Special issue:

THE AFRICAN IDEA OF AFRICA

Guest edited by Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Bongani Ngqulunga

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In This Issue

Prof Ronit Frenkel

The University of Johannesburg acquired *The Thinker* in April 2019 from Dr Essop Pahad. Over the last decade, *The Thinker* has gained a reputation as a journal that explores Pan-African issues across fields and times. Ronit Frenkel, as the incoming editor, plans on maintaining the pan-African scope of the journal while increasing its coverage into fields such as books, art, literature and popular cultures. *The Thinker* is a 'hybrid' journal, publishing both journalistic pieces with more academic articles and contributors can now opt to have their submissions peer reviewed. We welcome Africa-centred articles from diverse perspectives, in order to enrich both knowledge of the continent and of issues impacting the continent.

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The Thinker
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Introduction:
From the idea of Africa to the African idea of Africa

By Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Bongani Ngqulunga

This special issue is part of the collaborative research project initiated by the Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa, based at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, and the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS), based at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. The collaborative project is entitled "The Changing African Idea of Africa and the Future of African Studies." At the University of Bayreuth, the research project is also part of *The African Multiple Cluster of Excellence* supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (grant number EX 20521-390713894). The overarching agenda of *The African Multiple Cluster of Excellence* is that of reconfiguring African Studies, and at the centre of this is the imperative of doing African Studies with Africans while also privileging African voices and intellectual/academic productions.

The project commenced in April 2022 with a series of keynote seminar series and the commissioning of this special issue themed "The African Idea of Africa." Africa as an idea, concept, space, home and other iterations, continues to elicit contestations

and animated debates in both scholarly circles, as well as in political discourses of governance and development. Consequently, to write about Africa has not been an easy task for both Africanists and African scholars. This is why Binyavanga Wainaina (2022) posited the question of how to write about Africa. Perhaps, it was these contestations that provoked the Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen in his famous poem "Heritage" (1924) to posit in poetic terms the soul-searching question: "What is Africa to me?" John Henrik Clarke (1991: xiii) expanded the question to "What is Africa to Africans, and what is Africa to the world?"

It perhaps these same concerns that prompted the Congolese scholar Valentine Y. Mudimbe to write *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, and the Order of Knowledge* (1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (1994). In these two widely celebrated works, Mudimbe delves deeper into the complex politics of knowledge, representation(s), and indeed invention and reinventions of Africa. He explained in detail how missionaries, explorers, anthropologists and other literate observers of Africa propagated an exotic idea of Africa. To make sense of the politics of knowledge and representation, Mudimbe coined the term "the colonial library" as an epistemic framing of a particular idea of Africa, which still remains a challenge in African Studies. At the centre of the idea of Africa are complex and tormenting issues of subject, subjection, subjectivation, and subjectivity, which Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 101) described as "the ticklish subject," borrowing a concept from Slavoj Zizek.

Reflecting on Mudimbe's concept of "the invention of Africa," Lewis R. Gordon (2008: 204) elaborated on Mudimbe's idea and posited that Africa was invented in a double-sense: "It was invented by the system of knowledge constituted by the process of conquest and colonization, which always erupted with discovery, on the one hand, and it was also constituted by the processes of resistance borne out of those events the consequence of which is an effect of both on each other." As far back as 1963, Ali A. Mazrui published "On the Concept of 'We Are All Africans,'" where he delved into the politics of resistance to colonialism and rise of pan-African ideas. Pan-Africanism was propagated by such figures as Kwame Nkrumah who made it clear that Africa was born in him and Julius Nyerere who articulated the concept of the "African sentiment"

(Mazrui 1963: 24-26). This thinking created the African idea of Africa (internal, African-centred view of themselves), as a shift from the Mudimbean idea of Africa (external representation). Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009: 72) expressed this shift in this way:

> V. Y. Mudimbe describes the idea of Africa as a product of the West's system of self-representation, which included creation of an otherness conceived and conveyed through conflicting systems of knowledge. But I prefer to think of the idea of Africa—or, more appropriately, the 'African idea,' as African self-representation. To distinguish it from the Mudimbeist formula according to which Europe is finding itself through its invention of Africa, I see the African idea as that which was forged in the diaspora and travelled back to the continent.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009: 35) introduced the concept of "re-membering Africa" as a central leitmotif of the African idea of Africa. Re-membering is the opposite of dismemberment. It entails the recovery of fragments. It means the picking up of pieces. It is a reconstitution and restitution process after centuries of de-constitution and destitution. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009: 35) depicted it as the "quest for wholeness, a question that has underlain African struggles since the Atlantic slave trade." Therefore, such initiatives as Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism,

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the Black consciousness movements, African socialism(s), the African renaissance, and many others are constitutive of "re-membering." These initiatives were and are also part of what Adom Getachew (2019) depicted as "worldmaking after empire."

The current calls for a new understanding of Africa are inspired by what Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018; 2020; 2021) has depicted as the "resurgent and insurgent decolonization of the 21st century." This resurgent and insurgent decolonial politics is characterised by what Geo Maher (2022) depicted as "the second sight of the colonized" drawing from W. E.B. Du Bois. At the centre of this decolonial politics is not only the re-opening of basic epistemological questions, but also the exploration of heteropatriarchal sexism, the afterlives of racial enslavement, racial capitalism, colonialities, as well as the recovery and articulation of knowledges and ideas that have been marginalised.

It is within this context that the contributions to this special issue are largely informed by the decolonial and anticolonial spirit of revisiting, recovering and articulating African ideas of liberation and the imaginings of a liberated Africa. The essays are unique in that they recover and affirm, subject to the ideas of critical analysis, what remains useful for the unfinished struggle for liberation. Consequently, the very African struggles for liberation are opened to new critiques and new affirmations informed by empathetic readings and keen revisions of the past.

The first essay by Bongani Ngqulunga is focused on genealogies of African nationalism and how national imaginaries articulated the idea of Africa, where what is explored are individual thinkers and ideas. What is underscored are the complexities of ideas and the avoidance of easy dismissals of some of the imaginings and ideas. The second essay is by Tlhabane Mokhine Dan Motaung and, like Ngqulunga, he focuses on the African nationalist idea of Africa. African nationalist thought dominated the twentieth century and animated the anticolonial struggles, as well as decolonial imaginaries of liberation. The degeneration of a once coherent African national self-consciousness into detestable forms of ethnic conflicts, genocides, nativisms and xenophobia is opened to analysis in this article. The expansive work of Mahmood Mamdani is mobilised

and deployed to understand both colonial and postcolonial realities of Africa.

The contributors to this special issue also turn their analytical lens to specific political figures like Julius Nyerere, Robert Mugabe and Thabo Mbeki in their critical explorations of the African ideas of Africa. Some of these figures dominated the political landscape of Africa and they invariably contributed to specific ideas of Africa. William Mpofu's essay is focused on Thabo Mbeki in South Africa, who became a leading voice of the "African Renaissance" and actively participated in reworlding Africa from Africa, including its institution-building. Prolific Maturuse's essay is focused on distinctive "African philosopher" leader Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania and his ideas of African socialism.

Blazio Manobo's essay centers on Robert Gabriel Mugabe of Zimbabwe, a controversial leader who is both adored and loathed in equal measure. Mugabe's delivery of land to his people, in the face of all sorts of criticism, made him a hero among Africans. Like Kwame Nkrumah, perhaps Mugabe became a great leader outside of Zimbabwe and a dictator within Zimbabwe. Such a figure could not escape attracting the attention of scholars as he is a polarising figure - Mugabe is caught up in what one can term "Mugabephilia" (love for Mugabe) on the one hand, and "Mugabephobia" (hatred for Mugabe) on the other hand.

The glaring lacuna in these essays is a lack of focus on women leaders who were also actively involved in the liberation struggles and imaginings of a liberated Africa. This lacuna is reflective of the operations of patriarchy in knowledge production and in imaginings of Africa. Ifi Amadiume (1997) in her advancement of women in reinventing Africa, underscored the realities of matriarchal thinking in pre-colonial Africa and how women commanded a powerful voice as leaders. Oyeronke Oyewumi (2016: 220) highlighted the significance of what she termed "maternal ideologies'' because it is ''enabling, ennobling, and inclusive''---it is "community oriented, all-inclusive, life giving, life sustaining, and life preserving." Therefore, the decolonization of knowledge has to entail depatriarchization of knowledge too.

In the last set of essays, there is a shift from individuals, to ideas and intellectual productions. Kelvin Acheampong's essay highlights the contributions of novelists in his analysis of the literary turn in African Studies. Zama Mthombeni's essay focuses on values (ubuntu) and ethics in the context of an exploration of the problem of xenophobia in South Africa and how to transcend it. The last essay by Kudzai Vanyoro analyses the topical issues of sexuality and homophobia, as these issues cannot be ignored in any reflections on the African idea of Africa. Taken together, these essays demonstrate the complexities, multiplicities, ambiguities, ambivalences and even contradictions with African ideas of Africa.

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Genealogies of African Nationalism and the Idea of Africa

By Bongani Ngqulunga

Abstract

The historiography of the African nationalist movement in South Africa tends to focus on the struggle for political liberation. What gets marginalised, often, is that early African nationalists envisioned their political mission as not only bringing about inclusive freedom, but also to establish what they called 'the 'New Africa' or 'the regeneration of Africa'. The purpose of this paper is to discuss critically the idea of Africa—the New Africa—that leading early African nationalist intellectuals such as Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Selope Thema, Selby Msimang, Anton Lembede and Herbert Dhlomo advocated. This paper explores commonalities and differences in their imaginings and idea of Africa, and demonstrates the significance that political and intellectual currents from the African diaspora had in shaping the notion of the 'New Africa' that they advocated. By focusing on this idea at the heart of the African nationalist political tradition, the paper challenges scholarship that often dismisses early African nationalists as conservative, influenced by their experiences in mission communities, or by an eagerness to become loyal subjects of the British Empire.

Introduction

The African nationalist movement emerged in South Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mainly as a response to British colonialism and white minority rule (see, for instance, Walsh, 1970; Odendaal, 2012; and Ngqulunga, 2017). Central to its political aims was a call for the inclusion of black people in the political affairs of the emergent South African state, as well as access to economic opportunities such as land ownership (Ngcukaitobi, 2018). Early African nationalists believed that, critical to achievement of their political goals, was unity of the African people under the banner of African nationalism. This belief was eloquently articulated by Pixley ka Seme in his opening speech to the inaugural conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, in which he decried the divisions that kept black people apart and prevented them from waging a united political struggle (Ngqulunga, 2017). In the same address, Seme (1906) argued that black people were one and needed to act as such, in order to achieve their political struggle of emancipation and inclusion.

Running parallel to the political struggle for black unity and national liberation were debates and discussions among early African nationalists, regarding the relationship between their political endeavours in South Africa and the rest of the African continent. This aspect of the African nationalist tradition is often overlooked, despite its significance for early African nationalists. The purpose of this paper is therefore to examine critically the imaginings and idea of Africa that African nationalists, of the first half of the 20th century in particular, advanced. I focus in particular on the writings of major African nationalist thinkers such as Seme, R.V. Selope Thema, H. Selby Msimang, and their younger counterparts in the Congress Youth League such as Anton Lembede, Herbert Dhlomo and A.P. Mda. This paper explores the commonalities in their imaginings and conceptions of Africa, as well as identifying the divergencies in their opinions. While acknowledging the various ways in which their background in mission schools and their attachment to the ideals of the British Empire had an impact on their political outlook, this paper argues against the reductionism that is often found in scholarship on early African nationalism; this scholarship tends to dismiss early African nationalists as either apologists for Empire or as conservative political hacks whose main ambition was to copy lifestyles of white people. Although each of the African nationalists I discuss in this paper articulated their own idea of Africa, one factor that was common across their scholarship was a vision of the continent which was fundamentally different from that espoused by missionaries of old or white politicians such as Jan Smuts or Cecil Joh Rhodes. The Africa they imagined—the New Africa as they called it—was characterised by political equality, receptiveness to modernity brought by science, education and economic development, as well as criticism of political projects that sought to subjugate the peoples of African descent. Numerous scholars of African nationalism in South Africa have noted the influence that black thinkers in the African diaspora had on the development of the African nationalist tradition in the country (see, for instance, Masilela, 2013). In the next section, I sketch out a broad genealogy of African nationalism and the idea of Africa in South Africa.

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Genealogies of African Nationalism and the Idea of Africa

In May 1996, Thabo Mbeki, the deputy president of the Republic of South Africa at the time, stood before the two houses of Parliament of South Africa to deliver his now famous speech titled 'I am African' (Mbeki, 1996). In giving a speech that affirmed his African identity and defined his own vision of the African continent

and its peoples, Mbeki was following in the footsteps of many African nationalists before him, who expended considerable intellectual and political resources in the imagination and definition of the African continent. Ninety years before Mbeki's speech, another South African, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, had delivered another speech on 'The Regeneration of Africa' (Seme, 1906). Like Mbeki after him, Seme began his speech by declaring 'I am an African'. In a tribute to Seme's speech, Kwame Nkrumah, a man who has been described as the father of African nationalism (Birmingham, 1998), gave an opening address to the First International Congress of Africanists held in Accra, Ghana in 1962. Instead of reading his own speech, Nkrumah decided to read Seme's 1906 speech, 'The Regeneration of Africa' because, he contended, its postulates were relevant to the condition that prevailed into the 1960s (Ngqulunga, 2017: 17). By reading Seme's speech, Nkrumah was directly or indirectly drawing a line between his own vision of the African continent to Seme's. By extension, Mbeki's speech in 1996, which evidently drew inspiration from both Seme's 1906 speech and Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism, tied together these different generations of African nationalists and their vision of and for Africa. Reflecting on the significance of Seme's speech, Masilela (2013: xiv) has argued that it (the speech) served as 'an ideological position that gave intellectual authorization to the decolonization process'. Furthermore, he argues that it was a significant moment, which marked a turning point in the development of what he has termed the New African Movement (NAM) in South Africa.

Considering the significance of Seme's 1906 speech to the development of the African nationalist tradition and the imaginings of Africa in South Africa (and perhaps the African continent as a whole), it is important to understand its content, context and the influence it has had on other African nationalists such as Thema, Msimang, Lembede, Dhlomo, Jordan Ngubane and numerous others. With regard to its context, it is worth noting that Seme's speech was influenced and shaped by important intellectual and political currents of the time. Four years before, Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian barrister with strong links to South Africa and his collaborators including a South African black woman by the name of Alice Kinloch, had organised and convened the first Pan-African Conference that took place in London in July 1900. The major political themes discussed at

the conference are evident in Seme's 1906 speech, especially in W.E.B. Du Bois's concluding rousing address at which he said the following:

> Let the nations of the world respect the integrity and independence of the free Negro states of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, and the rest, and let the inhabitants of these states, the independent tribes of Africa, the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all nations take courage, strive ceaselessly, and fight bravely, that they may prove to the world their incontestable right to be counted among the great brotherhood of mankind. Thus we appeal with boldness and confidence to the Great Powers of the civilized world, trusting in the wide spirit of humanity, and the deep sense of justice and of our age, for a generous recognition of the righteousness of our cause.[1]

Although Seme did not refer explicitly to the first Pan-African Conference in his speech, its influence was clearly evident in the speech. Similar to the idea of Africa presented to the world by the conference, Seme's vision of Africa was bold, self-confident, and just. It echoed Du Bois's rousing closing address in which he projected an Africa that claimed its 'incontestable right to be counted among the great brotherhood of mankind'. This positive characterisation of Africa would influence many African nationalists who came after Seme and Du Bois and invigorate the anti-colonial struggles throughout the 20th century.

The emergence of African nationalism and debates over the meaning, status and role of the African continent were thus shaped and influenced by intellectual and political currents, especially coming from other parts of the African diaspora. In the case of Seme's speech in particular, it is clear that it was a contribution to a long running debate and discussion by leading thinkers in the African diaspora, especially those from the West Indies and North America regarding their relationship with the African continent. Among those participating in the debate were Martin Delany, Edward Blyden, and Alexander Crummell, to mention a few. Crummell in particular appears to have influenced Seme's ideas on the African continent

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[1] See early beginnings of the Pan-African movement (umass.edu)

and the fate of peoples of the African diaspora in particular. In fact, Seme's speech in 1906 was in all likelihood mainly a response to Crummell, for its title was the same as the address Crummell gave half a century before also called 'The Regeneration of Africa'. It was another Crummell address, presented in 1861, to which Seme's speech may have been particularly a response to. In that address titled 'The Progress of Civilization along the West Coast of Africa', Crummell (2018) painted a hopeless picture of the African continent. In his view, Africa was a continent without any significant achievement in science, philosophy and art; it was blighted by ignorance and barbarism (Ngqulunga, 2017). Although Crummell's negative opinion of Africa was nothing new, having been quite popular with some missionaries and early European explorers on the continent, Seme appears to have been compelled to present a radically different view.

The idea of Africa that Seme presented was more hopeful. It was of an Africa with significant achievements in the arts, science, statecraft and culture. This positive idea of Africa is evident in the following extract from his 1906 speech:

> The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved, her desert plains red with harvest, her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities. Her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce, her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business and all her sons employed in advancing the victories of peace—greater and more abiding than the spoils of war (Seme, 1906: 408)

Seme's hopeful vision for Africa echoed Edward Wilmot Blyden's one, who, unlike his contemporary Crummell, believed that Africa had made significant contributions to human civilization; he was also committed to the regeneration of the continent (Lynch 1964). Like Seme who wrote several decades after him, Blyden (2010) was convinced that the regeneration of the African continent was imminent and that Africans from the diaspora would play an important role in that regeneration. His campaign for African-Americans in particular to return to the African continent was largely motivated by this belief. Lynch (1964) states that Blyden thought that

Liberia in particular would play a leading role in Africa's regeneration, that the regeneration and redemption of Africa was imminent, and that African Americans would play an important role due to their experience in the Americas. Furthermore, Blyden's concept of African personality and his conviction that African societies were inherently socialistic, became influential among African nationalists particularly amongst those in the Congress Youth League such as Lembede and Mda, who also believed that Africans were unique both in personality and social organization (Frenkel, 1974).

I have dwelled on Seme and the influences that Africa diasporic intellectuals of the 19th and early 20th centuries had on his idea of, and vision for, Africa because of the central role he played in the emergence of the African nationalist movement in South Africa, as well as in shaping debates on the meaning and imagination of Africa. As Masilela (2017) observes, Seme's connections to African diasporic intellectual and political movements were not the only ones that shaped the development of African nationalism in South Africa. The emergence of Ethiopianism and independent churches in South Africa in the second half of the 19th century was connected to interchanges between educated black people in the country and their African-American counterparts (Masilela, 2017). Campbell (1998) points to the American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in particular as having been critical to the emergence of the Ethiopian movement in South Africa and in influencing the ideological orientation of early African nationalists such as Charlotte Maxeke, Pambani Mzimba and several others. These African diasporic connections brought about a new race-consciousness and a greater assertiveness in educated Africans about their African identity.

The connections were both organizational and personal. Maxeke, for instance, befriended Nina Gomer Dubois and her husband W.E.B. Du Bois while a student at Wilberforce University. Although Du Bois's influence on Maxeke's ideological outlook is unclear, what cannot be doubted is the impact of the American experience on her political activism upon the return to South Africa. In addition to dedicating her life to the struggles of African peoples, particularly black women, Maxeke established two institutions in South Africa that she had encountered

in the United States: the AME church as well as the Wilberforce educational institution in Evaton, then southern Transvaal. Her establishing the Wilberforce institution was an obvious attempt at recreating an educational institution similar to her alma mater and reflected the influence it had on her. The school's focus on teaching vocational skills, pointed to the influence of another African-American thinker and intellectual, Booker T Washington. Perhaps more than Du Bois or any Africa diasporic thinker and intellectual, Washington had a profound influence in shaping the ideological perspectives of early African nationalists in South Africa. Among those influenced by Washington were leading African nationalist thinkers and leaders such as Dube, Don Davidson T. Jabavu, Albert B. Xuma, Thema and Seme himself. Like Maxeke's Wilberforce institution, Dube's school at Inanda was modelled on Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (Hughes 2011).

Washington's influence was evident in what can be described as the 'moderate' route to emancipation that most early African nationalists preferred and often advocated. But there was a lot more to it than a moderate political orientation. Washington's insistence on certain values such as hard-work, thrift, restraint, moral and political integrity, and honour came to be cherished by early African nationalists. These values were central to their imaginings and idea of the 'New Africa' that they considered their duty to build. A 'New African' who did not subscribe to those values was not considered worthy of serious attention. The important point to underscore is that the intellectual currents coming from the African diaspora were instrumental in shaping and fortifying the nascent nationalist sentiment among educated Africans in South Africa. By the latter half of the 19th century, educated Africans started to establish civic associations, newspapers, churches, and political organisations. Some of the prominent organisations they formed in the late 19th century include the Native Educational Association (NEA) through which New African intellectuals such as John Tengo Jabavu, Walter Rubusana, Mpambani Mzimba, Paul Xiniwe and William Gqoba, engaged in political and educational matters (Walshe 1970; Odendaal 2012). They also launched numerous newspapers including *Imvo ZabaNtsundu* established by Jabavu in 1884. *Imvo*, as the newspaper became popularly known, paved the way for other newspapers to emerge across the length

and breadth of what became South Africa. The political organisations, civic associations and newspapers became forums through which educated Africans from different parts of the country communicated and debated issues of concern and interest amongst themselves. Through these interactions, a broader nationalist consciousness emerged and took the place of what were largely narrow regional interests (Masilela 2013). By the beginning of the 20th century, educated Africans started to imagine and mobilise a common African identity. They also established political associations that cut across regional and tribal identities. This movement towards a broader and more inclusive African nationalism found expression in the formation of national organisations such as the South African Native Congress (SANC) in the late 1900s, which was followed by the South African Native Convention established in 1909 (Odendaal 2012; Limb 2010). The formation of the South African National Native Congress (SANNC) in 1912 was the outcome of this broad movement towards black national unity.

What this brief rehashing of the history of African nationalism in South Africa demonstrates is that it was influenced, largely, by experiences and ideas originating from other parts of the African diaspora. These ideas and the political movements to which they gave birth, emerged in response to the condition of racial subjugation and exploitation that darker skinned peoples across the world confronted. Faced with this experience, some Africa diasporic intellectuals started to think about creating their own separate independent republic (Delaney), while others advocated for the return to the African continent (Blyden), and many more sought to change the system of racial oppression from within the countries in which they lived (Du Bois and Washington). In confronting these systems of racial oppression and exclusion, African diasporic intellectuals developed ideas about Africa that either elicited responses from their African counterparts or shaped their thinking. Often, debates about the African continent revolved around the dichotomy of modernity and tradition. As already stated, Africa diasporic thinkers such as Crummell considered Africa a backward continent without any credible contribution to human civilisation, while Blyden and Du Bois, to mention just two, thought Africa had a proud history. The two polar images of Africa—modern or traditional—occupied centre stage in discussions and debates by African

nationalists of the first half of the 20th century. While most were committed to creating what they called the New Africa (Masilela, 2007, 2013, and 2017), they advanced different ideas and imaginings of this New Africa. In the following section, I discuss in detail the ideas of R.V. Selope Thema, one of the leading African nationalist intellectuals of the early 20th century. I contrast Thema's with ideas of other nationalists such as Solomon Plaatje, Seme, Msimang, Mda, Lembede and Dhlomo.

The African Modernity of Selope Thema

In 1929, Clements Kadalie, the founder and leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (commonly known as the ICU), established a newspaper for one of the three splinter groups of the ICU he led called the Independent ICU. He named the newspaper *New Africa*. The decision by Kadalie to name it as such was not surprising for two main reasons. A year before, a Scottish missionary based in present day Malawi by the name of Donald Fraser had published a book titled *The New Africa* in which 'modern' Africans such as Kadalie himself were praised as harbingers of an Africa emerging from backwardness. So pleased was Kadalie by the publication of Fraser's book, and presumably his inclusion in the book, that he mentioned it in his memoirs published several decades after (Kadalie, 1970). There was, however, a larger reason why Kadalie might have found calling his union's newspaper *New Africa* appealing. The idea of creating and forging a 'new' Africa from the ruins of colonial domination was important, as was a step away from what was considered by 'New Africans' themselves to be the backwardness of African traditional societies, which was in vogue intellectually in the first decades of the 20th century. Consistently making a clarion call for reimagining the African continent was Richard Victor Selope Thema, an African nationalist intellectual who gained prominence through his involvement in the early years of the ANC. He took up the position of secretary general in place of Plaatje who was absent in London, and was also as prolific in his output as a newspaper columnist and editor, from the 1920s into the 1950s when he died.

