

CONCLUSIONS

a) The slow surge of the past

In analysing events in Africa since the Cold War we have frequently had to delve into the past – in some cases right back into the precolonial period. This historical approach to African problems is unusual. Yet there is a growing realisation that we cannot fully comprehend contemporary African developments if we look no further than the colonial era and the decades that have followed. In the twenty-first century, the period of European colonialism in Africa is starting to recede from view. However important this period may have been for Africa, it is more and more often recognised as just one episode in a much longer history with persistent features and patterns. In order to understand Africa's present-day situation, we must look not only at outside influences but also at long-term, indigenous African elements.

This brings us close to what the French historian Fernand Braudel has called the *longue durée* of history – the long, slow surge of the past, with events like ripples on the surface.¹ The term is often understood to refer to socioeconomic structures, with political developments as the ripples. Indeed, this has been the approach taken in the few cases in which Braudel's theories have been applied to African history. Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, for instance, use a similar classification in their recent work. Abandoning the familiar division into 'precolonial', 'colonial' and 'postcolonial', they have adopted a classification mainly based on economic criteria. They describe the period from after the depression of the 1930s to the 1970s, which was one of economic growth. This was followed by a period of economic decline, which is still in progress.² This essentially logical basic system of classification can be augmented by bringing in changes in political structures, so that we can better identify the underlying features of modern African history. This is where Africa's states come in.

Africa's formal political structures have remained more or less intact since independence, but the way in which states function – or malfunction – has certainly changed. Since independence, all African states have to a greater or lesser extent been gradually hollowed out from within. These gradual political changes can also be seen as part of the *longue durée* of African history. In this context, politics should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon, but in relation to other domains, such as culture, the economy and social structures. The erosion of African states since independence is mainly due to age-old African principles of political culture, political economy and social relations. They date back to well before the days of European colonialism in Africa, although they were sometimes profoundly influenced by it.

These age-old African features had a strong influence on the workings of the continent's states, in the sense that they made state institutions work differently – less effectively by contemporary, non-African standards. I have referred to this interaction between the institutional legacy of the colonial period and its African environment as the Africanisation of the state.

The specific principles, or features, at work have been discussed at numerous points in this book. A first, crucial set of features could collectively be termed premodernism. These are the characteristics that prevent change, development or progress from taking place. Premodernism can be regarded as an interaction between politics, culture, economics and social relations, directed at maintaining the status quo. Although premodern systems involve a static perspective on the world and society, these systems can in many ways actually be quite dynamic – at least with respect to events, the ripples of history. Nevertheless, the end result for the population will never be substantially different; such societies continue to have low levels of both production and consumption.

In premodern systems, change was not valued, since economic growth was not an end in itself, as it is in modern societies. Instead, investment was seen in terms of redistributing existing resources. In practice, this often meant redistributing resources through the state, in the form of money, jobs or other favours. The emphasis was on consumption rather than production. There was no general awareness of a link between consumption and modern industrial production, which requires a certain work ethic, organisation and discipline. The African attitude towards modern consumption sometimes seemed more like that of the cargo cults of the Pacific Ocean, in which the acquisition of commodities was linked with religion and magic rather than production.

African entrepreneurs do not generally have a chance to build up a profitable, stable business. As soon as they make a profit, people close to them force them to share it. If the business and the entrepreneur's motivation survive this setback, powerful politicians show up to claim their cut. Any business with good prospects is absorbed, and eventually smothered, by political networks. Business decisions are made on a political rather than economic basis, keeping African economies uncompetitive. In the age of globalisation, this is a true disaster.

In the late twentieth century, as competition was becoming more and more important in other parts of the world, Africa's lingering preindustrial habits brought about relative decline. After 1970, Africa lagged further and further behind the rest of the world. This led to mounting instability in large parts of the continent around the millennium.

At the heart of Africa's societies we find a second important feature: the social structure known as patronage. Interpersonal relationships in Africa stress individuals rather than formal roles. Through their personal bonds, individuals form networks. At the cores of these networks are prominent persons ('patrons') surrounded by less prominent ones (their 'clients'). Patrons have social status and possess the power and resources to grant their clients favours, such as jobs. Links between patrons and clients are informal in nature, but because patrons nearly always make use of state power and government resources, their ties with clients often take on a formal character as well. Informal ties and networks are the reality behind otherwise meaningless official titles and hierarchies. Ties of dependence between patrons and clients create a social structure and afford the weakest in society some protection, but are also a source of corruption and an obstacle to democratisation. There are no general standards of conduct that apply to everyone. Furthermore, there are no mechanisms allowing clients to monitor their patrons' conduct. Patronage systems are therefore difficult to reconcile with the rule of law. They undermine the work of government and people's trust in the state.

There have been patron-client relationships in Africa since time immemorial. They were a natural response to the uncertainty and insecurity of premodern life. During the colonial period they grew stronger, because the colonial authorities usually dealt only with the patrons in local African structures. However, such patrons were sometimes hard to find, for there was a broad spectrum of political systems in precolonial Africa. These can roughly be divided into organised states (of varying size) and societies with no rigid formal structure. Where the colonial system of indirect rule could not immediately make use of the 'natural leader' of an existing African political structure, others grabbed their chance to become 'traditional chiefs' in the service of the colonial authorities.

Colonialism had various implications for patronage systems in Africa. First of all, they grew bigger. Initially, patronage was often limited to local networks within extended families, but in the colonial era these networks tended to expand, eventually reaching the distant capital of the colony. Besides expanding, the system grew stronger, thanks to the power of the colonial rulers. In colonial days, leaders (patrons) had derived their authority from being accepted by their subjects. There was an understanding, usually tacit, between patrons and clients. The situation resembled medieval European feudal systems, in which both lords and vassals knew where they stood. The balance of power was extremely unequal, but everyone depended on everyone else. A patron's authority, like a lord's, depended on his underlings' support, which was granted in return for protection and other favours. It was understandings such as these (whose terms varied from place to place) that kept many African political systems in equilibrium – an early version of what we would now call checks and balances.

This equilibrium was disrupted by colonialism. African leaders' power came to depend on agreements with the colonial rulers rather than with their subjects. If a local ruler's people revolted, the colonial authorities did what was necessary to keep him in power – provided, of course, that they wanted to continue making use of him. African rulers negotiated with the colonial authorities rather than with their own people. The indigenous African systems of checks and balances faded away. In much of Africa, colonialism destroyed local sociopolitical structures and made it even easier for African rulers to take an authoritarian attitude towards their subjects (which was already a tradition in many parts of the continent). In the preceding centuries, in most parts of the world rulers' power had gradually been reduced by the separation of powers and systems of checks and balances, but in Africa the trend was just the opposite.

