

The African Renaissance in the Age of Globalization

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Abstract

The article seeks to examine the ambiguities and ambivalence of the concept of African renaissance. It situates the roots of the African renaissance in the cultural component, which challenges the right of Europeans to impose their cultural-spiritual values on African communities. This cultural project is traced from the early-fifteenth century when Europe sought to make Christianity a universal religion and in order to contain Islam, African religions and the Asian belief system. It is argued that the concept is a useful tool in the struggle of the African people to redefine a new political and ideological agenda of pan-Africanism in the age of globalization. The key pillars of the African renaissance are socio-cultural, political, economic regeneration and improvement of Africa's geo-political standing in world affairs.

Introduction

We live in an age of turbulence and rapid technological transformation which affects social life in new ways. This technologically and information propelled transformations dubbed “globalization” is causing conflicts, wars and social disintegration in almost all the countries of the world. It is also leading to the construction of new identities and the reinvention of old ones.

A study done in the 1980s by James Rosenau (1990) revealed the emergence of a world in turbulence, but one, which was also undergoing a transformation. Rosenau had argued that the rapid developments in the world economy, and in particular, in the communications technology, had strengthened “subgroups” and undermined the solidity of the state. This was because a major part of the people had come to believe that “whole systems” had become too “complex” to meet their material and spiritual needs and hence a reversion to more manageable identities. Alvin (1980) had referred to the same phenomenon when he noted:

In consequence, national governments ... continue, by and large, to impose uniform, standardized policies designed for a mass society on increasingly divergent and segmented publics. Local and individual needs are forgotten or ignored, causing the flame of resentment to reach white heat. As de-massification progresses, we can expect separatist or centrifugal forces to intensify dramatically and threaten the unity of many nation-states (Toffler, 1980: 327–28).

The transformation from “whole systems” to “sub-groupism”, according to Rosenau, included a resort to ethnicity. Rosenau argued that evidence available proved that “similar but unrelated circumstances [were] at work throughout the world” and this accounted “for the recognition of shared identity among the members of diverse subgroups in every corner of the globe”. According to Rosenau:

Surely a major part of the answer is that people have come to believe that whole systems are too complex to meet their needs and serve their wants. And so they have sought to regain control by turning to subsystems, to the less remote and less complex groups to which they somehow feel related in the hope that their interests can be better served and a modicum of control exercised over the distant and impersonal forces that intrude on their daily routines. The resurgence of the family and the church, and the emergence of the long-dormant linguistic, nationality, and ethnic-groups, are parts of this pattern, just as “big is threatening”, “small is beautiful”, and “I count, too” have become recurrent themes of the postindustrial era (Rosenau, 1990: 378–9).

Amongst other reasons Rosenau gives for the development of this situation is the “corruption and deception on the part of top governmental leaders having become an ever more evident worldwide pattern [as well as] the level of trust accorded the elites of whole systems having declined substantially (Rosenau, 1990: 379). Inglis says the same thing when he argues that when people are put in a situation where they feel they do not have power, the only political action left to them is “to make demands”:

Faced with a tyrannical and fatuous government, they demand a bit of space for themselves, enough to live on within which they may refuse governments and, it may be politics, as well. As the political has seeped into and soaked through every bit of social life, so that culture has replaced society as the stuff of enquiry, so classes and nations, as well as individual men and women seized hold of the only political weapons with which to beat off the invasions and pervasions of political power (Inglis, 1993: 176).

Thus, it appears that the phenomenon of ethnicity and other forms of cultural self-identity are characteristic of the whole general period of “late” or “high modernity” of which post-modernism and post-traditionalism are the intellectual, artistic, aesthetic, literary, and cultural manifestations of this dissent.

In Africa, the dissension has taken an ethnic as much as a cultural turn. This is what I termed a post-traditional renaissance (Nabudere, 2001). Ethnicity in this case forms an aspect of modernity in Africa, as indeed, elsewhere in the world. It is a demand for reorganization of new social groups on a new democratic basis in a rapidly globalizing world. But whereas ethnicity forms part of the continuing struggle for recognition and equality, the struggle will lead to the formation of larger units based on the principle of federalism and confederalism, drawing partly from the experiences in their heritages and partly from their new historical experiences and those of other communities and cultures.

Globalization and Identity

The phenomenon which Rosenau and Alvin referred to was in fact the beginnings of globalization which has for the moment taken on an information and technological form. This process has resulted in the uncontrolled flow of financial resources across the globe into a big speculative activity which takes up close to US \$1.7 trillion in daily trading in all the financial markets of the world. In contrast, only US \$200 billion goes in foreign direct investments for productive purposes.