Thema's ideas about Africa were shaped by various influences, including British philosophers and writers such as Thomas Carlyle, African-American thinkers such as Washington and Du Bois, and black South African intellectuals such as Elijah Makiwane and Seme. His writings in the 1920s in Umteteli wa Bantu newspaper in particular, reflected the tumultuous changes and events of that decade. Some of the notable events included the entrenchment of racial segregation in South Africa, which increasingly marginalised black people in general and closed off opportunities for upward mobility for an aspirational black middle class to which Thema belonged. Partly in response to the state-sponsored project of racial subjugation, was an increasing political radicalization of black people, which resulted in numerous industrial protests (Bonner, 1981). The social and political ferment of the 1920s provided fertile ground for the emergence and growth of organisations such as the ICU and the Communist Party of South Africa. Social upheavals enabled ideological influences from outside the country, such as Garveyism, to find resonance and gain traction (Masilela, 2013, and Limb, 2010) within South Africa. Although complex and varied in several respects, Thema's ideas, especially in the 1920s, centred around his fundamental commitment to and belief in black emancipation. Considering Thema's vast intellectual output during a period that spanned over four decades on various subjects, the discussion in this section will focus on four central themes that foregrounded his ideas on the African continent and its peoples: modernity, civilization, tradition and Christianity. In discussing his views on these topics, I will compare and contrast them to ideas and views articulated by other early African nationalists.

Thema's decision to title his unpublished memoirs, *Out of Darkness: From Cattle-herding to the Editor's Chair'*, is revelatory about the forces that influenced him and those he held dear. Evidently, the title of his memoirs was influenced by *Up from Slavery*, the autobiography of Booker T. Washington (1963), who was held in high esteem by Thema and his contemporaries. That he chose to style the story of childhood and adult life on Washington's, also indicates the type of politics he espoused and the fundamental beliefs that animated and undergirded it. As the title suggests, Thema did believe that the life he lived in the then northern Transvaal, before his conversion to Christianity and before being enrolled in formal education, was in many respects primitive and backward. In his memoir, he writes of how his life was changed fundamentally when he met two

missionaries from the Cape: Elijah Makiwane and William Stuart, who came to his village to preach. He singles out the prayer that Makiwane made as having been transformational for him. Makiwane, Thema (2018: 63) notes, prayed for boys and girls 'who were still in darkness' to see the so-called light of Christianity. He describes Makiwane's prayer as 'having thrilled [him] and 'stirred' his imagination (ibid). From then on, he abandoned his grandfather's plan of training him to be a traditional diviner and insisted on rather being sent to school and converting to Christianity. The journey that began with his encounter with Makiwane eventually led him on a life trajectory that landed him at Lovedale college in the eastern part of the Cape. Thema describes his experience at Lovedale by using once again the metaphor of the 'veil of darkness' being lifted from his eyes (Thema, 2018: 88). It is important to quote Thema's experience of Lovedale in full because, as he mentions in his memoirs, it changed his life greatly. He (2018: 88) states that his encounter with Lovedale:

> … opened my eyes and made me see the suffering of my people which caused pangs of pain in my heart and eventually led to my revolt against tyranny and injustice. This story of how Lovedale opened my eyes and set my mind in motion presents a moving picture in the history of my life. I was a boy of twenty years of age, and as it will be remembered, was just emerging from a barbarous life in the wilds of the Northern Transvaal. And yet when I left Lovedale at the end of 1910 I had ceased to think as a barbarous boy and was already grappling with the problems of civilised life.

Thema's views as articulated in the quotation above were the backbone of his world outlook throughout his eventful and illustrious public career, which saw him become a leading figure in the African nationalist movement, including succeeding Plaatje as secretary general of the ANC. In addition to a life dedicated to politics, Thema was a prominent newspaper man, both serving as a prolific and influential columnist for various black newspapers such as Abantu-Batho, Umteteli wa Bantu, and Ilanga lase Natal. In 1932, he was appointed the founding editor of The Bantu World newspaper, a position he held for more than two decades. During this period, he occupied numerous positions in political organisations such as the ANC

and the All-Africa Convention (AAC). He served also as a member of the Native Representative Council (NRC), which was a body established in terms of the Representation of Natives Act of 1936. His participation in the politics of the ANC ended in the early 1950s, when he was expelled after establishing a faction called the National-minded Group in opposition to the influence of communists in the ANC, which he considered a betrayal of its African nationalist origins.

Perhaps more than any other African nationalist of the early 20 century, Thema wrote extensively on the idea of Africa and his understanding of the continent's position in history and in humanity as a whole. The cornerstone of Thema's beliefs, ideas and indeed politics was his unshakeable commitment to Christianity. He believed that religion was critical in building and fortifying character in individuals and in laying a firm foundation upon which the progress of societies is anchored. In an article he published in Umteteli wa Bantu newspaper on 11 November 1922, Thema stated his 'firm' conviction that 'no race can make any appreciable progress without religion' n his mind, Christianity 'was the only religion of all the religions of the world, that is capable of pointing the way towards the civilisation and progress whose purpose is the eventual attainment by the human race of a god like state of perfection'.[2] In the same article, he expressed alarm that fewer black people in South Africa were converting to the Christian religion. He thought that the decline of influence of the Christian faith undermined the progress that he thought black people had made. By progress, Thema meant movement towards education, science and what he and his contemporaries referred to as modernity. One fundamental aspect of the African modernity they imagined and aspired to, included abandoning a life similar to that which he lived in his village of Mafarane, where in his view superstition and what he described as the 'veil of darkness' prevailed.

Thema's faith in Christianity, modernity, civilisation and progress poses important questions regarding his idea of Africa. In other words, if Christianity represents light and progress, what does that mean for his idea of Africa? The first point in addressing this question is to point out that Thema and some

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[2] Thema, R.V. S. 'The Bantu and Christianity', *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 11 November 1922, p.3.

of his contemporaries defined themselves as New Africans (Masilela, 2013). By emphasising this identity, they tried to set themselves apart from what they considered the 'old' Africa, which in their view, was organised and anchored on tradition, superstition and backwardness. Although conceding to the veracity of evidence around Africa and Africans being involved in science long before their encounter with Europeans (as he often pointed out by referencing the ruins and civilisation of the Great Zimbabwe[3]), Thema believed that the encounter of Africans with Europeans represented progress - notwithstanding the plunder and subjugation colonialism had brought to the African continent. Moreover, he believed that the southern African region's long association with what he called Western civilisation positioned it as playing a leading role in 'carrying the torch of Western civilisation and culture to the wilds and jungles of this dark continent'.[4]

The idea and image of Africa that emerges from Thema's writings is in many respects similar to the negative stereotypes propagated by early missionaries and explorers. While such an assessment is true in some respect, Thema's understanding of civilisation and modernity was a lot more nuanced than his general reference to Western civilisation suggests. In the first instance, Thema argued that the foundations of what had come to be known as Western civilisation 'were laid on the soils of Africa and Asia'.[5] Furthermore, he contended that what was considered Western civilisation was in fact a product of 'the gathering achievement of the human race'.[6] In arguing for Africans to fully claim and embrace what he considered to be a civilised way of living, he was basing this belief on it being their civilisation too. He opposed the notion that 'Western civilisation is the exclusive achievement of the white race'[7] and argued that it would be 'a gross injustice to exclude us from the benefits of civilisation to which we have made a distinct contribution'.[8]

A closer look at Thema's writings on the idea of Africa reveals a complex and at times confused and confusing picture. As already mentioned, he believed that Africans had made significant contributions to 'the gathering achievement of the human race' which he called civilisation. As proof of Africa's contribution to human progress, he cited the 'buried civilisations on this continent found in the ruins of Zimbabwe, Timbuktu, Carthage and many other cities that were once the centres of an African culture'.[9] By pointing this out, Thema disputed the argument made by many white politicians in South Africa at the time, which was that Africans had not contributed to civilisation and were not entitled to or ready for what was often considered its benefits. Moreover, Thema questioned the claim made by certain white politicians in South Africa such as Barry Hertzog and Jan Smuts, who stated that white people were standard bearers of civilisation, and that African 'barbarism' was its death knell. He pointed at the strangeness of the 'civilised' white people, who in South Africa showed the:

> superiority of their civilisation to us by kicking and bullying us in public and in private. There seems to be a curious idea that the civilised European should impress the uncivilised African by trampling upon him , treating him with discourtesy and calling him all sort of names.[10]

Although a firm believer in Christianity and very appreciative of the role played by missionaries in showing Africans the 'light', Thema sought to expose the dark side of the missionary enterprise. While praising early missionaries whom he argued believed in the equality of man, Thema claimed that their successors bought into schemes of white supremacists whose sole purpose was 'to exploit Africa and her children'.[11] By adopting the political project of subjugating Africans, missionaries lost the confidence of black people, who began to perceive them as 'veritable Pharisees' whose sincerity should be doubted.[12]

[3] Thema, R. V. S. 'The White Hills of the Rand, Umteteli wa Bantu, 24 November and 3 December 1923.
[4] Thema, R.V. S. 'Hertzog's Native Policy', Umteteli wa Bantu, 17 May 1924.
[5] Thema, R. V. S. 'Parallel Institutions, Umteteli wa Bantu, 3 October 1925.
[6] ibid
[7] ibid
[8] Thema, R.V. S. 'To Be Or Not To Be?', Umteteli wa Bantu, 14 June 1924.

[9] Thema, R.V. S. '"A Common Heritage"', Umteteli wa Bantu, 4 October 1924.
[10] Thema, R.V. S. 'The Superiority of Civilised Man', Umteteli wa Bantu, 13 August 1921.
[11] Thema, R.V. S. 'The Bantu and Christianity', Umteteli wa Bantu, 11 November 1922.
[12] ibid

> " Having concluded that the presence of 'European modernity' on the southern tip of the continent was irreversible, Thema thought that African intellectuals such as himself held a responsibility to mediate, so to speak, its entry and influence in other parts of the continent. "

Despite his critical stance on the idea of Western civilisation as an exclusively European project for the benefit of white people only, Thema at times saw Western civilisation as an essential force to drive the 'veil of darkness' from the African continent, which he considered backward. In this connection, he repeated ideas of some African diasporic intellectuals such as Crummell who believed that the road to Africa's redemption was through its Christianisation and adoption of European culture. In support of this view, Thema argued:

> We cannot as a race hold our own against the conditions of life which the planting of Western civilisation in our midst has created unless we assimilate Western ideas and adopt and learn the white man's ways of doing things. It was thought some time ago that our contact with European civilisation would be detrimental to our very existence; but it has been discovered that we are a virile race, capable of looking the white man in the face and of living in spite of oppression and enslavement. For through the roll of ages the African has been subjected to one or other form of slavery, but throughout of all this period of unspeakable suffering he has not only survived the debasing influence of this institution but has also attained to a position in the affairs of mankind which is giving thoughtful men restless days and sleepless nights.[13]

As the statement quoted above demonstrates, Thema believed that it was no longer possible for Africans to revert to the life they lived before, what Masilela (2013: xiii) describes as, the violent entry of 'European modernity' into African history 'through the social formation of capitalism and the political systems of imperialism and colonialism'. Like other New African intellectuals, Thema 'thought that a more viable alternative was to master the complexity of European modernity with the intent of subverting it into a form of modernity that would emerge from the democratic imperatives of African history' (Masilela, 2013: xiii-xiv). Thema thought the experience of African Americans held important lessons for their brothers and sisters in South Africa and the rest of the continent. In his view, African Americans were exemplary for their ability to overcome extreme adversity in the form of slavery and other political projects of subjugation. He praised Booker T. Washington in particular ,whom he described as 'the man who founded Negro civilisation and progress'[14] for anchoring their progress on the foundation of education and character building. Demonstrating once again his staunch belief in the significance of religion for individuals and societies, Thema contended that 'the building up of character without religion is an utter impossibility'.[15] Religion', he added, 'is the cornerstone of human progress and civilisation'.[16]

Having concluded that the presence of 'European modernity' on the southern tip of the continent was irreversible, Thema thought that African intellectuals such as himself held a responsibility to mediate, so to speak, its entry and influence in other parts of the continent.[17] In his view, the future of the African continent depended on the extent to which countries, in which the encounter with 'European modernity' was deep such as those in the southern African region, should chart a path towards an African modernity. For Thema, South Africa in particular should shoulder greater responsibilities because it was, according to him, the 'leading civilised state in Africa'.[18] South Africa's role, then, would be to carry the torch of the civilisation he thought irreversible to the rest of the

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[13] Thema, R.V. S. 'To Be Or Not To Be? Umteteli wa Bantu, 14 June 1924.

[14] Thema, R.V. Selope 'Are We Fit?', Umteteli wa Bantu, 2 February 1924
[15] ibid
[16] ibid
[17] Thema, R.V. Selope 'The Relations of White and Black', Umteteli wa Bantu, 12 May 1923.
[18] ibid

continent in order to ensure that Africa contributes more to human progress and civilisation.

Thema's views and ideas about Africa, although controversial at times, capture the broad worldview of early African nationalists. This was a social group that still carried with it the ideological imprint of its origins in Christian missions and the position it occupied under colonialism. As a social group, they saw the disintegration of African social, economic and political life under the onslaught from colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. The fundamental question that they confronted was how Africa and Africans should respond to the changed reality. Thema's answer was that Africans need to adapt by adopting, largely, the fundamental aspects of European modernity, including its education system and Christianity. He argued that if Africans failed to do so, they risked facing irreversible social disintegration. While accepting the permanence of social, economic and political systems introduced violently to Africa by Europeans, other African nationalists did not accept the full extent of Thema's argument. For instance, his close friend and fellow intellectual, Selby Msimang, contended that Africans needed to evolve what he termed a 'better civilisation', which would sustain them under the new conditions.[19] He was concerned that the social habits that Africans were adopting in the name of Western civilisation were those practiced by the worst elements of white society. What Africans needed to learn, he argued, were those habits and traditions that have helped Europe succeed so that they could apply them to the New Africa they sought to build.[20] Msimang's position on African spirituality and religion was also slightly different from Thema's. While Thema compared African religions unfavourably to Christianity, Msimang argued that 'For the most part, the religion of the Bantu tallied somewhat with the Christian faith in its fundamental principles'.[21] For Msimang, it was the arrival of missionaries and the intrusion of Western civilisation that rendered African religions and progress stagnant. He argued that the social disintegration witnessed in African communities did not reflect their inferiority as a people or a backwardness. On the contrary, it was a consequence of the imposition of Western civilisation upon Africa and her people that insisted on Africans abandoning their religions and customs, destroyed institutions and customs that bound them together, and insisted that they should adopt a way of life foreign to them. The consequence of that was, he contended:

> ... we have become a race without religion, custom or principle. They see us degenerating, demoralised, and point to these weaknesses as signs of our natural incapacity to cope with the new conditions. In their councils they form resolutions to keep us in our place—a place of imbeciles, irresponsible, who have to be kept in subjection for all time. Character among our people is failing because we discarded that which makes it and upholds it.[22]

While Msimang emphasised the imposition on African people of European modernity through a system of 'forced labour', 'the pass laws', 'the poll tax', and 'the Bible', which altogether drove Africans to urban centres, he agreed with Thema that the consequence of all of this was the raising of a new consciousness among Africans. It was a an 'awakening', a 'new light' and a 'new vision' that could no longer be reversed.[23] Having lived together with Europeans for three centuries, Africans had evolved a hybrid civilisation—an African modernity—that combined the elements drawn from their culture and experience, as well as some taken from their encounter with Europeans. The New Africa arising from the imposition of European modernity and the responses of Africans to it, was a permanent reality that Msimang felt defined modern Africa.[24]

By emphasising the hybrid nature of the civilisation that should be at the heart of the New Africa he advocated for, Msimang echoed the position outlined by Seme in 1906 when he called for the regeneration of Africa. What is distinctive about Seme's vision of Africa, as outlined in that speech and many of his writings, is that it posits an idea of Africa that does not scorn its past but takes pride in it and seeks

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[19] Msimang, H. S. 'Our Social Life', Umteteli wa Bantu, 24 June 1922.
[20] ibid
[21] Msimang, H. S. 'The Religion and Civilisation of the Bantu', Umteteli wa Bantu, 28 August 1922.

[22] Msimang, H. S. 'The Religion and Civilisation of the Bantu', Umteteli wa Bantu, 7 October 1922.
[23] ibid
[24] Msimang, H. S. 'Bantu Destiny', Umteteli wa Bantu, 16 July 1927.

to build from it. Where Thema and Crummell, for instance, saw an African jungle, Seme saw an Africa that would add a 'new and unique civilisation' that is 'thoroughly spiritual and humanistic' (Seme quoted in Ngqulunga, 2017: 29-30). As Masilela (2013) notes, Seme and other African nationalists such as Plaatje saw value in indigenous cultures and institutions. Their idea of Africa was not of a continent disembowelled of its institutions and cultures like Thema thought; rather, they believed Africa's progress lay in its ability to combine its ancient cultures, traditions and institutions with a 'Western' mode of life. This belief was most evident in Seme's idea of the ANC, which in its constitution combined the two traditions: Euro-American and African. As already mentioned, other African nationalists supported Seme's proposition that Africa's prosperity depended on its ability to meld their culture with European culture. Others such as Plaatje were in fact sceptical that the new African civilisation that they so eagerly sought could be anchored and driven by what he called a 'New Native'. For Plaatje the New Natives or New Africans could not be relied on because they were 'insidious and lethargic'. Their fathers and forefathers, the 'old Africans', were, in Plaatje's opinion, wiser.[25]

If there is one dominant point, in this discussion on the idea of Africa held by early African nationalists, it is how divergent their views were. On the one hand was Thema who accepted, perhaps grudgingly at times, Western culture and religion and believed that Africa's progress depended on it adopting what he often referred to as Western civilisation. At the other end of the spectrum were African thinkers such as Seme and Plaatje, who found great value in African history, culture and institutions and advocated for an African modernity that would combine the best elements from European and African culture. Despite these differences, early African nationalists had one thing in common: their idea of Africa was largely elitist. In other words, there was not much room provided for the role that ordinary Africans should play in the "New Africa' or in bringing it into being. Central to the idea of Africa was the role that African intellectuals or leaders should play. Following on Cape intellectuals such as Elijah Makiwane[26], Thema and Msimang believed

> " Despite these differences, early African nationalists had one thing in common: their idea of Africa was largely elitist. In other words, there was not much room provided for the role that ordinary Africans should play in the "New Africa' or in bringing it into being. Central to the idea of Africa was the role that African intellectuals or leaders should play. "

that educated Africans should play a leading role in forging the New Africa.[27] Seme, Plaatje, John Dube, and Zacchaeus Mahabane, saw a greater role for chiefs and traditional leaders.[28] Although influenced by the founding generation of African nationalism, the next generation of African nationalist thinkers— those who are known for founding the Congress Youth League in 1944—took a different view on the status and role to be played by the African masses. In the next section, I focus briefly on the ideas of three of the leading intellectuals of this generation: Herbert Dhlomo, Anton Lembede, and Ashby Mda.

The African Modernity of Herbert Dhlomo

In his periodisation of black intellectual history in southern Africa, Masilela (2007, 2013, 2014, and 2017) identifies the 1860s as the decade during which what he calls the New African Movement (NAM) emerged. This cultural, intellectual and political movement, at the heart of which was the ideology of African nationalism, would occupy centre stage of black social and political life for a century (1860 to 1960). Among the early founders of this movement were intellectuals such as Tiyo Soga, Elijah Makiwane, Pambani Mzimba, William Wellington Gqoba, John Tengo Jabavu, Samuel E.K. Mqhayi, Charlotte Maxeke, Nontsizi Mgqweto, to mention a few. These New Africans, as they called themselves, were joined by

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[25] Plaatje, S.T. '"The Good New Times" and the "New Native"', Umteteli wa Bantu, 9 November 1929.
[26] See, for instance, Makiwane, E. 'Educated Natives', Imvo ZabaNtsundu, 26 January 1885.

[27] See, for instance, Msimang, H. S. 'Bantu Intellectuals', 12 and 19 September 1925 and 17 October 1925.
[28] For a representative view of this perspective, see Mahabane, Z. 'To the Bantu Paramount Chiefs and Chiefs of Southern Africa', Umteteli wa Bantu, 5 March 1927.

others such as Seme, Plaatje and others that have been mentioned in this essay. Masilela singles out Thema as having been instrumental in linking the early Cape intellectuals with the Natal intellectuals, such as Jordan Ngubane and the two Dhlomo brothers, Rolfes and Herbert. Thema served as a bridge not only between intellectuals from two regions, but by employing several Natal intellectuals to work on The Bantu World, a newspaper that he edited. He thereby linked the generation of early founders of the African nationalist movement and the heirs of this tradition in the Congress Youth League.

Herbert Isaac Ezra Dhlomo(commonly known by his initials, H.I.E.) was in many respects a direct descendant of Thema's tutelage. Although quite young in the 1920s, having been born in 1903, Dhlomo started contributing to debates in the Umteteli wa Bantu newspaper by the mid-1920s.[29] Writing consistently in the newspaper alongside him were two outstanding intellectuals of the founding generation of African nationalism, Thema and Msimang. Their influence on Dhlomo's political and cultural thought is evident in his early writings on the Umteteli wa Bantu newspaper. His October 1925 contribution to Umteteli wa Bantu, coincidentally appearing on the same page as Thema's, addressed the experience of African Americans with slavery and the role slavery played, in Dhlomo's opinion, in bring about their 'unity and fraternity'.[30] Dhlomo took the line of early African nationalist intellectuals such as Thema, Msimang, Plaatje and Dube, who felt that the African-American experience held important lessons for black South Africans. Similar to them, he argued that what was needed were 'men who can and will lead our people wisely—men who are elevated above others in sentiment rather than in situation.[31] This view of history, in which great men led their people into salvation or redemption, was popular among early African nationalists. It reflected the influence that Scottish thinker, Thomas Carlyle, and his 'great man' theory of history had on African nationalists of the time (Carlyle, 2017)

Thema's influence on Dhlomo is evident in his early writings on the role played by Christianity and missionaries in particular in transforming the African continent. Like Thema, he moved from the premise that life in Africa was backward and 'dark' before the arrival of Christianity. In an article he published in August 1930, he had the following to say on the subject:

> When that greatest of all missionaries, Dr Livingstone , decided to give his life to Africa and its people, the old, dark continent was transformed into the new, glorious Africa of today. No intelligent person can deny the continent's indebtedness to his noble work and that accomplished by other missionaries who sought to bring light among primitive peoples.[32]

While Dhlomo made these statements regarding the African past, he was careful to note that the history of Africans was not well known. The little that was known, he observed, was distorted by prejudices held by those who wrote it.[33] Despite making this concession, he, like his intellectual predecessors, appears to have been too impressed by the spirit of 'New Africanism' to the extent that he was too eager to paint the Africa of the past, the old Africa, with a prejudicial brush of backwardness and darkness. This idea of Africa, popular at the time, would not last long in Dhlomo's writings. By the 1940s, his writings evinced a positive disposition towards African history and culture. This was most evident in a series of essays he wrote for the Ilanga lase Natal newspaper in the 1940s. His 'Three Essays in Tribal Culture', which were published by the newspaper between October and December 1947 deserve a special mention.[34] In the essays, Dhlomo engaged with African history and culture in detail. Although still married to his 'New African' world outlook, what is remarkable about the essays is that the Dhlomo of the 1940s appears to have abandoned the stereotypical view of African history and culture, which paints Africans as having been backward. In his first essay in which he addresses the fascination that Zulus had with beads, and their contribution to what

[29] One of Dhlomo's first articles in Umteteli wa Bantu appeared in 1924 when he was 21 years old. See Dhlomo, H.I.E. 'Hardship and Progress', Umteteli wa Bantu, 18 October 1924.
[30] ibid
[31] ibid

[32] Dhlomo, H.I.E. 'Bantu and the Church', Umteteli wa Bantu, 23 August 1930.
[33] Dhlomo, H. I. E. 'The Evolution of the Bantu', Umteteli wa Bantu, 14, 21 and 28 November 1931.
[34] Dhlomo, H. I. E. 'Three Essays In Tribal Culture', Ilanga lase Natal, 4 and 11 October and 6 and 13 December 1947.

today would be considered visual culture, he says the following:

> Here we have chiefs whom history daubs as savages and war obsessed tyrants talking incessantly and with great enthusiasm about decorative art. This prompt, instinctive and intellectual marriage to beads proves that the Zulu was no mere savage. He had trappings of culture and deep love of the beautiful. It is often said that the Zulu is conservative and does not readily take to new things and practices. Yet here we find him eagerly and instantly adopting bead culture. This raises the old question of who are the Bantu?[35]

Dhlomo's essays delve into other areas of African culture and history, including the importance of the shield in African social life (11 October 1947), as well as the significance of cattle in African culture (13 December 1947).

