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On the Cover:
Use the power of the people to fight and defeat patronage and corruption © shutterstock.com
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

NORTH KOREA

Deceit and Demonisation

On September 11, 2017, the UN Security Council imposed further sanctions on North Korea following its sixth and possibly largest nuclear test. The latest round of UN sanctions puts an annual cap of two million barrels on refined petroleum products and a ban on textile exports. The latter is worth US$725 million to that economy.

Both China and Russia are reluctant to impose further sanctions and prefer dialogue and negotiations with North Korea. However Trump and his administration are determined to pursue belligerence and fierce war-talk. In pursuit of this aggressive, destabilising and potentially devastating approach they have unleashed a sustained propaganda campaign demonising Kim Jong-un and his government.

But the truth is much more complex and revealing of the way the US and its junior partners Japan and South Korea are dealing with North Korea. To be sure, progressive forces, internationally, should seek to convince North Korea not to become a fully-fledged nuclear power, as well as to tone down its rhetoric. It is important to intensify the struggle for the elimination of all nuclear weapons in the world.

Below we reproduce an article by John LaForge which enables us to better understand the history of US involvement in the Korean peninsula and its devastating impact on North Korea and its people.

“We Burned Down Every Town in North Korea”
by John LaForge

We went over there and fought the war and eventually burned down every town in North Korea anyway, some way or another… Over a period of three years or so, we killed off, what, 20 percent of the population? General Curtis LeMay, in Strategic Air Warfare, by Richard H. Kohn

The US public wants to know why North Korea is so paranoid, militarily hostile and boastful. And why do the leaders in the capital city Pyongyang point their fingers at the US every time they test another rocket or bomb? Sixty-five years after the US burned down every town in North Korea, the US military is now simultaneously bombing or rocketing seven different non-nuclear countries. The US conducts military exercises with South Korea off the North’s coastline twice a year.

The US regularly tests Minuteman-3 long-range nuclear missiles from Vandenberg Air Base in California that can reach and obliterate Pyongyang. Several presidential administrations have called North Korea “evil,” a “state sponsor of terrorism,” and “threatening.” US military officials have called North Korea’s tiny, backward, nearly failed state the “principle threat” to the US security. North Korea may have reason to worry.

North Korea’s rocket tests mostly fail but are nevertheless called “provocative” and “destabilizing” by the State Dept., the Council of Foreign Relations, and the White House. This is regardless of which party is in power. Bill Clinton said in 1994: “If North Korea ever used a nuclear weapon, it would no longer continue to exist.” Likewise today, Defense Secretary Jim “Mad Dog” Mattis used similarly bombastic language discussing North Korea August 8. John Walcott reported for Reuters that Mattis said the North must stop any action that would “lead to the end of its regime and the destruction of its people.”

Consider living memory
In Robert Neer’s 2013 book “Napalm,” the author reports that General Lemay wrote, “We burned down just about every city in North and South Korea both… we killed off over a million civilian Koreans…” Eighth Army chemical officer Donald Bode is quoted as saying, on an “average good day” … pilots in the Korean War “dropped 70,000 gallons of napalm: 45,000 from the U.S. Air Force, 10,000-20,000 by its navy, and 4,000-5,000 by marines” marines who nicknamed the burning jellied gasoline “cooking oil.”

Neer found that a total of 32,357 tons of napalm were used on Korea, “about double that dropped on Japan in 1945.” More bombs were dropped on Korea than in the whole of the Pacific theater during World War II 635,000 tons, versus 503,000 tons. “Pyongyang, a city of half a million people before 1950, was said to have had only two buildings left intact,” Neer wrote. This is still living memory in North Korea.

Howard Zinn’s “A People’s History of the United States” says, “Perhaps 2 million Koreans, North and South, were killed in the Korean war, all in the name of opposing ‘the rule of force.’” Bruce Coming’s 2010 history “The Korean War” says, “of more than 4 million casualties … at least 2 million were civilians. … Estimated North Korean casualties numbered 2 million including about 1 million civilians… An estimated 900,000 Chinese soldiers
lost their lives in combat.”

After Truman fired Gen. MacArthur in May 1951, the former supreme commander testified to Congress, “The war in Korea has already almost destroyed that nation of 20 million people. I have never seen such devastation. I have seen, I guess, as much blood and disaster as any living man, and it just curdled my stomach, the last time I was there. After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and children … I vomited.”

Dems take finger off the button (for a minute)

Two democratic presidential hopefuls said in 2007 that they’d take the threat of nuclear attack “off the table,” hinting at their discomfort with the idea of the Bomb’s deliberate mass destruction. In April 2006, then New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton was asked in a TV interview about her position toward Iran. She said, “I have said publicly no option should be off the table, but I would certainly take nuclear weapons off the table. This [Bush] administration has been very willing to talk about using nuclear weapons against human beings, must be abolished. H-bombs cannot be used without indiscriminately killing of hundreds of thousands if not millions of civilians, creating deadly radioactive fallout that drifts into non-conflict areas, and causing long-term environmental damage, all in violation of the laws of war, the UN Charter, and the Geneva Conventions.

Clinton’s and Obama’s public put-downs of nuclear weapons attacks are both rare and bold in their implications for the nuclear weapons establishment. More such talk should be encouraged.

At least a dozen former nuclear war planners — Kissinger, Jimmy Carter, Melvin Laird, Generals George Butler, Charles Horner Andrew Goodpaster, and Admirals Stansfield Turner, Noel Gayler, and Hyman Rickover, among others — have denounced nuclear weapons and called for their elimination.

What is it exactly to threaten to destroy an entire country’s people? Is it terrorism? Trump’s fire and fury “the likes of which the world has never seen” would have to be beyond the half million dead in the US Civil War; 18 million overall deaths in World War I and 50 to 80 million dead in World War II; 3 million dead Vietnamese and at least 2 million dead Koreans. As usual, Mr. Trump cannot be taken seriously, or he is frighteningly unhinged.

Even, the late Paul Nitze, Reagan White House presidential adviser, a rightwing Cold War hawk, and a founder of the anti-Soviet Committee on the Present Danger, wrote in the 1999, “I can think of no circumstances under which it would be wise for the United States to use nuclear weapons, even in retaliation for their prior use against us.”

John LaForge is a co-director of Nukewatch, a peace and environmental justice group in Wisconsin, and edits its newsletter.

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Puppets of Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump with missiles, Pacifists against the danger of a war between USA and North Korea, at a parade on 1 May 2017 in Turin, Italy

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The global geopolitical landscape has undergone a major tectonic shift over the past 24 months, in which the prevailing consensus regarding international trade, finance and immigration has been turned on its head by the rise of markedly nationalist movements across the US and Europe.

The rise of anti-global populism suggests that something about the model of globalisation needs to change if we are to improve its sustainability. For example, governments across the world may require a more coordinated effort to ensure that the social costs of international competition are mitigated by providing safety nets during periods of unemployment and economic evolution.

Investors would thus be wise to pay close attention to recent developments in the area of anti-globalisation in general and trade flows more particularly. As some of the world’s largest economies threaten to pull out from existing trade agreements, the cutting edge of global influence and dynamism may accelerate in its shift eastwards. The Silk Road initiative, which could link China much more closely to its neighbours through a vast network of transport infrastructure, is one such area of change. The mega project may involve the financing of $900 billion in investment expenditure across countries to the south and west of China, into Eurasia and Europe’s mainland, while spanning north and east Africa as well, along the old ‘Silk Road’ trade routes.

However if globalisation and trade integration are to be properly revitalised by initiatives such as the Silk Road, they will require alternative financing models which enhance socially responsible economic outcomes, rather than undermine them. While domestic participation in infrastructure funding may go some way to retaining the economic benefits of development, global investors should likewise be strongly incentivised to remain committed to sustainable development over the long term.

In this respect, the Islamic finance sector is particularly well positioned to become a driving force behind the Silk Road initiative, as its prohibition of speculative activities and its asset-based financing structures are perfectly suited to long term tangible infrastructure development. The proximity of the Middle Eastern, European, Malaysian, Indonesian and African centres of Islamic finance to the planned regions of development can also serve as a strong underpin which ties global financiers and local populations to the same fate, reducing the propensity for predatory modes of investment. Ultimately, the process of globalisation and integration can enhance worldwide productivity growth massively, as the profitable pre-crisis period of booming international trade has showed us. However, true sustainability will need more imaginative modes of international investment, so that the benefits of this growth are shared fairly, and we do not find ourselves in another cycle of growth-destructive political nationalism down the road.

Oasis was formed with the belief that a company could deliver a track record of continual excellence, outstanding results and superior returns in a socially responsible and ethical manner. It is a belief that has led us to an unwavering commitment towards our clients, their families and society at large. Over the past twenty years this commitment has made us a trusted global wealth manager and led us to continue and value each decision we make. Because we know that every choice made will impact the lives of our clients tomorrow.
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during periods of unemployment and economic evolution.
Present to receive the award was Oasis CEO, Adam Ebrahim, who said that “the Oasis Crescent Global Equity Fund is managed to thrive in a dynamic, constantly evolving global landscape. This award-winning Fund thus maintains a highly diversified exposure to companies which have the ability to deliver superior returns throughout the economic cycle in sectors such as healthcare, telecommunication and information technology, where the rate of change is creating new opportunities for market-leading companies to grow.
The Fund’s focus on quality is evident in the portfolio profile, as the companies in which it invests have market leadership positions and strong management teams, allowing them to generate an average return on equity of 21.6%, which is significantly higher than the benchmark average of 16.3%. Despite this, these companies are trading at meaningfully cheaper valuations across most conventional metrics, a powerful underpin of long-term outperformance. Furthermore, the underlying investments have strong balance sheets with low levels of debt and robust cash-flow generation, characteristics which have the impact of both reducing risk and enhancing share price performance over time.”
The Oasis Crescent Global Equity Fund is listed on the Irish Stock Exchange and has generated a sterling record over the past seventeen years. This award brings the total number of accolades the fund has garnered to eight, giving testimony to its consistent track record and its ability to deliver on its mandate, which is to protect and grow the wealth of its investors.
For further information on how you can access the Oasis Crescent Global Equity Fund, please call our client services centre on 0860 100 786.