This has resulted in a severe redistribution of wealth so that fewer and fewer individuals have come to own most of the world's wealth whilst the vast majority of the world's people have become impoverished. A process of marginalization has therefore been part and parcel of the process of wealth accumulation by a few rich people who control the new financial and technological centres. Despite these new developments, it should not be imagined that globalization is a new phenomenon. Its roots go back over five hundred years and if we are to understand why the call for the African renaissance has emerged, we have to trace this development for it is part and parcel of that development.

To be sure, the process of globalization begins in Western Europe in 1492 as a western cultural project whose roots are to be found in the attempt to make Christianity a universal religion. This was done to contain Islam, African religions, and Asian belief systems. The first drive was by the Catholic Church, which together with the merchants, attempted to conquer the whole world. The European renaissance arose out of these developments and the Age of Enlightenment was built on these achievements against the old worlds of Africa, Asia and what came to be called America. In all these developments, there were resistances to the European universalization project.

Thus, right from the beginning, "modernization" which in effect meant the universalization of the European historical experience (just like globalization of today) was contested and that experience also was also a Janus-headed phenomenon in that, on the one hand, it was humanistic and yet, on the other hand, it was oppressive and dominating.

For this reason, today, globalization should be viewed in these two senses. The first concept of globalization is a process of economic integration which is propelled by the electronic informational revolution, an information-based knowledge to

communication system that links markets and the people of the world in what has been claimed to be a “the electronic super-highway”. If we view globalization in this way, we can see that it is indistinguishable from the internationalization of capital which is a stage in the evolution of world capitalism and imperialism.

The second sense in which to view globalization is to comprehend it as a *popular solidarity movement*, which has all along been propelled by the resistances of people against the Western imposed economic and political systems or imperialism of which the African anti-colonial movement was part. These struggles have created a *global consciousness* and human solidarities across the globe against imperialism and is manifested today in the anti-capitalist movements against the World Trade Organization which has recently come to manifest this discontent.

We can see therefore that the first form of globalization led by international (now globalized) corporate or finance capital is contested and condemned by the second, more *culture-based* globalization in which the corporate domination of the global economy is resisted as a threat to the economic well-being of the impoverished majority. The resistance is against an economic system which is leading to greater dehumanization of peoples and the degradation of the natural environment on which life depends. This form of globalization calls for a more holistic and sustainable locally linked global economy that takes account not only of human needs, but also of the needs of the ecosystem as a whole.

We can already see that the roots to the African renaissance lies in the cultural component which challenged the right of the Europeans to impose their cultural-spiritual values on other African communities while at the same time attempting to abolish the spiritual and cultural rights of “the natives”. Behind this cultural challenge lay the political nationalism that characterized the general anti-imperialist struggle in Africa and other colonized parts of the world. In fact, within these components of the contestation, there were several sub-components which were played out by the different social classes and groups, incorporating both the old (“primordial”) elements from the old society with the new forms of colonial modernity which had arisen within the imperial-colonial project. This is why ethnic claims are also Janus-headed with one face looking backward and the other forward, representing the different interests of the different social classes within Africa (Vial, 1989).

A combination of all these political, economic, social and cultural struggles came into a convergence in a very sharp way in the period between 1945 and 1970. This is a period we can truly call the humanistic phase of globalization. *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1991: 133) has defined the concept globalization with reference to this period. Parsons refers to this period as a period of “the expressive revolutions of the 1960s” (Robertson, 1990). *The Oxford Dictionary* refers to this as connected with the emergence of a “global consciousness”.

As we know in this period, there were several struggles which converged into a big global solidarity movement against imperialism. These struggles began with the anti-colonial movement which combined with the civil rights movement in the

USA and this was soon joined by the women liberation movement and the student movement. The anti-Vietnam war movement and the solidarity movement in support of the Indo-Chinese people and Cuba manifested this aspect of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles. These struggles also led to the emergence of the peace movement in almost all the countries of the world.

Within this same period, and as part and parcel of these humanistic struggles emerged the ecological movement in which the new generation claimed responsibility for "mother earth" in new environmental social movements. All these movements converged into popular mass movements with a new civic responsibility and a human solidarity. This solidarity which expressed itself on a global scale aimed at containing the adverse effects of economic globalization and its impact on the disadvantaged groups in the colonies as well as in the developed capitalist countries.

This anti-colonial movement on the African continent came to the fore in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa which was supported by the global anti-apartheid movement in different countries. It is not surprising that with the release of Nelson Mandela and the achievement of democracy in that country, a new era in the struggle appeared in the form of the African renaissance.