There are two other important points to mention about Dhlomo's writings in the 1940s. The first is a marked shift from the perspective he advanced in the 1920s and early 1930s, which appeared to be too enthusiastic about the influence of what was often referred to as European modernity and too sceptical of African culture and history where he advanced the idea of Africa as backward. The second point is that the observable shift in Dhlomo's idea of Africa was not isolated. It reflected a serious re-assessment of African history, culture and institutions by New African intellectuals, which started in the late 1930s and gained momentum in the 1940s. With regard to African nationalist intellectuals based in KwaZulu/Natal, the pivotal moment in this shift happened with the decision to establish what became known as the Zulu Language and Cultural Society, which was launched in 1935 to promote Zulu culture and language (Ngqulunga, 2022). Another well- known African intellectual, Benedict W Vilakazi, was also writing essays in Ilanga lase Natal newspaper at the time defending the legacy of Shaka Zulu and projecting him as a great leader, who promoted progress and unity among African people.[36]

One of the most significant contributors to debates on the idea of Africa among the Congress Youth League group of African nationalists was Anton Muziwakhe Lembede. While Dhlomo's intellectual lineage can be traced mainly to Thema, Lembede's (and perhaps Mda's to some extent) is traceable to Seme.[37] Lembede's association with Seme ran deep. Not only did Lembede served his articles as a candidate attorney with Seme, but they also became partners in a law firm when he qualified. What is not clear is the extent to which Seme's politics influenced Lembede's. Lembede's strong African nationalism was in tune with Seme's long -standing association with the African nationalist tradition. There is a faith in African culture and institutions in Lembede's political philosophy that is very similar to Seme's. This is notwithstanding the differences in their political perspectives, with Lembede's African nationalism being quite radical as opposed to Seme's more moderate (and at times conversative) approach. Lembede's view contrasts with African thinkers such as Thema and Dhlomo, who celebrated African nationalist thinkers in their own right, but tended to take a more African position on 'old Africa'.

A few years before he died unexpectedly in July 1947 at only 33 years old, Lembede wrote numerous articles published principally in the *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Inkundla ya Bantu* newspapers on the subject of African nationalism or Africanism.[38] In an article he published in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, Lembede outlined his vision of Africanism/ African nationalism at the heart of which was his idea of Africa. In the paper, he advanced seven propositions about Africa and his idea of Africa. He started the article by making an

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[35] Dhlomo, H.I.E. 'Three Essays In Tribal Culture', Ilanga lase Natal, 4 October 1947.

[36] Vilakazi, B.W. 'Shaka's Plan of Freedom and Reconstruction', Ilanga lase Natal, 31 July, and 7, 14 and 21 August 1943.

[37] Incidentally, another Congress Youth League African nationalist and intellectual who claimed intellectual and political descendance to Seme was Jordan Kush Ngubane. Ngubane is known for having been, together with Lembede, the main author of the Congress Youth League manifesto that declared African nationalism as the ideological fulcrum of the League as well as the liberation struggle in southern Africa.

[38] Inkundla Ya Bantu newspaper was established in the last 1930s. For a time, its editor was Govan Mbeki, but for a long time in the 1940s and early 1950s it was edited by Jordan Ngubane, one of the founders of the Congress Youth League. It came to be known as a mouthpiece, and several leading thinkers of the League generation of African nationalists such as Lembede himself, Ngubane, and A.P. Mda published some of their work there. Ilanga lase Natal on the other hand was established by Joh Langalibalele Dube in 1903 and published its first issue on 10 April the same year. It arose as part of the rise of the African nationalist movement in southern Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Like its companion newspapers of the time such as Imvo ZabaNtsundu, Izwi la Bantu, Tsala ea Becoana and several others, it became a voice and mouthpiece of the new African nationalist movement. While Umteteli wa Bantu became the most influential forum for African nationalist thought in the 1920s despite its foundation having been sponsored by the Chamber of Mines; Ilanga lase Natal in the 1940s became the most exciting and influential forum for black political and cultural thought. At the time it was edited by R.R.R. Dhlomo, the elder brother of Herbert's.

argument that 'the history of modern times is the history of nationalism'.[39] For him, nationalism was the 'only effective weapon, the only antidote, against foreign rule and modern imperialism'.[40] Lembede saw the same spirit of nationalism spreading through the African continent. Moving from this premise, he argued that 'Africa is a black man's country'[41], and that Africans were the natives of their country. Africa was their 'Motherland from times immemorial'.[42] His second proposition was that Africans were one people. Although conceding that they were constituted by 'heterogenous tribes'[43], he advocated for one African nation to emerge from those tribes. This would be achieved by the emergence of African nationalistic feelings that should unite Africans. Lembede also believed in the self-determination of Africans by insisting especially that Africans should be led by other Africans. That was his third proposition. Fourthly, his idea of Africa distinguished between Africans and what he called 'other Non-Europeans'. By this he meant people of Asian descent who lived in South Africa and so-called Coloured people. While he supported cooperation between the two categories, Lembede believed that the cooperation should not undermine the unity and singularity of Africans. For Lembede, the destiny of Africa and Africans was national freedom. Failure to achieve it, he contended, would lead to their extermination. The last two propositions concerned the progress and advancement of Africans: he believed they should aim for advancement and that the African character was socialistic.

These principles constituted the backbone and crucible of Lembede's idea of Africa. Because of his influence, they became the ideological fulcrum of the Congress Youth League of which he was the founding president. And through the 1949 Programme of Action, these principles were adopted by the ANC as its ideological perspective. It is important to comment on how Lembede's African nationalism compared to Seme's. Perhaps reflecting the radicalisation of African politics in the 1940s, Lembede's nationalism was less accommodating than Seme's. Although proud of his African identity, Seme's African nationalism was

perhaps more inclusive in the sense that it imagined other social groups such as white people as belonging to the New Africa he advocated. Lembede defined those he considered as not indigenous Africans despite having lived in Africa since time immemorial as not belonging to Africa, or perhaps entitled to certain privileges associated with belonging to Africa. His proposition regarding Africans leading themselves is a case in point. The other difference between his African nationalism and Seme's was their attitude to the masses. Seme's African nationalism and his idea of Africa was distinctly elitist in the sense that he saw leaders, be they chiefs or educated New Africans, as playing a leading role. Lembede on the other hand saw a larger role for the African masses. This position was evident in an article he published in Ilanga lase Natal newspaper where he argued 'Nationalism is essentially an ideology of the masses because it stirs the deepest human feelings'.[44] He added 'The African masses today are becoming imbued with the spirit of nationalism'.[45] The shift to the masses reflected the turn towards popular mobilisation in African nationalist politics, which was championed by the Congress Youth League.

Notwithstanding differences on certain aspects of their nationalism, Seme and Lembede held an idea of Africa that in many respects affirmed its history, culture and identity. Though slightly divergent from the ideas of other leading intellectuals such as Thema, this faith, if not in the past of Africa but in its present and especially its future, is one of the defining principles of the African nationalist idea of Africa. Thema might have believed the idea advanced by early missionaries and colonists on African past defined by a backwardness and 'darkness', he, however, felt strongly that Africa's future was bright and that the New Africa and New Africans he imagined would contribute significantly to human civilisation and progress.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to discuss various ideas of Africa as articulated and advanced by early African nationalist thinkers. I have argued that the

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[39] ibid
[40] Lembede, A.M. 'Policy of the Congress Youth League', Inkundla ya Bantu, May 1946.
[41] ibid
[42] ibid
[43] ibid

[44] Lembede, Anton M. 'African nationalism and the new African masses', Ilanga lase Natal, 21 June 1947. Lembede wrote this article a few weeks before his untimely death.
[45] ibid

African nationalist tradition in South Africa was influenced largely by debates in the African diaspora. The main conduit of these ideas and debates was Seme, who brought them into South Africa especially through his 1906 speech. The article has also examined various ideas of leading African nationalist thinkers such as Thema and Msimang. Despite certain differences in their political thought, the fundamental idea that tied them together was their belief in what they called the New Africa. It was the same idea that was inherited by the Congress Youth League African nationalists such as Lembede, Mda and Dhlomo. Unlike their predecessors of early African nationalism, the Congress Youth League generation of African nationalists propounded a more radical idea of Africa in which the African masses played a leading role in shaping human history. The African nationalism that won freedom in South Africa towards the end of the 20th century can be traced to the early African nationalism and the ideas of Africa it advocated.

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The African Nationalist Idea of Africa

By Tlhabane Mokhine Dan Motaung

Abstract

This paper probes the impact of colonial designs in the fabrication of native subjectivities, which eventuated in toxic political identities that would later undermine the post-colonial nationalist project. African history was shaped by three discursive periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. The colonisation period deformed, distorted and adulterated Africa's pre-colonial cultural landscape—its sense of selfhood. African nationalism was a response to this ontologically debilitated condition of African personhood resulting from the violence of self-serving European colonial modernity, which created a structured subjugation of the African 'other.' African colonial elites at once defined and epitomised various forms of African nationalism against European incursion. However, these African modernisers failed to grasp the historicity of such enduringly baneful identity politics, and were thereby often themselves cast into the vortex of social contradictions reflective of this history. Mamdani made this observation when he stated that in kick-starting the nation-building project after independence, post-colonial elites turned their backs on the history of colonialism and thus on their own history. Instead, they modelled their political imagination on the modern European state, the result being the nationalist dream was imposed on the reality of colonially imposed fragmentation, leading to new rounds of nation-building by ethnic cleansing. Consequently, African nationalism has invariably spread across large swathes of post-colonial Africa as it degenerated into odious ethno-nationalism and chauvinism. Only through a deeper historical understanding of these colonial processes of African political identification can an we begin to understand how this once glorious African nationalism regressed into a dystopian one. This article draws on history to dissect this legacy of subjective forms of African self-understanding.

Introduction and Context

'For the Nation to Live, the Tribe must Die'---Samora Machel

Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation; and this means we must develop a world perspective. Martin Luther King Jr.

This paper probes the impact of European colonial designs on the fabrication of native subjectivities, which eventuated in toxic political identities that would later undermine the post-colonial nationalist project among African nations. African history has been shaped by three discursive periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. The colonial period deformed, distorted and altered Africa's pre-colonial cultural landscape - its sense of selfhood. African nationalism was a response to this ontologically debilitated condition of African personhood, resulting from the violence of self-serving European colonial modernity, which created the structured subjugation of the African 'other' (Masilela, 2013). African independence movements at once defined and epitomised various forms of African nationalism in its tstruggle to rid Africa of oppression and find passageways into the African future.

However, quite often, these African modernisers, comprising both nationalists and intelligentsia[1], failed to grasp the historicity of enduringly problematic identity politics, and were, thereby, often themselves cast into the vortex of social contradictions reflective of this history. Mamdani observes that "in kick-starting the nation-building project after independence, post-colonial elites turned their backs on the history of colonialism and thus on their own history. Instead, they modelled their political imagination on the modern European state, the result being the nationalist dream was imposed on the reality of colonially imposed fragmentation, leading to new rounds of nation-building by ethnic cleansing" (2021: 15). Consequently,

African nationalism has generally spread across large swathes of post-colonial Africa where it degenerated into odious ethno-nationalism and chauvinism. In this regard, a deeper historical understanding of these colonial processes in African political identification reveals how a once productive African nationalism regressed into a dystopian one.

This study therefore draws on history to dissect the injurious legacy of Europe on subjective forms of African self-understandings. It largely relies on Mamdani's (in Martin and West, 1999; 1996; 2013; 2021) study of European colonialism's strategies of both direct rule and indirect rule, which was weaponised to deconstruct and reconstitute African societies along ethnic lines. Mamdani's study is useful in showing the causal link between the impact of colonialism in remoulding African societies, later post-colonial instability and the fragmentation manifested in insidious political identities. Nation building, 'the creation and consolidation of political and national identity in former colonies or imperial provinces' (Erikson, 1994: 3) could not come into its own under these antithetical conditions, immersed as they were in the invidious, harmful history of colonial identity formations. Following on the fractious effects of the politics of toxic social identities wrought on post-colonial Africa by colonialism's indirect rule and perpetuated by the post-colonial nation-state, nationalism was structurally undermined as African nation-states wrestled with the all-too violent political animosities embedded in this history of ethnic politics. What once were coherent African forms of national self-consciousness soon deteriorated into pernicious forms of ethno-nationalism, as diverse social identities created by colonial designs staked a claim in the new order. Mamdani (2021) argues that this type of identity politics was spawned by the failure on the part of the African independence movement to 'decolonise the political'. By decolonising the political Mamdani means,

Upsetting the permanent majority and minority identities that define the contours of the nation state. The idea of the nation-state naturalises majority and minorities identities, justifying their permanence (2021: 19).

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[1]Ntongela Masilela (2013) refers to the early African intelligentsia which illuminated African responses to European colonial modernity in intellectual, artistic and cultural terms as the 'New African Movement', i.e., individuals armed with modern European education who set out to 'master the complexity of European modernity with the intent of subverting it to a form of modernity that would emerge from the democratic imperatives of African history' (2013:xiii-xv). Across colonial and post-colonial Africa, this was not necessarily philosophically monolithic grouping, as their disposition to European hegemony differed according within countries, as the case of Congo-Zaire shows (see the section entitled 'The Failure to Decolonise the Congo' below).

> " In essence, decolonising the political refers to the process of dismantling the colonial legacy of exclusion based on social identities and their replacement with a reconstituted, all-inclusive, egalitarian political community driven by a cohesive, superordinate national vision which transcends the contours of ethnicity. "

In essence, decolonising the political refers to the process of dismantling the colonial legacy of exclusion based on social identities and their replacement with a reconstituted, all-inclusive, egalitarian political community driven by a cohesive, superordinate national vision which transcends the contours of ethnicity. Another formulation would be creating the nonnational state; a state not tethered to ethnic identities but driven by political processes. Decolonising the political equates to depoliticising racial and tribal practices, without seeking to extirpate cultural difference. Cultural difference, or ethnicity, existed before colonialism and formed the African human landscape. It was only when colonialism politicised it by way of reification for purposes of 'divide and rule' that cultural difference was politically toxified (Mamdani, 2021).

In this environment of 'tribally'-orientated permanent majority and minority populations, post-colonial Africa remained locked up in self-consuming, regressive cycle of political violence[2] that impeded political unity and social coherence. With the atrophying of post-colonial African nationalism, Pan-Africanism was 'deoxygenated'. It could not be otherwise. Pan-Africanism could not stand on its own two feet without nationalist underpinnings since it was the progeny of the former. As Falola (2001) shows,

> Nationalism gave birth to Pan-Africanism, Pan-Africanism radicalised nationalism, and both combined to contribute to the fall of the European empires in Africa. As the empires were crumbling, nationalism and Pan-Africanism appeared to be separating and nationalism itself was in retreat (2001: 98).

Pan-Africanism cleaves to the historical self-consciousness of global Africa; it encapsulates both continental Africa and Africans in the diaspora. Adebajo (2020) defines Pan-Africanism as:

> The efforts to promote the political, socio-economic and cultural unity, emancipation and self-reliance of Africa and its diaspora. The concept of Pan-Africanism developed amid the sweltering oppression of slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas, and was transported back to Africa by its students who went to study in the US and Europe (2020: 4).

Once Pan-Africanism philosophy landed on the African continent it became an ontological project of African nationalism[3], serving as a contrastive vision and antidote to the smothering oppression of Global Europe. To that extent, the growth and durability of Pan-Africanism on the African continent became contingent on the sustainability of nationalism as a political force. How the post-colonial African politics fared would therefore determine whether a Pan-African vision survived as a coherent, continental force capable of galvanising African unity.

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[2] In line with his core argument on this front, Mamdani differentiates between two types of violence: 'criminal violence' and 'political violence'. His thesis is that what is normally thought of as criminal violence in post-colonial societies is actually political violence whereby excluded groups fight for belonging. Therefore, solution to post-colonial violence (Sudan; Nigeria; Kenya etc) is not to criminalise it but to see it as a political expression of a group's longing for membership.

[3] Unlike European nationalism, African nationalism was an imposed response to conditions of external domination, which response had the aggregate effect of turning Africans into the subjects of history (Masilela: 2013). The ideological evolution of African nationalism stemmed from the lived reality of colonialism. African nationalism in this reactive vein was far more sustainable than its post-colonial iteration which had to re-define its ontological legitimacy within the context of power in the face of which it fell apart due to inherited fabricated ethnic identities which the architects of nationalism failed to transcend through an all-inclusive vision. Ironically, post-independence nationalism took on the ethno-connotation which harked back to the beginning of European nationalism. In this sense, nationalism referred to 'the belief that 'the nation' is the central principle of political organization (Heywood, 1992:143). If the 'tribe' substitutes 'the nation' in the preceding sentence the parallels are clear. Despite its complex evolution in its European home soil, European nationalism became 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983: 6) while in Africa it remained reified identity frozen in time as it served political purposes.

Identity Politics and the Global Political Economy

The spectre of a post-colonial African failure of nation-building is comprehensible within the broader context of the history of neo-colonialism, to which newly-freed African states are invariably subjected (Gutkind and Wallerstein, 1975; Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996; Mafeje, in Nabudere, 2011). Attributing the vulnerable post-colonial condition of Africa to the asymmetric global trade, Archie Mafeje argues that 'being a direct product not simply of colonialism but of pervasive global capitalism, African economies (with the exception of South Africa), unlike any other regions in the world, had suffered total vertical integration into the global system' (in Nabudere, 2011: 57). Gutkind and Wallerstein (1976) advance the same argument about the 'subordination of the continent to the economic and political needs and objectives of the major Western powers' (1976: 7).

Olukoshi and Laakso (1996) conclude that both individual and group identity crisis, which unfold in post-colonial Africa do so against the background of these domestic and international macro-conditions shaping the political environment. This identity crisis is therefore compounded by 'deepening social inequality/fragmentation, the weakened administrative and policy apparatuses, of the state, the decline of the ideologies of communism and anti-communism that dominated the Cold War years, and the accelerating process of globalisation...' (1996: 5).

In view of these broader global, socio-economic currents, this article does not seek to reduce the debilitated post-colonial African condition to a monocausal paradigm centred around identity politics. Olukoshi and Laakso maintain that 'the tendency to regard ethnic/religious pluralism as essentially incompatible with the goal of nation-building is grossly mistaken and ought to be jettisoned in the quest for a more solid basis on which to build national unity in African countries' (1996: 5). As the foregoing explications demonstrate, the causes of African under-development are far more complex, even though, as this article maintains, identity politics remain the common denominator. To be sure, toxic identities have often taken more forms than just the ethnic, just as overlaps of these adversarial identities have not been unusual. For example, in post-colonial Africa these overlaps are typified by the case of

'Sudan and Chad, (Muslim/Arab North, Christian/Animist South) and Nigeria (Muslim and Hausa North, Yoruba Southwest, Ibo Southeast)' (Hobsbawm, 1990: 154). The failure of post-colonial politics invariably leads to the flaring up of hidebound and atavistic forms of ethno-nationalism, with dire socio-political consequences for the newly independent state. For his part, Vail maintains that,

> the nationalist message before and immediately after the end of colonialism was that the new dispensation would result in improvements and much increased welfare benefits. Unfortunately, this progress has not occurred, and instead the nation state's administrative structures have faltered and shrivelled (1989: 17).

Aborted African nationalism is therefore not only the function of the African leaderships' failure in historical imaginings, but also the upshot of the bleak state of the political economy. Under desolate socio-economic conditions, social contradictions are sharpened with ethnic hostilities accentuated by the scramble for scarce resources. Mamdani illustrates that by saying,

> Extreme violence in the postcolonial condition is very often nationalistic violence, as ethnic groups, organised as separate tribal units under colonialism, vie for privileged access to public goods (2021: 21).

Such has been the crisis of the nation-state in Africa in the wake of the adverse state of the international and national political economy, coupled with reified ethnic politics. The African Confidential (as cited in Olukishi and Laakso, 1996: 8) once boldly stated that 'there are signs everywhere that the era of nation-state is fading...The awkward marriage of the 'nation' in the sense of an ethnic coalition and the state as the principal source of political authority is coming under pressure from above and below' (6 January 1995).

Instead of flourishing after defeating external conquests, African nationalist configurations quite often tend to succumb to the legacy of the exogenous ruination as the local political leadership misconceives the remedial response to the afflictions of politicised identities. In turn, these residual colonial effects wilt Africa's post-colonial nationalist self-consciousness, thereby undermining its national unity.

From Direct Rule to Indirect Rule

The African independence movement's espousal of the nation-state, for all its innate inimicality to the African political community, turned out to be a tragic flaw for national cohesion. Dissimilarly, the evolution of the nation-state in Europe occurred under congenial conditions. In its European historical habitat, 'nationalism stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents and, by definition, its relationship to the state. A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries' (Gellner, 1983, in Eriksen, 1994: 10). In Europe the evolution of the nation-state was therefore an organic process which eventuated into wholesomeness, despite challenges. To the contrary, the notion of the nation-state as an extraneous colonial imposition ended in degenerate African states. On a subjective level, this failure is ascribable to the failure of African nationalists and the intelligentsia to interrogate the historicity of the post-colonial moment.

According to Wamba-Dia-Wamba, 'the National Question refers to how the global form of social existence, characterising the relationship of society to its environment, is historically or politically arrived at' (in Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996: 154). Dia-Wamba delineates a dual conception of the national question, splitting it into objective and subjective conditions in terms of which there is,

> an objective side where the nation-state refers to the complete subordination of the National Question to the state, i.e., the state as creator and organiser of the nation, and a subjective aspect involving a subjective capacity in which the common people (les gens), independently of the state, constitute a national subjectivity or national community serving as reference for political solidarity and action' (in Olukushi and Laakso, 1996: 154).

For Dia-Wamba, a state can come into being in either one of the two ways above. He emphasises that the subjective process of nation-state formation 'calls for real transformation of the colonial state to make it democratic/representative and capable of empowering people against foreign domination' (in Olukushi and Laakso, 1996: 155). African state formation under colonial domination instantiates the process of the objective conditions of state formation. Thus, the African nation-state incarnates inherent incommensurabilities. Inversely, the inability to decolonise the political means that most post-colonial African nations cannot rise up to Dia-Wamba's subjective condition for the national question.

Colonialism assumed two modes of political domination in Africa - direct rule and indirect rule (Mamdani, 1996; 2013; 2021). Mamdani (in Martin and West) reasons that the legitimation of both direct rule and indirect rule came about in response to the question: 'how can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority?' (1999: 189). To this end, colonial conquest had to introduce innovations for purposes of self-preservation. Direct rule was the initially preferred colonial strategy in terms of which the colonialists sought to replace African modes of being with European cultural forms. It was 'centralised despotism' which 'involved a comprehensive sway of institutions: the appropriation of land, the destruction of communal autonomy, and the defeat and dispersal of tribal populations' (Mamdani, 1996: 17).

Direct rule excluded from its definition of citizenship those individuals it deemed beyond the pale of 'civilisation'. This was emphatically captured by the British colonial secretary's pronouncement in 1849 that authorities would brook only that version of customary law that is not 'repugnant to the general principles of humanity, recognised throughout the whole civilised world' (Mamdani, 2021: 146). Its other side was the nonrecognition of the 'native' institutions" (in Martin and West, 1999: 189-190). Christian European culture was the gold standard of citizenship. It embraced the idea of equality for all who met the threshold of European standards. This is best captured by Cecil Rhodes' call for 'equal rights for all civilised men' (Walshe, 1971). Mamdani concludes that,

> Thus did the Europeans turn to the colonies and seek to build the avatar of modernity; the nation state, as it existed in Europe. The French called this the 'mission civilisatrice' which was anglicised as the 'civilising mission' (Mamdani, 2021: 2).

So why did direct rule shift to indirect rule? Mamdani (2013) explains this shift by what he calls 'the crisis of empire' in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In brief, his explanation says that 'the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a crisis of empire at both ends, India and Jamaica, starting with the 1857 uprising in India, known as the Sepoy Mutiny, and closing with Morant Bay in Jamaica in 1865' (Mamdani, 2013: 8). This crisis of empire convinced the colonial theoreticians that direct rule's mission of civilising the natives and 'its project of assimilation aimed at colonised elites' had failed (2013: 45-46).

Because of this force of circumstances, the British apostles of empire began to shift their focus from direct rule to indirect rule. The abiding rationale for indirect rule was that it was preserving the traditions and custom of the natives. Its main tenet was to 'manage difference', by institutionalising it 'in both the polity and society' (Mamdani, 2013: 2). Under indirect rule,

> Peasant communities were reproduced within the context of a spatial and institutional autonomy. The tribal leadership was either selectively reconstituted as the hierarchy of the local state or freshly imposed where none had existed, as in 'stateless societies'. Here political inequality went alongside civil inequality. Both were grounded in legal dualism (Mamdani, 1996: 17).

What made indirect rule an attractive proposition was the fact that it held out the prospect of emphasising, reproducing and even creating cultural distinctions between the natives themselves (Mamdani, 2013). Its distinguishing feature was a concern with ordinary people and not just the indigenous elites. Ultimately, indirect rule was an ingenious method that enabled colonial authorities to be in charge without ever impinging on the consciousness of the ruled, since it retained indigenous institutions of governance, albeit in a re-purposed form (Myers, 2008). With the establishment of indirect rule after 1858, Africans were reconstituted culturally, socially and historically; in essence, their 'colonial subjectivity' was invented (Mamdani, 2013: 44).