As African rulers gained more control over their subjects, it reinforced a view of power that is now widespread in Africa, namely that power is all-pervasive. Postcolonial patron-client relationships may in some sense be governed by tacit understandings, but if so, then one of these understandings is that the patron can exercise power in whatever area he chooses (political, economic, social, etc.). There is no separation between the public and private spheres. Power is generally seen as sacred, even if the right to interpret the spiritual world is often reserved for individuals other than the ruler.

However, all this should be seen in perspective. Almost every type of political organisation could be found in Africa at one time. Moreover, the idea that power is all-pervasive is by no means solely African. The fact that it has become so dominant in postcolonial Africa is not simply due to internal factors – colonialism is again very much to blame. In African eyes, the European colonial authorities had unlimited, all-pervading power. The first leaders of independent Africa inherited both traditions, African and colonial. In the years after independence the tendency for power to become concentrated, in combination with a social system based on patronage, caused African states to develop in their own unique way. Powerful networks of patron-client relationships sprang up, each with just one person at the apex. This pyramid structure cut across formal relationships between state institutions and obeyed a logic of its own. Informal networks spread throughout society.

It is tempting to add yet another feature to the list of constants in African history: the tenacity of subnational, 'ethnic' feelings, which have even grown stronger over time in some cases. These feelings undoubtedly have their origins in the precolonial period, but it is now also clear to what extent they were reinforced and frozen in place by the European colonial authorities.³ In present-day Africa, ethnicity is still an important factor in the way states function. In itself, the existence of various levels of identity and loyalty (to one's country, province, town or village, neighbourhood and family) is a normal phenomenon found on all continents, but in some African countries ethnic affiliations are so strong that they undercut national identity. Yet the strength of ethnic ties seems to be not so much a part of Africanisation as one of its effects – one that has become more apparent as national structures have grown weaker.

The aforementioned features, to which still others might be added, continue to play an important part in the functioning of African societies.⁴ They were not taken into account when more-or-less modern states were introduced, on a limited scale, in the colonial era. Structures were quite simply transplanted from the totally alien European context to the African one. When the Europeans left, these states had to fend for themselves in an African setting which had been disrupted by colonialism. The foreign body that was the European state was increasingly influenced by African ways of life. Although, with the exception of Somalia, none of these states actually ceased to exist, many came close. Especially after the end of the Cold War, as the influence of foreign powers waned, states became more 'Africanised', 'traditionalised' or 'premodernised'.

These terms – 'Africanisation', 'traditionalisation', and 'premodernisation' - should be used with the utmost caution, for what exactly do they mean? The features described above are far from uniquely African, for they can also be observed elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, they are not entirely due to indigenous African influences, but are also to some extent a colonial legacy. It was the colonial rulers who, when they left, handed over the reins of government to small, Westernised black national elites that were fairly isolated from their own African societies. In colonial states, just as in the states that replaced them, there had been no separation of powers. Power had been concentrated in the capital, and political and economic interests had been intertwined. These problems of the colonial state were exacerbated by the new African rulers.

Africa is so large and varied that not one of the features mentioned can fairly be said to be found in every African country or people. Moreover, the further we go back into the past, the harder it becomes to tell which features were most common.⁵ Europeans have 'traditionally' been quick to call various African phenomena traditions. The British historian Eric Hobsbawm has even argued that in the initial period of European imperialism, from about 1870 to 1914, the Europeans 'invented' traditions for the indigenous peoples they governed. Onto these conquered but unfamiliar societies the colonial rulers projected rigid characteristics which not only suited their ideological and administrative purposes but also acted as a psychological counterweight to far-reaching changes in European society that were creating a sense of loss and uprootedness.⁶ While Hobsbawm's statement

indicates the need for the utmost caution when identifying 'African traditions', it does not rule out the existence of African ways of life that truly do predate colonialism.

It is only logical that characteristic African notions of identity, loyalty, power, human relationships and society – notions that are probably centuries old – should continue to influence the states that the Europeans left behind. From this point of view, many current African developments make more sense. Presumably, the main significance of African independence was that it set off the Africanisation of politics. It was a turning point; from then on, the continent was headed in a new direction. The subsequent end of the Cold War served to bring the Africanisation process more clearly to the fore, but 1989 was not another turning point – Africa was still moving along the same path.

The position of African elites was the direct result of colonisation and, above all, decolonisation. The black national elites were given power over the new state structures. Apart from Western education and links with the former colonial authorities, this was often the only thing they could rely on for survival. Nor did African countries have politically independent economic elites of the kind found in Western, Latin American and many Asian countries. Only a few, such as Ivory Coast, Kenya and Botswana, had middle classes with an economic base of their own. In most cases, the elites' only possession was the state, which they exploited for their own economic benefit. Potential political opponents likewise had no independent economic base. The only way they could afford a career in politics was to eat from the government trough. Thus the political economy of independent African states did not allow the emergence of a pluriform elite. The often inexperienced political parties were all assimilated into the ruling party, which ultimately coincided with the state and the economy.

These changes in the structure of African politics and society took place in almost every African country in the 1960s and 1970s. The rhetoric of socialism, anticolonialism and revolution, then a familiar part of international discourse, was often used to explain them, both by the Africans involved and by Western observers. However, this was a distortion of African reality, in which no such modern socioeconomic forces were at work. The roots of the process lay elsewhere – in Africa itself.

The features described above as being widespread in African societies were in keeping with the direction taken by African states under their new rulers. State institutions began to operate more in accordance with African society and culture, and African states became increasingly remote from the ideal of the modern Western state. By the turn of the century, this insidious process had more or less completely eroded state structures. Some countries – Somalia, Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone – existed in little more than name. These were extreme but by no means exceptional cases; the disintegration of the state could be observed throughout Africa.

This erosion of the inherited 'modern' state followed a fairly consistent pattern, which after about twenty-five years culminated in general dysfunction, along with financial and moral bankruptcy. States that gained their independence around 1960 reached this low point in the 1980s, or in some cases around 1990. Countries that became independent later followed the same pattern, only with a time lag. The Portuguese colonies became independent in the mid-1970s, but as a result of the ferocious struggles for independence and the ensuing civil wars there was little of the states left. Far more significant was the delayed independence of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. The many Europeans who had settled in these countries made the situation there different from that in the rest of Africa. In these countries, colonialism can be said to have survived longer, in the form of apartheid. Only when apartheid was abolished and power was transferred to black governments could the state begin to be Africanised. In Zimbabwe this transition took place in 1980, so that the process reached its natural culmination in the opening years of the twenty-first century. This was reflected in President Mugabe's authoritarian style of leadership. Zimbabwe was followed ten to fifteen years later by Namibia and South Africa, where there is already considerable evidence of Africanisation.