Globalization and the African Renaissance

The struggle against imperialism in Africa was a struggle for African independence and to that extent for an African renaissance. This struggle at the cultural level could not have taken on a political form until the whole continent was freed from colonialism and this struggle against apartheid represented a stage in raising the anti-imperialist consciousness of the African people and their unity as African people in the diaspora and at home on the African continent. Up to this point, pan-Africanism played a significant role in developing the unity of purpose.

Therefore, as we enter the third millennium, Africa is rightly trying to locate itself in this new situation by reimagining and reinventing itself along certain ideological and philosophical lines. One of the more recent manifestations of this search for meaning and identity has been the concept the African renaissance that has been popularized by Thabo Mbeki, the President of South Africa. In this formulation, the concept is viewed as an attempt by Mbeki to place Africa and South Africa in particular in the new global context.

However, it has also been claimed that the aim in the case of South Africa, the idea is to bring about the interaction between established domestic and global business interests in line with the new government policy (Kornegay and Landsberg, 1998: 3). And this is not surprising and hence the need to be clear about what we mean by the concept if we are to meaningfully bring it in the political discourse on the continent.

As we have already indicated above, the rise of ethnicity while manifesting a discontent with the post-colonial state in Africa has also revealed that the claims for African identities contains contradictory elements which reflect the Janus-headed nature of ethnicity. Culture and ethnicity are constructed differently by the different

social classes on the continent. The African elites utilize ethnicity in form of neo-tribalism and neo-traditionalism to maintain their power in the post-colonial, neo-colonial states. On the other hand, the African people have utilized ethnicity and cultural revivalism to survive the effects of modernization and globalization in the form of post-traditionalism (Nabudere, 2001). Thus in the emergence of the African renaissance, the same phenomenon can be observed.

To be sure, in its Mbekian form and current usage, of the concept African renaissance and its formulation is said to have originated, on the one hand, in Mbeki's "I am an African" seminal speech which was delivered on the occasion of the adoption of the new South African Constitution in May 1996. On the other, it is said to have its inception in the response of the African National Congress's and ANC's leadership to the demand by the ANC members during the 50th National Conference in 1997, that the concept be elaborated to cover its economic and foreign policy. The demand was that such policies were to be "part of a broader African renaissance, spearheaded by popular movements in many countries on the [African] continent".

Kornegay and Landsberg have argued that from a national identity-perspective, the "I am an African" speech should, in their view, "be considered as the intellectual foundation for the articulation of an African renaissance" (Ibid: 4-5). But in that case, a distinction has to be made between attempts to articulate the African renaissance as part of the search for an African identity for South Africa which was dominated by a white European cultural and civilizational perspective, and on the other hand, the articulation of the African renaissance as part of the policy of the post-apartheid regime in which the claims for an African identity are still compromised. By doing this, we can be clear in which way the concept is neo-traditional (for the maintenance of what Kornegay has called "elite power" and the sense in which it is post-traditional and a continuation of the struggle by the African people for identity and dignity).

Perhaps as an indicator of the struggle against these two approaches, it should be noted that after the Mbeki speech and the ANC National Conference, an African renaissance conference was organized in September 1998 with the support of the President Mbeki's office which resulted in the launching of the African Renaissance Institute in Botswana. The institute was formed for the purpose of co-ordinating national chapters of the African renaissance in different parts of the African continent.

This movement is supposed to spearhead the "reawakening of the African continent" and people. In the further consolidation of this move, the ANC South African Chapter of the African Renaissance Movement was also launched to champion the ideas of the African Renaissance Movement.

These developments demonstrate that the South African leadership, at least in the person of Thabo Mbeki, is attempting to make the African renaissance a key political ideology to challenge or supplement pan-Africanism as the ideology of the African people in the twenty-first century which Mbeki has called "the African

century". But to what extent is Mbeki's attempt a continuation of the struggle of the African people for full independence and dignity?

What can be observed so far is that the current usage of the concept African renaissance is Janus-headed. On the one hand, it reflects the mainstream political elite concern in South Africa for an African national identity against the background of an alienating apartheid system, which tried to depict South Africa as a white man's country. From that standpoint, South Africa was not part of the African continent socially, politically and culturally. On the other hand, it can also be seen to express the ANC's concern to win corporate capital in South Africa to its programmes in the age of globalization. It can be said that the struggle between these two understandings of the African renaissance will determine the direction in which the movement will proceed.