Mamdani reminds us that, "unlike what is commonly thought, native does not designate a condition that is original and authentic. Rather… the native is the creation of the colonial state: colonised, the native is pinned down, localised, thrown out of civilisation as an outcast, confined to custom, and then defined as a its product' (2013: 2-3). In other words, self-conceptions of being native are the upshot of invented colonial subjectivity. In this effort to create native subjectivity for the colonialised,

> Historical writing, census-taking, and law-making fostered new subjectivities by creating for the colonised a new past, altering their status in the present, and anticipating for them futures that otherwise would never have come to pass. Colonisers wrote European race theories and perverted variations on local history into the histories of the colonised peoples, making European categories of race and tribe appear local and natural (Mamdani, 2021: 12)

Over generations, these constructed subjectivities entrench themselves, taking on a life of their own by the strengthening of historical frames of reference, in which ethnic collective memory resides[4]. The colonial 'states not only attempt to provide their citizens with official accounts of the past, but they also seek to control the particular way such accounts are used', as well as having access to alternative versions (Wertsch, in Seixas, 2004: 50). As stated above, history, culture and the official archive were instrumentalised to falsify historical identities,

> " Mamdani reminds us that, "unlike what is commonly thought, native does not designate a condition that is original and authentic. Rather… the native is the creation of the colonial state: colonised, the native is pinned down, localised, thrown out of civilisation as an outcast, confined to custom, and then defined as a its product' (2013: 2-3). "

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[4] Seixas refers to this collective memory as 'individual and collective understandings of the past, the cognitive and cultural factors that shape those understandings, as well as the relations of historical understandings to those of the present and the future' (2004, ed: 10).

thereby inculcating 'false historical consciousness'. It is exactly this self-contained, primordial sentiment implanted during the colonial era, which will grow centrifugal with time in order to antagonise the nation-state and its nationalist ideology after the dissolution of the formal colonial order. Sensitivity to this historicity or the nation-state and an attendant, appropriate response would have enabled national independence movements to re-image political categories which could circumvent the booby-traps of ethnic identity. In this way progressive anti-colonial nationalism could have transcended the repercussion of the machinations, distortions and falsifications of indirect rule.

Yet, this is precisely the self-same trap that the indigenous political class and intelligentsia fell into. At an epistemic level, this inherited colonial order posed a monumental challenge to the apostles of the nationalist project in terms of their understanding of the colonial problematic. Mamdani argues that the only condition in which the post-colonial state could qualify as having decolonised the political is when it has transformed both the civil law (racial relations) and the customary law (tribal relations) by reimagining more inclusive political communities. Eliminating both these colonially created domains implies the eradication of material privilege as a function of politicised identities based on the idea of a nation-state. As it turned out, the project of decolonising the political, to create conditions that could facilitate the sustainability of a universal post-colonial nationalism, ran aground as the national independence movement failed the most critical test of building democratic citizenship and national unity - or, in Mamdani's formulation, in decolonising the political.

Decolonising the Political: Exorcising the Colonial Ghost

To reiterate the central contention of this study as articulated by Mamdani (2021; 2013), the task of decolonising the political refers to the imperative to dismantle both the spheres of civil law and customary law, which were legally sanctioned domains of political dominance in which the political architecture of colonialism was constituted. It is an exercise which centres on the nonnational state which cleaves to the political process as the centre of gravity. The

two domains of tribe and race represented the hierarchisation of political identity, where identity conferred benefits within the context of a 'homeland', or on the grounds of native and non-native. Civil law represented a category of dual political identities in which individuals considered 'settlers' enjoyed the rights of citizenship while those considered native or tribal (ethnic Africans) were legally excluded. Customary law was a form of decentralised despotism in which people considered tribes were 'sub-divided into territorial homelands and made subject to separate legal regimes' under the authority of chiefs, often imposed or created *ex nihilo* (Mamdani, 2013). The South African negotiated settlement, according to Mamdani (2021), succeeded in overcoming the institutionalised segregation of civil law by depoliticising racial identity.

For Africa at large, reconstituting both domains into a new non-nation state, transcending the logic of identity politics, would have devitalised the source of national fragmentation while laying the foundations for a national unity within democratic politics. As it turned out, Africa did not follow the same logic of subverting the historical heritage of the toxic identity politics in forging the national question. Post-independence, African politics were shaped by both the national intelligentsia, concerned about reconstructing the history of the new state, and the political class, whose main objective revolved on the building of 'common citizenship as the basis of a common sovereignty' (Mamdani, 2013: 85). Both processes were ultimately about nation-building but could not succeed due to misapprehending the task of political transformation.

Across the African continent, there emerged differences in how the post-independent state was to be re-organised and reconstituted to meet this key objective of state-building (Mamdani, 1996). Some states retained the substance of a bifurcated state, while others instituted reform by consolidating the myriad customary laws into one national iteration applicable across the board, thereby, by default perpetuating despotism by reviving this throw-back (Mamdani, 1996). To varying degrees, both cases led to perverted consequences including military coups and secessionist threats, as happened in Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Congo-Zaire and many other countries.

Tribe and Political Identity

Mamdani's delineation of the problematic of the term 'tribe' is that it does not refer so much to 'the ethnic group as in a cluster of culturally unique people but to political identification with the ethnic group' (2021: 14). His exhortation to decolonise the political is motivated by this historicised reality. When Samora Machel's Mozambique proclaimed that 'for the nation to live, the tribe must die', it meant that all the inherited political identifications affixed to ethnicity should be cleansed so that a national state could emerge (ibid).

Africa's political class and intelligentsia stand guilty before the bar of history for the cardinal political sin of revitalising the colonial project of homogenising the political community in the mistaken belief that they were building national unity. National unity built on the foundations of inherited political despotism and ethnic identity has turned out to be a recipe for disaster. Erikson states that 'national identities are constituted in relation to others; the very idea of the nation presupposes that there are other nations, or at least other peoples, who are not members of the nation (1994: 134). This conception of nationhood is intrinsically exclusionary.

The Failure to Decolonise the Political in Congo-Zaire

Employing the concept of the national question to analyse the ethnic history of the modern-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dia-Wamba uncovers similar causes for the miscarriage of the post-colonial state as expounded by Mamdani (in Olukoshi and Laaksko, 1996). Focusing on the post-colonial conditions of the then Zaire, Dia-Wamba illustrates the effects of colonially induced political identities on the emergence of post-colonial polity and its resultant nationalist project. He insists that Zaire-Congo had never really undergone qualitative transformation from colonial construction to a subjectively new nation-state reflecting the true aspirations of the people; in fact, he argues, the only change was the departure of the Belgian rules (in Olukoshi and Laaksko, 1996: 154). This would mean that since its independence in 1960, until at least the 1990s, Congo-Zaire's only underwent cosmic changes.

Dia-Wamba puts the blame for the collapse of post-colonial Zaire squarely at the door of a group called the Zairean *national tribaliste* (ibid). The main flaw in this politics of this post-colonial grouping, as Dia-Wamba puts it, is that they "tried to rule in the name of an 'abstract state of unity' (premised on a colonially created territorial unity) incarnated by the legacy of the colonial state and a programme of 'nation-building' from above" (in Olukushi and Laakso, 1996: 155). Their aim was to 'Africanise' their political legacy on the false assumption that it could be a genuine nation-state project (ibid).

This ruling elite also conflated the notion of the 'abstract national state unity' with the image of the 'father of the nation', the leader of the national independence movement, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (ibid). It was more like the history of the French leader, Louis XIV, who is reputed to have said 'L'Etat c'est a moi' ('I am the state'). Consequently, the Congo-Zairean state was rendered brittle and vulnerable by the counter-visions of those who sought to exterminate Belgian colonial vestiges, including its material privileges for designated groups. Under such combustible political relations, what nationalist project had catapulted the independence movement to power, dissolved into nothingness.

Furthermore, the history of Congo-Zaire saw constitutionalism becoming a fig leaf to conceal the power grab of the ethnicised elites, the *national tribaliste*, and in effect therefore justifying 'a one-sided, unilateral approach to tackling the National Question: a national minority-based state, incarnated in one person, oppressing the majority of the people on the basis of class, ethnicity, or nationality' (in Olukushi and Laakso, 1996: 156). In this regard, the constitution of the country became a sham, subjected to and reflecting the arbitrary personal power of the leader of the party to whom all else were subordinated. In turn, a hierarchy of political identities was perpetuated.

The Failure of Decolonising the Political in Sudan and South Sudan

Like the Congo-Zaire, both Republics of Sudan and South Sudan botched their post-colonial transformation to the extent that they retained the poisoned chalice in the form of colonially fabricated

identities as the basis for the post-colonial state. In other words, the two countries valorised the notion of the nation-state as constructed by European colonialism by retaining politicised notions of race and tribe in the post-colonial state. In the case of the Republic of Sudan, both South (wrongly described as 'African') and the North (wrongly described as 'Arab') internalised British colonial ethnic ascriptions in the post-colonial era (Mamdani, 2021). These dual, territorialised identities fractured the national imaginary along identity lines, congealing racialised hostilities which led to the secession of South Sudan.

South Sudan has in turn suffered a bloody ethnic conflict which destabilised the country, threating to tear it asunder. The two main ethnic communities in South Sudan are the Dinka and the Nuer, both of whom had co-existed peacefully in pre-colonial times (Mamdani, 2021). Their current inter-ethnic violence is traceable to the post-independence fighting over resources within the context of frozen social identities (Mamdani, 2021). However, they had also internalised imposed political identities on what was but cultural diversity. According to Mamdani, 'whoever rules - which means whoever has enough guns and money to maintain a loyal fighting force - can funnel cash, real estate, jobs, business opportunities, contracts, and protection to his own ethnic group' (2021: 196). Colonial modernity is the root cause of this chronic

> " In other words, the two countries valorised the notion of the nation-state as constructed by European colonialism by retaining politicised notions of race and tribe in the post-colonial state. In the case of the Republic of Sudan, both South (wrongly described as 'African') and the North (wrongly described as 'Arab') internalised British colonial ethnic ascriptions in the post-colonial era (Mamdani, 2021). "

rivalry. As in other colonies, 'after the British took over in the early twentieth century, the politicised ethnic boundaries, reconstituting cultural difference as tribal difference. The inheritors of this colonial mentality govern as the British did, not as their ancestors did' (Mamdani, 2021: 196).

Re-Imagining Post-Colonial Africa: The Imperative to Decolonise the Political

The cases of the Republics of Sudan and South Sudan, as well as modern-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, lend credence to the conclusion that the post-colonial African state, as presently constituted, is locked in a failed template with no epistemological warrants in Africa's history. The case of the two Republics of the Sudan demonstrate the failures of the national state shaped by the colonial imagination. Drawing on Marxism, Mamdani argues for the case of 'epistemological revolution, whereby the very consciousness of being, the vocabulary in which we understand the world around us, is transformed' (2021: 32). It is all very well to defeat colonial domination powered by nationalist discourse; yet, it is quite another thing to build the post-colonial nation where resources are shared not on the basis of ethnic affinities but rather on the basis of inclusive, democratic citizenship.

Dia Wamba makes almost similar suggestions as Mamdani to extricate Congo-Zaire, and by extension, the African continent, from its ethnic quagmire. Dia-Wamba's contention is that 'the only democratic state is a state of the people of all walks of life' (in Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996: 164). Like Mamdani, he warns against ethnic or religious parochialism, which excludes those defined outside the group. Referring to the volatility of post-colonial ethnic hostility, Hobsbawm too, has noted that 'the internal situation of states is unstable in which power rests with a single hegemonic community…', which was the case in Sudan, South Sudan, Congo-Zaire and many other independent African states (1990: 154). Most critical is his admonition that the issue is not just about recognising and moving away from the position of acknowledgement of the existence of multiple ethnic identities. In other words, 'the state must not be a simple composition or expression (reflection) of this multiplicity; it must transcend it with new categories' (ibid). This act of transcending the multiplicity of

ethnic identities with new categories is consistent with Mamdani's political vision of decolonising the political. Preceding the exercise of decolonising the political is the imperative to historicise current African political modernity. Underscoring the imperative to transcend the ethnic identities with a new category, Mamdani highlights that 'the right to citizenship is the mother of all rights, yet', he laments, 'all nation-states, post-colonial and otherwise, ensure that access to it is controversial, thereby fostering membership-oriented grievances' (2021: 334).

Further reinforcing the forcefulness of Mamdani's thesis, Dia-Wamba insists that the new categories which provide the underpinnings of such new conceptions of the post-colonial African state 'must not be derived from the social being which may be cultural, linguistic, religious, professional, etc' (in Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996: 164). Both Mamdani's and Dia-Wamba's shared proposition assumes cardinal importance when seen through the prism of the impact of colonial history in shaping the self-understandings of the colonised subject. Scholars have warned against undermining the extent of the entrenchment of colonially invented identities. For example, Zegeye (2001 ed.) has cited a study by Gibson and Gouws which cogently showed that South Africans still identified themselves along ethnic and racial lines. Zegeye notes that 'ontological commitments or identities point to how an individual or group is structured in terms of practical historical being' (2001 : 14). In other words, historically constituted identities tend to be ineradicable. This means if a post-colonial state is defined as a nation-state, it is likely not only to legitimate ethnic consciousness but to perpetuate it, thereby posing an existential threat to the state in turn.

Conclusion

Employing the historiography of Mamdani, this article has argued that the primary architects of African post-colonial modernity have failed the litmus test of decolonising the political; they have failed in the construction of an independent state by not abandoning the European heritage of the nation-state and in its place re-thinking an all-inclusive, democratic and united non-national state model. This would not have meant the abolition of cultural difference. It means depoliticising cultural differences by transcending them, thereby excluding the undercurrent of fractious ethnic identities from the construction of the state itself.

In fact, persistent ethno-nationalist feelings in the post-colonial social landscape beg the question of what happened to the pan-ethnic consciousness that propelled the anti-colonial (anti-apartheid struggle)? Often, with a few exception such as the Republic of Sudan, free African nations dismantle the domain of racialised politics which constituted the mainspring of colonial order but fail to do the same in the tribal domain. At most, they impose homogeneity on the tribal terrain, with the result that contradictions erupt into inter-tribal conflagrations, perpetuating national divisions with irreparable harm to the nationalist vision. The cases of Sudan, South Sudan and Congo-Zaire are among prime examples of post-colonial societies whose aborted transformations throw up a Pandora's Box of whose collision rent asunder the ideal of African nationalism which, at a national level, is a building block for the construction and sustainability of Pan-Africanism.

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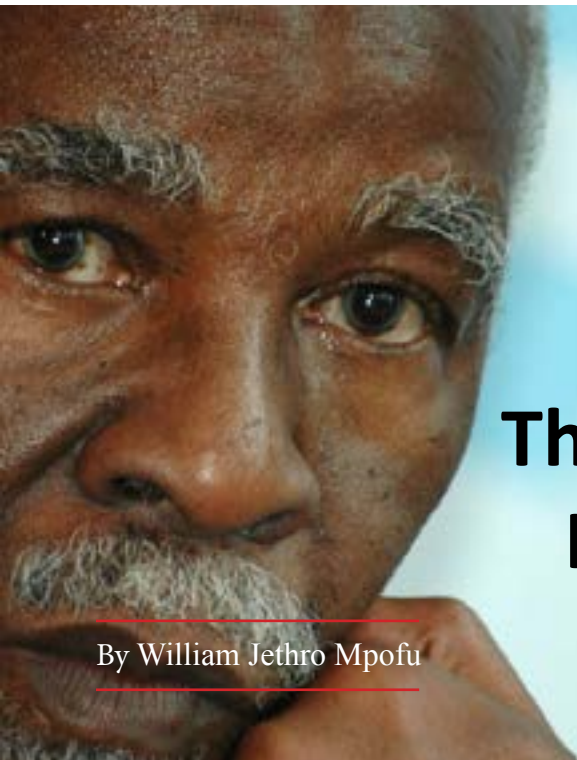
Thabo Mbeki's Decolonial Idea of an African in the African Renaissance

By William Jethro Mpofu

Abstract

In this essay, I deploy a liberation philosophical perspective in order to understand Thabo Mbeki's decolonial imagining of an African in the African Renaissance. It is my understanding that the African of the African Renaissance is one who has awakened to the task of undoing coloniality in the African postcolony. For instance, that an African has to declare that 'I am an African' in Africa, as Mbeki does, reflects the troubled and also troubling idea of being African in the African postcolony. It might seem that being human, and African in Africa, is an idea under question that must still be declared or defended. Whether one is an African or not in the postcolony is not a given, as colonialism succeeded in changing the being and belonging of Africans in Africa. Through colonialism, settlers became local in Africa and Africans became aliens in their own native territories. Colonialism, especially in its apartheid expression in South Africa, questioned the humanity of Black Africans, displaced them, and dispossessed them of their land. It is the uprooted, displaced, and dispossessed African represented in Mbeki who makes the remark that: 'At times, and in fear, I have wondered whether I should concede equal citizenship of our country to the leopard and the lion, the elephant and the springbok, the hyena, the black mamba and the pestilential mosquito.' This dehumanised African is the subject who travels from the dystopia of colonialism to the utopia of reconciliation and a renaissance of Africa. This is the African who was caught in the tragic optimism of the liberation 'dreamer', but was later to concede that after the end of juridical colonialism, South Africa remained 'two nations' racially and socially. Even a globally celebrated democratic Constitution did not come close to solving the political and social equation, the paradox, where South Africa remains the 'most unequal country in the world'. For the African of Mbeki's representation and observation, the dream of liberation from colonialism collapsed into a nightmare of coloniality, and the starting point of an African renaissance is the decolonial effort to dare dream and imagine another Africa and other Africans built from the ashes of the colonisers and the colonised. This essay is also an observation of the dilemma of a philosopher of liberation who was torn in between the necessity of justice for the victims of colonialism and the importance of reconciliation with the colonisers in the African postcolony.

Introduction

In this essay, I deploy a liberation philosophical perspective in order to understand Thabo Mbeki's decolonial imagining of an African in the African Renaissance. It is my understanding that the African of the African Renaissance is one who has awakened to the task of undoing coloniality in the African postcolony. For instance, that an African has to declare that 'I am an African' in Africa, as Thabo Mbeki (1998: 31) does, reflects the troubled and also troubling idea of being African in the African postcolony. The idea of being African is troubled in that it is a search for true liberation and full humanity where liberation remains elusive, and the humanity of Africans continues to be questioned if not denied. It is troubling in the sense that the insistence by Africans that they are African and human haunts those who have sought to question their humanity and have benefitted from their dehumanisation. Mbeki imagined the African Renaissance as the awakening of Africans in South Africa and beyond from a colonial slumber to decolonial consciousness that would lead to justice and liberation. The philosophical dilemma that confronted Mbeki's imagination is that true liberation and reconciliation between the former colonisers and the colonised could not be achieved without justice. Mbeki, as the Vice-President to President Nelson Mandela, presented the 'I am an African' speech on behalf of the African National Congress (ANC) in Cape Town on 8 May 1996, on the occasion of the passing of South Africa's new Constitution. The speech became a classic amongst many other speeches that Mbeki presented as part of introducing the idea of the African Renaissance. Mbeki's poetic declaration that 'I am an African' in South Africa might just indicate that being human, and African, in Africa is an idea under question that must still be declared or defended in the postcolony. So fragile is being African in Africa that as part of his explication of the idea of the 'postcolony' in Africa, Achille Mbembe (2001) notes that being African, thinking about Africa, and writing about it has never come easy. It has never come easy because the postcolony is that uneasy place where colonialism has not really died, while liberation from colonialism struggles to be born.

The long history of the dehumanisation of Africans by slavery and colonialism – and the fact that Africans were not named Africans by themselves but by their colonisers – led Mogobe Ramose (2005: 4) to accept being called an African in Africa only 'under protest'. Mbeki's speech was delivered at an uneasy time in the South African postcolony. It was a time when the Black South African population had high expectations of liberation after the long years of apartheid. It was a time when white South Africans were gripped by fear of the revenge of Black people, who for very long had lived outside the mainstream economy and polity of the country. Political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Mbeki had to negotiate high Black expectations, while also allaying deep white fears at a time when the South African constitutional and democratic experiment was still young and fragile. The language of forgiveness and reconciliation was, at the time, the currency of political trade in a South Africa that Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1996) had christened the 'rainbow nation of God', where seemingly impossible forgiveness and reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of apartheid was taking place. Mbeki's speech could not escape being infected or flavoured, depending on where one stands, by the political climate of the time. As such, the African that Mbeki describes in his speech is an African who seeks to re-invent the self and the continent of Africa itself. For instance, Valentin Mudimbe (1998) described how Africa and Africans needed to be re-invented after the continent and its people had gone through decades of 'invention' by colonialism. The idea of the African Renaissance itself might, after all, be an idea about the decolonial re-invention of Africa and Africans. Re-inventing Africa and Africans takes a decolonial imagination and a tragic optimism that is clear about the colonial invention of Africa and Africans and can envision a re-invented Africa and new Africans. That task, as represented by Mbeki, takes an African who sees and believes in the utopia of forgiveness, reconciliation, and liberation – under a dark cloud of the real history of the dystopia of colonisation, dehumanisation, and oppression in the postcolony. That the African Renaissance itself is an awakening is based on the reality that there was a colonial wound to heal and a colonial slumber from which Africans must wake.

Mbeki begins his 'I am an African' speech by invoking the name of the African in Africa as a victim of conquest and colonisation who is proudly prepared to march to a new future with some dignity. This is an angry and proud African who is only too aware of the depth of the colonial wound that continues to bleed, even after political independence has been declared. It is this African who says:

> I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the beautiful Cape – they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives – in the struggle to defend our freedom and independence and they who, as people, perished in the result. (Mbeki, 1998: 32)

As Sisonke Msimang (2000: 70) notes: 'after three years of carefully constructed Mandela speeches on the importance of 'non-racialism' there was something in Mbeki's affirmation of Africa that seemed to be alluding to a South Africa that was very different from the Rainbow Nation.' This was the South Africa of the angry but proud African who still looked at the bleeding colonial wound and was not easily enchanted by the 'sugar-candy mountain' of reconciliation. However, as if unable to escape the enchantment of the 'rainbow-ism' of the political moment, in the same speech and same voice, Mbeki turns around to describe another African who is not simply Black and native to Africa, but rather an inclusive African whose 'Africanity' accommodates others, including the white settlers themselves, 'whatever their own actions' in the history of South Africa. This other African who Mbeki projects is a wounded but forgiving victim who dreams of a South African future that includes both the victims and the perpetrators of apartheid as fellow citizens who are prepared to pursue a future together:

> I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still part of me. In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture is part of my essence. The stripes they bore on their bodies from the lash of the slave-master are a reminder embossed on my consciousness of what should not be done. (Mbeki, 1998: 32)

In this essay, I write about this wounded but forgiving African. My observation is that this is not a fragile African who espouses forgiveness and reconciliation from a position of defeat, surrender, and weakness. Rather, this is an African with a liberation philosophy purpose: one who sees liberation beyond not only the conflict between the coloniser and the colonised, but also beyond the identities and positionalities of the oppressor and the oppressed. Paulo Freire (1993) refers to such liberation thinkers and political activists as great humanists who have the task not only to liberate themselves, but also to free their oppressors from the existential and systemic prison of being oppressors. The oppressors, Freire notes, by virtue of being oppressors do not have the power to free their victims or themselves. They can only be freed by the power that arises from the 'weaknesses' of the victims who are the ones who can forgive, even if they do not forget. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) describes such political thinkers and activists as the 'decolonial humanists' who practice the 'politics of life', as opposed to the politics of revenge and death. It is such thinkers and political activists who can, in the midst of dystopias such as post-apartheid South Africa, dare to imagine the utopia of a working constitutional and democratic dispensation where former perpetrators and former victims can live under one Republic, salute one flag, and sing one national anthem. As forgiving as these thinkers and political activists seem to be, they nonetheless retain a sharp memory and view of the colonial wound. They do not forget. It was Mbeki, the philosopher of liberation (Mpofu, 2012), who in the midst of his conciliatory

> " My observation is that this is not a fragile African who espouses forgiveness and reconciliation from a position of defeat, surrender, and weakness. Rather, this is an African with a liberation philosophy purpose: one who sees liberation beyond not only the conflict between the coloniser and the colonised, but also beyond the identities and positionalities of the oppressor and the oppressed. "

speech could be un-forgetful enough to remember that post-apartheid South Africa would necessarily have to accommodate those who colonised South Africans and those who continued to economically benefit from the proceeds of apartheid. In expressing the philosophical and humanist dilemma of accommodating former enemies, Mbeki poetically noted that: 'At times, and in fear, I have wondered whether I should concede equal citizenship of our country to the leopard and the lion, the elephant and the springbok, the hyena, the black Mamba, and the pestilental mosquito' (Mbeki, 1998: 31).

The liberated South Africa of Mbeki's philosophical and poetic imagination was a South Africa where the African would share citizenship with dangerous monsters whose history and deeds resembled those of leopards, mambas, hyenas, and pestilential parasites such as mosquitos. In dehumanising the Africans through colonisation and apartheid, the colonialists dehumanised themselves into wild animals, venomous snakes, and other creatures of the wild. As a forgiving but un-forgetting philosopher of liberation, Mbeki remained clear about the violence of apartheid in the past and in the present. Nonetheless, he remained dedicated to reconciliation and democracy. Such forgiveness, as is required from the victim of colonialism and other crimes against humanity, is described by Hannah Arendt (1958) as impossible but necessary and therefore achievable by those who have the courage and the optimism to see brighter human futures in dark times. Such forgiveness, Arendt noted, is more religious than political in origins. Arendt observes how forgiveness after large-scale crimes, such as holocausts and genocides, is actually a quality of God which only some brave human beings with great purposes can afford. The great purpose of re-inventing Africa and Africans required not just humility, but also the courage to forgive the unforgivable. South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy involved the victims of apartheid forgiving their victimisers. This is why the transition was understood as a kind of miracle: because apartheid wounds were too deep, Black expectations of liberation too high, and white fears of punishment too vivid. Those who forgive might not forget, and some might forget but not forgive, remaining with deep anger bottled up in their psyche.