From the 1980s onwards, there were national as well as international attempts to change the adverse situation that had been developing in African states since independence. The scale of these attempts grew ever greater in the 1990s. International donors focused on improving African policies and governance. They believed that African states had to put their financial houses in order, separate

politics from the economy so that a private sector could emerge, introduce separation of powers as the basis for the rule of law, place checks on power through democratisation, fight corruption in order to make the state more efficient, and develop or strengthen state institutions. A large-scale operation began, with the aim of rebuilding Africa's states.

b) Why Africa failed

Attempts to restore African states to working order were largely the result of pressure from the international community, but were also backed by groups in the countries themselves. This shows just how interconnected African and international developments were, as we have seen throughout this book. However, if we look at the reasons for the lack of development in Africa since independence, it would be simplistic to conclude that internal and international factors were equally responsible. The general theories described in the introduction – modernisation theory and dependency theory – blamed the failure of African and other developing countries to develop (at least so far) on internal and external factors respectively. At the start of the twenty-first century we must conclude that, despite the lasting importance of the international environment, external factors cannot have been the overriding cause.

Dependency theory (including the latest version, antiglobalism) has proved untenable. Supposing for the sake of argument that international factors truly are chiefly an obstacle to development, many developing countries have still managed to overcome them. At no time in history were so many people on so many continents so well off as at the beginning of the third millennium AD. Prosperity came within reach of all parts of the world. Compare an arbitrarily selected pair of countries, one in Africa and one in Asia: Zambia and South Korea, for instance. When the Zambians became independent in 1964, they were on average twice as wealthy as the South Koreans. By the turn of the century, the South Koreans were, on average, a full twenty-seven times as rich as the Zambians.⁷ Or take Kenya and Singapore, which thirty years ago were just about equally poor. Now Singaporeans earn an average of about 24,000 euros a year, while the average Kenyan earns about 340 euros a year, or one-seventieth of that amount.⁸ If we take any comparable pair of countries, one African and one Asian, and look at what has happened to them over the past few decades, the difference is always stunning, and the Asian country always comes out on top. It would be absurd to attribute such huge differences to the international economic environment, which was essentially the same for all these countries.

It is often pointed out that, for political reasons, some Asian countries, especially South Korea and Taiwan, received much more aid than African countries. This is true to some extent, although African countries did not generally suffer from a lack of aid. The crucial factor, however, was what was done with the money, how profitably it was put to use. Here lay the great difference between Asia and Africa. Domestic circumstances in African countries were such that extra money would not have made any essential difference. A case in point is Nigeria, which for decades had several billion US dollars a year of 'extra' income from oil. The Nigerian elite became both extremely rich and extremely large by African standards. The result was a host of states within the Nigerian federation, each with a local elite and clientelist networks of its own, and internecine power struggles. This brought about chronic domestic instability, which led the army to stage repeated coups in an attempt to preserve national unity. The billions of extra dollars did nothing at all to raise ordinary people's living standards. When Nigeria became independent in 1960, about twenty-five per cent of the population was below the poverty line. By 2000 this figure had risen to around seventy per cent.

In an attempt to provide more palatable reasons for Africa's failure – factors that Africans 'could do nothing about' – people often mention the borders that were drawn rather arbitrarily by colonial rulers, sometimes while sitting in their capital cities in Europe. Naturally, a border that cut through an area inhabited by a particular group caused all kinds of problems for the people affected as well as for the authorities (even though the border was often very easy to cross). However, such problems cannot seriously be put forward as obstacles to statehood. Other parts of the world have shown that nationhood and development are perfectly possible even in geographical units whose borders are the result of historical contingency.⁹

Sometimes other geographical or environmental circumstances are cited, such as the fact that a country is landlocked or that it is not easy for people to live in a hot, humid climate. Yet numerous examples prove that this is of little relevance to a country's ability to modernise. If such theories were true, landlocked nations such as Switzerland and Austria or ones with extremely harsh climates, such as the Scandinavian countries, would be doomed to remain poor, whereas in fact they are the wealthiest countries in Europe.

The example of China shows to what extent domestic circumstances – especially the interaction between politics and culture – can determine a country's chances of modernisation. People in the West had long felt that the Chinese should be capable of becoming prosperous, given some of their more striking cultural characteristics such as industriousness, inquisitiveness, organisation, motivation and an emphasis on education. Chinese people living outside China showed the world what these virtues could achieve. In China itself, however, people could not take advantage of them, for the country's sociopolitical system was still premodern, still geared to maintaining the status quo.¹⁰ This was true not only of the Empire but also of the Republic and the People's Republic, right through the twentieth century. It was only in the 1980s, when the state under Deng Xiaoping relaxed its grip on the economy and allowed free markets to develop, that the real Chinese revolution took place. These reforms fell on fertile soil, and since then China has changed dramatically. The country's socioeconomic development has produced not only victims, but also very many winners, and economic growth is now taking place at an astonishing rate. The idea that this might be due to the international economic environment or to China's geographical location or climate is baseless. The main contributing factors have been internal ones, both political and cultural.

So what can we conclude about Africa from this comparison with developments elsewhere? The continent has changed dramatically in all kinds of ways, but never truly modernised. Of course, this does not mean that Africa can never modernise – the potential to do so is probably universal – but internal factors have prevented this potential from being realised. The main reason for Africa's disappointing level of development is the Africanisation of colonial organisational structures. This insidious process, which was discussed in the previous section, took place almost everywhere in Africa and was largely unaffected by the international context.

The image of buildings from Africa's colonial days – mansions, office buildings, railway stations or hotels – that have succumbed to their surroundings is quite familiar, mainly from films and literature. Decades after the original owners abandoned it, the structure still stands, a mere skeleton, the wood stripped away, trees growing through the roof. Its physical remains are just a shell concealing a new function, one better suited to its tropical setting. Africa has taken possession of the alien intruder. Whole families live in what were once hotel rooms, clay huts have appeared on the balconies, the entryway has become a marketplace.

This process – call it 'Africanisation' – has affected more than just the material legacy of colonialism. The architecture of the state was also left in an African environment at the time of independence, and has undergone a similar process. The remains of colonial institutions – ministries, parliaments and courts – are still standing, but over the years they too have become mere shells, concealing an African reality that has taken possession of them and turned them to its own purposes. Outsiders dealing with African states would do well to remember: what you see is not what you get.

But even if the Africanisation of Africa's states is at the heart of the continent's development problems, might it not still be logical to blame the outside world – more specifically, Europe? After all, if European countries had not introduced colonial states to the continent in the first place, then no process of Africanisation could have taken place. However, the presence of modern, Western-type states is not in itself a development problem. Quite the contrary; results from other continents suggest that the presence of modern states with Western features is essential for development. Despite the unfortunate circumstances under which modern states were introduced in Africa, it was not those states but their African surroundings that caused problems for development.