In the context of the political struggles within South Africa it should be noted that the deployment of this concept was seen as an attempt to adopt the "Africanist" ideological stance which was previously espoused by the Pan-Africanism Congress of Azania (PAC). Up to this point, the ANC did not politically espouse pan-Africanism since it held itself out as a "non-racial" organization. It had depicted pan-Africanism as "reactionary" ideology. The "non-racial" political stance was especially addressed to the white moderate-to-liberal constituency and the South African Communist Party's (SACP) political line, in view of the fact that both formed part of the democratic alliance with the ANC against apartheid. Even the Africanist faction within the ANC had long been on the defensive for pursuing what was conceived to be a racial approach in the struggle against apartheid.

According to Kornegay and Landsberg, the commencement of the transition to a new political dispensation in the country and the broader global backdrop to this transition was bound to create the circumstances for "the reversal in the fortunes of Africanism". This was because the ANC government was battling to come to terms with the pressing development imperatives of its "core constituency": an emerging and impatient black bourgeoisie both within and outside of the ANC, and a mass constituency of organized labour represented by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) as well as the working and unemployed poor in the urban and rural areas of the country:

The resulting emergence of an affirmative action and empowerment agenda in response to these objective realities has eroded "non-racialism", a concept that, in any case, begs for fresh definition (Kornegay and Landsberg, 1998: 4).

The collapse of the USSR and socialism as a global alternative to global capitalism, and the resurgence of nationalism in the post-cold war world throughout the world, also demanded that something more than non-racialism and a facile "rainbow nation" was required to motivate a new sense of national identity on the road to "nation building". This is why Mbeki in his "I am an African" speech tried to demonstrate that non-racialism and Africanism, which were hitherto considered

rival political ideologies and tendencies, were not incompatible after all! Nevertheless, the Africanist constituencies, both within the ANC and those outside it, continued to view this combination of non-racialism and Africanism as a convenient cover for the maintenance of white and Indian privileges over the mass of the African people.

It is here that it can be seen that the proclamation of the African renaissance by President Mbeki was an attempt to create a synthesis out of the combination of non-racialism and Africanism as ideological constructs to cover the post-apartheid situation with which the ANC was confronted. Although the political-identity and corporate elements of the concept are interlinked in this ambivalence, nevertheless, the two elements can also be separated because the operationalization of the mainstream attempts to place the African economies within the global economy has the implication of marginalizing of the African masses which, its own turn, inevitably collides with the general purposes and objectives of a post-traditional African renaissance.

These objectives, according to Kwesi K. Prah, must be to define pan-Africanism and to the same extent African renaissance grounding "in historical and cultural terms which are emancipatory for mass society, and which in the object does not contradict or deny the rights of other peoples" (Prah, 1998: 83). In this paper, we therefore try to distinguish and contrast these two elements in the conception and operationalization of the African renaissance.

President Thabo Mbeki in his United Nations University speech in Tokyo, Japan, echoed all these sentiments when he tried to locate the idea of an African renaissance in the Africa's civilizational achievements and at the same time argued for the need for Africa to place itself in the global competitive economy. He pointed out that the continent had "made the point clear that it is opposed to military coups and that the leaders had taken 'practical steps to demonstrate their intent to meet this challenge of democratization in places like Sierra Leone and Nigeria' as part of the need to place Africa in the global community" (Mbeki, 1998).

All this demonstrated the Janus-headedness of the concept in South Africa. South Africa was taking a leading role in defining the concept as well as trying to operationalize it through its economic and foreign policies. On the other hand, it was also trying to make it an African ideology in place of pan-Africanism by creating African renaissance chapters throughout the continent. According to Eddy Maloka, the Director of the African Institute of South Africa, the concept has been hotly debated in the country, and yet it "remains vague as a concept". He attributes this to the "conflation of the different meanings and usage of the term". This ambivalence is also revealed by the kinds of platforms, which Mbeki has used to give meaning to the concept.

For instance in his speech to a group of business leaders in Virginia, USA, in April 1997, Mbeki unveiled what Maloka calls "the key pillars of his conception of the African renaissance. These were socio-cultural, political (democratization), economic regeneration, and the improvement of Africa's geo-political standing in world affairs" (Maloka, 2000: 2). Nevertheless, despite the attempt to bring the

concept into an African-wide debate, the concept has remained restricted to the South African political and academic scene which suggests that it has more relevance to the political situation in South Africa than elsewhere on the continent.

This explains the hot debates which are taking place in the country and which seek to define the concept and elaborate the manner in which it can be used in the political struggles in that country. On the other hand, what Moelesti Mbeki, President Thabo Mbeki's brother, has described as the South African "triumphalist syndrome" may explain why the concept has gained little support and attention elsewhere on the continent (Ibid: 6). There is also the argument about South African "exceptionalism" which has alienated many African countries and intellectuals from joining the debate. In this ambivalence, South African corporate capital has also been quick to cash in on these developments to advance their economic interests by exploiting the concept for their own strategic needs. Yet this ambivalence is deep-seated historically and manifests differences in strategy about Africa's rejuvenation.