Mbeki, as the forgiving but not forgetting philosopher of liberation, made the bold observation that South Africa's beautiful and democratic Constitution, though celebrated worldwide, was unequal to the task of eradicating the social inequalities left behind by apartheid. On the occasion of the debate on reconciliation in the National Assembly, Cape Town, on 29 May 1998, Mbeki (1998: 68) delivered another historic speech: 'South Africa: Two Nations'. In this speech, he pointed out that South Africa was still divided between rich white people and poor Black people. The constitutional goal of 'national unity and reconciliation' in South Africa was a dream that had turned into a nightmare. The white South Africans who had perpetrated apartheid and who had benefitted from its economic and political crimes against humanity did not seem to be interested in undoing the inequalities that apartheid had produced. Mbeki (1998: 75) noted how 'it comes about that those who were responsible for or were beneficiaries of the past absolve themselves from any obligation to help do away with an unacceptable legacy'. The Mbeki who delivered the 'South Africa: Two Nations' speech was true to the philosophy of liberation that might forgive but not forget. In the midst of celebrating a beautiful Constitution, he pointed out that, in post-apartheid South Africa, the social inequalities created by apartheid were not a crime of the past, but rather a crime of the present that needed urgent resolution. In other words, Mbeki insisted that apartheid was a present reality. South Africa was true to what Mbembe (2001) has called the 'postcolony': a time and a place where the corpses of colonialism and apartheid insist on resurrection whenever attempts are made to bury them for good. The tragedy of the project of re-inventing Africa and Africans is that those who were supposed to be forgiven did not make themselves available for forgiveness, as they resisted giving away the privileges that they gained from apartheid. It was a tragedy of having to forgive those who were not willing to apologise for their injustices and crimes. This turned forgiveness into an even more difficult challenge that requires political and philosophical courage. Even more tragic, perhaps, and requiring more courage, may be the attempt to forget apartheid when the social inequalities it produced are still very much alive. The two speeches 'I am an African' and 'South Africa: Two Nations' represent Mbeki as an African Renaissance philosopher who was as keen

to forgive as he was not to forget the injustices and crimes of apartheid. Mbeki was vividly aware of the fragility of reconciliation without justice, and of the shortcomings of a forgiveness and reconciliation experiment that was based on a politically-motivated collective amnesia.

The Philosophy of Liberation and the African Renaissance

When Friedrich Nietzsche (2014) determined himself to look 'beyond good and evil' and to come up with a 'philosophy of the future', he opined that those who fight against monsters should be careful to not become monsters themselves. Similarly, those who fought against apartheid in the South African liberation movement had to take care that they did not, once in power, practice a new version of apartheid against those who had oppressed them. While Nietzsche was the direct opposite of a philosopher of liberation, because of his celebration of 'will power' (Nietzsche, 1968) and his valorisation of the politics of domination, his present observation affirms the philosophy and politics of liberation. The philosophy of liberation, and the politics of liberation that it gives birth to, do not privilege the ideas and practices of retaliation and revenge. In his articulation of the African Renaissance, from his background in the South African and African liberation movements, Mbeki was aware that retaliation and revenge against the perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid were not sustainable options. Revenge and retaliation can only produce new victims and new victimisers. Nonetheless, he was also aware that those who enjoyed the political and economic privileges of apartheid were not going to easily forfeit those privileges. It became the existential and political dilemma of the leaders of the liberation movement to build a new democratic South Africa in which even the perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid would find home. The tragedy of the South African democratic and constitutional experiment, therefore, as expressed by Mbeki in the 'South Africa: Two Nations' speech, is that the perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid did not only find home in post-apartheid South Africa, but also kept their power and privileges. As canonically described by Enrique Dussel (1969) and Paulo Freire (1993), the burden of the philosophy of liberation is that its humanist vocation compels it to look after not only the victims of oppression, but also the oppressors. Liberation philosophers practice politics not as a profession of opportunists and tricksters, but as a vocation of liberators who are determined to make the world a shared place where people of different historical and political positionalities can co-exist. This did not eventually take place in South Africa, a country which remains racially divided, with white people monopolising the economy. This reveals the tragic messianism of the philosophy of liberation, which leaves the victims of oppression on the cross of history, crucified and sacrificed on the altars of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. The peace that arises from a reconciliation that is not accompanied by justice is a negative peace that amounts to the silence of the defeated who await the opportunity to return to conflict.

The African Renaissance, as articulated by Mbeki, might then have been a return to the struggle of an aggrieved philosopher of liberation who was witnessing the durability of apartheid even after political independence had been declared in South Africa. In the narrative of *Endgame: The Secret Talks and the End of Apartheid*, Willie Esterhuyse (2012) describes how Thabo Mbeki was always 'against war' and for a negotiated liberation of South Africa that would liberate Black people and also preserve the humanity of those who perpetrated and benefitted from apartheid. That South Africa remained 'two nations' after the negotiated settlement might therefore have come as tragic crucifixion for Mbeki. It is the crucified Mbeki who found in the idea of an African Renaissance an avenue to return to the unarmed struggle for liberation in South Africa and in Africa. Apartheid and colonialism were now to be fought through the re-invention of Africa and its people, through an African Renaissance that was not interested in punishing perpetrators, but was rather interested in empowering victims. Even as the African Renaissance as represented by Mbeki sounded only poetic and philosophical, it was still political and powerful in the way that its project was to re-invent what had been invented by colonialism. In that way, the African Renaissance was the work of beauty and power as a philosophical idea. The idea of the African Renaissance suffered the Marxian limit, in which the impotence of philosophers lies in the fact that they describe the world, when in fact the point is to

change the world for the better. In South Africa, the limits of the political messianism of the philosophy of liberation might have been the forgiveness extended by victims and their reconciliation with victimisers who were not interested in relinquishing their power and privilege.

The African Renaissance

The reason why Pitika Ntuli (1998: 15) had to ask 'who is afraid of the African renaissance' is because the idea of an African Renaissance threatens power and knowledge systems that have normalised Africa as a dark continent that is beyond repair. The idea that Africa is lost beyond recovery is comforting to the colonial ego. The idea of an African Renaissance is also threatening to Africans who have to carry out the cultural, economic, intellectual, and political tasks that will lead Africa to its long overdue awakening. The tasks 'will involve [a] re-analysing of Africa's past', decolonising education in Africa, and paying attention to the diversity of Africans in Africa and around the world (Ntuli, 1998: 15). In other words, the idea of an African awakening is threatening to those who benefit from the African economic and political condition of slumber. In his reading and interpretation of the work of Ngugi wa Thiongo, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019: 3) understands the idea of an African Renaissance as the hard work of African intellectuals and political leaders 're-membering', in the sense of re-assembling the organs of an African continent and African people that were 'dismembered' by colonialism. This intellectual and political work is frightening to Africans themselves and is threatening to those who have benefitted from a dis-membered Africa.

The call for an African Renaissance is a direct challenge to Western economic, political, and cultural imperialism. It is a call that 'challenges the right of Europeans to impose their cultural and spiritual values on African communities' (Nabudere, 2001: 11). Dani Nabudere (2001: 1) notes how the African Renaissance idea seeks to 'redefine a new political and ideological agenda of pan-Africanism in the age of globalisation' and that 'the key pillars of the African Renaissance are sociocultural, political, economic regeneration and improvement of Africa's geo-political standing in world affairs'. In other words, the African Renaissance is not seen as a simple awakening or coming to

consciousness, but also as an insurrection against Western cultural, economic, and political domination. In the first place, 'the struggle against imperialism in Africa was a struggle for African independence and to that extent for an African Renaissance' (Nabudere, 2001: 15). In that way, the poetic but also vigorous call for the African Renaissance was a call by a philosopher of liberation who had been awakened to the reality that the end of juridical apartheid and colonialism in Africa did not necessarily entail the end of coloniality, hence the need to return to the struggle, even if it was an unarmed struggle. Percy More (2002: 61) notes that 'the concept of the renaissance has since brought into sharp focus the post-apartheid notion of the return'. Regardless of whether the idea of return can be seen to be retrogressive and oppressive, it is in this case understood as progressive in the sense that Aimé Césaire pronounced *Return to the Native Land*, and Amílcar Cabral made bold the call for a *Return to the Source*. It is in that way of the return to the centrality of Africa and Africans in the world that the idea of the African Renaissance shares at least some similarity with the 'Afrocentric Idea' that is proposed by Molefi Kete Asante (1998), and which advances as its central idea African power, relevance, genius, and pride.

Another way of understanding the idea of the African Renaissance, especially as articulated by Mbeki, has been that it was a political way of returning South Africa to Africa and to the world after many years of isolation. Peter Vale (1998: 272) observes that the idea of the African Renaissance was rooted in 'South African diplomacy' and the politics of return to the world comity of nations. The African Renaissance had to do with 'South Africa's destiny' in the world and 'the notion that their presence should feature in African affairs seems to have been a constant thread in the rhetoric of successive South African leaders' (Vale, 1998: 274). It is even thinkable that after Mandela's global fame and aura, his successor had to respond to the political and intellectual pressure to engage with South Africa, Africa, and the world in the grand terms of a Renaissance. After all, the ANC had to recover its place and name in the world as the *African* National Congress. If the idea of the African Renaissance had to do with South Africa leading the continent in search for global relevance, then it might be true that the idea is an off-shoot of the Pan-African ideal of a united continent that would become a meaningful global player.

The Genealogies and Goals of the African Renaissance

It is important to emphasise that the idea of the African Renaissance was not in any measure an invention of Mbeki who, in his own words, only saw himself as an heir of a long legacy of African intellectuals and political leaders. Addressing the gathering of the Second Southern African International Dialogue in Namibia in 1998, Mbeki poetically claimed his intellectual heritage from earlier African leaders, intellectuals, and Pan-African activists:

> Let me say something about myself and about some other people in this hall who belong to my generation. I am a product of the teachings and example of Abdul Gamal Nasser of Egypt, of Ben Belta of Algeria, of Habib Bourgiba of Tunisia, Mohamed V of Morocco, of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, of Medico Keita of Mali, of Patrice Lumumba of Congo, of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo of Zimbabwe, of Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique, of Agostinho Neto of Angola, of Sam Nujoma of Namibia, of Seretse Khama and Ketumile Masire of Botswana, of Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. (1998: 289)

Mbeki's pronunciations about his and his generation of African leaders, as produced by former African heads of states, some of them intellectuals and others soldiers, was a Pan-African performance that accompanied his articulations of the African Renaissance. Mbeki, in this and other speeches, was keen to project the Pan-African and decolonial roots of the African Renaissance. The speech was titled 'Stop the Laughter' (Mbeki, 1998: 289) and its gesture was that African leaders should stop the corruption, despotism, ignorance, greed, and violence that made Africa's former colonisers in Europe laugh at the continent and its people. Thus, the African Renaissance was not only a movement against Western imperialism in Africa but also against the rot in African post-colonial leadership that delayed the envisaged renewal of Africa. The paradox in Mbeki's celebration of earlier African leaders was the mention of genocidal tyrants such as Mugabe, who had become native colonialists of their own countries in their use of colonial modes of rule that combined force and fraud. It is another

> " Mbeki's pronunciations about his and his generation of African leaders, as produced by former African heads of states, some of them intellectuals and others soldiers, was a Pan-African performance that accompanied his articulations of the African Renaissance. Mbeki, in this and other speeches, was keen to project the Pan-African and decolonial roots of the African Renaissance. "

tragedy of the African Renaissance that it had to claim its roots from some earlier African leaders who had betrayed the cause of liberation with despotism, one-party state experiments, and a variety of claims to life presidencies. It is for that reason that Kwesi Prah (1999: 37) cautioned that the African Renaissance should not fall to the temptation of 'warlordism' and other inimical forms of African leadership.

The point that is not to be missed is that, in articulating the African Renaissance, Mbeki was standing on the broad shoulders of Pan-African leaders, intellectuals, and some Africanist historians of the previous decades. From South Africa, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme (1906) wrote of 'The Regeneration of Africa' after years of colonial subjugation. Later, from Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe (1937) wrote of 'Renascent Africa' to pronounce a vision of an African continent that was bound to recover from colonial wounds and to claim its place amongst world civilisations. The Senegalese intellectual Cheikh Anta Diop (1966) produced a collection of essays ruminating on the African Renaissance – *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in Culture and Development, 1946–1960* – that claimed that Africa was the cradle of world civilisation. The Africanist historian Basil Davidson celebrated the rise of African nationalism in his book *The African Awakening* (1955). This was followed by Roger Woddis, who celebrated African trade unionism against colonialism in *Africa: The Lion Awakes* (1961). These works highlight the idea of the African Renaissance as part of the Pan-African and decolonial politics of a return to the continent.

The idea of the African Renaissance, in short, had a long history before Mbeki. This history compels us to ask what happened to the earlier calls for the African Renaissance and what might be the future of Mbeki's latest call. The suspicions that the idea of the African Renaissance might be Pan-Africanism dressed in new words and charged with new agendas is compelling. While Pan-Africanism was generated as a philosophy of African unity against colonial divisions of the African continent, the African Renaissance is trained against the coloniality that endures after the dethronement of juridical colonialism in Africa.

Sisonke Msimang poses the question: 'African Renaissance: Where Are the Women?' (2011: 67). Msimang argues that if women and their oppression are not centred in the African Renaissance, then the liberatory potential of the idea is limited and compromised. The history of Pan-Africanism and its leaders has been associated with the exclusion of women. Msimang contends that isolating the African Renaissance to the elite circles of the South African polity, academy, and corporate sector effectively limits its decolonial stamina and reduces it to a political, intellectual, and corporate slogan. As a decolonial South African feminist, Msimang enters the African Renaissance debate with a scathing but constructive critique. Her ideas rhyme with Dani Nabudere (2001), who suggests that African intellectuals, political leaders, and activists should come forward and transform the African Renaissance from an idea to a continental policy and cultural agenda. The African Renaissance, in other words, is too important an idea to be left to a few politicians, scholars, and elites.

As a committed Black South African feminist, Msimang exercised political and intellectual activism in carefully reading Mbeki's speeches, critiquing them, and eventually gleaning what the goals of the African Renaissance were. Msimang (2000) notes how Mbeki's emphasis on 'the importance of democracy and multi-party rule taking hold throughout Africa' and 'the need to counter negative outside perceptions of Africa' were some of the prominent goals of the African Renaissance. The need for economic reforms, including 'the development of regional economic blocks' and ending corruption (Msimang, 2000: 72) are the other goals. These goals would only be achieved if Africans observed the importance of peace and stability on the continent and stopped the trend of

civil wars and military coups, for instance. In Mbeki's view, African leaders and Africans at large should work on themselves and modernise their political and economic cultures in order to be equal to the grand task of African awakening. This awakening is aimed at eventually empowering Africa to participate as an equal amongst other continents in world affairs. The business of world affairs requires an Africa that has rid itself of tyranny, corruption, political violence, and disunity. Mbeki optimistically envisioned Africa as a formidable player in the 'New World Order' amongst other continents. As President of South Africa, delivering a State of the Nation Address on 25 June 1999, Mbeki announced the drive towards Africa's contribution to the New World Order:

> Gradually, Africa will work her way towards the resumption of her rightful place among the continents of our globe. Where necessary, we will call on the services of such outstanding African statespersons as former Presidents Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Sir Ketumile Masire and Nelson Mandela to assist in the promotion of this agenda. As part of the world community of nations, we will make our due contribution to the construction of a new world order that will be responsive to the needs of especially the poor of the world. (Mbeki, 1999: 11)

Mbeki interestingly talks of 'a resumption' of Africa's 'rightful place among the continents of our globe' which betrays his belief in a great Africa of the past that was once influential in world civilisation. The African of the African Renaissance, therefore, will be an African who is concerned as much with the glories of the past as with the goals of the future. This is an African who is concerned both with Africa's ancestors *and* with its descendants. Mbeki admits that the African Renaissance will be 'gradual' and will benefit from the wisdom of past leaders. A decolonised and renascent Africa would be one that is rooted in itself as a continent, united and prosperous, and ready to be relevant and competitive globally. Mbeki's is the tragic optimism of a philosopher of liberation who was clear about the dystopia surrounding Africa, but was nonetheless confident that with intellectual and political will, the continent could navigate itself to becoming a formidable and equal player in world affairs.

Conclusion

Thabo Mbeki's ideas of the African Renaissance are characterised by the tragic optimism of a philosopher of liberation who is clear about the dystopia of the history of colonialism, but who nonetheless retains a stubborn hope for a brighter future. The declaration 'I am an African' is at once a defence of African humanity and identity *and* a threat of the return of the continent to a significant place in global affairs. The African Renaissance philosopher of liberation forgives, but does not forget, colonial wounds and injustices. The philosopher is impatient about the tyrannies, corruption, ignorance, and political violence on the continent. The African has to work on African weaknesses in order to be equal to the decolonial task of re-inventing the continent and recovering it from dystopia in order to restore it to utopia. The beauty of poetry and philosophy are mobilised in order to resist African dehumanisation and dispossession and to instead strive for the economic and political empowerment of the people and their continent. The dream of restoring Africans to full belonging in the global human family and the restoration of the continent to prominence belongs to the messianism of the philosophy of liberation. This philosophy is willing to save the victims and the victimisers in order to achieve a fantasy of a paradisal world that might be more real in poetry and philosophy than in the present New World Disorder, where the geopolitical and economic inequalities of the past are more pronounced than ever.

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African Socialism, the Economy of Affection,
and a Concern for Foreign Affairs:

Julius Nyerere's Enduring Definition of the Global South

By Prolific S. Mataruse
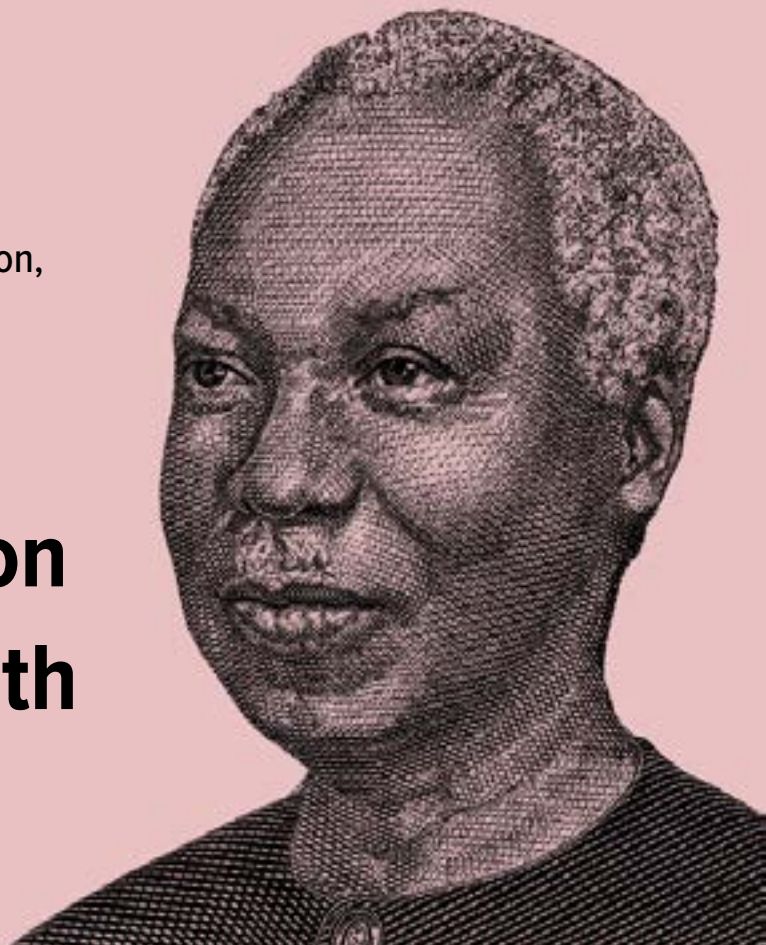
Abstract

Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, is known as the 'Mwalimu' (the Great Teacher) for his roles and expansive thinking about the liberation of Africa. While he belongs to an older generation of politicians, it is opportune to reflect on his philosophical contributions at a time of extreme poverty and inequality in developing countries, and as Africa largely takes a backseat on the Russia-Ukraine war. Nyerere's contributions tend to be forgotten, due to little contemporary academic work on his thoughts, criticism of his Ujamaa socialist policies, and 'Nyererephilia' (love/sentimentalism for Nyerere). This Nyererephilia remarkably persists even 61 years into Tanzanian independence. This paper uses excerpts from the vast archive of Nyerere's speeches to reflect on how he subversively defined the Global South to implement African socialism, an economy based on interconnectedness and compassion, and a belief that Africa has to be concerned with foreign affairs. In his time, he was seized with grand questions like self-reliance, educational reform, international debt and global inequality, nuclear weapons, non-alignment, African independence, and African unity. A contemporary vision for confronting contemporary questions could lean on his conception of the Global South. In Nyerere's view, the Global South was not the underdeveloped world but was the 'Third World', which meant the third vision/way/subjectivity. This 'way' can only be practiced through unity, otherwise the small states of the Global South are weak states that cannot participate as equals in the global system.

Introduction

Many have a simplistic view of the Third World or the Global South, but not Nyerere. He profoundly said: 'I have claimed the third world does exist and has a meaning which can be used for the betterment of the masses of the poor people' (1982: 440). The meaning was embedded in a deeply philosophical and practical rationale highlighted in this paper. I write this paper in order to bring out the role of Tanzania and Nyerere in conceptualising and fighting for the liberation of southern Africa and the Third World, and in order to push us to think about how we can perpetuate our legacies as Africa. This paper carefully reads Nyerere's speeches and writings as a methodology in order to bring out his positive view of the terms 'Third World' and 'Global South'. It is a story that shows the unselfishness of a country and its leadership to pursue the liberation of other countries at a great cost to its economy and a physical danger to its society. When one examines their sacrifices, one may ask: how can they be recognised, those who gave it their all, who put on hold several agendas as their assistance to others took a toll on them? One way of giving back is retelling and relearning from their love in order to understand their active efforts to end their own poverty and that of others.

African Socialism is not Marxism

What ideas of freedom and economic development existed in Africa before Marxism and capitalism – the two paths that apparently lay open for newly-independent states in Africa? Maintaining the colonial state structure under Black leadership would mean reproducing colonial structures of group, class, and race alienation. In other words, are Africans capable of developing their own political thought or ideas about freedom outside of these two paths? In the face of colonialism's oppression, many felt that the vision of a future society could only be a collective effort of popular struggle. Socialism came closest to this ideal. However, the conditions in Africa would not allow for socialism along the same lines as elsewhere. Tanzania chose to go with a definition of socialism rooted in African culture. Nyerere called this 'African socialism'. This kind of response was important since European 'colonization of Africa was justified in terms of the cultural inferiority of the Africans or the non-existence of African culture' (Mutiso and Rohio, 1987).

This resulted in the colonised reversing the argument, pointing out that they had a culture, and should be accepted as human and cultural persons, as defined in African humanism.

Re-organising the racially determined social stratifications was important to resolve racial strife, otherwise 'as long as one community has a monopoly of political power and uses that power not only to prevent the other communities from having any share in political power, but also to keep those other communities in a state of social and economic inferiority, any talk of social and economic advancement of the other communities as a solution to racial conflict is hypocritical and stupid' (Nyerere, 1969b: 23–9).

African socialism was the core idea put forward: a philosophy which advocated for the caring of fellow humanity, as was the practice in traditional African communal life, rather than another Marxist recipe. Nyerere (1969a: 162–71) stated that:

> In a socialist state it is the attitude of mind, and not the rigid adherence to a standard political pattern, which is needed to ensure that the people care for each other's welfare... In the individual, as in society, it is an attitude of mind which distinguishes the socialist from the non-socialist. It has nothing to do with the possession or non-possession of wealth... the man who uses wealth for the purpose of dominating any of his fellows is a capitalist... We must... regain our former attitude of mind – our traditional African socialism and apply it to the new societies we are building today...

African socialism as defined as such differed from that in the West or East. For Nyerere (1969a: 162–71):

> 'Ujamaa', then, or 'familyhood', describes our socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man. We in Africa have no more need to be converted to socialism than

we have of being 'taught' democracy. Both are rooted in our own past – in the traditional society which produced us. Modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage the recognition of 'society' as an extension of the basic family unit.

The extension of African socialism was elastic enough to cover all oppressed persons:

> But it can no longer confine the idea of the social family within the limits of the tribe, nor, indeed, of the nation. For no true African socialist can look at a line drawn on a map and say 'the people on this side of that line are my brothers, but those who happen to live on the other side of it can have no claim on me'; every individual on this continent is his brother. It was in the struggle to break the grip of colonialism that we learnt the need for unity. We came to recognize that the same socialist attitude of mind which, in the tribal days, gave to every individual the security that comes of belonging to a widely extended family, must be preserved within the still wider society of the nation. But we should not stop there. Our recognition of the family to which we all belong must be extended yet further – beyond the tribe, the community, the nation, or even the continent – to embrace the whole society of mankind. (Nyerere, 1969a: 162–71).