In many parts of the world, the expansion of European power over the past several centuries, through colonialism or otherwise, set off local reactions that eventually promoted development. In Africa, however, it did not. For some reason, the continent was not receptive to it. That suggests Africa would also have been highly unlikely to have modernised on its own, without its involuntary

exposure to European ways. It might have been a better place in many ways than it is now – more in balance, with greater self-esteem and dignity – but it would not be better off in a material sense. Colonialism left many scars in Africa, but it did not make the continent poorer. Instead, maybe it can be blamed for failing to put Africa on the road of material progress.

c) Plenty of change, but little progress

In order to understand recent African history we need to focus on internal factors. If we think of the new African elite as a spider in two webs, two networks (one internal, the other external), we must look more closely at how those elites interact with their internal networks. How do the new African elites run their countries?

With a few exceptions, African leaders have done poorly – not for themselves, but for their countries. Since this has been such a widespread phenomenon, there is no point in seeking explanations based on personal failings. The causes were systemic and lay in a combination of African sociocultural features and the historical background. A great deal has already been said in this book about sociocultural features. Domestic power, which is often seen as sacred and all-pervading, is based on extensive patronage networks. Rulers derive their support from ‘clients’, people who are tied to them by virtue of services rendered. This is also true of the security forces (the army and the police), whose members have personal ties with their leaders rather than formal, functional ones. The purpose of this system is to preserve the status quo, i.e. the authority of the leaders. These essentially premodern systems of political economy are thus geared to internal stability rather than development. In an age of globalisation, in which competition is increasingly important, they are causing Africa to lag further and further behind the rest of the world.

Africa’s postcolonial leaders had no tradition or culture of leadership with its own sense of *noblesse oblige*, of rights and corresponding duties. They were not simply Africans, but also products of the recently departed colonial regime. These rulers, these new elites, did not see the state primarily as a means of developing their country but as a means of securing their own livelihoods. The democratic systems introduced by the colonial rulers at the last minute could not be maintained, since the opposition had no life of its own. Rulers had little difficulty in persuading members of the opposition to defect to the ruling party, where they could eat from the government trough. Only a few years after independence, Africa’s originally pluriform political systems had become one-party systems. At the same time as the opposition was neutralised, the economy was incorporated into the state. So-called socialist systems of state enterprises, marketing boards and tariffs were sources of income for rulers and also provided the wherewithal for maintaining patronage networks.

This interaction between culture and history – which left African countries with a quite characteristic kind of political economy – produced the results described in previous chapters: abuse of power, corruption, a sprawling, expensive and inefficient bureaucracy, low competitiveness, an insubstantial private sector, poor economic performance, etc. As the state and the economy deteriorated, rulers’ positions became less secure. African political life was full of risks. Leaders tried to stay in power until they died of natural causes. Their rivals tried to unseat them; if they succeeded, the ex-ruler often risked jail or execution. Under such circumstances, long-term goals such as the development of the country were of minor importance. To African rulers, ‘staying afloat was more important than going somewhere.’¹¹ Apart from decolonisation throughout the continent, African countries met none of the goals that they had set themselves on gaining independence. Economic development, social justice and autonomy/autarky, the original goals of the first independent African leaders (see Chapter 1, paragraph a) failed to materialise.

Government activities that were designed to keep the ruler safe (the army, the police and the numerous security services) or to maintain a flow of income from abroad (contacts with the international community) were the ones that survived longest. In areas that were of little personal interest to the rulers (such as infrastructure, health care and education), states provided fewer and fewer services. The structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and the IMF only reinforced this trend. Governments created an investment climate that was unattractive to businesses, whether big or small, domestic or foreign. The governments of many countries harassed their citizens

in all kinds of ways. All in all, it was no wonder that people showed little or no trust in government – instead, their attitude was one of distrust and fear. African states made no appreciable contribution to their people's welfare, instead preventing progress. In the course of the 1980s it became clear that the development of African states in the years since independence had been a failure. The impact of these failing states on the development of the continent was catastrophic.

Ultimately even the army and the police began to operate less effectively in many places. Throughout the continent, cities became more unsafe and crime rates rose, here and there to the point of actually threatening national stability. Ineffective states were sometimes unable to withstand pressure from rebel groups, especially in countries with a wealth of natural resources. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, regimes collapsed into violent anarchy. Disintegration of government institutions and social structures in general was the most extreme symptom of state failure. The 1990s saw sporadic outbreaks of civil war which proved difficult to halt or even contain. This partly reflected the new international environment since the end of the Cold War. African regimes could no longer rely on backing from major foreign powers, but were more and more often forced to fend for themselves and were less and less capable of doing so.

The striking trends of the 1990s included not only increasing violence within countries, but also the rise of what was considered classic warfare in the rest of the world – conflict between states. This had been unheard of in Africa for almost a century – throughout the colonial period and the first three decades of independence. The independent African states had largely abided by the principle of noninterference in each other's domestic spheres, as laid down by the Organisation of African Unity (the forerunner of the African Union). However, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the relative disengagement of the major Western powers from Africa gave African countries new scope to concern themselves with one another's affairs. Eritrea and Ethiopia actually went to war, and numerous Central African countries became embroiled in military conflict, usually allying themselves with rebel groups in other countries. Conversely, internal hostilities in African countries always proved to have an international component. Around the turn of the millennium, violent conflict in Africa had become a complex mixture of old and new features.

Yet not all of Africa displayed this tendency to lapse further and further into anarchy and violence. Across the continent – from Botswana to Tanzania to Senegal – there were states that remained fairly stable throughout the four decades following independence. In addition to years of decline they also experienced years of relative prosperity. There were also countries such as Uganda and Mozambique, which proved capable of impressive recoveries after years of chaos and warfare. Among the almost fifty African states there was considerable variety in quality of governance, stability and living standards.

Immediately after the Cold War, thanks to structural reforms, Africa's economies appeared to be heading in the right direction, with average growth rates of 5 to 6 per cent by the mid-1990s. Thereafter, however, growth slumped to an average of just 2.5 per cent and remained there into the twenty-first century. This was more or less on a par with population growth, so Africans were not really moving forward. Admittedly, some countries did quite a bit better, but they were counterbalanced by countries whose per capita income continued to shrink. In the age of globalisation, in which competition was increasingly important, Africa completely failed to become more competitive in relation to other continents. Except for oil, its share of the traditionally important commodities markets for raw materials fell. Nor was it able to capture substantial segments of new markets, at least not legitimate ones. Its share of the illicit drug trade did increase sharply.¹² The agricultural sector was not modernised, and there was no appreciable development in trades or industry.¹³ The continent drew little private investment, and the flow of international aid decreased. While globalisation had a deep and rapid impact on the rest of the world, Africa failed to integrate into the global economy. Instead, it became even more marginal.