Astana, Kazakhstan was host to the Global Islamic Finance Awards on the 6th of September 2017 as the world’s best performing Islamic investment funds and their associated fund managers were recognised. In an opulent ceremony held in the capital city and attended by Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Oasis Crescent Global Equity Fund received the award for the Best Global Shari’ah Compliant Equity Fund in 2017.
Dr Ademola Araoye is a former Nigerian diplomat and author of Cote d'Ivoire, The Conundrum of a Still Wretched of the Earth. He is an international policy analyst with a special interest in conflict analysis and management. Araoye has significant lived experience of post-conflict societies. He trained at the Claremont Graduate University, CA, USA. He was visiting Professor associated with SARCHI Chair for African Diplomacy and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg.

Molefi Kete Asante is an activist intellectual who is President of the Molefi Kete Asante Institute for Afrocentric Studies, and Professor and Chair, Department of Africology and African American Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia. He also serves as the International Organiser for Afrocentricity International. Asante is a Guest Professor, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China and Professor Extraordinarius at the University of South Africa. Asante has published 83 books, among the most recent are Erasing Racism: The Survival of the American Nation, Facing South to Africa, and As I Run Toward Africa. Asante is recognised as one of the most widely cited as well as the most published African American scholar.

Professor Steven Friedman (D Litt) is a political scientist and is Director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Rhodes University and the University of Johannesburg. Over the past decade, he has written on the relationship between democracy, social inequality and economic growth as well as the significance of citizen action. Friedman is the author of Building Tomorrow Today, a study of the South African trade union movement, and Race, Class and Power – Harold Wolpe and the radical critique of Apartheid. He was the editor of The Long Journey and The Small Miracle (with Doreen Atkinson) on the South African political transition.

Reneva Fourie served as the former Acting Secretary of Police and is currently a full-time member of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party. Previously she was a senior public servant in South Africa’s Department of Cooperative Governance. Reneva holds a Master’s Degree in Public Administration and is currently doing her doctorate in decentralisation models in Africa.

Robert Tama Lisinge is the Chief of the Operational Quality Section of the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). He holds a BSc degree in Civil Engineering from Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, and an MSc degree in Transportation Engineering from Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria. He also holds an MPhil and a degree of Doctor of Business Administration from the Maastricht School of Management in the Netherlands. The author has over 15 years of experience in research and in advising African countries and organisations on infrastructure policy issues. He has delivered courses on transport development at the African Institute for Economic Development.

Kgabo Masehela holds Master’s degree in Science Education from Rhodes University. He is the Divisional Manager for the Research and Information Unit at the Limpopo Legislature Previously he had worked as the Research Manager at the Human Sciences Research Council. He lectured at the University of Vista and is now at the University of the Free State in the Education Department. Kgabo has published widely in peer reviewed journals and presented papers at both local and international conferences. His interests are in the area of oversight, accountability, evaluation and election studies.

Tshepo Moloi is currently a D.Litt et Phil candidate in African Diplomacy and International Relations (University of Johannesburg). A student activist he has held many student leadership positions. Founding Member of United Nations Association of South Africa UJ Student Chapter (2015), Founder of Black Thought UJ (2015) and Chairperson of the University of Johannesburg’s Postgraduate Association (2015-16). Amongst the awards received by him are the University of Johannesburg’s Doctoral Merit Bursary (2015), the National Research Foundation Scholarship for Doctoral Candidates (2015). He is also an Advisor to the Traditional Chief of the Makholokoe (Moloi) Clan.

Zama Moyo lives in Johannesburg. He has completed an undergraduate degree in English and International Relations and an Honours degree in International Relations at the University of Witwatersrand. While doing his Honours, he was selected as an intern at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) where he researched and compiled topic packs for Model-UN debates, assisted in logistical planning for conferences, and developed an interest in qualitative policy analysis. In August 2016 he completed my MA in Ideology and Discourse Analysis at the University of Essex, United Kingdom. He has written on a broad range of current affairs. He is currently a Political Consultant to a Start-up consortium of market traders, and working to publish his debut novel.

Khathutshelo Neluheni is a qualified crop scientist and development practitioner with a Postgraduate Diploma in Management. Specialising in Monitoring and Evaluation, and a Master’s degree in Agriculture (Horticulture). He has worked in agricultural research, Food and Nutrition Security Policy environment, environment and water management.

Thando Ntlemeza holds a BA (Law) and postgraduate LLB from the University of Cape Town, where he was active in student politics. He is an Attorney of the Western Cape High Court. He worked as a Senior Researcher for the ANC in parliament. He has written many articles for various publications, including Hlomelang (ANCYL) and the ANC’s Umrabulo.
Pitika Ntuli is a South African sculptor, poet, writer, and academic who spent 32 years of his life in exile in Swaziland and the UK. He holds an MFA from the Pratt Institute in New York and an MA in Comparative Industrial Relations and Industrial Sociology. While in exile in the UK he taught at Camberwell College of Art, Central Saint Martin’s College of Art and Design, the London College of Printing, Middlesex University and the University of East London. Since returning to South Africa he has taught at The University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. He is an expert in African indigenous knowledge systems and has also participated in several national and provincial task teams and ministerial advisory committees.

Francis Onditi is senior lecturer and head of department, School of International Relations and Diplomacy, Riara University, Kenya. Onditi is a former employee of the United Nations leadership, politics and governance unit at the UN Women Regional Office in Gigiri, Nairobi. He was Guest Editor for the Special Issue on Women, Politics and Peace building in Africa, published by the African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review Vol. 7, Issue 1 (Spring 2017). His research article also appeared in the African Geographical Review Journal.

Michael Prior is a British economist with over 30 years’ experience as an international consultant specialising in energy and environment projects and policy development. He has worked in several African countries including Angola, Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan. Michael was previously Director of the Stockholm Environment Institute at York University. He has written extensively on a number of countries in Africa including South Africa.

Li Song is Minister of the Chinese Embassy in South Africa.

Gerson Uaripi Tjihenuna is the Director in the Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly in the Republic of Namibia. Previously he served as an Under Secretary in the Office of the President and as a free-lance consultant. He was also a Senior Lecturer at the International University of Management and served on the Editorial Board of the Namibia Journal of Managerial Sciences. He holds a Master’s Degree in Public Policy and Administration, and a BA Degree in Political Science.

Dr Oscar van Heerden completed his PhD and Master’s studies at the University of Cambridge (UK) from 2006-2010. He lectures in IR part-time at the University of the Witwatersrand and was also a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Johannesburg under the NRF chair for International Relations and African Diplomacy. He is currently the Executive Manager: Strategic Support for a Johannesburg City Municipal entity. He is a fellow of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflections (MISTRA) and a trustee of the Kgalema Motlante Foundation.

The Thinker

A Pan African Quarterly for Thought Leaders

UJ Collaborates with Vusizwe Media in publishing The Thinker
The problem with witch hunts is that you have to live with the consequences after you have got rid of the witch.

What that might mean in practice was spelled out in, of all things, a play about an English monarch. The play is ‘A Man for All Seasons’ by Robert Bolt. It is about Sir Thomas More, the British prime minister who was executed for opposing King Henry VIII’s plan to set up a church which would allow him to divorce his wife. More believed that the king was bending the rules to suit himself but, in his bid to prevent him, insisted on playing by the rules. This angered his zealous son-in-law Will Roper, who wanted him to do whatever it took to stop the king, who he sees as a representative of the Devil. More tells Will that he seems so determined to chase after the Devil that he would break down every law in the land to get at him. Will agrees that he would. To this, More replies: ‘And when the Devil turns on you to pursue you, where will you run to, there being no laws left to protect you?’

What does this snippet from our former coloniser tell us about our politics today?

Well, the king may have more to do with our current reality than we might imagine. He was renowned for his musical ability but also for his six wives. And the reason More (and Will) were opposing him is that he was trying to bend the rules to make them suit him.

Many of us may make some obvious links between this long gone British ruler and one in our midst now.

We may also have far more of our share of Will Ropers here. In our case, these are people who are so eager to get at politicians who they believe are using the state for their own ends, that they seem determined to knock down many of the rules which protect us. If they succeed, we will have no protection when the next group of politicians who want to turn the government into their own instrument come along.

To see why this British play does say something important about our politics, we need to go into some detail.

The Perils of Patronage

There are clear parallels between...
A British king who thought that the society’s institutions were his personal property and a faction which is trying to strengthen its hold on the South African state.

None of this is particularly new – it is familiar to anyone who has any exposure to South African media. But it is necessary to point out that the campaign against state capture is not a fiction invented by white monopoly capitalists to hide their power – it reacts against a reality which threatens the health of the economy and society.

Despite its frequent use of the term ‘radical economic transformation’ and its attempt to portray itself as a fight against white economic control, the political faction which rallies behind the incumbent president is about channelling the state’s resources to the service of a narrow group of connected business people and politicians.

There is more than enough evidence to back this claim but one example illustrates the point better than another recital of the last Public Protector’s state capture report – the relationship between the Ministry of Social Development and Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), which pays out social grants and is currently supervised by the Constitutional Court because it was using its position of power to sell services to a captive, impoverished, market of grant beneficiaries.