> " After attaining independence in 1961, Tanzania remained a poor country with many exploited peasants and workers. This prompted Nyerere and others in 1967 to radically shift to African socialism through the 5 February 1967 Arusha Declaration. The Caribbean philosopher C. L. R James would describe socialism and self-reliance, the core ideas of the Arusha Declaration, as the highest stage of African resistance "

African socialism was therefore the social innovation, political thought, and action that sought to change through collectivisation and self-reliance, without using Marxist blueprints, the material conditions of a people who had been exploited and colonised for so long. After attaining independence in 1961, Tanzania remained a poor country with many exploited peasants and workers. This prompted Nyerere and others in 1967 to radically shift to African socialism through the 5 February 1967 Arusha Declaration. The Caribbean philosopher C. L. R James would describe socialism and self-reliance, the core ideas of the Arusha Declaration, as the highest stage of African resistance (Shivji, 2009). This built on and subverted Nkrumah's (1965) declaration of neo-colonialism as the last stage of imperialism, and Lenin's (1916) contention that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. African socialism urged a different approach to money, wealth accumulation, and distribution. Nyerere (1962: 204–208) argued that wealthy individuals should not be separated from the purpose of banishing poverty otherwise 'there develops a ruthless competition between individuals; each person tries to get more wealth, simply so that he will have more power, and more prestige, than his fellows. Wealth becomes an instrument of domination, a means of humiliating other people. The very basis of socialism is the rejection of this use of wealth. And within socialist countries personal wealth is not, and should not be, a symbol of power or prestige; it is used to banish poverty.' The Arusha Declaration is a document that announces Tanzania's adoption of socialism and self-reliance by attacking the idea that a moneyed outsider will solve development and political problems. It calls on people to value hard work, to learn from peasants, and to prioritise rural development. Urbanisation was seen as disruptive of the precolonial lifestyle. The aim, rather, was to try to recreate the precolonial. A major way of doing this was to move people out of the city through a process called 'villagization', under which about 2,500 collective settlements were created and 10 million people forced to move. This resulted in displacements, which led to a lot of criticism that eventually culminated in the end of villagization in 1985 when Nyerere resigned (Komba, 1995).

What Nyerere identified as the basis of his political thought, African socialism or Ujamaa 'familyhood', forms the basis of what Hyden called the economy of affection. Hyden (1983: 2) identified an economy

of affection, a term he used to describe a 'network of support, communications and interaction among structurally defined groups connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities, for example, religion. It links together in a systematic fashion a variety of discrete economic and social units which in other regards may be autonomous.' This network serves to ensure human survival, social maintenance, and development. These networks of interdependence and communal care had been supposedly captured by capitalism. Peasant economies in southern Africa, including in Tanzania, had not yet been captured and thus remained un-proletarianized. This gave the peasants the option to benefit from both the market system and the abundant land in the peasant system. Waters (1992: 166) notes that the 'peasant mode of subsistence is strong and likely to persist parallel to the capitalist/monetised economy as long as arable land is available at little cost. This is why relations between kin, family, and tribal networks are more important for Hyden than descriptions of emerging class and forms of industrialised production.' The uncaptured peasants were seen as possessing the transformative character that would push Africa forward.

A related key area of African socialism that Nyerere saw as a critical matter was educational reform. He believed that educational transformation was central in the post-colonial reconstruction (Nyerere, 1976). Education had to deliver liberating skills based on the understanding that people make themselves and cannot be liberated by another. Education was thus key in the expansion of consciousness over self, environment, and society. It was key to fighting disease, ignorance, and dependency. Nyerere's educational reform vision was to create a scholar practitioner with the right attitude to support a policy for education and self-reliance. Education was tied to social action. In this regard, 'education has to increase man's physical and mental freedom' (Nyerere, 1976). In Nyerere's view, 'education is not a way of escaping poverty. It is a way of fighting it' (Nyerere, 1976). The colonial education was linked to a slave mentality since colonisation was seen as an attack on the mind, such that personal and physical aspects of development cannot be separated. The entire education system had to be re-organised. The education system was designed to move away from attitudes that promote inequality and subservience. Nyerere strongly condemned what he called the 'disease of

acquisitive society' from Tawney (1918), the tendency to wealth accumulation, which was promoted by western education. The colonial education system was modelled after the British system but 'with even heavier emphasis on subservient attitudes and on white-collar skills. Inevitably, too, it was based on the assumptions of a colonialist and capitalist society. It emphasized the individualistic instincts of mankind, instead of his cooperative instincts' (Nyerere, 1967: 267–90). The intention was 'to create a socialist society which is based on three principles: equality and respect for human dignity; sharing of the resources which are produced by our efforts; work by everyone and exploitation by none' (Nyerere, 1967: 267–90). Nyerere argued that schools and colleges should 'become communities – and communities which practice the precept of self-reliance. The teachers, workers, and pupils must be the members of a social unit in the same way as parents, relatives, and children are a family social unit' (Nyerere, 1967: 267–90). He saw no 'reason why students at such institutions [university/post-secondary level] should not be required as part of their degree or professional training, to spend at least part of their vacations contributing to the society in a manner related to their studies' (Nyerere, 1967: 267–90). These are very important ideas in educational theory or what Freire (2020) called 'the pedagogy of the oppressed'. These ideas remain relevant in explaining Africa's quest to address skills and capacity deficits.

Tanzania's efforts to dismantle colonial and neo-colonial social and economic structures and to reconstruct new ones along African lines under Julius Nyerere present important lessons for Africa. It can be noted that 'the pursuit of socialism became a mixture of policy thrusts, institutional change, attempts to gain control over resources, trial and error corrections of a vast number of projects, and efforts to muddle through the confusion of concrete situations' (Resnick, 1981: 137). Extraordinary achievements in popular participation after the 1967 Arusha Declaration clashed with emergent class interests, resulting in class conflicts that were not fully defined or dealt with. Entrepreneurs emerged, gained wealth, and acquired power – while also entrenching workers' and peasants' poverty. The contradictions in the Kujitegemea ('let us do it by ourselves') reveal the difficulties of changing a social and economic structure. Yet amidst these challenges, Tanzania adopted a towering independent

approach to Africa and Third World issues. The power of African socialism and the economy of affection became evident when Nyerere died and people cried in Tanzania. He had stepped down from presidential office in 1985 and died in 1999. Citizens openly cried in the streets because they characterised his rulership with compassion, assisting the poor, and strong values of dignity, self-reliance, unity, and freedom.

Even after abandoning African socialism, the limits of this system became evident to Nyerere from his analysis of the skewed nature of international trade and economics. Just as Mkandawire (2003) in proposing a developmental state in Africa notes the effects of the Bretton Woods Institutions' prescriptions in producing negative economic indicators after colonisation, Nyerere (1999) in an interview with Ikaweba Bunting notes: 'In 1988 Tanzania's per-capita income was $280. Now, in 1998, it is $140. So, I asked the World Bank people what went wrong. Because for the last ten years Tanzania has been signing on the dotted line and doing everything the IMF and the World Bank wanted'. Nyerere (1962: 204–208) had warned that 'as we are emerging successfully from the first 'Scramble for Africa' so we are entering a new phase... but its purpose will be the same – to get control of our continent' through exploiting differences between formerly colonised groups and the perpetuation of an unequal global order. In his view, 'Karl Marx's doctrine that there is an inevitable clash between the rich and the poor is just as applicable internationally as it is within nation states' (Nyerere, 1962: 204–208). The poverty of African nations was maintained by the principle of the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Nyerere (1972) argued that 'wealth produces wealth, and poverty, poverty... the poverty of the poor is a function of the rich. Each time he buys a loaf of bread a starving man contributes to the wealth of a baker who already lives in luxury'. Being producers of primary commodities and having little industrialisation meant that 'on the world market we sell cheap and buy dear... The result is that the prices of our imports go up continually and our prices remain the same or even go down' (Nyerere, 1972). Breaking from poverty could not be achieved through anything else other than altering the structure of international trade. This could not be done through more aid since 'charity, however well meaning, is no way out of the present appalling poverty in the world. The poverty of the underdeveloped world is as much a function of the

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Unity as the Solution

Nyerere proposed unity amongst poor states as a solution against powerful countries. He would differ with Kwame Nkrumah on how to achieve this unity: 'I tried to get East Africa to unite before independence. When we failed in this, I was wary about Kwame's continental approach. We corresponded profusely on this. Kwame said my idea of 'regionalisation' was only balkanisation on a larger scale' (Nyerere, 1999). Shivji (2009) believes Nyerere came to Pan-Africanism through nationalism. Nkrumah started from Pan-Africanism under the influence of the early Pan-Africanist conferences and individuals like George Padmore and W. E. B. Dubois. Nyerere linked African socialism to nationalism. The nationalist impulse was interpreted by Nyerere (1999) as supposedly different in Africa: 'the role of African nationalism is different – or should be different – from the nationalism of the past. We must use the African national states as an instrument for the reunification of Africa, and not allow our enemies to use them as tools for dividing Africa. African nationalism is meaningless, is anachronistic, and is dangerous, if it is not at the same time Pan-Africanism' (Nyerere, 1999). Extending and agreeing with this explanation, Shivji (2009) cautions

that Pan-Africanism is older than nationalism. Given the adverse international economic structures, African unification was seen by Nyerere as a goal to be worked towards to achieve full self-determination and to overcome poverty. Unity was a key aspect of both domestic policy and foreign policy, for it was argued that '[w]ithout unity there is no future for Africa' and '[u]nity will not make us rich but it will make it difficult for Africa to be disregarded' (Nyerere, 1997). Nyerere contended that 'it is not enough to be technically free, to have a Parliament and a President and Ministers. It is also necessary to have real power to stand on your own feet and follow your own interests. It is necessary to have an economy which is sufficiently balanced, stable and large to promote and sustain its own growth, and to withstand shock waves from other parts of the world. In other words, Africa wishes to have the political strength to prevent other powers using her for their own ends, and it wishes to have the economic strength to justify and support a modern economy' (Nyerere, 1965).

Shivji (2009) sums up Nyerere's ideas of African unity as being defined by three aspects: identity, the non-viability of small states, and sovereignty. The African identity connects Africa over any other identity; small African states cannot be viable (economically, politically, and socially); and sovereignty (the ability to make decisions) could not be practiced by tiny states on a global platform of powerful countries. Nyerere has been criticised for looking at unity through the agency of the state and not the people, specifically through a one-party state (Neocosmos, 2017). Shivji (2009) also points out that this dissonance in Nyerere's thought is largely because he was a philosopher king, both a man of principle and a man of practice. For example, Mamdani (2013) thinks forced villagization was necessary, while Neocosmos (2017: 292) notes that 'popular narratives were not given a chance to develop possibilities for a different politics; national subjectivities that exceeded the representation of the nation enunciated by TANU were simply silenced'. The contradiction was that individual freedom and reconstructing the colonial state had to be achieved through the state. In 1964, Nyerere would declare at the OAU that colonial borders were inviolable, while he would go on to spend the rest of his life arguing for the destruction of colonial borders. These contradictions were perhaps necessary in maintaining a consistent and practical principle of African unity and freedom.

Recognising his critics, Nyerere said: 'I am pragmatic because I lead a government. You cannot lead a government as a bishop or as a professor. When you lead a government, you have to achieve results, you have to do things' (Nyerere, 1979: 21–22). Ujamaa (familyhood) and Umoja (freedom) were the principal twin policies of Nyerere's Tanzania. The effect of their implementation was not always positive.

Rooted in his unique conceptualisation of African socialism, Nyerere saw unity – emanating from the principle of collective responsibility – as an important part of African liberation, defence, and imperative for participating in the international system. He thought 'the requirements of African Unity – the purposes of it – necessitate the establishment of a new international entity to replace the present small international entities which now exist in our continent. Until we have achieved that we shall not be free from fear of the rest of the world. A continent-wide state, single and individual, must be established, which cannot be broken up again because it is one unit and not a collection of units' (Nyerere, 1965). Disunity meant that each African state is so 'weak in isolation with relation to the outside world that we compete with each other, without unity economic growth would be delayed. Economic unity should lead to political unity' (Nyerere, 1965). If the threat to Africa were external, he was clear: 'in relation to the outside world there must be just one authority in Africa' (Nyerere, 1965). This one authority could be called various names: All-African Government, United Nations of Africa, the United States of Africa, or another name.

It was Nyerere's (1968) argument that 'no nation has the right to make decisions for another nation; no people for another'. From understanding Nyerere's conception of African socialism, it was apparent that a mission beyond the borders was inevitable (Msabaha, 1995). Africa's need to involve itself in international affairs emanated from both the expansive nature of its socialism and its historical circumstances, such that the independence of Tanzania was intricately bound with the independence of Africa. Nyerere went on to demonstrate and live the international or communal dimension of African socialism on the international stage. He insisted that Africa should have a say in grand questions of nuclear weapons, climate change, and international trade because the world was interconnected. Nyerere's African socialism enabled

him to understand the meaning of nuclear weapons in an interconnected world and he urged the Global South to take interest in this issue (Nyerere et al., 1976). He wrote a letter to the Commonwealth challenging South Africa's membership and, as a result, apartheid South Africa decided to leave the Commonwealth. He went on to support freedom fighters in South Africa for 30 years from 1963 until 1994 when South Africa obtained its freedom. He did the same for Namibia from 1968 to their freedom in 1990 (Saul, 2002). He was a leading advocate for the formation in 1963 of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the OAU Liberation Committee. When Ian Smith of Southern Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence from the U.K. in 1965, Nyerere through the OAU called all member states to break ties with Southern Rhodesia. He argued that the honour of Africa was at stake and that Africa had a responsibility to uphold the OAU resolution, if not as a continental body then as individual states (Nyerere, 1965). He became a strong critic of both UDI and Britain (Martin and Johnson, 1981). In the Lusaka Manifesto of 1968, he elaborated on the reasons for armed struggle. He was the First Chair of the Front-Line States in 1976 and organised the 1976 Rhodesia Conference between the warring sides in Southern Rhodesia as part of talks to majority rule (Martin and Johnson, 1981). He supported several militant groups in Africa like the ANC from South Africa, MPLA from Angola, Frelimo from Mozambique, and ZANU/ZAPU from Zimbabwe. He also supported academics like the Guyanese scholar Walter Rodney who found a safe haven from which he wrote the famous book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) (Bly, 1985). In 1978 and 1979, in an economically devastating war for Tanzania, Nyerere invaded Uganda and removed Idi Amin who was destabilising East Africa. Such decisions were not easy ones. He had also unpopularly indicated his intentions to militarily intervene in Rhodesia (Coggins, 2014; Swoyer et al., 2011). Nyerere was also broker in several crises, such as in Rwanda and Burundi. As more states joined the UN, he was at the forefront in pushing for the reform of the UN and organising the African position on UN reform which has come to be known as the Ezulwini Consensus (Abdulai, 2010).

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1981). He was critical at the 1968 Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned countries. NAM was the middle way, the peaceful third way which also saw colonialism as an affront to its founding ethos. At the 1986 NAM Conference in Harare, the South Commission was established. This has eventually become the South Centre in Geneva and focuses on challenging global inequality and debt (Pratt, 1999). Over 120 states (containing half of the world's population) have become part of NAM (Novaković, 2021). NAM's relevance has been questioned on the basis that it promotes an outdated agenda of non-alignment in an age without alliances (Keethaponcalan, 2016). One indicator is the decreasing head of state attendance at NAM meetings. Unfortunately, as the impacts of the 2022 Russia–Ukraine war have shown, such an approach is limited and reflects a lack of concern for international affairs and understanding of the global political economy (Lopes, 2022). The international economic structures that maintain African poverty still persist. Now more than ever, continued concerted solidarity is important. As Cold War tensions resurface and justifications for grand strategic military deployments seem necessary, the unity of nations in the Global South could help not only fight poverty, but also serve as a defence against external security threats. Small African states are arguably not even full states, but rather powerless 'statelets' in the face of powerful countries and neoliberalism. Africa has been warned of the possibility of being colonised again if it does not unite (Lumumba, 2021; Mheta, 2019). Unity based

on African socialism presents a possible solution to poverty and insecurity in the Global South.

Conclusion

Julius Nyerere's formative influence in African socialism, foreign policy, unity, and ideation in the Global South is important. His other nickname was 'Baba wa Taifa' ('father of the nation') in recognition of his role in birthing the independence of Tanzania. This name could also signify his concern for foreign affairs as a logical outgrowth of a certain approach to interpreting human freedom, national independence, and human development (Nyerere, 1997; 1969). His commitment to fighting disease, ignorance, and poverty serves as an example in understanding and approaching common issues plaguing the Global South. He defined the Third World and Global South as positive concepts. The Global South was more than a geographical location or the exploited. It had a meaning 'which can be used for the betterment of the masses of the poor people' (Nyerere, 1982: 440). Instead of a pejorative and derogatory understanding of the 'Third World', he defined the First World and Second World as the ways of the West and the East, in no particular order of importance. The Third World was, for him, another way of seeing things and he urged Third World countries to understand that they did not only have to look at the other two ways (Nyerere, 1982). This perspective had its basis in an ethical foundation: 'that while many of Nyerere's policy initiatives failed, they rested on an ethical foundation and on an understanding of the challenges which Tanzania faced, which were vastly more insightful than anything offered by his critics. An increasing number of students in African development are belatedly coming to recognize this truth. Perhaps, in contrast to them, ordinary Tanzanians have always recognized it' (Pratt, 2002: 40).

Tanzania will forever hold a cherished place in the history of Africa in general and in the history of southern Africa in particular. Tanzania was selfless in providing military bases and training camps to launch the African liberation struggle and the Frontline States. The great African stories of young people who trekked their way to various camps in Tanzania make up so many heroic tales woven into the fabric of African national construction. These include Namibians in the South West Africa People's

Organisation (SWAPO), South Africa's African National Congress paramilitary wing uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) cadres, and Zimbabwean liberation fighters – all of whom have fond memories of Kwango and Morogoro military training camps in Tanzania (Msabaha, 1995). But perhaps the most difficult thing that Tanzania did, and also the most important for us as academics, was to provide thought leadership. This is the significance of the Mwalimu – the Great Teacher – not only as Nyerere but also as the able artisan, statesman, and intellectual. The concept of African socialism is important to African knowledge and continues to be relevant as a decolonial epistemology. It is relevant as we seek new ways of ending poverty and international insecurity. It is also relevant to new modes of learning and teaching in Africa and the Global South.

From Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, ideas of Pan-Africanism reverberating from Ghana under Nkrumah found capable interpreters and interlocutors in the people of Tanzania. They did not take their independence lightly, as it came much earlier than the rest of Africa. They approached their independence with intellectual zeal, deciding to tackle the broad questions of the day even beyond their borders. They resisted the temptation of simply mimicking Marxism or other -isms, but instead went deeper to innovate from African culture and ways of life and to re-member the psyche of a dismembered people (to use Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's 2009 term). They began to theorise the liberation of Africa and the Global South in a very practical sense.

Amidst this liberation diplomacy, great social innovations in development, democracy, and politics were conducted. We look at Tanzania's willingness to tear down the ruinous and oppressive past with a keen eye. We look at Tanzania to learn what it is to innovate and not fear innovation. We look to Tanzanian independence to see what to do with freedom and independence. This paper has shown that while the temptation may be to celebrate Nyerere only, the best way is to contextualise him within a community tradition and leadership role. His true legacy lies in demonstrating the interconnectivity of people and nations beyond narrow definitions of colonial borders and economic depravity. Nyerere was extraordinary in his capacity to combine action with deliberation. This enabled him to explain, interpret, and predict patterns of politics and economics working for and

against the Global South. Against great odds facing the Global South, Nyerere (2019) said: 'My warning to my people is directed at both ends. Never be complacent. Can't you do better. Couldn't you do better. But don't be so self-critical that you despair. Despair is the unforgivable sin. There is still a long way to go but we have come far'.

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A LITERARY TURN IN AFRICAN STUDIES:

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THREE GENERATIONS OF AFRICAN WRITERS TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF DECOLONIALITY IN AFRICAN STUDIES

By Kelvin Acheampong

Abstract

The literary turn in African Studies is conceptualized here not as entailing the shift to textual/ discourse analysis pioneered by Edward Said, but as how African literary figures have contributed to the advancement of decolonization/ decoloniality in African Studies. Its point of departure is the "decolonial turn", which refers to the varied patterns of decolonial thought emerging from different geographic and epistemic sites. Although there are sometimes divergences among these patterns of thought, the salient point of convergence is their acknowledgement of coloniality as a problem haunting the world today, and of the task of decolonization/ decoloniality as unfinished.

There is, however, a tendency among certain scholars to trace the genealogy of decolonial thinking, ignoring the various contributions to decolonial thinking from other sites. This article attempts to fill this crucial gap by accounting, specifically, for an African literary genealogy of decolonial thinking through the lens of the concept of "generations." The ideas of generations and turns in literary studies in particular, and African Studies in general, are complicated by the overlapping ideological dispositions of the writers.

Key Terms: Africa, (Anglophone) African literature, decolonial turn/ thought, generations, literary turn

Introduction

The 21st century is justifiably the age of insurgent and resurgent decolonization (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020b). Black people are reminding us of a fact which should have been too obvious: that their lives matter! In Cape Town and Oxford, young activists mobilised for the dismantling of colonial iconography (i.e., the statue of Cecil Rhodes). Globally, those referred to by Fanon (1963) as "the wretched of the earth" are forming epistemic alliances in a shared "insurgent and resurgent spirit of decolonization/ decoloniality" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020a, p. 23).

The battle also rages fiercely in the academic arena. The "westernized university" is charged with a twofold invidious crime, namely, its complicity in the superiorizing of Eurocentric knowledges, on the one hand; and the inferiorizing of non-Eurocentric ones, on the other hand (Cupples, 2019; Grosfoguel, 2013). University curricula have come under keen decolonial scrutiny, as evinced, for example, in the "Why is my Curriculum White?" campaigns in Cambridge and Leeds University. The spotlight has been put on research methodologies as gatekeepers who are anything but objective, innocent and neutral (Smith, 2021). That knowledges are always situated; and that no single knowledge can offer "universal truths about the world" is no longer a myth (Mpofu, 2014, p. 17). Appeals to "a-perspectiveness", objectivity, or "zero-point hubris" (Castro-Gomez, 2021) are now seen as attempts at concealing one's situatedness, and therefore, an indulgence in "gladiatory scholarship" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021b). These epiphanies fuel the demands to decolonize knowledge, power, being, gender; to unmask—as Walter Mignolo (2011) puts it—the "darker side of modernity"; and, ultimately, to bring the unfinished business of decolonization to completion.

This resurgence of decolonial struggles in the 21st century is in part due to the proliferation of Latin American scholarship on (de)coloniality/ modernity, which takes as point of departure the fact that colonial systems were not necessarily dismantled merely with the attainment of political independence by formerly colonized countries. As such, scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Ramón Grosfoguel and Anibal Quijano elect to use "coloniality" rather than "colonialism" to describe the continuation of empire well beyond the retreat of physical empires. This has engendered an erroneous idea among certain scholars that (de)coloniality is an originally Latin American idea.

In this article, I respond to this misconception by posing the question, "What is the contribution of African literature to decolonial thinking?" This question is necessitated not only because of the tendency among scholars to side-line the immense wealth of contributions to decolonial thinking from African scholars, but also because even in African Studies, the contribution of African literature to decolonization is hardly emphasized, although it was researchers in literature who were among the foremost to critique the postcolonial condition in Africa (Zeleza, 1997).

In the following parts of the article, I examine what Maldonado-Torres (2011) calls the "decolonial turn", emphasizing its heterogeneity and emergence in various geographical and epistemic sites (beyond Latin America), before progressing to discuss the literary turn, which I conceptualize as the contribution of African writers to decolonization/ decoloniality as read through the lens of three generations of African creative writers. In the conclusion of the article, I make a case for why African literature (and its contribution to African Studies) ought to be taken more seriously than is usually done, while also acknowledging that the various decolonial turns existing in various sites does not weaken the liberatory thrust of the decolonial turn.

The Decolonial Turn

According to Maldonado-Torres, the decolonial turn refers to "massive theoretical and epistemological breakthroughs in the works of Third World figures," which serve as a counterpoint to the "colonizing turn" in Western thought (2011, p.p. 1–5). If, as Blaut (1993, p. 10) explains, the colonizing turn is Eurocentrism (otherwise known as "the colonizer's model of the world"), then the decolonial turn entails struggles for epistemic freedom that aim at undoing/ reversing the work of the colonizing turn/ Eurocentrism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021c).