It is natural to view Africa's current situation from one of two seemingly contradictory perspectives. From the first point of view, the dominant theme is failure, with states and other organisations malfunctioning all over the continent. This image comes to the fore whenever Africa is compared with other continents, which have made impressive progress in the past few decades. Africa has not modernised, and is lagging further and further behind the rest of the world. However, if we abandon this comparative perspective, a different image emerges – that of a continent which is

proceeding in its own, African way. States that seemed to be malfunctioning from one point of view (based on Western standards) suddenly appear to be functioning properly, in African terms.¹⁴ From this perspective, Africa looks premodern, with no more than scattered links to the rest of the twenty-first century world. While the international setting has changed dramatically, Africa seems to have remained more or less the same.

This may be partly true, but by and large it overlooks the immense changes that have taken place there. In the second half of the twentieth century, the once empty continent – traditionally the domain of large herds of wild animals – was gradually populated by humanity. What had been tiny villages in 1900 often became cities with over a million people by 2000. In the twenty-first century, there were actually more Africans living in urban areas than in rural ones. What is more, they were young; more than half of them were under eighteen. In the cities, many young Africans came into contact with Western-style education or became acquainted with the outside world in other ways. Their respect for elders and for African traditions declined.¹⁵ A gulf opened up between traditional African cultures and the world of young people longing to move forward. This caused intergenerational tension and many young people grew frustrated because modernisation was not taking place. Uprootedness and frustration formed an explosive mixture that led to chaos and misery through much of the continent. Mass migration, both internal and international, and above all the spreading AIDS epidemic disrupted African communities even further.

AIDS raged on uncontrolled. The message that had successfully reduced transmission of the disease in Western countries – prevention through safe sex – failed to hit home in Africa. There were various reasons for this, the main one probably being the strict African taboo on talking about sex. With a very few exceptions, African leaders failed to shoulder their responsibility for breaking this taboo. Some even sent the debate off in irrelevant directions, for example by questioning the cause of AIDS or overemphasising the importance of medicines, while the only thing that could really control the epidemic was prevention. The resulting confusion allowed AIDS to keep spreading swiftly, with disastrous consequences.

African states were incapable of tackling the continent's many problems effectively. The first to realise this were the international financial institutions, who discovered in the 1980s just how serious a financial mess the continent was in. A vast amount of money had been poured into Africa but had made no positive economic or social impact. On the contrary, conditions in Africa were deteriorating and its debts were increasing. There was clearly no point in continuing to support the bankrupt continent unless changes were made. In return for new loans, the World Bank and the IMF insisted that Africa must become more efficient. Just as elsewhere in the world, aid would have to yield returns. Ineffectual governments had to be thoroughly reformed, the private sector had to be promoted and measures were needed to encourage liberalisation and freer markets. The first results, however, were mostly disappointing. It became ever clearer that Africa's economic performance could not be seen in isolation from its domestic politics. In the absence of political change, economic reforms could not be carried through forcefully enough to have a substantial effect.

The breakthrough in the political sphere came at the end of the Cold War, when the worldwide wave of democratisation reached Africa. Encouraged by spectacular changes elsewhere, Africans took to the streets to call their leaders to account for the sorry state of their countries. Bowing to strong pressure, both domestic and international, numerous regimes agreed to liberalise their countries' political systems. One-party states were transformed into pluriform systems, and political parties and civil-society organisations sprang up like mushrooms. International donors also began to focus on using aid to improve the political situation in African countries. According to the development theory that prevailed after the Cold War, aid could only have a lasting impact in an environment of good governance and good policies. Where that was present, aid could be channelled through the government. Where it was not, donors were forced to limit themselves to small-scale activities in cooperation with civil society, in the hope that this would have some local impact. In places where the state had largely disintegrated, top priority was given to restoring state institutions.

In the mid-1990s, the combination of political change and gradually accelerating economic growth made Africa's future look a little brighter. South African leaders propagated the ideal of an African renaissance. Yet the mood soon darkened again, especially when extensive fighting broke out

in Central Africa and the Horn. In many countries, moreover, the process of political and economic reform encountered major hurdles. It became clear that the road to better conditions in Africa would be a long and arduous one, assuming substantial improvement was even possible. Africa's position in the globalising world was marginal, and without further political and economic reform the continent would find it impossible to capture a larger share of the global economy. Young Africans were aware how hopeless the outlook was, and many attempted to migrate – the further from Africa the better. Others tried to build some kind of life for themselves, but hope often gave way to frustration. It was only a short step to violence and crime.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the idea of an African renaissance is a mirage to most Africans. Their daily lives are marked by poverty with little hope of change. They do not usually trust their leaders, let alone respect them. A sense of belonging, of community, is sought elsewhere – on a small scale among one's own 'ethnic' group, or on a larger scale as a member of one of the world religions. Islam, above all, is a magnet for malcontents. It is increasingly becoming a religion of protest against the West, the international system and modernisation, which many feel has brought Africa nothing but misery.

d) The postcolonial state: a comparison between continents

This book attempts to explain Africa's current problems by examining the interaction, in the years since independence, between the state structures left behind by the departing colonial rulers and certain central features of Africa's political, economic and social culture. Interaction between foreign and indigenous elements is not unique to Africa. The question then arises whether the Africanisation of the inherited colonial states is a concept whose relevance extends beyond Africa. What implications does Africa's experience have for other continents that have had to deal with European expansion? Obviously it is beyond the scope of this book to subject the whole world to thorough scrutiny. However, a brief glance at other continents may help make things clearer. The focus will be on the extent to which the European colonial powers introduced new state structures into their colonies, the 'cultural distance' between these structures and the local population and, where relevant, the role of the local elites that took charge of the newly independent states.

North America, Australia and northern Asia (Siberia) can be dealt with very briefly. There the indigenous population – native North Americans, Aborigines and the local Siberian population – were so thoroughly subjugated and massacred by the invading European colonisers that they were no longer able to influence the subsequent development of the state, which hence became totally European in form.

Latin America was conquered and colonised by the Spaniards and Portuguese in the sixteenth century, and the majority of the indigenous population fell prey to disease or warfare during this tragic period of European invasion. The survivors and their descendants were too few in number, and too powerless, to leave any mark on the development of the state. The cultural distance between indigenous Indian societies and the new states in Latin America may well have been as large as that between African societies and the colonial states in Africa, but the ratio of European settlers to local inhabitants was fundamentally different. All over Latin America, European colonists and their *mestizo* descendants were soon in the majority. In most of Africa, on the other hand, there was no appreciable settlement by Europeans, so that when the colonial powers officially departed, the original inhabitants 'had the place to themselves' once more and were able to exert considerable influence on the state structures that had been left behind. In the parts of Africa where Europeans did settle on a fairly large scale (South Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe), 'colonial influences' preserved state structures in their original form longer, delaying the Africanisation process by about twenty years in the case of Zimbabwe and thirty-five years in the case of South Africa.

