

Patrimonial Politics in 21st Century Central Africa, Evolution and Progress

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Abstract : The democratic wave of the 1980s and 1990s brought a lot of hopes to the politics of African states as many nation-states adopted 'democracy.' The end of the Cold War ushered in, with a lot of rush, pro-democracy movements, which led to multi-party politics, following constitutional reviews. For the very first time since independence, Africans revolted against personalized dictatorship and adopted the idea of limited office terms for the presidents. This paper dives deep into the history of Africa post-independence with the aim of allowing the readers to understand the nature of the differences in the political setups that currently govern the continent and the central region in particular. Time has proven the euphoria that characterized post-Cold War African politics at least for many countries short-lived, as their leaders were unable to re-design the institutions of governance from the compromise and interest-oriented structures handed down after independence. The result has been that politics in many of the countries have been tailored down along the lines of winner takes all approach, with the accumulation of state power being the sole objective of the leaders. The paper contends that 21st Century African politics is exactly the politics of inclusion/exclusion based on ethnic and interest groups, leading to the flourishing of patrimonial authoritarian regimes. It also puts to the test, whether authoritarian responses to delivering growth (economic, political, social) and peace as has been the model adopted by many leaders is superior compared to democracy. This paper then concludes by adding that the practice of democracy in the Central African region in its current form is inherently flawed from its foundations, thus incapable of rooting out the crises faced in the region.

Keywords : authoritarianism, democracy, development, power, institutions

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