While the court has intervened to protect people living on grants, the contract with the company survives, at least for now, and the minister responsible, Bathabile Dlamini, retains her post despite her key role in concluding the contract and a marked inability to keep to deadlines imposed by the court. She remains untouched because she is a key supporter of the president and is also vital to the presidential campaign of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who is the faction’s choice – and despite the fact that the ministry’s arrangement with CPS makes a mockery of the faction’s claims to be batting for the poor in particular and black people in general.

CPS is a subsidiary of Net 1, a multinational corporation whose Black Economic Empowerment credentials were rejected by the constitutional court. It is, therefore, a glaring example of the ‘white monopoly capital’ which the faction claims to oppose. An arrangement which allows it to make money at the expense of the country’s poorest black citizens has nothing at all to do with ‘radical economic transformation’, however we define it, and everything to do with connected people advantaging themselves at the expense of the poor and the weak.

Given this, it is surely fair to insist that the faction is seeking control of the state – and the Treasury in particular – not because it wants to challenge or dismantle privilege, but because it wants a greater share of it.

When Dlamini-Zuma talks of ensuring that the Reserve Bank does not fight poverty and is certain to increase it.

Factional control of the Reserve Bank and the Treasury will benefit the insiders who benefit from deals like that with CPS: it will not fight poverty and is certain to increase it.

It is true that business leaders oppose control of the state by patronage politicians because they are looking after their own interests. But it is equally true that they are not the only people opposing them. The coalition which opposed the sacking of then finance minister Nhlanhla Nene in December, 2015, stretched from the major banks through to the left of the trade union movement. The state capture agenda negatively affects anyone who relies on the market economy – this includes everyone who receives a wage and a salary and this is why opposition to the president and the patronage faction is overwhelming among wage and salary earners.

Among people excluded from both, the reality is more complicated. Patronage politicians are able to command support among non-wage and salary earners because an important survival strategy is to attach yourself to a politician or political party which might dispense resources: people excluded from the benefits of the formal economy use this lifeline if it is available to them. But not everyone living in poverty enjoys this option and even those who do may well find that the benefits of the goods they receive are outweighed by the costs of the scarcity and the rising price of capital.

These dynamics are not researched and debated enough: they do much to explain current political trends. But, for
this analysis, the point is that opposition to patronage and the state capture on which it relies may include the owners of capital but is hardly restricted to them – most South Africans would lose if the state does become the plaything of the connected.

This shows why a campaign against state capture is needed. It does not justify the way in which the current campaign is run.

Knocking Down the Laws

If the ANC’s patronage faction bares an uncomfortable resemblance to King Henry, the campaign against it seems inspired by Will Roper because its aim seems to be to remove any protection for citizens which stands in the way of its goals. It too seems unmoved by the likelihood that this will make it more difficult in the future to safeguard rights and freedoms.

The most obvious example of a desire to tear up principle to get at the danger which faces us is the successful campaign for a secret ballot in the Parliamentary no confidence vote.

Much ink has been spilled on this issue so it is not necessary to repeat all the arguments. Suffice it to say that ensuring that public representatives vote in the open is an important protection for citizens because it enables us to hold to account those we elect. More specifically, an open vote is a protection against vote-buying because it makes it more difficult for elected representatives to cast votes in exchange for money.

Ironically, all of this was illustrated during the run-up to the no confidence vote when the DA’s mayor in Mogale City was removed in a no confidence vote by secret ballot. A DA councillor voted against the mayor but voters don’t know which one. More important, they don’t know why and so it remains possible that the mystery councillor was paid to change their vote. But the idea of legislators who are accountable to citizens to vote in secret is apparently acceptable if the goal is to remove the modern day South African equivalent of Will Roper’s Devil.

Another example is the constant attempt to turn the courts into vehicles of a political campaign. They have, for example, been asked to declare the March cabinet reshuffle irrational and are currently deciding whether they should tell parliament to begin impeachment proceedings against the President.

Courts play a crucial role in constitutional democracies like South Africa’s but only if we understand what that role is. Democracy is not a system in which we are ruled by judges – it is one in which we rule ourselves. The job of the courts is to do what they can to make sure that this happens, not to substitute their own rule for that of the people.

Courts are vital to democracy because the system does not only grant a say to those who are in the majority – it grants it to everyone. That means that everyone needs to enjoy the right to vote, to speak, to organise, to live and all the other rights which ensure that we are respected and dignified members of our society. And it is the job of courts to step in where majority governments threaten those rights. South Africa’s courts have justifiably won high praise for doing exactly that by, for example, ordering the president to pay back public money and trying to ensure that the arrangement between the social development ministry and CPS does not deprive grant beneficiaries of their rights.

But some of the more recent cases go way beyond asking the court to protect rights – they effectively ask it to take over the function of elected government.

In any political system, the people who head the government choose their cabinet. The decisions are political and so in a democracy they are taken by those who have been elected by the majority – there is no such thing as an irrational Cabinet appointment because people will inevitably disagree on who is a reasonable appointment and there is no way in which one person’s view can be shown to be more rational than another’s – in the mid-1990s, some very respectable people thought Trevor Manuel’s appointment as Finance minister was irrational because they saw him as a black radical. By asking a court to declare a Cabinet reshuffle irrational, the campaigners are, in effect, insisting that a small group of people who hold legal qualifications are entitled to decide for everyone else. Similarly, by asking it to take over parliament’s right to decide whether to impeach a president, it is trying to replace government by the people with rule by those who have professional qualifications.

This, to put it bluntly, is an attempt to return to minority rule in the quest to achieve a particular political result. It seems unlikely that the courts will play ball, but the fact that they are being asked to do this is revealing.

The belief that it is the job of the political system to produce the results sought by the campaigners has also prompted some to blame the constitution for the fact that the president is still in office. The constitution, it is said, was drafted in 1996 and is irrational because it saw him as a black radical. By asking a court to declare a Cabinet reshuffle irrational, the campaigners are, in effect, insisting that a small group of people who hold legal qualifications are entitled to decide for everyone else. Similarly, by asking it to take over parliament’s right to decide whether to impeach a president, it is trying to replace government by the people with rule by those who have professional qualifications.

This is an excellent example of how zeal to remove a particular politician can prompt campaigners to ignore basic democratic principles. The claim that the constitution assumed a saintly President is an almost breath-taking misinterpretation. The constitution includes an array of measures which are meant to hold all office holders, including presidents, to account. Besides the obvious right of parliament to vote out a president (in two ways, either through a no confidence vote or for bad behaviour), these include a wide range of checks designed to
ensure that the president operates within constitutional rules.

The only remedy it does not offer is a way of getting rid of a President politically without commanding a majority in the legislature. This it shares with other constitutional democracies which also leave it to the democratic process, in this case the will of those who were elected by the people, to decide who should govern. Once again, the complaint is that the choice of who governs is left to the people rather than to those who command respect in the suburbs. But that, is of course, the basic democratic idea.

Given this aversion to democratic decisions, it is surely no accident that the campaign against patronage politics has relied far more on trying to persuade judges or protect members of parliament from their voters than on winning broad public support – the weapon on which confirmed democrats rely.

A further victim of the current campaign is the idea that all politicians and parties should be judged by the same standard. When the governing party threatens disciplinary action against politicians who buck the party line, this is denounced as a ‘witch hunt’. It is difficult to understand why. No democracy anywhere enshrines a right to belong to a political party, let alone to hold office in it. And so parties can let in or throw out whoever they choose. Doing this may land them in trouble with voters – throwing out Julius Malema and his allies cost the ANC more than 6% of the vote in 2014, 8% in 2016. But they clearly have the right to do it.

This right, it seems, falls away when the politicians under fire are supported by people campaigning to change the ANC leadership. More important for those of us who feel that all parties should be judged by the same principles, it does not apply to the EFF which encountered little criticism when it announced plans to discipline its Mogale City councillors who had voted for the council’s budget.

Finally, there is little evidence that the campaign to remove the President has any time for the tolerance which is meant to underpin democratic systems. Making arguments like those in this article – which endorse the campaign for change but object to its methods – is a sure ticket to being demonised as a hack in the pay of a certain immigrant family from India or a lackey of the President and his faction. There is no debate about the methods and principles of the campaign – you either obey or you are assumed to be on the other side.

Some adherents of the campaign – although to be fair not all – have also sought to press DStv into removing the television channel ANN7 from its platform, presumably in the hope that this will remove it from the airwaves. The channel is not a credit to South African broadcasting – for what it is worth, this commentator has refused on principle to go anywhere near it for some time because it is clearly interested in propaganda, not analysis. But it surely does not require a lesson in advanced democratic theory to point out that, if we start silencing broadcasters because we don’t like what they say, our freedom to receive the information we need will not last very long.

In several ways, the campaign against patronage politics is doing precisely what More warned against. It may not be literally knocking down laws, but it is demolishing principles – openness, government by the people, fairness and tolerance – which are core democratic values. Like Will Roper, the campaigners see the current head of state as the Devil and they believe any principle is worth tearing up if it stands in the way of getting at him. And, like Will, they may one day find that this has left them, as well as the rest of us, without much-needed protection.

**Mortgaging the Future**

To see why this is so, we can apply a simple test, the best measure of political principles: would those who embrace them be happy if the same principle was used against them?