Only in Latin American countries where the indigenous population formed a large proportion of the total, as in the Andes and Central America, did serious problems of state organisation arise, occasionally summoning the spectre of state failure. However, the state was never actually threatened or even challenged. In general, the makeup of the population in Latin America was such that the new state structures had little to fear from the indigenous inhabitants. Institutions could be set up without regard to local cultural or social conditions. Because the European invasion of the southern part of the

western hemisphere took place so early (the first major phase of European colonisation there began right after the Middle Ages), the borders of the new states were largely determined by the physical and geographical features of the conquered regions. By 1600, less than a hundred years after the invasion began, the contours of the states that were to cast off Spanish rule two centuries later were already clearly visible in the patterns of habitation and political organisation of the conquered territories.¹⁶ The history of these clearly demarcated states thus goes back some four centuries. The colonists and their descendants have remained in power the whole of that time. Border disputes and other local conflicts have sometimes led to fighting (between Ecuador and Peru, Peru and Chile, Chile and Argentina, Argentina and Paraguay and so on), but these hostilities have merely strengthened the states involved and contributed to their emergence as nations. At the turn of the millennium, in the age of globalisation, a number of these Latin American states began to forge serious cooperative bonds, one especially noteworthy example being Mercosur.

The picture in Asia was quite different and much more varied, even if we leave aside the parts that belonged to the former Soviet Union (Central Asia) and the Asian parts of the Middle East. The continent is so vast and has such a large population that it can hardly be treated as a single unit. However, one important characteristic of almost the entire continent is the decisive part played by indigenous cultures and state structures. These were so powerful that European colonialism was only able to gain more than a foothold in a very few places. Asian countries were certainly influenced by Western encroachment in all kinds of ways, but they did not allow Western state structures to be imposed on them. In essence, most of today's Asian countries were already in existence several centuries ago. European colonialism scarcely caused a break in Asian history. Only in a few parts of Asia, particularly in the Southeast Asian archipelago, were Western countries eventually (in the era of modern colonialism, around 1900) able to leave their mark on the development of the state. Malaysia and above all Indonesia are cases in point.

If we want to find a region of Asia where this book's thesis about Africa might also apply, Indonesia is perhaps the most likely candidate. The modern Indonesian state is a Dutch colonial invention.¹⁷ When it became independent, the entire colony from Sabang in the west to Merauke in the east passed into the hands of a new, Dutch-educated elite. Most Europeans left. The political system underwent turbulent changes, and under President Suharto it reached a new equilibrium based on thoroughgoing centralisation and authoritarian rule. The functioning of the state was increasingly dictated by local cultural and social conditions.¹⁸ Just as in Africa, economic decline brought the country's problems to the surface. However, Indonesia's decline in the closing years of the twentieth century was quite different from the erosion of state and administrative structures in Africa. Whereas Africa suffered from insidious, structural problems which got worse in the 1970s and 1980s, for Indonesia those same decades were a time of stability and economic growth. After that period of prosperity, a sudden recession came as a shock. There was a drastic change of policy, and what stability there had been was destroyed. Like other countries, Indonesia sought answers to the new challenges in economic reform, democratisation and decentralisation. Meanwhile its unity was threatened by violent domestic conflict and ethnicisation.

In the Middle East, some countries had historical origins of their own, whereas others were legacies of colonialism. However, this had little effect on their political structures. The model used in this book to describe Africa could in some respects equally well be applied to the countries of the Middle East, each with a national elite like a spider in two webs, one international and the other domestic. Yet one can immediately point to a number of major differences which greatly influenced the workings of the system; above all, the oil earnings of some Arab countries (and massive foreign aid to others), which meant that, unlike in poverty-stricken Africa, the ruling elites never really had to worry about money. However, the oil had to be sold to rich nations, so there were close ties between the Arab elites and the industrialised countries. The international web was so strong that Arab leaders scarcely had to concern themselves with their domestic webs.

As a result, the political systems in Arab countries were utterly dictatorial. The available money, of which there was no lack, was used by the elite for its own purposes, and the needs of ordinary people were ignored. Groups that attempted to voice their concerns were harshly suppressed, making it impossible for local forces to manifest themselves. For want of legal opportunities to

express themselves politically, malcontents turned to religion. The government, naturally, could not do a great deal about that. Many people attempted to express their political and social dissatisfaction through Islam, which the secular states tried to suppress. With no prospects of material progress, large sections of the population felt desperate. They simply could not understand the position they were in. Why should they, the followers of the one true faith, have to live in such poverty while elsewhere in the world unbelievers could apparently afford whatever they wanted? Their anger and envy easily turned to aggression against their own rulers – stooges of the infidel Westerners – and against the West and modernity itself. Given a chance, they would replace the countries they had to live in with Islamic states in an instant, as Iranians did in 1979. Nowhere in the Middle East was there a gradual transformation of the state, as there was in Africa.

If we compare developments on other continents with those in Africa, we can draw the following conclusions. Postcolonial developments similar to those in Africa occurred in other former colonies only when there was something of a balance between the strength of colonialism and that of indigenous cultures. If colonialism was too strong or indigenous cultures too weak, local influence was extinguished altogether. In such cases, colonialism effectively became permanent. This was the situation in Latin America and to a much greater degree in North America, northern Asia and Australia, where the indigenous population was so thoroughly crushed that the situation was no longer even recognisable as a form of colonialism. In the Middle East, too, Arab elites could almost entirely ignore the local population thanks to their oil earnings and their ties with oil-buying countries. On the other hand, if colonialism was too weak or the indigenous societies too strong, as in much of Asia, colonialism had little impact on local structures. Of course, colonialism had a huge influence on Asia in many ways; it stimulated the modernisation of the continent. But it did little to disturb the continuity of most Asian states. Still, Asia was heterogeneous, and there were cases where indigenous resistance was weaker, as in Africa, enabling colonialism to leave its mark on the development of the state. The best example of this is the Southeast Asian archipelago. This shows that the thesis can have some relevance outside Africa.

e) An African renaissance?

Those with an interest in contemporary history are usually curious not only about what has happened, but also about where things will go from here. However, history is by no means the same thing as futurology. Sometimes, completely unpredictable events profoundly affect the forces that determine change. Moreover, what we might call structural changes – the slow surge of history – are, on closer inspection, not always so slow after all. One feature of the modernisation process in Europe since the Middle Ages has been that changes, including structural ones, have taken place in ever quicker succession. The global changes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been especially rapid – faster than ever before.