This explains why the corporate sector in the United States and the US government under President Clinton had also entered the African renaissance discourse for their own purpose. In April 1998 the US-based Southern Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group and the Congressional Black Caucus, organized their own conference in Washington on the African renaissance.

According to the organizers, the notion of an African renaissance was being propagated by "a new generation of African leaders who share the ideal that Africa's political and armed conflicts should be settled by collaboration amongst the Africans themselves without external influence". These leaders were said to believe that Africa's development should be based on practical economic and investment principles rather than donor assistance, and that democratic governance was the cornerstone of political stability and economic prosperity. In fact these "new breed leaders" all espoused the reform programmes of the Washington consensus.

Despite all these ambiguities and ambivalence in the use of the concept African renaissance, many people have come to agree that the concept is timely and that it can be developed to be a useful tool in the struggle of the African people to define a new political and ideological agenda of pan-Africanism in the age of globalization.

Vusi Mavimbela, President Mbeki's political adviser, has called the concept "a workable dream". In his view, the idea of the renaissance stems from the objective conditions of the moment. These include the ending of the cold war and the upsurge of more open political and economic interaction on world scale, which has inspired a new vision of political and economic renewal in Africa. In his view this development is "only surpassed by the optimism that greeted the first years of decolonization in the 1960s". This development emerged around the 1990s with the democratization process, which began to take place at the end of the cold war.

Mavimbela therefore takes these two "moments" of "African rebirth" as the "dress rehearsal" for the "third moment" of the African renaissance par excellence.

For him the “third moment”, which he still finds difficult to discuss without reference to the Asian renaissance, was ushered in by its “economic miracle”. This is what has put the African “third moment” within the proceedings of the globalization process, which was underway since the mid-1980s. He looks at economic indices to prove how Korea, for instance, had overtaken Ghana, which, thirty years earlier, had a comparable gross national product. This has come to demonstrate, according to him, that when we talk of economic globalization, we are actually talking about the economic competition between East Asia and the West (Mavimbela, 1998: 29–31). For him therefore:

The raison d’être for a renaissance in the African continent is the need to empower African peoples to deliver themselves from the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism and to situate themselves on the global stage as equal and respected contributors to as well as beneficiaries of all the achievements of human civilization. Just as the continent was once a cradle of humanity and an important contributor to civilization, this renaissance should empower it to help the world rediscover the oneness of the human race (Ibid: 31).

Apart from these African and Asian economic indices, Mavimbela places the understanding of the African renaissance within the European renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He uses the salient elements of this European transformation as the determinants of the content and the motive forces of the renaissance. He sees the emerging merchant class as the leading motive force and the content of the transformation was the multiplication of the fortunes of this class, which led to their voyages of exploration and conquest of foreign markets. Mavimbela does not highlight the cultural drive, which lay behind this transformation and seems to be very much inspired by the economic and social phenomenon alone. Nor does he highlight the contradictions of this transformation and its impact on Africa.

This becomes one of the major weaknesses in his analysis, but for the time being he dwells on the “fundamental elements” of the African renaissance as lying in the construction of a growing and sustainable economy “capable of assimilating the best characteristics of economic activities around the world” which includes learning from the Asian experience. Mavimbela does not indicate the key motive forces behind the Asian miracle, but observes that one of the most important factors behind this experience was the extent to which Asia was able to resist cultural westernization for he states:

There is reason to believe that part of the explanation for the Asian resilience is the fact that Asian cultures were able to limit the extent of westernization on their social life. For instance, their written languages and their written traditions provided a more solid base for cultural resistance. They maintained written religious cultures with verifiable histories in Hinduism, Islam, and so on (Ibid: 34).

One would have thought that this key element in the character of the Asian modernization would be the point of departure for Mavimbela in indicating the real motive forces for an African renaissance. However, his placing too much attention on the global economic and technological developments tend to make him underplay the contradictions which could help us locate the real social forces in the transformation he desires for the African renaissance. This weakness is responsible for his failing to deal with the issue of what would be the real and meaningful content of the African renaissance as well as the real motive forces that would bring about such a meaningful transformation.

In this context, he examines the African motive forces likely to play a leading role in this transformation as lying in the following social classes and social forces: First, the “new proletariat class” which, according to him, is emerging and being unionized into new forms of trade unions. He does not indicate which this “new proletariat” is but we are told that it is “increasingly cutting a role for itself in the market place of economic ownership, production and distribution”. This rather rosy picture of this “new proletariat” ignores the main tendency in economic globalization of the transnational corporations in South Africa: the marginalization and exploitation of labour under increasingly “flexible” working conditions. These conditions tend to undermine unionization of labour and the emergence of the “new proletariat” in South Africa and African generally.