However, considering the vast wealth of thought that serve as a counterpoint to the colonizing turn, it

is impossible to homogenize the decolonial turn. As Maldonado-Torres reminds us, it is heterogeneous, rather than a "single theoretical school" (2011, p. 2), a point which is accentuated by the metaphors used to describe the decolonial turn: a church/ a cocktail (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020a, p. 34); a family (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 30); and an "umbrella" term under which a diversity of approaches gathers (Gallien, 2020, p. 37). This elucidation is useful particularly because of the tendency to (re)package contemporary decolonial discourses from Latin America as novel and (as a result) trace the genealogy of decoloniality from only Latin America. In "Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues", for example, Bhambra (2014) attributes the genealogy of decoloniality to the "work of diasporic scholars from South America" (2014, p. 115), ignoring the colossal contributions of African intellectuals. A logical defence would be that Bhambra was not aware of the scholarship of these African scholars, but such defence is not as potent as it seems because it proves all the more "how scholars from Africa [especially those based in Africa] in particular experience epistemic injustice in the form of their work not being taken seriously and treated as though it does not exist at all" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021a, p. 168).[1]

A more telling example involves Anibal Quijano, the Peruvian sociologist who is credited with having developed the concept of "coloniality of power" which has remained fundamental and influential in the fields of decolonial studies and critical theory. By "coloniality of power", Quijano was referring to "the structures of power, control and hegemony that have emerged during the modernist era, the era of colonialism, which stretches from the conquest of the Americas to the present" (Makuvasa & Shizha, 2017). Though useful, these seemingly novel insights only echo the thoughts of radical Black thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah and Amilcar Cabral, among others, whose works Quijano engaged with. Yet, in failing to "recognize the intellectual sources of his work", Quijano practiced an "epistemic extractivism/ racism", thus "giv[ing] the wrong impression that coloniality was his original idea", thereby "concealing its origins in the Black Marxist tradition" (Grosfoguel, 2020, p. xviii).

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[1] To be sure, African complicity should not be ignored. Tembo (2022), for example, has lamented the "uncritical import of concepts from Latin America that carry insights already endogenous to African intellectual history" (p. 40)

> " The illusion of the novelty of decolonial thinking is thus corrected once we take into consideration the fact that there has been a "strong African contribution" "from both academic and literary spaces" (Hankela, 2020, p. 60), emphasizing that the 21st century call for decolonization is more appropriately appreciated as a resurgence, rather than a nascency. "

African Contribution to Decolonial Thinking

The illusion of the novelty of decolonial thinking is thus corrected once we take into consideration the fact that there has been a "strong African contribution" "from both academic and literary spaces" (Hankela, 2020, p. 60), emphasizing that the 21st century call for decolonization is more appropriately appreciated as a resurgence, rather than a nascency.

Of course, the attempt to equilibrize this case of epistemic injustice (i.e., of privileging Latin American scholarship on decolonial thinking) is also not a novel enterprise. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020b) has accounted for an "African genealogy of decoloniality" (p. 2) by foregrounding the salient but often-ignored contribution of African intellectuals such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Samir Amin, Leopold Sedar Senghor and Kwame Nkrumah. More recently, he has also mapped out three major turns in African Studies: the colonizing turn, the nationalist/ Marxist turn, and the postcolonial turn—the latter two resisting the former (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021c). Leon Moosavi (2020) has also called for a rethinking of the genealogy of intellectual decolonization. Although he does not focus specifically on Africa, he argues that literature on decolonization from Latin America ought to be read harmoniously with those from Africa and Asia. These interventions are crucial because, among other things, they show—contrary to the claim of scholars such as Vambe and Khan (2013, p. 304)—that

the concept of the decolonial turn in Africa is not "another form of intellectual structural adjustment programme" (i.e., an alien theory imposed on Africa to explain its realities). Rather, the decolonial turn has long existed in Africa.

A Literary Turn in African Studies

In this article, I pose a slightly different question from Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2021). Rather than accounting generally for an African contribution to decolonial thinking, this article investigates specifically an African literary genealogy of decolonial thinking.[2] If truly "African writers were among the first to note that the emancipatory potential of independence had been overestimated" (Zeleza, 1997, p. 430), what has been the contribution of African literature to decolonial thinking? What have African literary figures understood as their task in decolonization/ decoloniality and how have they responded to it?

Recognizing the vastness of African literary production, I propose to answer these questions from the point of view of the concept of "generations". It is true that this concept has been the subject of intense controversy ever since it was employed by Mkandiwire (1995) in his seminal article on "Three Generations of African Academics". Although the debates are too vast to recount here,[3] they have largely revolved around the fluidity of generational categorizations, since the concept gives the impression that humans (including their thoughts, ideas and experiences) can be put into rigid boxes. Still, I agree with scholars like Adesanmi and Dunton (2005), who explain that the generational approach remains one of the cornerstones of literary criticism largely due to the "possibilities it offers for a systematic understanding of literary trends and currents synchronically and diachronically" (p. 13).

Three generations of African literary writers have been acknowledged by scholars such as Adesanmi and Dunton (2005), Nnolim (2009) and Ojaide (2015).[4]

In the following section, I will provide vignettes of the decolonial contributions of each generation of African literary writers, making brief references to literary works that typify the dominant ideological dispositions of each generation: *Osiris Rising* by Ayi Kwei Armah (representing generation one), the Tambudzai trilogy (i.e., *Nervous Conditions*, *The Book of Not*, and *This Mournable Body*) by Tsitsi Dangarembga (representing generation two) and *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (representing generation three). The goal is to open spaces for further and deeper exploration of the contribution of African literature to decolonization/ decoloniality.

First-generation Writing

First-generation writers are comprised of writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Sembene Ousmane, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, Kofi Awoonor, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who were mostly born during the first five decades of the twentieth century when colonialism on the continent was rife (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005). It is to this group of writers that Ashcroft et al. (2002) refer to in their discussion of the empire "writing back" to the imperial centre. As Singh (2017) correctly explains, "first-generation literature [was] an act of reclaiming voice, narrative autonomy and agency." These (new) literatures were challenging dominant traditional literature in which "Africa…[was] always being defined…by Europeans who often saw the world in colour-tinted glasses" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1993, p. 21).

Because first-generation African literature, from the onset, was chiefly about "writing back" to Europe— since "it was Europe which introduced into Africa the problems which the [African] writer was attempting to solve" (Achebe, 1976, p. 117)—the primary audience of this literature tended to be in Europe initially. Thus, the titles of some early African novels were taken from European poems. Also, certain first-generation works responded specifically to particular European novels.[5]

The preoccupation of engaging with Europe was mostly due to the aim of remedying Eurocentric portrayals of Africans as uncivilized and barbaric,

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[2] The focus here is on literatures written in English. Of course, I am aware of the entry point of Ngũgĩ's decolonial discourse (i.e., that African literatures are those written in African languages). However, following Maldonado-Torres (2011), this article is underpinned by a conception of decoloniality that embraces diverse patterns of thought. Thus, both Achebe and Ngugi's position on the language debate, to me, are both decolonial, the difference being in the degree of radicality.
[3] For more on this point, see Garuba (2005)
[4] Again, these categorizations are not rigid. Other scholars have talked about a

fourth and fifth generation. This article is limited to the first three.

[5] For a more in-depth discussion of this, see Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2018).

and of Africa as the dark continent with no history. These writers were labouring at reinventing Africa. Collectively, first-generation literature is called "literature of testimony" (Harrow, 1994) and "literature of revolt" (Ngugi, 2018). Literature of testimony responded to derogatory representations of (and myths about) African culture by presenting a counter-discourse that valorised African culture. In that sense, this "literature of testimony" can also be referred to as "literature of cultural assertion" (Okonkwo, 1991), given that it documents the history of Africa from an African point of view (Harrow, 1994). By recapturing "the myth, folklore and the sum total of African cosmological perspective in their works", first-generation writing, basking in a deep sense of African history, attempted to "make Africans regain confidence in themselves" (Osuafore, 2003)—a confidence that had been severely battered as a result of the colonial experience. Accordingly, these literatures tended to be set in (or featured key scenes from) the pre-colonial African past.

As literature of revolt, this literature also attacked racism and colonization. It presented Africans as actors, rather than people who were always acted on (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1981, p. 30). Choosing epistemic disobedience, this generation of writers gifted us with characters who embodied the spirit of resistance against forces of dehumanization. Famous among these characters are Okonkwo (from *Things Fall Apart*) and Ezeulu (in *Arrow of God*), who make their own history. Okonkwo, in particular, chooses to die through "suicide rather than submit and live in a world where he is denied the right to make his own history" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1981, p. 30). Such writings were geared towards avowing the value of African cultures in order to stress the innate dignity of the African (Nnolim, 1989, p. 55).[6]

These writers, then, seriously engaged in a type of ameliorative historical revisionism. Unlike what is sometimes thought, historical revisionism does not imply an obsession/ fascination with the past as a golden age of peace and harmony. First-generation writers understood the primacy of the epistemic dimension of colonization[7] and, consequently, that

decolonization would be shallow without "decolonizing the mind", as Ngũgĩ (1986) puts it. This privileging of the epistemic dimension of decolonization animates Armah's *Osiris Rising*.

Osiris Rising takes its narrative structure from Africa's oldest source: the Isis-Osiris myth cycle. It is the story of Ast, an African-American, who after gaining her PhD in America, goes to Africa seeking both love and her heritage. She finds both in the person of Asar, who is at the forefront of an epistemic revolution. This revolution involves moving the centre of knowledge from Europe to Africa. Those who think Asar is a threat, as they find this idea repulsive, manage to kill him at the end of the novel. But if, indeed, the novel is based on the Isis-Osiris myth, then it is not wrong to conclude that Asar's death, although seemingly anticlimactic, is the necessary catalyst to birth the revolution of which he is at the forefront.

Significantly, Armah's characters unpack the inherent Eurocentrism of what is known as "History" and invite us to embed studies on Africa in a more subversive history, not as an "escapist indulgence" (Soyinka, 1997, p. 355) or as an obsession with/ deification/ idealization of the past as a golden age of peace, harmony and prosperity, but rather in acknowledgement that the production of knowledge has never been neutral (history with lower case 'h'). *Osiris Rising* explores the intersection of ontology and epistemology, revealing how the epistemological base one assumes influences knowledge production—hinting at issues of cognitive/ epistemic (in)justice. From Armah's perspective, historical revisionism is also imperative so that contemporary resistance to coloniality can find solidarity in historical precedents.

Part of Armah's strategy to reconstruct African history includes a reassessment of the place of Egypt in Africa. References to Egypt abound in Armah's creative and critical works. Armah's fascination with Egyptology is seen not only in *Osiris Rising*, but also in his other creative works and critical essays. As imperfect though it is, it should be viewed as one of many quests by Africans for epistemic freedom, thus finding deep resonance with current scholarship on decoloniality. It seems that almost three decades ago, Armah had already decoded that decolonization, "at its deepest conceptualization", "entails a re-writing of human history" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020a, p. 10).

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[6] Of course, Negritude—the self-affirmation of Blackness in a White world—is best read against this backdrop.

[7] Both the colonizing and decolonizing turns have been underpinned by the control/ (re)interpretation of history.

Second-generation Writing

Second-generation literatures criticize neo-colonialism and speak chiefly to the theme of disillusionment[8], urging the reader to contemplate the real benefits of independence to African countries. As an online literary space succinctly puts it: "While the first generation writers were interested in challenging the images and stereotypes of [Africans] that were perpetuated during colonial rule, second generation writers wrote highly critical literature and seemed to be more concerned with contemporary [Africa]" (Bookshy, 2012). Thus, while first-generation writers had a more culturally restorative bent, second-generation writers were more national disposed.

Second-generation writers were also born during late colonial times; consequently, "their formative years were mostly shaped by independence and its aftermath of disillusionment and stasis" (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005, p. 14). This generation of writers, convinced that first-generation writing had been overly occupied with explaining Africa to Europe, engaged more directly with Africa—usually by critiquing the postcolonial situation. Second-generation writers therefore include writers such as Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Frank Chipasula, Tanure Ojaide, Isodore Okpewho, Nurudin Farar, Mandla Langa, Festus Iyayi, Jack Mapanje, Buchi Emecheta, Nawal El Saadawi and Ben Okri, most of whom arrived on the literary scene in the 1980s and 1990s (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005). Moving away from the cultural nationalism/ valorisation and historical revisionism that had shaped first-generation writing, these writers foregrounded the plight of the "poor masses in a society in which the oppressed and the oppressor, the exploiter and the exploited, share unequal and uneasy coexistence" (Nnolim, 1989, p. 58).

Dangarembga's Tambudzai trilogy is a textbook example of second-generation writing, which exposes the futility of thinking of decolonization in terms of the attainment of independence by African countries. Although the reader navigates their way from British colonial rule in Zimbabwe into the (period after the) attainment of independence, we look for significant transitions in the lives of the characters in the novels in vain. Instead, an "oppressive sameness" (Gulick, 2020) pervades the life of Dangarembga's main character, ever-questioning the "post-ness" of post-coloniality[9] by foregrounding continuities rather than ruptures between the supposedly colonial and post-colonial era. This point is foreshadowed in the titles of the novels. The first novel explores the "nervous conditions" of the characters while the second novel takes a more existential turn. As Saint (2020) argues, it is a quest for self, providing "an extended meditation on how colonial and postcolonial worlds affect the existential life of the colonized subject" (p. 450). The title of the last novel in the trilogy is no less foreboding: *This Mournable Body-* that is no less gloomy irrespective of the fact that Zimbabwe is now independent. These works "reject a national narrative that is premised on political independence as a moment of historical rupture" (Gulick, 2020, p. 466), proving more poignantly that which Grosfoguel (2007, p. 219) identified as "one of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century"—namely, "that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to decolonisation of the world"—has long been a departure point for African literary figures.

Third-Generation Writing

This group of writers include Toyin Adewale, Lola Shoneyin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Yvonne Vera, Calixthe Beyala, Amma Darko, Abdourahman Ali Waberi, and Chris Abani, representing, perhaps, the most diverse and eclectic group of writers in the history of Africa. Third-generation writers (especially those from Francophone Africa) are sometimes referred to as "children of the postcolony" to emphasize their severance from the colonial event (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005). Easily detectable in the literature of the so-called third-generation writers is a preoccupation with the exploration of themes of "identity and otherness, as conditioned by their location in the diasporic and/ or exilic space" (Adesanmi, 2004, p. 236). Their works also emphasize "diasporic identity, migration, transnationality and globalization" (Krishnan, 2013,

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[8] This is not a distinctly second-generation characteristic. Some first (such as *A Man of the People, This Earth, My Brother, The Interpreters*, *Fragments* and *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*) and third-generation (such as *We Need New Names* and *Americanah*) writings are examples of the so-called literature of disillusionment.

[9] The hyphenated post-colonial is used here as a time marker (i.e., the period after the attainment of political independence), rather than the unhyphenated postcolonial as a theoretical framework.

p. 74). According to Krishnan (2013), because third-generation writers are "displaced from the event of colonization and the turmoil of independence" and have been shaped more by "contemporary notions of cosmopolitanism, globalization, nomadism, and liminality than their predecessors", their works have a "diminished concern with the colonial past" (p. 75). This also explains the reduced affinity with the nation-state.

Third-generation writing have therefore been indicted as being "so foreign and contrived that they fail to offer the kind of political dream that has always animated African writings" (Edoro, 2008, p. 25). This appraisal, it appears, is based on a faulty perception that every work of African literature has to match a certain type of engagement—usually meaning that of first-generation writers. In reality, third-generation writers have been posing the same questions as first (and second)-generation writers, except that they are proffering different answers that reflect their own realities (Edoro, 2008).

For example, Adichie has been grappling with issues of coloniality and identity. Not only has she been advocating for us all to be feminists, but she also analyses how racism continues to manifest in everyday interactions, albeit in subtler ways. Take *Americanah*, for example, which grapples with asymmetrical power relations in America based on skin colour within a context of a supposedly postracial world. The idea of postraciality is reinforced by concepts such as "colour-blindness", and discourses such as "all lives matter" (as a response to "Black Lives Matter"), and "the only race that matters is the human race" (as a denial of White privilege). Ifemelu's (i.e., the protagonist in *Americanah*) polemic critique of postraciality reminds us of what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls "hermeneutic epistemic injustice", which occurs when people experience "a gap in collective interpretive resources" because they are put "at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (p. 1)—in this case, the viability of race as a useful analytical category for determining who gets what, how and when. At the same time, these third-generation literatures also deal with post-independence disillusionment in a similar manner that authors like Ayi Kwei Armah did in *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born* back in the 1950s.

Conclusion

If, as Craig (1975) writes, "the course of literary development—its lulls, peaks, dying branches and new shoots—is determined by the main course of history" (p. 137), then it is also true that "the literature of Black Africa…[has been] mainly in response to the realities of colonialism" (Okonkwo, 1991, p. 41). These three generations of writers have been posing the same questions regarding coloniality in its multifaceted forms, but have been proffering different answers.[10]

At the same time, the point must be made that these generational categorizations do not necessarily imply disjointedness. In fact, each generation's task, although peculiar, "is made possible only by the foundational work of those who have gone ahead" (Mwangola, 2008, p. 10). What these three generations of writers have in common is the redemptive thrust of their work. As Mwangola (2008) further explains, "stripped of the specificities of the particular debates, Africa's intelligentsia has continued over different eras to respond more or less to the same core concerns" (p. 8).

Besides, the generational categorizations (although both epochal and thematic) themselves are very fluid. Although "temporal coevality and ideological preferences are at the centre of generational determination in modern African literatures" (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005, p. 14), some leitmotifs (such as the disillusionment of independence) run through all three generations. It is also because of this fluidity that there arise challenges about locating specific African writers. For example, although I present Tsitsi Dangarembga as a second-generation writer, Gulick (2019) hints that she is a first-generation writer, while Adesanmi and Dunton (2005) classify her as a third-generation writer. In fact, Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2018) suggests that the so-called first-generation writers are better classified as the "Makerere generation", given that the term "first-generation" excludes the work of South African writers (such as Samuel Mqhayi, Sol Plaatje, AC Jordan, Thomas Mofolo and RRR Dhlomo) who were writing in (South) African languages long before writers such as Achebe. This paper's focus, however, is not as much on presenting

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[10] In fact, even within generations, writers usually disagreed on decolonial strategies. Perhaps, the most profound is as touching the divergent positions first-generation writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Achebe took on the famous language debate.

a conclusive conceptualization of an old debate as much as it is on locating a decolonial turn within African literatures. The question of generations will remain open, requiring revisiting.

The fluidity among the various generations also means that writing for writing's sake has generally been a luxury too expensive for the African writer, regardless of which generation they belong to. Zeleza correctly clarifies that "writing in independent Africa has been a deadly serious business" (1997, p. 434). African writers have continued to serve as social critics, educators and part of the struggle against social evils. The idea that art needs no justification, should serve no purpose, should be judged purely on its own terms, rather than on its relationship to social, political or moral values has been dismissed by writers such as Achebe (1976), Ngũgĩ (1991) and Soyinka (1997), with Achebe's famous dismissal of "art for art's sake" as a "piece of deodorized dog shit" (1976, p. 25).[11] If for nothing at all, this should challenge us to give African literature a much more prominent place in social research than it is usually accorded (Adeoti, 2005).

The argument here has not been to discount the wealth of the Latin American contribution to decoloniality, nor to privilege African genealogies of decolonial thinking. After all, the value of anything cannot be merely reduced to its origin. The point, instead, is to make a case for the necessity of reading decolonial contributions from various geographical and epistemic sources in concert, in line with Maldonado-Torres' articulation of the decolonial turn. Thankfully, the diversity of the various turning points will not necessarily weaken the liberatory thrust of decoloniality, but will instead, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains, provide "the necessary nuances, complexity, depth and expansion" (2020a, p. 21).

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[11] This is true even beyond art. As Thuynsma 1998 explains: "Africanists have never been able to afford scholarship for its luxury. In whatever field, African intellectuals have had to work their way out from under a number of historical boulders rolled over us by foreign interests" (p.185).

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Xenophobia in South Africa:

Problematising Ubuntu as an Ethical Response

By Zama Mthombeni

Abstract

Despite the human rights principles established in South Africa's Constitution, there have been recurrent waves of xenophobia throughout the country's history. Foreigners who live in South Africa have been perceived as the victims of xenophobia and South Africans as the perpetrators. This paper aims to problematise the usage of the 'ubuntu' ideology as a utopian African ethic to promote 'universal' African humanism. It seems that apartheid's heritage, which produced the present-day South Africa in which these xenophobic events occur, is often overlooked when South Africans are characterised as xenophobic and in need of ubuntu salvation. The study makes the case that colonial and political issues, which continue to have an impact on high levels of poverty and unemployment, should be considered as ongoing contributors to xenophobia. Several anti-immigration organisations have emerged as discussion points in the country. This study will only concentrate on one of these: Operation Dudula. This paper critically examines the reasons why Operation Dudula is continuing to expand despite protests from civil society organisations. This paper demonstrates, via media stories, how the media primarily portrays the organisation as vigilante that vex ubuntu and African unification. The paper makes the claim that marginalised South Africans are 'Native Foreigners', as opposed to simply perpetrators, drawing on Neocosmos' idea of native foreigners. Instead of being considered as a problem that needs ubuntu's salvation, the paper argues that anti-immigrant organisations should be understood as a sign of unsolved colonial and political problems that need to be addressed.

Introduction

The prevalence of xenophobia is rising throughout all of Africa's nations. In Southern Africa, discrimination against foreigners is on the rise from Kenya to the Maghreb (Fayomi et al., 2015). However, Crush (2008) asserts that after the continent's independence, discrimination based on the idea of being 'non-native' has persisted throughout Africa and was codified during colonialism. One of the most recent manifestations of restricted ideas of citizenship, which have existed in Africa for two centuries, is contemporary xenophobia (Fayomi et al., 2015). Since the country's transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa has seen a rise in xenophobia. The extraordinary influx of primarily African immigrants in search of greener pastures is linked to the rising xenophobia in South Africa (Ogunnubi and Amusan, 2018). Due to the perception that South Africa has a favourable economic, political, and social climate, African citizens seeking better pastures find the country to be quite alluring (Akinola, 2018).

Insidious and violent xenophobic attacks against foreign people living in the country, which have resulted in fatalities and the wanton destruction of property primarily owned by African citizens, are evidence that South Africans are not fully comfortable with the presence of foreigners (Ogunnubi and Aja, 2022). Approximately 121 Nigerians were slain in South Africa between 2016 and 2018 because of xenophobic prejudice and discrimination (Ogunnowo and Joshua, 2019). Since the 1990s, there have been numerous instances of xenophobic crimes. In 2018, more than 60 foreign people were killed in the nation, making the situation worse (Bishogo, 2020). In June 2021, South Africa was introduced to 'Operation Dudula', a purportedly patriotic campaign established to address issues of crime, a lack of jobs, and poor health services allegedly caused by an influx of illegal immigrants (Myeni, 2022). *Dudula*, which is an isiZulu word meaning 'to force out' or 'knock down' alludes to the movement's objective of expelling immigrants. Operation Dudula has been labelled a xenophobic vigilante group (Myeni, 2022).

The group led their first march through Soweto on June 16 2021, with a focus on immigrant informal traders and those they believed to be involved in international drug trafficking (Bornman, 2021).

Following the march, numerous additional anti-immigrant organisations bearing the name Dudula or a version of it, including the distinct Alexandra Dudula Movement, were founded. This strengthened their popularity and Operation Dudula was expanded to Durban in KwaZulu Natal in April 2022 (Bornman, 2021). The initiative shut down all the food stalls maintained by foreign nationals who were unable to produce the necessary paperwork for conducting business or a current passport (Bornman, 2021).

Several scholars have analysed the phenomenon of xenophobia. According to Adebisi (2017), xenophobia has historically posed a problem for social relationships and co-habitation. The word 'xenophobia' has its origins in the Greek terms *xenos* ('stranger' or 'guest') and *phobos* ('flight' or 'fear') (Adebisi, 2017). The term describes an aversion towards different ancestries, races, or skin tones. According to Fayomi et al. (2015), xenophobia in this sense refers to the fear or hate of foreigners living in an individual's country. However, for some scholars it also includes assault and violent confrontations against foreigners who are residents of the country, going beyond simple statements of rage, hatred, or dislike (Adebisi and Agagu, 2017). Saleh (2015) broadens this concept by defining xenophobia as a strong hatred or disdain for someone due to their national origin. According to Gordon (2015), discussions in South Africa about xenophobia generally focus on or are equated to violence. There are other ways that anti-immigrant sentiment could manifest itself, even if xenophobic violence is a vital component of any study of xenophobia on the African continent (Gordon, 2015). Furthermore, there is no clear connection between xenophobia and anti-immigrant violence, as prejudice towards immigrants is not a direct source of violence (Gordon, 2015). This view of xenophobia coincides with that of Phiri who believes that the conceptualisation of xenophobia needs to be reconsidered. Xenophobia needs to be separated from violence because it is not every xenophobic sentiment that translates into violence (Phiri, 2021).

A definite dichotomy between South Africans as perpetrators and immigrants as victims is drawn in the literature on xenophobia. The perpetrators of genuine violent crimes have been characterised as

vigilante organisations executing senseless atrocities. This paper offers an alternative perspective and explanation of xenophobia in South Africa rather than attempting to refute these views. The introduction to xenophobia in South Africa is covered in the first subsection, which then examines ubuntu as a problematic framework for understanding and addressing xenophobia. The essay then provides a critical analysis of how Operation Dudula has been portrayed in the media as a vigilante group. To convey a contrasting viewpoint, it demonstrates how South Africans can also be perceived as victims.