The test is easily applied. Let us assume that the President is replaced by an incumbent to the liking of the campaigners – either a rival within the ANC or the leader of one of today’s opposition parties. Would those who are leading the campaign against patronage politicians be comfortable if this president could be removed from office by a no confidence vote held in secret? Would they be happy if someone asked judges to tell their president who they may appoint to the Cabinet and or to instruct Parliament to investigate the President? Would they support constitutional change which will allow the removal of a President who enjoys majority support in the legislature? Would they have no complaint if the party they supported was demonised when it decided who to admit and who to eject, particularly if other parties were given a free pass if they did the same? And would they applaud if anyone who disagreed with their opponents was driven from the public debate as an agent of ‘white monopoly capital’? Or tried to silence media who supported their view?

The answers are obvious – the moment control over government shifts, we can be sure that the behaviour which is now being touted as a guarantee of our freedom would immediately be viewed as a threat. Which is precisely why the willingness to tear up principle now may, as More warned, come back to haunt us tomorrow. Even if the President and his faction disappear into the political wilderness today, the threats which democracy is meant to protect again will remain. Tearing up principle now will ensure that it is not there tomorrow when it will be needed to deal with problems we cannot yet anticipate but which are sure to emerge.

The fight against patronage politicians is essential. But so too is ensuring that the battle is waged in a democratic and principled manner. If it is not, the campaign may remove today’s presumed Devil only to find itself at the mercy of others which lie in wait.
Corruption and the Mangled Project of African Nationhoods

Corruption is clearly associated with the power calculus in state spaces and societies floundering with no validating principles. It is what defines who is in and who is out. He who dares wins.

By Ademola Araoye

African state spaces, and by implication, the continental space, are suffused with corruption. Corruption actually defines the African state. Conservatively, not less than 70% of the summit of African leadership, in the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, is embroiled in corruption, in its material and non-material expressions. Accordingly, Africa’s paternalistic leadership and those close to their patrimonial circles constitute paralysing impediments to the actualisation of the fractious national will and the obscured common African will as well as the repressed continental good. Corruption is an emotionally and ideologically vested concept, and corruption research is often characterised and/or motivated by normative descriptions and analyses of corruption.¹

Corruption is thus a complex phenomenon. It is an imprecise concept without a universally accepted definition. The varying definitions of corruption tend to reflect the inclination of the scholar² and are influenced by a host of factors related to the use for which the concept is to be immediately adopted.

In this article, corruption is the deployment of power, often legitimately acquired power, or use of one’s office or status in society, to promote or advance material and non-material interests and outcomes to private ends that are extraneous to, and with definitive deleterious impact on, or inconsistent with the overall objective public or common good. Accordingly, corruption is regarded as antithetical to the purpose of public administration. It is often referred to as a failure of the institution of the public service and as a betrayal of the essential professional ethic of the public administrator to serve the
public “honestly and disinterestedly as trustees of the public interest”. Public good or overall public interest are used synonymously and interchangeably as the non-exclusive common good.

The normative end of public policy is here assumed as objective public good, or overall public interest or non-exclusive common good. It is distinguished from and contrasts with the many competing partisan interests of a segment of society, formal institutions or of individuals in charge of public affairs in their different capacities. The rivalries of the many partisan interests at different levels that thrive in the public sphere may sometimes fuel a democratic response of distilling and advancing a common national interest out of the many. However, under certain circumstances, it may foster a logic of validating the institution of the practice of partisan loot and segmental interests as the contrived and convenient systemic operational protocol.

The latter option would seem to be the road taken in most of Africa, including Nigeria. Corruption, in betraying the essential professional ethic of public administration, undermines the formulation and implementation of determined interests of the state or that of the national community. In defining and playing the crudest form of politics, implying literally who gets what and when by all means, including underhand, illegal and unconstitutional means, corruption lurks initially at the subterranean zone of engagements. This has, over time, become integral to the calculus of power and central to the negotiations to achieve the immediate political settlement in states characterised by fractious societies with neither a driving overarching central vision, a consensual moral centre nor even an agreed existential raison d’être of the state and polity.

In these circumstances, state structures and institutions, both the corpus of protocols, procedures and the direct human articulators, have no direct philosophical directions. They may have often been captured by partisan forces to pursue goals extraneous to the overall public good. When this culture is entrenched in the political system, it impacts on the integrity of the formulation and implementation of policy, while undermining the integrity of structures and institutions of state governance. When corruption is believed to be the way the public sector, or one of its agencies, routinely operates the damage goes beyond the loss of misdirected resources; public administration risks losing both its capacity to be effective and the trust of citizens in the fair and impartial application of public resources and authority.

Meanwhile, the informal terms of the management of the state space by a dominant coalition of forces or even intra institutional relations may entail certain informal agreements or informal mutual understandings that are inconsistent with the purity of the law, the Constitution or the overall public good. Such a development poses a danger to the continued integrity of the system as a whole. For it is a slippery slope. Political settlement is the forging of common understandings, usually between elites that their best interests or objectives are served by a particular way of organising and deploying of political power. Since every political settlement is temporary and implies informal elements in the extant settlement, the renegotiation of every new regime or evolved dominant coalition at all levels often involves a recalibration of the moral gauge that may or may not be close to the nation’s moral centre.

In the worst case scenario, the recalibration of the moral centre may also prove to be a political project not truly defined by public morality or ultimately by the search for the restitution of the public good from the parochial loot. The overall national ethical orientation is therefore critical in directing any assault on the Augean stable. In a May, 2017 report by Chatham House on Corruption in Nigeria, it is highlighted that while significant attention has been afforded to legal and institutional efforts to tackle corruption, little consideration thus far has been given to understanding and addressing corruption in Nigeria as a collective practice – one that is primarily an aggregate of individual behaviours that are sustained by particular beliefs and expectations.

In Nigeria, the three branches of democratic governance have developed at one level, inter-institutional antagonisms in response to the anti-corruption project of the Executive branch. This has been pronounced in the frosty relationship between the Presidency and the Senate over the refusal of the latter to confirm the appointment of Ibrahim Magu, whose implacable anti-corruption operations have been applauded by most Nigerians, as Chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Magu is generally perceived as a man with the zeal to cure Nigeria of the vice of corruption that has been plaguing the country.

Although Nigeria has a plethora of laws and institutions to fight corruption, the EFCC is the major anti-corruption instrument. Ibidolapo Bolu highlights that the major laws that deal with corruption in Nigeria are:

- Independent Corrupt Practices & Other Related Offences Act 200018
- Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act 200619
- Money Laundering (Prohibition) (Amendment) Act 201220
- Miscellaneous Offences Act 21
- Code of Conduct Act 22
- Freedom of Information Act 201124
- Fiscal Responsibilities Act 201025
- Penal Code Laws of Federation of Nigeria 200426
- Criminal Code Law of Federation of Nigeria 200427
- Banks and Other Financial Institutions (Amendment) Act 1991

In the face of being rejected twice by the Senate, the presidency announced its resolve to work with Ibrahim Magu as chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to stamp out corruption in the country. Even while indisposed in London, the President reconfirmed the position that as long as he remained the President Ibrahim Magu would be the chairman of the EFCC. In a new twist to the confrontation of the two institutions,
the Presidency has insisted that Mr. Ibrahim Magu’s nomination as the substantive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) does not belong to the category of executive appointment that requires Senate confirmation. The Presidency has filed a case with the Supreme Court for judicial interpretation of the relevant Section 171 of the Constitution on which it relied.

For the Presidency, the Senate rejection of Magu is couched as corruption fighting back. The Senators are perceived to be against Magu because he has the corruption dossier on Senate President Bukola Saraki and several other serving Senators. It is also noted that Magu is about to re-commence the prosecution of former Delta Governor James Ibori who has just returned to the country from a British jail. Ibori is also seen as a close friend of Saraki and several other senators. Meanwhile, the Senators asserted in a note to the public that based on available security reports, the Senate could not proceed with the nomination of Ibrahim Magu as the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. They spoke, paradoxically, of a failure of an integrity test by the nominated Chairman. The nomination of Ibrahim Magu was hereby rejected and has been returned to the President for further action.

The case of the Legislature against Magu has not been helped by the introduction of a bill largely understood to grant amnesty to corrupt officials. The bill reads: A Bill for an Act to Establish a Scheme to Harness untaxed Money for Investment Purposes and to assure any Declarant Regarding Inquiries and Proceedings under Nigerian Law and for other Matters Concerned Therewith.

In public reaction to the bill, The Ummah Movement under the National Islamic Centre (NIC), has condemned the bill before the National Assembly as seeking to grant amnesty to treasury looters. The Ummah Movement rejected the spurious and self-serving reasons for the bill and urged all Nigerians of good will to condemn it and the National Assembly to abandon and cancel its second reading.

At another level, the fight against corruption has elicited intra-institutional tensions mainly in the Nigerian Bar Association, whose more radical members have lashed out at the Bar Association (NBA) for shielding corrupt judges and teaming up with corrupt judges and corrupt members of the Legislatures to frustrate the Executive’s anti-corruption campaign. In this connection, some bar members noted that in particular, the Nigerian Bar Association, which has information on all corrupt judges and lawyers in the country, has continued to shield them to the embarrassment of incorruptible members of the bar and the bench. It was highlighted that the few lawyers who have plucked up the courage to expose corrupt judges and lawyers have been stigmatised and treated like lepers by their colleagues. It was noted that it is on record that when both the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission sent invitation letters to judges suspected of corruption, the judges had rushed to the Federal High Court to obtain interlocutory injunctions to prevent their arrest, investigation and prosecution.

Meanwhile, the Executive also has a fair share of egregiously corrupt elements.