Such a force cannot be said to be the motive force in the African renaissance unless really new conditions of their emergence and role is properly laid out within its African mass cultural setting. Nor can the now much elevated “emerging urban middle class” of individual and small businesses do the trick. As he claims. Their role is rather minor in the context of the globalization under way in South Africa and the rest of the world. They cannot under those conditions be “the driving force of civil society” which excludes the majority of peasantry and working and unemployed people in the rural areas where close to ninety per cent of the population live in abject poverty.

This section of the population, according to Mavimbela, should be “incorporated in the economy of information technology” by this emerging urban middle class. But he does not say how this could be done. Even then, he does not think that this majority of impoverished people can, without the middle class, become the “crucial component in economic democratization and sustainable economic growth”. Such a view, in our opinion, is anti-democratic and repudiates much of what the ANC has claimed to be fighting for. The approach he advocates cannot therefore constitute the basis of an African renaissance, nor can it be a realizable or “workable” dream under those conditions.

Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance

Mavimbela has been given special attention in this analysis because of the very important position he occupies as political adviser to the author of the concept of the African renaissance, President Thabo Mbeki himself. Although Mbeki must be

given credit for re-highlighting the issue of African rebirth, the debate of what kind of an African renaissance we are talking about has now been joined. This is because the struggle for African rebirth is not a new one. Indeed, it spreads the whole landscape of the African peoples' struggle for freedom. If the idea as now propounded by Thabo Mbeki is to be of any political significance on the African continent it has, therefore, to address and motivate the very people it is supposed to re-awaken and re-energize and the agenda it is supposed to address must be clearly laid out for the real actors in this struggle to comprehend it, namely the masses of the African people. To do this, we need to grasp the history of their struggles in order to pick up the thread from which the vital elements of struggle can be joined and a new struggle embarked upon.

South Africa is a good starting point because it is the last territory to be won over politically from the colonizers. Although the enemies of Africa's independence and freedom still occupy "the skyscraper economy" and the vast majority of the African people remain restricted and banished in the "Shanty" and "Bantustan" economies, the lived experiences of their struggle is the only solid basis upon which they can be re-energized to undertake another struggle for their emancipation. No one else can occupy the central place in this new struggle. Only when this has been achieved, can we really speak of an African renaissance.

In short, it is only on the basis of their culture and lived historical experiences that real liberation can unfold and be completed. This is what Cabral meant when he spoke of a "return to the source" which for him meant the critical appropriation of the vigour, vitality (life) and the ebullience of African existence by the assimilated African elites who had been alienated from their source by Portuguese culture and history. It is this memory, which was reawakened and reignited by the anti-colonial struggle (Cabral, 1973: 63; see also Serequeberhan, 1994: 6, 9, 102-5).

Thus, when Thabo Mbeki speaks of the twenty-first century being an African century, we have to analyse correctly what are going to be the real motive forces to bring about the renewal of the continent. Instead of looking southwards, South Africa must turn its face northwards and westwards and retrace the paths through which its struggle passed in order to create the conditions for the re-awakening not only of the African people in South Africa, but of the entire African people on the mother continent as well as in the diaspora.

A narrow focusing on South African struggle without this wider perspective of history and African struggles, the attempt will fail. This narrow focusing is reflected in Mavimbela's "three moments". The first is dated in the 1960s, the second in the 1990s and the third in the rebirth which is assumed to take place in the twenty-first century. We beg to differ with these "moments". They do not locate the origins of the struggle for an African renaissance correctly.

In our view, a true understanding of the origins of African reawakening and rebirth leading to freedom and liberation must be traced to its source in the enslavement of the African people who were taken to the "New World". They now constitute the African diaspora. The awakening has also to be traced to the

colonization of the African people on the African continent itself as well as their resistance to both those two “moments”. These two struggles is what produced the concept pan-Africanism which enabled mobilization of the people on the continent in the liberation of South Africa and the rest of the continent.

According to Basil Davidson, the term “pan-Africanism” begins to take on political connotations after 1900 when, according to him, the notion of “Africanism” reappeared as “pan-Africanism”. This derived from the need for a substantive “pan-Africanism” which was “adjectively” being applied to the idea and programmes for an “envisioned continental unity”. Increasingly, the word came into usage after the 1920s, especially in the call for the study of Africa by “Africanists”. In the 1950s, Lord Hailey, the British imperial administrator and author advised that the term “Africanism” be used for “nationalism” in an African context. Davidson adds that the term Africanist, rather than Africanism, emerged in black politics in South Africa to describe someone who rejected political co-operation with whites in the black struggle against racism (Davidson, 1994: 79).

