideology and unveil the affiliation of certain social groups and elites with distinctive interpretations of the term. This means in practice: To uncover which group profits from which notion of democracy through which kind of social mechanisms?

Secondly, African political philosophy needs to trigger debates about the interrelation, the normative weighting and the legitimacy of rivaling interpretations of democracy as a core question of contemporary political and moral philosophy. The debate on how to develop normative standards to evaluate the communalism- or communitarianism-debate is a case in point, departing from simple ascriptions of ethnic groups to larger communities which are adapting to migration, urbanism and partial industrialisation (i.a. Matolino 2009): How do we assess the relation between indigenous democracy and social democracy of a nation state?

Thirdly, we need to understand and investigate the specificity of the historical triple post of the current era and dialectically draw consequences for today’s situated theorising of the political:

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, claims for democracy should also be analysed as a transnational phenomenon, relating to a transnational public sphere: Young urban educated elites in North Africa and sub saharan Africa claim jobs, an internationally comparable quality of life, popular consumer goods and a hearable voice in political decision making processes. These claims are not “postcolonial” in particular, but take reference to major changes in discourse also beyond the African continent. Although this approach seeks to disrupt the dichotomous thinking of “Africa and the rest”, democracy remains a hegemonic term in international politics that fulfils certain ideological functions and may serve as a narrative for neocolonial interventions in African affairs. Hence, the normative debate about the content(s) of democracy remains in need to be complemented with an analyses of democracy as a rhetoric means within transnational power structures in which a national discourse remains embedded.
References:


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