Yet the evidence suggests a lack of a common ethical pole in the brutish struggles to appropriate the totality of the public space by partisan actors. The restitution of the sanity of the public space entails a process without safeguards. This is specially so in multi-national societies with fragmented, fractured and competitive intra-national society associated with little integrated social capital for the process to draw on. Yet, often the project to recalibrate or reaffirm the centrality of the national moral centre may however be a ruse; an exercise merely promulgated as a convenient tool for regime validation and consolidation of power. Because of this possibility, the management of corruption thus spans two poles. It may be a legitimate project of sanitising the public sphere; or at the other end may be a mere political project of partisan consolidation of power. Whatever drives the project though, it is a political process that is subject and vulnerable to the unpredictability and vagaries of politics. The politics of the process to mitigate corruption is therefore a critical imperative. In general, perpetrators of corruption often seek to turn the restitution and criminal process into a political charade. At least that has been the tendency in the anti-corruption campaign in Nigeria.

The dominant regime at each point in time refers to the rules, principles, norms and modes on interaction between social groups and state organs. Corruption is perceived as part of exploiting opportunities based on rational calculus of costs and benefits. Rose-Ackerman and Søreide advance that in economic terms, for instance, corruption is usually opportunistic behaviour based on rational choice and agency theory, and thus on the individual’s motivations for engaging in corrupt behaviour.

In this context, the directing principles of corruption driven regimes is the perpetuation of illegal and unfair distribution of value inconsistent with the organic law of the land. The public sector is then deployed to serve private, sectional and partisan ends. In any case, the public sector may lose its pre-eminence as the main structure for the developmental agenda as proceeds from corruption in private hands outstrip what is officially allocated to public administration. In Nigeria, the Minister of Information, National Orientation and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, revealed that the looters of the public treasury had more money in their possession than all the tiers of the public treasury had more money in their possession than all the tiers of the public treasury had more money in their possession than all the tiers of the public treasury had more money in their possession than all the tiers.
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of government in the country. The Minister was quoted as saying it is now obvious that there are more funds in the possession of looters than are available to government at all levels to meet their obligations, including paying workers' salaries, providing social amenities, upgrading infrastructure and ensuring the security of lives and property.11

Meanwhile, it has been estimated that close to $400 billion was stolen from Nigeria's public accounts from 1960 to 1999. Also, between 2005 and 2014, $182 billion was lost through illicit financial flows from the country.12

In light of daily revelations of stolen public money in Nigeria, some may consider the Chatham House estimate rather conservative.

Corruption expresses itself in a multitude of ways. The final impact however is the gross distortion and derailment of established procedures, processes and protocols that define the nature and character of national and societal systems; of the relationships, operations and ethos of the public sphere. These distortions impinge in the subversion of the integrity of all facets of national life: political, including administrative, legislative and the judiciary; economic; social; cultural; normative; and spiritual. In contrast to the search for the public and common good, corruption at the personal, societal and institutional levels advances the subjective, private and parochial interests of a few to the detriment of the objective interests of the overall collectivity. In fiscal terms, it promotes parochial loot at the expense of the public good. It also reflects a lack of or corrosion of the moral centre of society while polluting, metaphorically and in actuality, the spirituality of the public space and entire fabric of the febrile community. At its worst, corruption shreds the conventional operative norms of society and drives all levels of the subverted interactions of a society in decay.

The physical expressions of corruption range from the ridiculous to the bizarre. Tayo Oke shares that Politically Exposed Persons in Nigeria and across the continent appear to have come up with ingenious means of concealing their stolen wealth. In January 2017 he documents that, for instance, Kenya's Electricity Pool, "Kenya Power", recovered 18 transformers buried in a farmland by a top government functionary. Also, in January this year, after spending his stolen wealth until he became terminally ill, a Ugandan man instructed his wife to bury him with $55,000 US dollars, apparently for use to bribe God (just in case the Almighty turns out to be a Ugandan like him). Recently, in Nigeria, seven military Hilux trucks were needed to dig up N37bn concealed in farmland. A prosecution witness in the ongoing trial of Andrew Yakubu told the Federal High Court, Abuja, how 9.8m dollars and £74,000 was found in the defendant’s house in Kaduna. Yakubu, who was the former Group Managing Director (GMD) of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), was arraigned by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) on a six-count charge of money laundering and false asset declaration.

Stories abound of monies being abandoned at airports, hidden in sewage outlets, in rooftops, swimming pool hatches, graveyards, etc. Some of the affected PEPs have stolen more money than they and their generations yet unborn can ever need or require.13 Yet, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Premier state institutions, including the Legislature and Judiciary are not immune to the challenge.

In the early hours of Saturday, October 8, Directorate of State Services (DSS) operatives launched a sting operation in several parts of the country. Justices of the Supreme Court Sylvester Ngwuta and John Okoro were taken to the EFCC in custody. Justice Ngwuta allegedly traveled to Qatar to receive a bribe which he shared with Justice Okoro and others. The bribe was allegedly given by Governor Wike to win his election case which got to the Supreme Court. When Justice Ngwuta’s house was raided, the DSS allegedly recovered N35,208 million, US$319,475, £25,890 and €280. Ngwuta is being prosecuted by the federal government on a 16-count charge for corruption, money laundering and other financial crimes. He has however pleaded not guilty to the charges and was granted bail on self-recognition.

When the DSS stormed the residence of another Justice, Adeniyi Ademola, he was arrested allegedly with N54 million cash, $171,779, €4,400 Euros, 1,010 Rupees, and £80 in his possession. Subsequently, a High Court in Abuja cleared Justice Adeniyi Ademola and his wife, Olabowale, of charges of corruption brought against them by the Attorney General of the Federation. A statement by the presidency indicated that the federal government has filed an appeal against the ruling which discharged a Federal High Court judge and two others of fraud allegations. In the statement, the federal government reiterated its determination to save the war against corruption. This followed a streak of losses in the courts. Accordingly, it filed an appeal against the decision of Justice Jude Okeke to uphold the no case submission in the corruption case against Justice Adeniyi Ademola, Mrs. Olabowale Ademola and Mr. Joe Agi, SAN. The Government through the Ministry of Justice has also filed a fresh case in the Code of Conduct Tribunal against Justice Ademola and wife for living above their means and failure to declare their assets, the sources were quoted as saying.14

In another raid of the residence of a judge, Justice Okoro was found with N4.35 million, $38,833 and €1000 Euros.14 In another high profile case involving the Judiciary and a member of the Nigerian Bar, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned Justice Oifili-Ajumogobia alongside Mr. Godwin Obia, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), on November 28, 2016 on a 30-count charge bordering on conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, offering gratification to a public official, and unlawful enrichment by a public official, among others.

Meanwhile, the Vanguard newspaper (Nigeria) reports that the House of Representatives has queried the Central Bank of Nigeria for a staggering $81.2bn imbalance in crude oil sale proceeds declared by the apex bank for the years 2011 to 2014. The query was sent to the CBN by the House ad hoc committee investigating the alleged export of $17bn undeclared
crude and gas resources from the country between 2011 and 2014. Part of the query the committee sent to the apex bank read, “That out of $42.7bn you declared as crude oil sales receipt, that $35.2bn, representing 82.4 per cent, went into a bottomless pit called Cash Call and Excess Crude Account, and only $7.5bn, representing 17.6 per cent, was available for distribution to the three tiers of government.”

The entrenchment of legalised and institutionalised systemic looting of the state is revealed in the struggles of the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) to recover more than N40 billion received by ex-governors of some of Nigeria’s 36 states, currently serving as senators and in the federal cabinet as ministers. The SERAP noted that the politicians were already enjoying pensions and other privileges and ought not to receive further emoluments from the Federal Government. Accordingly, the SERAP dispatched a letter to the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice to urgently institute appropriate legal actions to challenge the legality of states’ laws permitting former governors currently serving as senators and ministers to enjoy monumental serving governors’ emoluments as pensions. In its letter to the AGF, the organisation expressed concern that many serving senators and ministers were receiving salaries and life pensions running into billions of naira from states that were currently unwilling or unable to pay workers’ salaries. It said that double emolument and large severance benefits for former governors now serving as public officials constituted a blatant betrayal of public trust.

Publishing a survey of the pensions and privileges many governors had approved for themselves with the connivance of their cronies in state Legislatures, SERAP noted that under the Lagos (State) Pension Law, a former governor would enjoy the following benefits for life: Two houses, one in Lagos and another in Abuja estimated to cost between N500m and N700m. It said they also enjoy six brand new cars, furniture allowance of 300 per cent of annual salary to be paid every two years, and a close to N2.5m monthly pension (about N30m pension annually).

It said a former governor of Lagos State was also entitled to free medicals with his immediate families as well as house maintenance, car maintenance, entertainment and utility allowances in addition to several domestic staff. In Rivers State, the law provided for 100 per cent of annual basic salaries for ex-governor and deputy, one residential house for former governor anywhere of his choice and one residential house for the deputy for life. Three cars are given to the ex-governor every four years; two cars for the deputy, 300 per cent of annual basic salary for furniture; and 10 percent of annual basic salary for house maintenance.

In Akwa Ibom State, the law provided N200m annual pay to ex-governors, deputies; pension for life at a rate equivalent to the salary of the incumbent governor/deputy governor respectively. A new official car and utility-vehicle, one personal aide and provision of adequate security; a cook, chauffeurs and security guards were provided for the governor. Other benefits include free medical services for governor and spouse at an amount not exceeding N100m for the governor per annum and N50m for the deputy governor. The law also gave a five-bedroom mansion and allowance of 300 percent of annual basic salary for the deputy governor; 300 percent of annual basic salary and severance gratuity.

The Kano State Pension Rights of Governor and Deputy Governor provided for 100 percent of annual basic salaries for former governor and deputy as well as furnished and equipped offices. It also provided for a 6-bedroom house; well-furnished 4-bedroom for deputy, plus an office; free medical treatment for self and immediate families, two drivers; and a provision for a 30-day vacation within and outside Nigeria.