We need only look at what happened in Africa in the course of the twentieth century. In 1900 the European colonial powers had only just become established there, and it looked as though they would remain in power for centuries. A new political structure was introduced – yet suddenly, long before the century was out, Africa became independent. For most of the rest of the century its countries were pawns in the Cold War. No-one reflecting on Africa's future in 1900 could possibly have foreseen all this. The speed of structural change will undoubtedly continue to increase in the twenty-first century. Today, when we speak of the challenges of the twenty-first century, we really mean the ones we are already facing. We have no idea what the rest of the century will bring.

We should therefore be cautious about making predictions. Still, we can say something about what the near future is likely to bring for Africa. This book has identified some dominant forces in the contemporary history of the continent, which will not suddenly disappear. They will continue to shape things to come, in combination with other forces as yet unknown.

Today's Africanised states, which we have come to think of as failing states, are unlike anything that previously existed on the continent. They are products of a unique historical process and are now functioning – or malfunctioning – under rapidly changing international and internal conditions. An

example of an internal factor is the continent's rapidly growing population. In the days of precolonial African states, the continent was practically empty of people. Labour was therefore much more important to those states than land or other resources, which were relatively abundant. The situation has now changed drastically; the continent is starting to fill up with Africans. As a result, Africa's modern states no longer need to bind people to them; they have enough people already. Rather, it is land and other resources that are becoming scarce. This is a fundamental shift that cannot be reversed. If only for this reason, Africa's state structures will never again resemble those in the precolonial era. The same African forces may still be operating, but in an ever-changing setting. There can never be a return to the way things were.

So what will happen instead? Since the 1990s there have been efforts to help African states function better. As this book shows, there is a confrontation between the disintegration of states and attempts to build up state capacity. The outcome will have a decisive impact on the near future of the continent. What can we expect of efforts to restore and reconstruct African states? We must be realistic and accept that it will be difficult to achieve lasting results, since these changes, which have largely been forced on African leaders, are not falling on fertile sociocultural and historical soil. In China, simple changes of policy were sufficient to get modernisation going. In Africa, on the other hand, policy changes are necessary but by no means sufficient. Africa's social structures and cultures are particularly unyielding, with widely shared features that are outlined above: social systems geared to preserving the status quo, patron-client networks and a notion of power as all-pervasive. These features not only explain why the continent malfunctions, in that they form the main obstacle to development, but also explain how it functions, in that they describe how power operates in its societies. In the words of the Africanists Chabal and Daloz: Africa works.¹⁹ If it is to improve its chances of developing, Africa will have to abandon many of its present features. The question is not even so much whether it is capable of changing – for societies and cultures always change – but rather how soon it will do so, what the direction of change will be and what force will drive the process.

Though we should be careful about making long-term predictions, improvement is certainly possible and indeed is already taking place. The last decade has seen an impressive degree of democratisation. This is also an instance of Africanisation of the state, only this time with the current of modernisation rather than against it. Originally, of course, democratisation was mainly a European phenomenon, but the democratisation of African states (based on Western models) can nevertheless be seen as Africanisation, since it gives Africans more influence over their own affairs. Not only has democratisation put the population in a closer and more effective relationship with the state, but it has also ensured that for the first time in the history of independent Africa the continent now has several former heads of state who have voluntarily relinquished power after losing elections and can still travel freely without fear of being imprisoned or murdered. A new, milder political culture is starting to emerge in Africa. As a result, rulers will feel less compelled to put their personal interests first (by embezzling state funds) and hence there will be less corruption. They will also focus more on long-term policies, such as freer markets, which often require sacrifices in the short term. More democracy, less corruption and better governance – there are those who believe that the positive impact of this dynamic is already visible.²⁰

A second potentially important structural change has to do with the economy. Improved economic policies have halted the economic decline that Africa experienced in the 1970s and 1980s, replacing it with stagnation. In addition, a significant informal sector has emerged. The state and the economy are still quite intertwined and further liberalisation and privatisation are therefore necessary. The formal economy is in such a sorry state that people have no choice but to engage in economic activities of their own devising in order to make a living. This informal economy faces huge problems due to lack of organisation, training, credit and legal certainty, in combination with social pressure from family and friends. It therefore has difficulty moving beyond small-scale activities. However, its market forces and spirit of enterprise may lay the foundations for the dynamic, competitive private sector that African countries will ultimately need if they are ever to achieve economic power and prosperity. If vigorous centres of economic growth manage to develop in the informal economy, this will not only enable many people to escape from poverty but will also countervail the all-pervading power of politics and the state by allowing a middle class to emerge.

Nevertheless, the informal economy will not be able to develop fully without support from the state, which must provide the facilities and services on which a modern economy depends, such as law enforcement and infrastructure. The state and the economy must develop side by side and bolster rather than stifle one another. The informal economy must establish ties with the state that will gradually turn it into an 'ordinary', formal economy. This means that people who earn an income in the informal economy must ultimately pay taxes. Only then will the state regain the wherewithal to do such things as stimulate economic growth. This will also create the material ties between the state and its citizens on which any democratic system depends, for people who do not make a financial contribution to the state will never have a lasting say in how it is run. Africa's economic development cannot be seen in isolation from political, social and cultural change.

In this optimistic scenario, the African state might be ready for a development of the kind that Max Weber, the renowned (and still very relevant) late-nineteenth-century German sociologist, considered essential to modernisation. Africanised states, although they may have failed in performing the tasks of a modern state, have at least managed to bring the state and society together in a cultural sense. Weber said that, in order for a modern state to emerge, it must be emancipated from society. Instead of being tied to society in all kinds of obscure ways (as is now the case in Africa), it must stand above society as a visible institution and only be connected to it in clearly defined ways, for example by holding elections, collecting taxes and carrying out tasks that other organisations in society are not able or allowed to perform. Interaction between components of the state, and between the state and its citizens, should be purely functional and, in a sense, abstract. Such interaction should involve the performance of clearly defined tasks, the provision of services, and other transactions in which only objective factors (rather than personal ones) play a part. Africa's modernisation process will require the emergence of this kind of state.

It has been said that Africa's failure to modernise is largely due to the state's failure to become emancipated from society in the Weberian sense.²¹ This raises the question of how this emancipation was supposed to come about, given that the state introduced by the colonial powers was so remote from society. If the state and society are not intertwined to start with, how can one be emancipated from the other? In fact, the Africanisation of the state since independence has brought the state and society closer together. It is only since about the end of the Cold War that African states have had the potential to try to stand above society in a healthy, functional manner – not as the 'foreign bodies' that colonial states used to be, but as truly African states. In some cases, of course, it is questionable whether there is enough of a state left to be emancipated in the first place. In any case, efforts to restore and build up well-run modern states must also be seen in this context of emancipation. The process can be encouraged and supported from outside, but will only succeed if the people of Africa are the driving force behind it. Democratisation and economic improvement are still the key.