Davidson notes that in advising the use of the word “Africanism” for African nationalism, Lord Hailey had noted that this change was necessary since nationalism had “proved inseparable from the whole range of ideas and inspirations joined in the drive to transform African colonies into nation-states, and hence to bring about a new evaluation of their cultures and sociologies”. Nevertheless, the early evolution of the term can in practise, he noted, “be followed only through the history of the ideas and inspirations of pan-Africanism”. Davidson adds:

The latter was born in North America and the Caribbean, not in Africa itself, and in its early phases could better be called Pan-Negroism or Pan-Blackism. Yet early pan-Africanists were concerned to claim for the blacks of Africa, as well as of the Americas, the same real equality of human values with other peoples, which was precisely what the black culture of enslavement and imperialism had denied to all black peoples (Davidson, 1994: 79–80).

Thus we see here a clear link in the conception of Africanism with the struggle for cultural survival and human equality—a struggle against enslavement, racism and colonialism for a common humanity. It is in this sense that pan-Africanism has real meaning in the sense of unity by all black people of the continent and the diaspora against oppression to which they were subjected. It is in this sense that Professor George Shepperson, who also considered the above situation, argued that the birth of pan-Africanism in the diaspora was “a gift of the New World of America to the Old World of Africa” (Shepperson, 1960).

Vincent Bakpetu Thompson has argued that the pan-African movement constituted three inter-linked developments, which lay behind the various resistance movements and organizations throughout this period. These developments “sought to restore the status of Africans in Africa as well as those of the diaspora”. These resistances centred on the centuries-old conditions of degradation that began with the transatlantic slave trade (Thompson, 1969: 3).

According to him, these three developments tell the story of the relationships between the Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora *through struggle* against a common enemy. The *first*, is the slave trade; the *second*, is imperialism and colonialism; and the *third*, is the rebellion and resistance against Western Europeans which perpetrated these evils on the Africans for their gain. Resistance against enslavement and oppression therefore forms the key link to African unity and the emergence of pan-Africanism as a conceptual framework of the *common struggles of the African people and people of African descent everywhere against exploitation, degradation and oppression*.

The notion of the “white’s man’s burden” on the African continent and idea of “the Negro problem” in the diaspora constituted the pillars of Western racism against Africans everywhere. In this sense, *European racism* against Africans, which was heightened by the slave trade and by European colonialism in Africa, gave Africans a new conception of themselves. According to Thompson: “They began to see themselves no longer in terms of small communities but as people belonging to a despised ‘race’. African *race consciousness* which was generated in this way became one of the early manifestations of pan-African ideology at its inception” (Thompson, 1969: 16) and not itself a racist movement, as Appiah has suggested (Appiah, 1992:). In fact, it was a struggle against it (Nabudere, 2001).

This then constitutes the *common bond* of the Africans people everywhere *in resistance* against oppression and it is this common bond that led to a number of activities, in which the conceptual framework of pan-African was constructed. These activities included the organization of pan-African conferences, as well as the *creation of organizations for linking Africans at home and those dispersed* in the Americas and the Caribbean such as Marcus Garvey’s organization for a return to Africa. Later, particularly after 1945, it shifted the focus on the African continent.

The pan-African conceptual framework must therefore be the basis for the understanding of the relationship between the Africans on the African continent, and those dispersed in the other continents of the world. It must also be the framework within which we can understand future struggles, including the struggles for an African renaissance. To separate the two is to do injury to the memory of the struggles of the African people globally.

Such an inquiry must seek to establish what are their real life conditions in which they exist because such an inquiry can inform us as to what are the *central issues* in their lives that underlie their actual struggles. These conditions in turn will inform us as to how Africans everywhere are confronting the *continuing racism* which continues to be exercised against them everywhere. It is these continuing struggles that can give us an indication of how Africans view the need for a cultural and political renaissance in a rapidly globalizing world. Kwesi Prah throws more light on this approach in the new period when he states:

If the problem of the twentieth century has been the problem of the colour line, the twenty-first century, takes us beyond the colour line into a new world where cultural existence and democracy determine how we survive

together as humanity in a shrinking global village. The pan-Africanist position needs to define its grounding in historical and cultural terms which are emancipatory for mass society, and which in the object does not contradict or deny the rights of other peoples (Prah, 1998: 83).