It said Gombe State law gave N300 million executive pension benefits for the ex-governors while Kwara law gave a former governor two cars and a security car replaceable every three years. The act also provided for a well-furnished 5-bedroom duplex, 300 per cent of his salary as furniture allowance and five personal staff. The ex-governor and his deputy are also entitled to free medical care, 30 per cent of salary for car maintenance, 20 per cent for utility, 10 per cent for entertainment; 10 per cent for house maintenance.

SERAP said in Zamfara State, former governors received pension for life, two personal staff, two vehicles replaceable, two drivers and free medical treatment for them and their immediate families in Nigeria or abroad. Ex-governors in the state are also entitled to a 4-bedroom house in Zamfara, an office, free telephone and 30 days paid vacation outside Nigeria.

The Sokoto State law gave former governors and deputy governors N200 million and N180million respectively being payment for other entitlements which included domestic aides, residence and vehicles that could be renewed after every four years. Many of the beneficiaries of the appropriated largesse are serving either in the Senate or appointed into the federal cabinet who, at the same time, were receiving equally monumental salaries and privileges.

Also in a case involving corporations with state agencies, media reports that George Turnah, holder of a privileged title of Member of the Order of Niger, MON, together with seven companies, were arraigned on a 12-count charge bordering on obtaining by false pretense, money laundering and abuse of office to the tune of N3, 094, 268, 235.69. The seven companies arraigned with Turnah are: El Godmas Global Services Limited; Turnoil and Gas Nigeria Limited; Kolo Creek Petroleum Development Limited; Celtic Pride Consult and Events; Yenagoa Mall, Adaka Boro Marine Services Limited
and Sugarland Integrated farms Nigeria Limited. 17

Corruption seems to be inherent in the very nature of power in developing societies. The intense unmediated struggle for acquisition of power by all means by all the various competing individuals and their convenient roles as part of the coalescing partisan forces have proven to the most cost effective instrument to escape grinding poverty, achieve and consolidate the social mobility of individuals and their immediate families. Subsequently is the proclivity to abuse public trust in promoting personal or sectional interests. Power usurpation, including very skewed patterns in the distribution of fiscal value either through truncated due processes in politics, business and economic interaction or even the subversion of spirituality, is therefore the norm in state spaces characterised by intense struggle for partisan appropriation. Corruption is clearly associated with the power calculus in state spaces and societies floundering with no validating principles. It is what defines who is in and who is out. He who dares, wins.

The public sphere is a murky realm where angels fear to tread. It is paramount that the complete denudation of the ethics of the public space and the criminal abridgement of normal processes by representatives of stake-holding constituents in national affairs are tacitly or even explicitly approved by partisan kinsmen and the local constituency. The latter perceive themselves as direct or potential beneficiaries of the accruing and accrued loot of the local hero operating at their instance at the centre of power. The local hero who is villainous at the national level is often further rewarded by the local community for his villainous acts of corruption at the centre. They often represent the communal wild dogs that are unleashed to haunt, hunt and hound in the wild world of domestic politics of prebendal systems.

This behavioural attitude may be consistent with the treatise of organisational scholars, (cited by Ashforth and Anand, 2003) that have emphasised that corruption should not only be regarded as a state of misuse, but also as a process – ie a gradual institutionalisation of misbehaviour which contributes to legitimising behaviour and socialising others into it in such a way that it gradually becomes normalised. This may be called a ‘culture of corruption’.

The local heroes must also ensure that no new heroes emerge in the local community. So the dominant heroes of the community share the largess in a local patrimonial paradigm built on loyalty to their persons. In most cases, emerging challengers are physically eliminated. This ensures that the circle of political elites is very narrow and on the surface uncompetitive.

Tayo Oke is miffed by the obsession with money by public officials? And, if that sounded baffling, then, Oke asked, by way of analogy, why politicians in this country (Nigeria) never retire from the business of politics? They move from being secretary to a governor, then become a two-term governor in their own right, move to the Senate to serve two or three terms, move on to become a minister, and then, move on to become Chairman, Board of Trustees of their party, etc.

The departing president or governor handpicks a sympathiser or a protégé of sorts as his successor to protect his back once out of office. He acquires the status of a political godfather of sorts in the community. The attempt to protect dubious legacies of outgoing regimes, and in most cases with skeletons in huge cupboards to conceal, is integral to the perpetuation of political corruption. The immutable trajectory of this is part of the arrangement to perpetuate corruption. It is corruption of the political and economic space fossilised in the subsisting political settlement.

Part of the corruption of the political space is the expected assurance that the next administration will protect the last. This has often been the case where the ‘new’ in-coming administration has been put together by the outgoing governor. That has implied the truncation of internal democracy within the political parties and by implication of the national democracy project. The situation in Lagos State of Nigeria is a prime example. Against this background, elections at all levels are therefore sham as each regime seeks to perpetuate itself in a second term, whether it has earned it by meritorious performance in the first term or not. If it is constitutionally barred and cannot elongate its rule, the next option to ensure continuity of the extant political settlement is through electoral fraud. The elections must throw up a new government of its cronies from its ruling party. Accordingly, in a nominally democratic environment, it is the judiciary that often determines the winner. Cases have been known to languish in the courts half way into the gubernatorial mandate only to declare the governor an usurper. In this climate, the sages stay at home. Corruption is institutionalised.

Therefore while corruption may be instigated primarily for personal gain of the individual perpetrator, it is often instrumental in promoting, providing and satiating parochial material or psychological dividends of a sub-set of the national community or a defined parochial constituency. This delineated partisan constituency perceives that its interests are served by acts of the villainous representative at the national level, who is hailed as a smart hero in the home constituencies. The denunciations at the national level are contrasted by the approbations at the home constituency of the perceived smart local heroes. This suggests a wide ethical discrepancy across the field and gargantuan systemic value dissonance in the operational axioms underpinning the system as a whole. This wide gap directs the operative expectations at the local level for their representatives deployed to the centre.

This is often the case in multinational states and societies struggling with the damaging deficits and imperatives of state orphanage in post-colonial contexts and the challenges of nation building. This has emerged even in post-liberation state spaces with relatively more coherent ideological appreciations of the essence of the state forged out of the crucible of horrendous deprivations and revolutionary struggles. They constitute post-revolutionary societies in decay as the tenets of the revolution have given way to the banalities of partisan struggles intrinsic to the formulation of political settlements outside the

UP THE GAME
Corruption is manifest in bribery, misappropriation, underhand transactional processes outside the established due process, and all other related forms of non-material gratifications, including demands for and solicited and willful offering of sexual favours, as well as stealing of public funds. Corruption includes the use of otherwise legitimate institutional mandates, such as the Legislature or any political party, to orient the formulation of public policy away from the objective public interest in the direction of outcomes for private dividends and or parochial gains. Also, corruption may entail the implementation of policy in a manner that detracts from the overall public good to advance parochial interests of the direct recipients, their complicit constituencies or institutional actors. Institutions, including political parties and state organs such as the Executive, the Legislature or even the Judiciary, can therefore be corrupt.

Despite popular understanding of corruption as the outcome of clandestine interaction between individual actors, corruption often entails open interactions based on or implied tacit public partnerships. Partisan state capture and the corruption of the state space begin with electoral fraud.

Systemic corruption threatens democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The country’s senate president stood trial for false asset declaration and other corruption-related charges. Many former governors are facing trial for graft. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is actively investigating dozens more sitting and former officials. News that several senior election officials allegedly accepted millions of dollars in bribes demonstrates that corruption threatens the integrity and credibility of Nigeria’s elections.

The logic of systematic and systematised corruption is founded in its utilitarian function as a political instrument and as an organic, even if illegitimate, glue to a negotiated political settlement among like-minded corruption directed dominant elites. The national project in this case rests on a permanently fragile political settlement that incorporates in an atomistic fashion, in contradistinction from an integrated manner, the collectivity of prominent national villains who are legitimate in their local constituencies by virtue of their capacity to advance a parochial look at the national level.

The national villain is thus validated by his credentials as a local hero. There is therefore no consensual moral centre to prosecute the preeminent local heroes advancing the partisan interests as a national villain. Impunity results from the character of the national processes founded on a political settlement based on discounted national values and ethics. Impunity reduces the perceived cost of corruption. As former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Dahiru Musdapha, observed in a keynote address at the SERAP’s 9th Roundtable conference in 2012, the risk that corrupt activities will result in imprisonment and accompanying public humiliation is minimal. He surmised that the gains of corruption are therefore not discounted and there is thus, little reason beyond personal integrity not to engage in corrupt acts.

Corruption is thus a complex phenomenon entailing an equally complicated network of actors internally and externally. That complexity also involves understanding the structural linkages of domestic level national villains in the context of a subsisting political settlement while simultaneously defining the relationships of local proxies with their conniving external hegemonic state and institutional collaborators. The internal political settlements that validate corruption at the highest levels in less developed political systems are also integral to formal and informal engagements with external interests and partners as informal state policy in pursuit of their sovereign interests.

Corruption in African countries can therefore be analysed at two levels. At the first level is the anatomy of corruption in the domestic and national setting. At the second level is the nature of the murky external environment, political and legal, that facilitates corruption in, paradoxically, a reversed structural dependence of powerful international forces on corruption in underdeveloped political systems in the Southern hemisphere to oil their respective economic and political machineries.

Corruption, especially endemic across all strata of society and national communities in Africa, is the most expressive public articulation of an unrefined ethical and normative system and a deformed spirituality of the community. This may lead to psychological mass defection from the idea of the centrality of the state as the defining political realm or of the notion of the nation as a determinate community. In this context, statesmanship is reduced to activities to exploit the subject putative state, the nation and community. Notions of the rhetorical national project, like the character of the concrete myth of these kind of states, acquire a fictive character in what essentially are entities that perpetually struggle to consolidate themselves as concrete and legitimate realities.