What matters is what attitude Africa's people will take as they confront tomorrow's challenges. How will they cope with the intrinsic ambivalence of the modernisation process, of adopting and adapting some Western features while rejecting others? At the moment there is an ideological vacuum in Africa. African humanism, *négritude* and socialism merely evoke a sense of nostalgia for the good old days. Liberalism as an ideology is unlikely to win many converts in this part of the world. There is considerable frustration at the continent's failure to develop, and a tendency to blame this on external forces and systems which supposedly have the continent in a stranglehold. It is also all too easy to point the finger at Africa's history of slavery and colonialism. African leaders find it especially difficult to break free from these notions, because the supposed legacy of victimisation both has the potential to attract foreign aid and distracts from their own failures.

If the frustration and hopelessness of Africa's people mount, there is a danger that they will direct their energies even more destructively, into an ideology of protest that rejects modernisation altogether. Islam, which is spreading faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world, is a logical channel for feelings of discontent.²² If the mood on the continent does indeed turn against the West and modernisation, then Africa's development, like that of the Middle East, may be set back decades.

This could be counterbalanced by the ideology of the African renaissance, but it remains to be seen whether that movement will ultimately be strong enough.

Naturally, we would like to know what is going to happen to Africa in the coming decades. Will it develop along more or less Western lines after all, at least partly closing the gap that separates it from the rest of the world, or will its role grow ever smaller and the gap ever bigger? In that case, will Africa's entire state system collapse? Or might there be a two-tiered process of development, with 'islands' of relative modernity that can more or less keep up with the world economy, surrounded by large, backward areas that have missed the boat? Or is Africa simply too large and too fragmented for a single scenario, and will each region go its own way? I will venture a guess, but without attempting to look more than about twenty years ahead (up to around 2025), for we cannot even begin to imagine what will happen after that.

Despite the formidable cultural forces behind the erosion of Africa's postcolonial states, which have been discussed in such detail in this book, it is my prediction that Africa – with the probable exception of large parts of West and Central Africa – will not become any more unstable than it is at present. The independent states still have some power of their own. Since about 2000, international efforts have to some extent stabilised teetering state structures (in Sierra Leone and Liberia, for example), and this trend will continue. Violent conflict will remain, but that does not mean states will disappear.

Africans from all parts of society will obtain more of a say in running their countries. However, this will not have an immediate impact on their living standards, which will be much the same in 2025 as they are now. The number of poor people on the continent will greatly increase, not because Africans who are now better off will become poorer, but because the population will continue to grow rapidly. Opportunities for socioeconomic progress will remain extremely limited. At present there are no realistic answers to the huge challenges that Africa faces. The continent is still not at all competitive, and will attract little or no commercial investment from abroad. Investment on other continents may not always yield as much as investment in Africa, but will certainly be less risky. Africa will thus lag further and further behind the rest of the world.

Nor is there as yet any prospect of fighting the AIDS epidemic effectively. The disease will therefore continue to have a huge impact on society. The migration of large numbers of young men, especially from rural areas, will continue to have a disruptive effect. The continent will become increasingly urbanised. By the 2020s some of the world's biggest cities will be in Africa.

Turning back to the overall development of African countries, there will be some success stories in the years to come, but these successful countries will be at the risk of backsliding, for they will face essentially the same problems as other parts of Africa. Any progress they make will be fragile and uncertain. However, countries with reasonable governance that pursue satisfactory economic policies for more than ten years will have more lasting success, with potential for stable further development. Some of these countries will begin to emerge from 2010 onwards. Which ones they will be cannot be predicted at this stage. Their governments will display new, as yet unattested combinations of African and Western features. Just as there are now numerous modern Asian states which are partly Asian and partly Western in character (such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, China, Malaysia and Singapore), there will be modern African states. Their effectiveness and stability will attract more and more foreign investment and trigger an upward spiral. These countries will act as models for their slower-moving neighbours and thereby make it possible for whole regions or even the entire continent to move forward. By then, however, we will have moved beyond our 2025 horizon.

All in all, the outlook for Africa is none too bright. There is no easy way out of the present situation, and few if any of the conditions for improvement are currently being met. What is more important, however, is that many Africans – including political leaders – are beginning to show the will to solve the huge problems Africa faces. And it is the strength of that will, more than anything else, that will determine whether or not there is an African renaissance.

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- ¹ In fact, he identified three levels rather than just two. For more details, see Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*.
- ² This is briefly explained in Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, *The Criminalisation of the State in Africa*, p. xvii. Bayart's work, as well as that of Chabal and Daloz, has focused on long-term historical trends. Another relevant publication is Weiskel's analysis of Ivory Coast around the time of independence ('Independence and the *longue durée*').
- ³ Wright, 'What do you mean there were no tribes in Africa?'; Reader, *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*, pp. 615-616.
- ⁴ Some other authors have presented more elaborate lists of African traditions or characteristics that they believe still have a substantial impact on how African political systems and societies function. One interesting example is 'Does Africa need a Cultural Adjustment Programme?', by the Cameroonian author Daniel Etuonga-Manguelle.
- ⁵ For an attempt to reconstruct political traditions in one part of Africa (Western Equatorial Africa), see Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests*.
- ⁶ Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Chapter 6, by Terence Ranger, specifically deals with the invention of traditions in Africa.
- ⁷ *The Economist*, 24 February 2001, p. 17.
- ⁸ From the Dutch daily newspaper *De Volkskrant*, 24 December 2002. Based on World Bank figures.
- ⁹ Take, for example, the absurd border between the Netherlands and Belgium, which cuts straight through Limburg, Brabant and Flanders.
- ¹⁰ Stover, *The Cultural Ecology of Chinese Civilization*.
- ¹¹ Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*, p. 18 (also quoted in Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, p. 5).
- ¹² Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, *The Criminalisation of the State in Africa*, pp. 3-4.
- ¹³ Modernisation of agriculture has always been necessary as a basis for industrialisation, in the West as well as Asia; see the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs memorandum *Het Aziatische groeimodel (The Asian Growth Model)*, pp. 4-5 and 14-15. However, Africa's agricultural sector was never modernised.
- ¹⁴ This is the essence of Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*.
- ¹⁵ See for example Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*.
- ¹⁶ Slicher van Bath, *Spaans Amerika omstreeks 1600 (Spanish America around 1600)*.
- ¹⁷ De Jong, *De waaier van het fortuin (The Fan of Fortune)*.
- ¹⁸ Far from being called into question, colonial borders were actually the basis for political choices. Just as Eritrea was able to secede from Ethiopia, so Indonesia had to give up East Timor, which it had annexed in 1976.
- ¹⁹ Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*.
- ²⁰ Goldsmith, 'Risk, rule and reason'.
- ²¹ Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, pp. 131-137.
- ²² De Gier, 'Islam in de wereld' ('Islam in the world').