Sticking to the point, Prah argues that the most potent idea for African emancipation is the pan-Africanist position:

If pan-Africanism is to meet the evolving challenges of our times, it needs to go beyond cross reproduction of former views, some of which are today contextually and sociologically irrelevant. *The view here is African emancipation, development, democracy and unity, lies with the recentering of African languages at the heart of African endeavours at social transformation.* African progress must be culturally reconstructed on the basis of indigenous heritage. African languages are at the core of African culture, and culture is the source and essence of identity, not colour (Ibid: 70–71. Emphasis in the original).

Kwame Nkrumah's great dictum: "Divided We Fall, United We Stand" applies with equal force to the present situation of the Africans on the African continent and those in diaspora. This division and lack of unity, on Africa itself as well as in the diaspora, is the very basis on which Africans are being marginalized, discriminated against and exploited in the globalization process. In this condition Africans remain an enslaved people under modern conditions and we have seen the reason for this as lying in the very character of the post-colonial state which could have not given full meaning to these aspirations since the an Attempt to create an African nation were doomed to failure by the fact that the colonial state which was inherited could not by its nature countenance pan-African unity.

A recent issue of *The Economist* headed "Africa, the hopeless Continent", brought out this same issue. The article, although it contained certain contradictory aspects, nevertheless observed that the expectations that had been generated by the "new breed" African leaders of democracy and economic reform and which gave rise to the idea of an African renaissance had turned out to be "an illusion". It argued that the most damaging aspect of European imperial rule in Africa had not been political or even economic but psychological. It noted that European colonial rule in Africa had lasted just a couple of generations or less. But that this was "long enough to undermine African societies, institutions and values, but not long enough to replace them with new ways of life or establish new systems of government. Colonialism, in short, undermined Africa's self-confidence". It added:

African nations were not forged by ethnicity, nationalism and war. They were simply bequeathed by departing imperial powers who left highly decentralized, authoritarian states to a tiny group of western-educated Africans who rushed in and took over. Some of these states, such as Congo, were established by Europeans as businesses to be milked for profit. Their successors continued the practice (*The Economist*, 14 May 2000).

The article continued that the African nationalist elite, which rushed in to take over, did not deconstruct the colonial and reconstitute a new African national state. They merely proclaimed “national unity and denounced tribalism”. But they soon found, like the imperial powers before them, that “manipulating tribal affiliations was essential to preserving power”. They even went further to personalize power through patronage and clientism. By so doing they undermined rather than boosted national institutions. The author comes to the crux of the matter when he observes:

The African ruler finds himself trapped. He wants power and control; but the outside world (of capital-DWN) makes demands about democracy, human rights and good governance, which weakens his position and could cost him his job. If he cannot use the treasury as his private bank account and the police as his private army, he tries to create alternative sources of wealth and power. This is why more and more African rulers are turning their countries into shell states (Ibid).

The author of the article tries to find a solution to this kind of dilemma of the African post-colonial state and elite. It asks the question whether Africa can change and answers the question in the affirmative: “Yes, Africa can change”. He points to the possibilities of economic growth, but still argues that “real change needs something deeper than quick spurts of growth”:

More than anything, Africa’s people need to regain their self-confidence. Only then can Africa engage as an equal with the rest of the world, devising its own economic programmes and development policies. Its people also need the self-confidence to trust each other. Only then can they make deals to end wars and build political institutions; institutions that they actually believe in (Ibid).

This calls for a real deep African renaissance that does not build on the fragile and oppressive structures of the European-created colonial states, which have become, in the words of the article, “shell states”, and also in the words of Basil Davidson a “Blackman’s burden” (Davidson, 1992). That renaissance can also not be built by that elite which lost the self-confidence to “deconstruct” the post-colonial and post-apartheid states. It must come from the people themselves who, through political action, can deconstruct the post-colonial and post-apartheid state and reconstitute new states, institutions and agencies that reflect their needs and capabilities. Only then can they find respect from the rest of the globe.

Despite these weaknesses, the formation of the Organization of African Unity has enabled the people of Africa to score a number of victories on the political front. The formation of the Liberation Committee represented that continuing element of struggle in pan-Africanism and is the link in the continuing search for African unity and the African renaissance. It follows that only a cultural and political reunification of the African people is the key to any African renaissance and recovery from oppression. This reunification is only possible on the basis of mutual respect and co-operation. The maintenance of political relationships between Africa and its

diaspora therefore becomes imperative as the only basis on which such unity and co-operation can be achieved both spiritually and institutionally.

South Africa being the last product of that journey of the pan-African struggle through history, must bear the flag for initiating another political strategy for the liberation of the people of Africa and its diaspora. Thabo Mbeki in his articulation of what the African renaissance stands for must give this direction, otherwise we all have the responsibility for contributing to the development of this discourse on which the African renaissance and pan-Africanism can become reality.

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