The struggles for the absolute partisan appropriation of the totality of the state space by individuals such as Sassou Nguesso in Congo Brazzaville and Obiang in Equatorial Guinea, account for the significant incidence of corruption in the post-colonial state. Corruption is thus integral to the process of and struggle for partisan appropriation of state spaces unleashed by the unconsolidated and unpacified nature of the state and potential nation spaces in their post-colonial settings. In fact, the dominant governance paradigms in post-colonial or post-liberation entities rest on corruption.

This is abundantly manifest whether in the context of the many derailed messianic military interventions or intrusions in public life that predictably ended up spawning moral monstrities governing through opaque and unaccountable standard operating procedures in regimes of bold thieves in uniforms or even in the post military ex-military dominated successive odious instrumental democracies exemplified by Nigeria.

They are also manifest elsewhere in patrimonial administrations in One Man States (OMS) as in Obiang’s Equatorial
Guinea or Togo under the Cbasinghe Eyadema and his dynasty or One Party States in Angola's MPLA (OPS). In the post-Cold War era associated with enhanced cognitive sensibilities in relation to governance in the global environment and the associated demands for transformational democratic leadership, corruption remains endemic in neo-patrimonial systems in the post One Man State or post One Party States or even represented in the emerged post-revolutionary decay of post liberation and post settlement regimes depicted by South Africa, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau and Angola.

Meanwhile, in spite of the political rhetoric to the contrary, corruption has been an explicit vehicle for the promotion of continued hegemonic statuses of neo-imperial partners of predatory national leaderships serving in proxy roles. This seeming validation of international amoralities in the affairs of poor and weak countries shaped the consciousness and understandings of local third world tyrants of the duplicitous state of global morality. Corruption was also then a strategic instrument for political longevity domestically and in oiling the international crucial partnership externally. These understandings underpinned the workings of a curious international network and structural linkages of global corruption. These networks can be plainly public as in the historic case of FrançAfrique.

FrançAfrique symbolises everything nebulous about French neo-colonial relationship with post-independence Francophone Africa that meant keeping former colonies on a tight leash. This is expressed in political interference to protect France's political and economic interests: organised coups to remove African leaders that attempted to go rogue, covert military intervention to secure natural resources; and corruption and illicit outflows.

Corruption thus feeds into and is sustained by the amorality of the operations of the international system. The leaders of elite states adumbrate their political correctness in condemning corruption while turning a blind eye to institutional collaboration with corruption in their proxy states. This is to the benefits of their economies or to the private fortunes of selected families in the metropoles. In fact formal neo-colonial relationships are founded on the transference through legal and formal compacts as well as illegal channels oiled by formal state institutions of receiving powers of illegally acquired wealth to the metropoles. It is the standard modus operandi of FrançAfrique in Africa.

The quid pro quo is that the corrupt and the conniving African head of state and the cohort in the inner circles of the patrimonial arrangement are protected in office and assured a life-time reign. The most loyal of these corrupt proxies may be offered French honorific titles such as the Houphouet Boigny Prize for peace instituted in the name of the life President of that country.

“Many serving senators and ministers were receiving salaries and life pensions running into billions of naira from states that were currently unwilling or unable to pay workers’ salaries.”

The honorifics are to deodorise their memories and whitewash their real role in blighting the fortunes of their nations. Blackmail is a tool in the box. Where through dynastic succession, the scions of established corrupt leaderships seek to break the mould and renounce consolidated patterns of fiscal hemorrhage of the treasury to external destinations such as France as in the case of Ali Bongo, the son and successor of the late Omar Bongo of Gabon, they are blackmailed to return to the status quo. The cases of Laurent and Simone Gbagbo who refused to continue the tradition of unlimited and mediated access of France to the Ivorian treasury under Houphouet Boigny in Cote d’Ivoire are clear examples. So is that of President Pascal Lissouba in Congo Brazzaville, who opened up the strategic, even if puny, oil sector of the economy to foreign, specifically American, participation. In both cases, the responsible French agency concocted narratives demonising them as blackmail to soften the ground before their final political executions. French companies and establishments are in partnership with the state in the execution of these critical national projects.

In Congo (Brazzaville) Elf Acquitane financed a war to bring back Sassou Nguesso to power to facilitate continued French control of the economy. Corruption thus becomes an instrument for neocolonial domination and control. Meanwhile, the situation can sometimes be complicated. With the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, Sassou Nguesso is haunted by his past. Sassou Nguesso is enmeshed in corruption scandals in Australia, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland. Earlier this year, during trips to Washington, Sassou Nguesso’s wife, son, and finance minister were served with subpoenas, which required them to disclose the sources and locations of Sassou Nguesso’s wealth. As Brent L. Carlson highlights, the subpoenas were delivered as part of Commisimpex SA’s effort to collect a $1 billion arbitration award, which stemmed from Sassou Nguesso’s refusal to pay infrastructure invoices some 30 years ago. Sassou Nguesso’s routine use of official meetings with French presidents to elicit guarantees of immunity from prosecution is not enough, given the new realities at the international level.

It can be recalled that in the 1980s ELF Acquitane funded the war unleashed by Sassou Nguesso to overthrow democratically elected Congolese President Pascal Lissouba from office. Thereafter, from the late 1980s, Sassou Nguesso, a major player in the FrançAfrique network, favoured France to undercut ExxonMobil’s central role in offshore exploration in that country. Sassou Nguesso stripped ExxonMobil of oil concessions granted to the American company under President Pascal Lissouba. He awarded the most lucrative production permits to French corporations Elf and Total – essentially snubbing ExxonMobil. In
the context of the prevailing political realities, especially Sassou Nguesso’s protracted centrality in Françafrique corruption networks, his decision then was politically prudent. As a result, from the late 1980s Sassou Nguesso had a strained relationship with ExxonMobil, and its former CEO Rex Tillerson.

In 2017, however, Tillerson is President Trump’s Secretary of state. Nguesso is thus seeking rapprochement with Tillerson and assurance from President Donald Trump. Finally, in 2015, Sassou Nguesso gained the implicit approval of French President Francois Hollande’s to illegally review the Congolese Constitution to enable him to stand for a re-election not prescribed in the constitution in March 2016. Many protesting this illegality in the streets were killed. Sassou Nguesso is again suppressing a phantom opposition in a military campaign in the Pool region. The military campaign ostensibly targets a rebel group that no longer exists. In reality, the campaign is designed to threaten citizens who might otherwise contest and protest his ‘reelection’.

Also, Joseph Desire Mobutu, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1965 until his death from prostate cancer in 1997 is documented as setting about a death from prostate cancer in 1997. He stole and stashed away a whopping $30bn in Western banks, notably, in France and Switzerland. Former maximum ruler and dictator Sani Abacha stashed away over 5 billion United States dollars in safe havens, including the United States, Switzerland, France, Luxemburg and various established destinations of stolen wealth from Africa. Negotiations to repatriate the stolen loot have remained tortuous.

It is against the background of the international dimensions of corruption that the Nigerian administration has entered into bilateral agreements with a number of countries that have provided safe havens for stolen monies from Nigeria. On January 19, 2016, Nigeria signed six agreements with the United Arab Emirates, following a state visit by President Muhammadu Buhari. The pact includes Judicial Agreements on Extradition, Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters, and Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal and Commercial Matters (the recovery and repatriation of stolen wealth). In September, 2016, the Federal Government of Nigeria signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the British Government on the modalities for the return of Nigerian stolen assets. The Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, who signed on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria, outlined the objectives of the MoU. It includes the fact that the processes of returning stolen assets was a partnership to further the interest of both countries and based on mutual understanding, confidence and trust. That both countries recognised that they have a mutual interest in ensuring that returned assets are not at risk of being misappropriated again. And that both countries recognised they have obligations toward their own citizens for providing such assurances. Also, both countries recognised the importance of ensuring that the highest possible standard of transparency and accountability are applied for the return of assets. The Nigerian Attorney General gave the assurance to the international community that all funds recovered would be judiciously utilised for projects that would benefit the poorest segment of the Nigerian society. Affirming his government’s full commitment to the return of all funds looted from the Nigeria, the Minister of State for Immigration of the United Kingdom, Robert Goodwill, announced that 40 jurisdictions, including British Overseas Territories, would share beneficial ownership information relating to companies, trusts and foundations in order to expose owners of stolen assets. Before then, a two day Anti Corruption Summit was held in London that brought together over 40 heads of government to use the conference to galvanise a global response to tackle corruption. It was expected that agreement would be reached on the repatriation or extradition of persons that had looted their nation’s funds to ensure they faced trial.

It was also hoped that the summit would remove all impediments to the efforts of the Nigerian President to get all stolen money in the UK repatriated. At last, it will be faster to facilitate the repatriation of the assets that are abroad; and even the people behind the looting living abroad could be extradited to Nigeria.