Overview of Xenophobia in South Africa

South Africa is a destination for immigrants of all racial backgrounds and origins, including Asians, Americans, Europeans, and Australians. All regions of South Africa have experienced xenophobic violence and incidents date back to 1994 (Valji, 2003). South Africa is a desirable destination due to its high level of growth and technological advancement, which accounts for the significant influx of immigrants and foreign travellers (Dauda et al., 2018). Indeed, a big lure for immigrants is the wealth of opportunities and the structure of the South African economy. The nation's long-term colonial presence promoted rapid development and set it on the route to industrial development (Tella, 2016). This led to a surge of people seeking refuge from political regulations, conflict, poverty, and economic issues. In 2015, a survey by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees found that more than 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers resided in South Africa (UNHCR ROSA, 2015). Each year, 60,000–80,000 people are anticipated to request asylum in the country.

Due to this influx of foreigners, numerous xenophobic assaults have been recorded, with most attacks occurring in Gauteng province (Johannesburg, Soweto, Alexandra). Some of the causes of antipathy towards immigrants by South Africans are the perceptions that foreigners are to blame for the unemployment rate, high crime rate, and drug-related violence (Dauda et al., 2018; Ogunnubi and Amusan, 2018). Table 1 shows documented xenophobic incidents by province between 1994–2018. It shows that xenophobic incidents have taken place in all provinces in varying degrees. Gauteng is the leading province, and it is

therefore not a surprise that Operation Dudula is alleged to have started in Gauteng and then spread to other provinces (Myeni, 2022).

Table 1: *Xenophobic Incidents by Province (1994–2018)*

Province	Number of incidents
Gauteng	212
Western Cape	111
KwaZulu Natal	67
Limpopo	40
Eastern Cape	33
Mpumalanga	22
Northwest	20
Free State	19
Northern Cape	5

Source: *(BBC, 2019)*

Crush and Pendleton (2007: 64) used the National Immigration Policy Survey (NIPS) as a research tool to understand South African citizens' attitudes toward foreigners and migration. They found that people in Southern Africa tended to overestimate the number of foreigners living there and tended to view immigration as 'a problem rather than an opportunity'. Evidence from the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) survey literature demonstrates that anti-immigrant sentiment is common in Botswana, Namibia, and especially South Africa. The Project uses 2007 public opinion poll data from Pew's Global Attitudes Project (Miller, 2012 observed a similar conclusion). South Africans were found to be most favourable towards

> " The results of the SAMP study, however, also demonstrated that prejudice towards immigrants in South Africa crosses racial, gender, and class divides. According to further SAMP findings, xenophobic sentiments are far more prevalent among white people than among Black people. Xenophobia is also more prevalent among poor, working class, and wealthy people as opposed to the middle class. The entire report concluded that the majority of citizens share sentiments of xenophobia towards other Africans. "

immigration limits, as compared with the inhabitants of other countries (Crush et al., 2008). South Africans, however, do not view immigrants as a single group. To better understand xenophobic ideas in South Africa, questions concerning immigrants from other countries were posed in the 2006 SAMP study on views about immigration. The results showed that South Africans viewed immigrants from Europe and North America more favourably than those from Africa (Crush et al., 2008).

According to public opinion statistics from SAMP on South Africa, the majority of South Africans believe that immigrants cause unemployment and deplete the country's economic resources (Crush and Pendleton, 2007: 71–72; Crush et al., 2008: 29–30). The results of the SAMP study, however, also demonstrated that prejudice towards immigrants in South Africa crosses racial, gender, and class divides. According to further SAMP findings, xenophobic sentiments are far more prevalent among white people than among Black people. Xenophobia is also more prevalent among poor, working class, and wealthy people as opposed to the middle class. The entire report concluded that the majority of citizens share sentiments of xenophobia towards other Africans. Du Toit and Kortze (2011: 182–188) corroborated this conclusion by finding that attitudes in favour of restricted immigration were widespread throughout the nation's various socio-demographic groups. In other words, sentiments were the same amongst the wealthy and the poor, the employed or the unemployed, and Black and white population groups. To better understand the factors related to the wards where the 2008 anti-immigrant riots occurred, Fauvelle-Aymar and Segatti (2012) undertook a study. Debunking theories that solely focus on economic factors as the causes of xenophobic violence, it was discovered that neither unemployment nor absolute poverty played a significant role.

Problematising Ubuntu as a Conceptual Framework for Understanding Xenophobia

According to African scholars, the solution may not ultimately be based on a range of external ideologies and institutional interventions, given that most of these efforts have failed the African people (Obioha and Okaneme, 2017). Eleojo (2014) emphasises how pointless it is to classify African issues and thought processes using Western concepts. This raises concerns about the use of ubuntu as a catch-all solution to address xenophobia, particularly in South Africa. While I recognise the moral importance of ubuntu as a philosophy rooted in African humanism, I also recognise its importance in bridging different African civilisations. Ubuntu, I contend, has been exploited to moralise South Africans while neglecting the underlying problems that lead to recurrent acts of xenophobia. Ubuntu's core principle is the honouring and respect of each person's dignity, regardless of differences in race or culture. Ubuntu promotes kindness, generosity, compassion, and a peaceful co-existence with one's neighbours and the wider community (Nussbaum, 2003; Kaungu, 2021). For many generations, the principle of ubuntu and the way of life it encourages have served to maintain African communities in South Africa and throughout Africa (Eliastam, 2015; Kaungu, 2021).

Due to the resonances of ubuntu in other African nations, supporters feel that this concept should form the basis for African unity (Eleojo, 2014). Expecting such unity with other African communities while the structure of Black South African society has not been unified strikes me as a bit unrealistic. This research considers additional social, political, and economic elements and demonstrates how just applying ubuntu to be a moral judge of xenophobia does not resolve concerns. African philosophies are admirable because they provide African communities with a moral code; this paper does not dismiss them as unimportant. However, these philosophies insinuate that South Africans are forced to adhere to a borderless African mentality because of ubuntu's blind application, as if other nations were doing the same. Ubuntu appears to be advocating a religious or utopian African ethic that chooses to ignore the existential context of difficult issues like xenophobia in South Africa.

Methodology

This article will place a strong emphasis on qualitative data from South Africans as seen in news articles and videos. I investigate how people who use opinion articles and internet media based on qualitative empirical evidence feed the narrative that Operation Dudula is a thorn in destabilising oneness and ubuntu. Table 2 documents the primary data source which is made up of 14 news stories that were published

between June 2021 and June 2022. I chose to focus on news clips published during this time frame because the first Operation Dudula march was held in Soweto in June 2021. Documentation of Operation Dudula is still ongoing. For the purposes of this study, it is enough to cover news clips that emerged in June 2021–June 2022. These news reports discuss events that led to the maturation of the xenophobic attacks that happened under Operation Dudula (Note in Table 2). Pseudonyms have been employed, much like in the news clips, to shield interviewees' identities.

Operation Dudula as an Enhancer of Xenophobic Attacks? Review from the Data

I will reflect on Operation Dudula in this section utilising primarily secondary data as support. The analysis' key findings show that Operation Dudula is viewed as a contributor to the recent xenophobic violence in South Africa.

Table 2: List of News Clips Articles Reviewed
1. Africa News. (2022). 'South Africa: Anti-Immigration Movement 'Operation Dudula' Launched in Durban.' Africa News [online]. Available at: www.africanews.com/2022/04/10/south-africa-anti-immigration-movement-operation-dudula-launched-in-durban/
2. Fihlani, P. (2022). 'Dudula: How South African Anger Has Focused on Foreigners.' BBC News [online]. Available at: www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60698374
3. Bishogo, C. (2020). 'Xenophobia in South Africa.' Harvard Human Rights [online]. Available at: www.harvardhumanrights.com/xenophobia-in-south-africa
4. Bornman, J. (2021). 'Operation Dudula Pushes Ahead with Hateful Politics.' New Frame [online]. Available at: www.newframe.com/operation-dudula-pushes-ahead-with-hateful-politics/
5. Evans, J. (2022). 'Operation Dudula Brings Its Campaign Against Foreign Nationals to Cape Town.' News24 [online]. Available at: www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/operation-dudula-brings-its-campaign-against-foreign-nationals-to-cape-town-20220514
6. eNCA. (2022). 'Operation Dudula Let the Law Take Its Course.' eNCA news [online]. Available at: www.enca.com/news/operation-dudula-watch-let-law-take-its-course-dlamini
7. Mafata, M. (2022). 'Immigrant Traders in Gauteng Fear for Their Safety After Threats of Xenophobic Attacks.' News24 [online]. Available at: www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/immigrant-traders-in-gauteng-fear-for-their-safety-after-threats-of-xenophobic-attacks-20220202
8. Madia, T. (2022). 'Ramaphosa Calls Operation Dudula a Vigilante Force, Says ANC Can't Support Them.' Eyewitness News [online]. Available at: www.ewn.co.za/2022/04/04/ramaphosa-calls-operation-dudula-a-vigilante-force-says-anc-can-t-support-them
9. Makwakwa, T. and Dlamini, T. (2022). 'Operation Dudula: Migrants Trading at Shops Fear Outbreak of Xenophobia, Lament Unprovoked Attacks as Threat Still Looms Large.' IOL News [online]. Available at: www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/kwazulu-natal/operation-dudula-migrants-trading-at-shops-fear-outbreak-of-xenophobia-lament-unprovoked-%E2%80%A61/7
10. Mncube, P. (2022). 'Operation Dudula: When Deep-Seated Frustration Meets Prejudice and Weak Leadership.' Daily Maverick [online]. Available at: www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2022-04-20-operation-dudula-when-deep-seated-frustration-meets-prejudice-and-weak-leadership/
11. Myeni, T. (2022). 'What is Operation Dudula, South Africa's Anti-Migration Vigilante?' *Aljazeera* [online]. Available at: www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/4/8/what-is-operation-dudula-s-africas-anti-immigration-vigilante
12. Peralta, E. (2022). 'A Movement Gains Force to Put South Africans First and to Drive Migrants Out.' *NPR News* [online]. Available at: www.npr.org/2022/06/07/1103445432/south-africa-anti-immigrant-operation-dudula
13. Sibanda, N. (2022). 'Operation Dudula is a Symptom of Unresolved Colonial and Political Issues.' *Mail & Guardian* [online]. Available at: www.mg.co.za/opinion/2022-06-12-operation-dudula-is-a-symptom-of-unresolved-colonial-and-political-issues/
14. Wrougton, L. (2022). 'Vigilantes and Violence Have Migrants in South Africa Scared for Their Lives.' *The Washington Post* [online]. Available at: www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/05/south-africa-operation-dudula-immigration/

> " Organisations like Operation Dudula arguably point to the possibility that anti-immigrant sentiment is rooted in poverty. It is important to acknowledge the social, economic, political, legal, cultural, and psychological ramifications of these recurrent Black-on-Black persecutions (Sibanda, 2022). This paper contends that it is idealist to believe that ubuntu alone can effectively combat these socio-economic and political ramifications. "

Operation Dudula is seen as a symptom of unresolved colonial and political issues in the country. The All-Truck Drivers Forum, which campaigns for all truck drivers operating in the country to be South African, guarded the Maponya Mall in Soweto when the campaign's focus shifted from the call to protect shops from the frantic looting in some areas of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in July 2021 (Evans, 2022). Shortly after, the Operation's Chair (Mr. Nhlanhla Lux) made the announcement that any new businesses would first need to go through his organisation to ensure that South African stores and spaza shops were formed in Soweto (Myeni, 2022). Anxiety over Operation Dudula's focus on foreigners and the possibility for bigotry quickly replaced the joy of defending companies during raids. In an interview with eNCA, Operation Dudula's Deputy Chairperson, Dan Radebe, stated that the organisation also encouraged its members to sign up as police reservists to contribute to crime prevention (eNCA, 2022).

The Operation Dudula campaign is heavily debated in South Africa as some feel that it is an Afrophobia campaign, spreading xenophobic tendencies under the banner of putting South Africans first. In his reflection on the existence of the organisation and its spread in the Western Cape, Ricardo McKenzie shares his sentiments:

> Ricardo McKenzie, a member of the Western Cape provincial assembly for the DA, disapproved of the march's message and claimed that the organisation was a part of a concerning trend of xenophobia and Afrophobia that is spreading throughout South Africa. (Evans, 2022)

The sentiments shared above by McKenzie regarding Operation Dudula resemble those expressed by the South African President. During the African National Congress (ANC) Conference that took place in Mpumalanga in April 2022, President Ramaphosa described Operation Dudula as a 'vigilante-like force' (Madia, 2022). Ramaphosa further argued:

> 'We cannot support a vigilante-type-of move against a group of people and particularly targeting them as foreign nationals because what we are doing then is just to divide our people on the African continent.' (Madia, 2022)

Ramaphosa's opinions differ from those of ANC National Spokesperson, Pule Mabe, who supported communities that fought unlawful activity in an interview with the *Mail & Guardian*. A divisive campaign in Johannesburg spearheaded by Operation Dudula has targeted foreign nationals. One of the organisation's objections is that it is challenging to find unlawful foreign nationals who have been charged with crimes because they are not recorded in any South African databases. They contend that immigrants are displacing South Africans from their jobs and fuelling criminality in various parts of the nation.

The members of Operation Dudula, on the other hand, believe that they are not acting in a xenophobic manner, but rather are upholding the law, which they claim the government is not doing. One of the group members explained their dedication to law enforcement as follows:

> 'So, the issues are that people are coming into the country and they are not documented, and the government is doing nothing about it, and it's difficult to find them when they commit a crime. We just need our departments to enforce the laws that are there, because these laws are not enforced.'
> – Zandile Dabula, National Secretary for Operation Dudula. (Africa News, 2022)

According to Operation Dudula, their goal is purportedly to persuade the South African government to act against illegal immigrants and those who are allegedly involved in criminal activity (Ndaba, 2022). On paper, this appears to be the reason for the organisation's origin, composition, and behaviour. However, to purport is to suggest or assert that something is true without providing any supporting evidence. This is the key issue at hand, and the reason why Operation Dudula is so plagued with rumours and contradictions.

Putting South Africans First

Operation Dudula is purportedly centred around putting South Africans first in terms of job security and owning local businesses such as spaza shops in the townships. The organisation contends that the South African government is failing to emancipate them from the indecent living conditions that they are subjected to. According to the organisation's secretary, minimising the influx of illegal immigrants will supposedly help to reduce crimes incited by immigrants (Myeni, 2022).

The organisation's campaign gives the idea that it is Afrophobic. However, another possible view is that Operation Dudula represents an outcry seeking genuine economic equity for historically disenfranchised Black South Africans. The organisation's efforts are mostly focused on underprivileged Black citizens living in townships and shacks (Ndaba, 2022). Black South Africans long for social and economic reform, rather than persecution. Ndaba (2022) claims that Operation Dudula's intentions are blatantly anti-African and xenophobic. However, another possible perspective is that the organisation's efforts represent an outcry of frustration by people whose economic conditions have been repeatedly ignored by the government. The state's inability to address societal issues is arguably one of the reasons why Operation Dudula and other groups of a similar nature exist. This study contends that this is a view that is hardly considered when discussing xenophobic violence in South Africa.

Xenophobia has been denounced throughout Africa, especially given how common it is in South Africa due to Africanisation (Ogunnubi and Amusan, 2018). Charles Onunaigu, director of China Studies, claims that the attacks were a response to the unmet expectations of common citizens from the ANC-led post-apartheid South African government (Ogunnubi, and Aja, 2022). However, only a small number of elites in Africa have benefitted from the anti-colonial struggle. Therefore, regular people are expressing their resentment in various ways, including these attacks (Odoh, 2019). Akinola (2018) and Fayomi et al. (2015) argue that these tendencies are the result of a mix of social-political influences, some of which are overt and others which are more quietly present. It is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate a specific cause of xenophobia in South Africa. High rates of poverty and unemployment, inefficient immigration restrictions, provocative remarks made by the media and government authorities, and negative perceptions of Nigerians as a people are some examples of these triggers (Akinola, 2018; Fayomi et al., 2015). Whilst acknowledging that the issue at hand is not just moral degeneration by poor South Africans, this paper finds it important that the response to xenophobia should not just be an effort to moralise South Africans, but rather to address the socio-political influences of xenophobic attacks.

Should Ubuntu be an Ethical Response to Xenophobia in South Africa?

Organisations like Operation Dudula arguably point to the possibility that anti-immigrant sentiment is rooted in poverty. It is important to acknowledge the social, economic, political, legal, cultural, and psychological ramifications of these recurrent Black-on-Black persecutions (Sibanda, 2022). This paper contends that it is idealist to believe that ubuntu alone can effectively combat these socio-economic and political ramifications. I acknowledge that ubuntu advocates for universal African humanism and teaches us to appreciate and value people for who they are, regardless of their social, political, or cultural backgrounds. However, I argue that one must problematise the blind application of this philosophy to the South African context, whilst ignoring the country's existential circumstances. I do not endorse the tactics used by Operation Dudula. Rather, my interest lies in showing that there is more to these recurring xenophobic incidents than meets the eye.

As it promotes a 'universal' African humanism, ubuntu is also problematic as an intellectual theory

that has the propensity to downplay the significance of geographical boundaries. Why should South Africa be forced to adhere to a borderless African philosophy if other nations are not also doing so? Several authors have written about ubuntu's untapped potential as a social engineering tool to combat xenophobia in South Africa (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh, and Singh, 2005). However, xenophobia in South Africa is largely triggered by socio-political ills; it is not entirely about general hate towards foreign nationals.

It is possible that the motives of anti-immigrant groups like Operation Dudula emanate from the fear of continuously being excluded from employment. Therefore, I find it problematic when academics and South African theologians contend that 'learning and putting Ubuntu's principles and ideals into practice can challenge and motivate South Africans to view and treat African immigrants differently' (Mnyaka, 2003; Koenane, 2013; 2018). Shaping the views of South Africans will not take away the deep-rooted fear they have of foreign nationals taking their jobs. Whilst many preach the rhetoric of 'the rainbow nation', the 'new South Africa', and the country's progressive Constitution, the actual situation on the ground does not attest to these far-fetched ideals. South Africa's colonial and apartheid legacies persist and reflect the African experience. As Phiri writes: 'The post-colonial pattern across the continent follows a trend in which the people are condemned to relatively the same conditions that they suffered during the colonial or apartheid era. Even after independence, the situation of the people remains deplorable, despite the change of leadership' (2020: 88).

Koenane argues that there have not been any other significant violent incidents in South Africa against other racial or immigrant groups. However, the point of view that ubuntu and other African principles should be used to combat Afrophobia can be contested (Koenane, 2018). Scholars such as Fanon and Mamdani can help us to understand the foundations of xenophobia in South Africa (Fanon, 1967; Mamdani, 2017). They identify how colonialism intentionally kept the majority of the colonised underprivileged and how this is still maintained. Many South Africans are subjected to economic conditions that are not based on their personal choice, but are rather the result of intentional colonial creations. Since such people have nothing to lose, they opt to respond in revolt to these

unbecoming living conditions. Therefore, this paper contends that it is the colonial situation that is violent. It is possible to argue that those who are cast as 'perpetrators' (poor south Africans) and 'victims' (poor foreigners) are in fact all victims and xenophobic behaviour is the direct result of their frustrations.

Alternative Perspectives on Xenophobia: Neocosmos' 'Native Foreigner' Conception

Xenophobia in South Africa has been seen through the lens of violence, but Phiri (2021) has extensively argued that not every anti-immigrant sentiment translates into violence. According to Phiri (2021), xenophobic attitudes are much more widespread than recorded attacks. It is exclusion based on difference that is central to that definition of xenophobia and violence is one of its consequences. Neocosmos says: 'Xenophobia is a discourse concerned with a process of social and political exclusion of some group or population' (Neocosmos, 2006: 15). He further explains that there is another form of exclusion that operates even within borders, but that discriminates or marginalises those who are politically weak. For instance, those who are excluded in this sense might be South African citizens who are unable to fully enjoy the rights accorded to South Africans. This refers to South African citizens who are too poor to even afford decent accommodation and instead end up living in informal settlements. These citizens are *foreigners* in their own country, or are what Neocosmos terms 'Native Foreigners'.

Xenophobic attacks have occurred year after year in South Africa since 2008. This shows that little progress has been made in addressing this issue. It is interesting to note that historically and currently under Operation Dudula, xenophobic violence is conducted by those who could be termed *native foreigners*: South Africans who feel excluded and unable to fully enjoy their citizenship rights (Neocosmos, 2006; Phiri, 2021). Whilst media coverage refers to them as 'vigilante mobs' who are committing inexplicable atrocities, another possible perspective is that these are South Africans who are genuinely poor and neglected by the state. Whilst trying to deal with their own sense of exclusion, these South Africans must also contend with how the media portrays immigration issues and how these reports instil fear in the everyday South African. The media often speaks of migrants *flooding*

> " I have shown that South Africans are not only perpetrators, but are also victims. Citizenship cannot be reduced to recognition by political institutions; it must also include full participation in the life of a nation, in a way that allows for decent living and dignified humanity. Those who live below the poverty line and in deplorable conditions cannot be called citizens, but are instead 'native foreigners.' "

South Africa, which gives the impression that South Africa will be full of foreign people and all available opportunities will be taken away. This gives native foreigners the impression that they need to panic when they see an influx of foreigners.

The issue of nationalism has been intimately related to xenophobia in South Africa and this has been demonstrated through policies. South African political discourse has always portrayed xenophobia as a threat to the unity of South Africa and the rest of Africa because it begets intolerance and disunity. Xenophobia is represented as a disease that must be cured in order for 'the new South Africa' and the realisation of the African renaissance to function in harmony. For this reason, many propose that native foreigners need ubuntu to cure xenophobia. However, I argue that it is unfair to impose ubuntu on this group of native foreigners without considering that the same group has on many occasions expressed dissatisfaction with how the South African government rules them. I argue that it is essential to look at both the perpetrators and victims of xenophobia to understand what is happening in South Africa. In the post-apartheid period, many South Africans are politically recognised but nonetheless remain on the periphery, divorced from opportunities that should be accorded to citizens. When these native foreigners revolt against such treatment, they are blamed.

Oppressors accuse the oppressed of being violent, when in fact the oppressed are reacting to the violence of their oppression (Freire, 1993: 38). South Africa has been referred to as the protest capital, but one finds that protests generally take place in areas where violence is expected to take place. Most of these protests end up being violent because the masses realise that the country's rulers choose to either ignore their voices or to lie about the fact that their grievances will be addressed. The protesters want to live in conditions that allow for decent humanity. They are fighting for true citizenship. It is not enough to only be South African by citizenship/birth, as this does not guarantee them full participation in their citizenship. These ongoing protests are a plea to regain a humanity which was soiled during the colonial era. The masses have been betrayed by the very people who they thought would contribute to their freedom. This situation is not unique to South Africa; it can also be observed in most other African countries. Fanon has illustrated that there is no change between the colonial and apartheid states. The colonial system is inherently violent, and so violence becomes the only means available to the oppressed/the colonised.

It is for this reason that I argue that Operation Dudula should not only be seen as a problem that needs ubuntu redemption, but should rather be seen as a symptom of unresolved colonial and political issues. This is why even foreign nationals quoted in the media express the opinion that this is 'politics' rather than merely xenophobia (Wroughton, 2022). According to Mncube (2022), the government has long been urged to act over the presence of unauthorised foreign nationals in South Africa. However, as the nation struggles with higher rates of unemployment and poverty, the voices of internal discontent have grown louder. Despite being one of Africa's economic powerhouses, South Africa still must conquer internal political issues before it achieves socially fair economic independence (Sibanda, 2022). It is time to embrace introspection and to find the political will necessary to conduct discussions with the key parties involved.

Conclusion

This paper has argued for the need to consider xenophobia as related to the internal ramifications of colonialism/apartheid in South Africa. This paper does not advocate for tactics of violence, nor does it seek to exonerate the perpetrators. Rather, I have tried to draw attention to the fact that violence has been the

most travelled avenue that poor South Africans have used to demand decent humanity and livelihoods. In problematising ubuntu as an ethical response to xenophobia, I argue against the blind application of this philosophy, especially when all South Africans are simply cast as 'xenophobic' with no consideration of their context or circumstances. To combat the rampant xenophobia in the country, this article contends that it is not enough to tell Black Africans in post-apartheid South Africa to simply embrace the spirit of ubuntu and its principles. This is especially the case when people are continuously subjected to inhumane conditions. Using Neocosmos' view on native foreigners, I have shown that South Africans are not only perpetrators, but are also victims. Citizenship cannot be reduced to recognition by political institutions; it must also include full participation in the life of a nation, in a way that allows for decent living and dignified humanity. Those who live below the poverty line and in deplorable conditions cannot be called citizens, but are instead 'native foreigners.' South Africa has remained the same and the failure to improve the livelihoods of native foreigners will always create conditions that are conducive to xenophobic-related violence.

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