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At Aspen, we recognise that good corporate citizenship is more than a compliance requirement, it is a fundamental imperative to the way we do business. We care about developing sustainable communities, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, enhancing healthcare infrastructure and human capital development, promoting gender and youth empowerment and improving the quality of life of all South Africans.
I suspect that until we reset the social sciences, humanities, sciences and arts more closely to our own historical narratives we will continue to assume the role of junior brother and sister to other world narratives as if our own experiences, that is, those of our ancestors, are less important than others. Hence, I have proposed a re-alignment of all forms of historical, philosophical, and economic investigations toward an Afrocentric orientation to knowledge and I have not been alone in this effort. This begins with the proper interface to the emergence of homo sapiens on the continent of Africa whether in the Rift Valley or as has recently been
asserted in Morocco. What we know is that homo sapiens appears between 350,000 and 200,000 years ago in Africa. There are no examples of homo sapiens earlier in other parts of the world. In fact, there are no instances where homo sapiens are found in Europe, Australia, Asia, or the Americas prior to Africa. Our species emerged in Africa and spent nearly two-thirds of human time on earth has been spent in Africa. One can reasonably assert that prior to 70,000 every human was black; one can definitely say that all homo sapiens were Africans.

Cheikh Anta Diop’s work, *The African Origin of Civilization* established the fact that humans in Africa also created the first civilisations on the earth. It is not simply the fact that homo sapiens first stood up erect on African soil but that homo sapiens first named god, first built barges, first domesticated animals, first built villages to protect humans from other animals, first decided what was edible and what was poisonous to eat, and so forth. The organisation of collective protection measures, administration of rational forms of punishment for bringing shame to the community, and the exploitation of the resources of nature for food, were all related to the growing ability of human beings to develop civilization.

An immense record exists of the emergence in Africa of every foundational basis for modern civilisation. Nothing escaped the early humans who occupied the continent. We know, for instance, that African women created the earliest mathematical computers as they marked the time of their female cycles. Understandably these calculators reach back nearly forty thousand years ago in Swaziland with the discovery of the Lebombo bone and 28,000 years ago in Congo with the Ishango bone calculator. There should be no wonder that this marvelous continent, the original home of humankind, also gave us ancient paintings on the walls of caves throughout its vast territory. Each day it appears that Africa reveals more of itself and yet there is so much more to be revealed in time because scholars have barely unearthed one-tenth of the possible areas of archaeological and historical research. Naba Playa, a rich field of stone artifacts and tumuli, in the far southwest of Egypt and crossing over into Libya, has shown itself to be the oldest such archaeological region in the world making Stonehenge in the United Kingdom appear like a relatively recent experiment. Africa’s Naba Playa is the oldest known astronomical megalith field on earth. It was created between 12,000 to 14,000 years ago. Stonehenge, for example, was erected around 5000 years ago and Teotihuacan appears in Mexico about 2000 years ago.

I have argued in two of my books that the distortions of history produced in the West during a time when Africans were either enslaved or colonised have continued to direct the thinking of most modern historians. They are stuck in what Basil Davidson once told me was a “cycle of disbelief.” They cannot accept Africa’s primacy in anything because they were led to believe by many years of negative thinking and bad history that Africa had never produced any civilisations. They were able to say this in a Trumpian way; that is, while you are looking at the evidence and examining it with your own eyes they are telling you what you are seeing is incorrect.

Of course, we are rational human beings and as such we investigate, question, and demand to see more evidence. One of the most powerful examples of substance fact in a concrete way is what our African ancestors left on the earth. Early on in the dynastic age of ancient Egypt, called Kemet by Africans long before the young Greeks imposed Aegyptos on the world, a singular fact overwhelms and awes us: the construction of the pyramids.

The pyramid stands as the most important human construction in the ancient world. The pyramid, the mr, is an eternal and nearly indestructible monument honoring the passionate spiritual power of the enduring notion of eternal life. It is not merely an architectural wonder, but a seed, asili, in the words of Marimba Ani, that announces its primacy as a building and as a perfect monument to excellence.

Throughout the world the West has imposed its version of human history as the universal view. Consequently we learn that Homer’s Odyssey and Iliad are at the head of the class when it comes to a discourse on civilization. But how could that be since Homer lived about 800 BC and the first pyramid was designed and constructed by the African Imhotep about 2800 BC, almost 2000 years before Homer was born? There is no doubt in my mind that we have been hoodwinked and lied to and lied about by those who first created the idea of humans as inferior and superior to protect their own narrative. Why aren’t African pyramids considered the most profound creations of antiquity? One finds that they contain writing, mathematics, literature, philosophy, measurement, religion, medicine, and aesthetics. It is not possible to conceive of an instrument of human civilization more pronounced in the ancient world.

This is why the general perspective that I have proposed, Afrocentricity, has become a much more relevant idea than many other viewpoints. Within the paradigm of Afrocentricity, as Ama Mazama called it, there are many theories such as location theory, place theory, centrality analysis, and so forth, but my aim has been to provide the five constituent elements discovered in the creation of the idea as guiding landmarks for the intellectual.

I think it is important to establish that unlike the Negritude Movement (led by Leopold Senghor, Leon Dumas, and Aime Cesaire) to which the Afrocentric Movement owes much and to which
it is often compared, Afrocentricity has not been limited to asking artistic questions. Indeed the cultural question as constructed by the Afrocentrists is not merely literature, art, music, and dance, but the entire process by which Africans are socialised to live in the modern world. Thus, economics is a cultural question as much as religion and science in the construction of the Afrocentrist. This is why Afrocentrists tend to pose three sets of questions regarding historical and contemporary societies. How do we see ourselves and how have others seen us? What can we do to regain our own accountability and to move beyond the intellectual and cultural plantation that constrains our economic, political, social, and scientific development? What allied theories and methods may be used to rescue those African ideas and ideals that are marginalised by Europe and thus in the African’s mind as well?

There are five principal constituents of Afrocentricity that would distinguish it from any other theoretical viewpoint.

- Afrocentricity asserts that Africans ought to have an intense interest in psychological or emotional location as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals, ceremonies, and signs. What this means is that the African thinker should be seeking to determine by icon, myth, motifs, symbols, etc., where the person, text, or event is located. Is it a Eurocentric, Asiaticentric, or Afrocentric phenomenon? Is the person asking the question located in the proper place to ask a genuine question? For example, one could ask a Eurocentric question such as “Is African religion monotheistic or polytheistic?” If one asked such a question in an African situation it would have to be reoriented and interrogated for its location.

- The Afrocentrist should possess a commitment to finding the subject-place of Africans in any social, political, economic, architectural, literary, or religious phenomenon with implications for questions of sex, gender, and class. There is no field or interest that is without some perspective and the Afrocentrist’s commitment is to discover the proper role of Africa or Africans in all situations involving Africans. A critique of inequality, injustice, marginality or other forms of off-centeredness is certainly in order in this research.

- Afrocentricity insists that there has to be a defense of African cultural elements as historically valid in the context of art, music, education, science, and literature. One cannot assume that Africans have not spoken, commented, or acted in all the ways that humans behave in the world of culture, science, and economics. To defend African cultural elements means that we must study African cultures, whether on the continent or in the Diaspora, in order to become expert in our field of inquiry.

- Afrocentricity celebrates "centredness" and "agency" and activates a commitment to lexical refinement and reconstruction that eliminates pejoratives about Africans or other people. Nothing pejorative or demeaning to Africans as humans can escape the attention of Afrocentrists. If someone uses the term “tribe” in a negative way or speaks of “minorities” when speaking or writing about African people in the United States or Brazil or anywhere else, that person must be checked, that is, located before you can make a proper assessment of the situation.

- Afrocentricity is a powerful imperative from historical and social sources to revise the collective text of African people. Since so much negativity about Africa has been written over the centuries the Afrocentrist takes the position that the correcting of the collective text is a vital part of the reformatory process of education and the only real way to a truly liberating knowledge. Thus, the Afrocentrist is by definition and activist intellectual, not a public intellectual.

In conclusion, these are the reasonable minimum characteristics necessary for a truly clear view of African phenomena transgenerationally and transcontinentally. Thus, we incorporate the best traditions of the ancestors, the various struggle streams of resistance found on the continent and in the diaspora, and the indefatigable will of African sages. Afrocentricity is consequently an innovative understanding of phenomena from the standpoint of African people as agents. So long as we are afraid of Afrocentricity, even as a word, we will be unable to break the chains of alien cultures that still crush our legs, necks, and brains.

References and further reading:

A young and energetic Chedih Anta Diop, while a student in Paris, wrote an article for the famous journal, Presence Africaine in which he asked the question, “When will we be able to speak of an African renaissance?” Diop understood that we could never speak of a renaissance or rebirth of Africa civilization until we returned to our sources and used those guidelines for our way forward.


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RETHINK. REINVENT.
They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It’s our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour.

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, 1987

As we wrote about in a previous Thinker, there is something going on in Europe which is more than the usual back-and-forth between centre-left and centre-right parties, something more akin to the shift of political tectonic plates. We characterised this as a hegemonic crisis, a breakdown in the consensual hegemony which pulls together disparate elements in capitalist society into something approaching a cohesive society; and suggested that this could be seen as the fourth such crisis in the history of European capitalism. However, assigning names and categories may satisfy historical analysis but it does little to help the immediate questions as to just what is going on and where Europe may be heading.

The neoliberal hegemony ushered in around 1980 drew its social cohesion from the idea that freeing up individual enterprise within an unfettered market system would provide economic benefits for all, even if the balance of such benefit would flow selectively to the most wealthy. It was a lie, of course, but it cast its intellectual shadow very wide particularly with regard to its inevitable worldwide dominance. Consider the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, speaking to his own party in 2005:

I hear people say we have to stop and debate globalisation. You might as well debate whether

Turkey is now home to as many as 3.25 million refugees mostly from Syria and it is unclear just how long it can contain the pressure of those who want to move on to Europe. In any event, the sealing of borders both around and inside the EU produces a kind of existential crisis of fear and suspicion which continues to poison much of European politics.
The character of this changing world is indifferent to traditions. Unforgiving of frailty. No respecter of past reputations. It has no custom and practice. It is replete with opportunities, but they only go to the swift to adapt, slow to complain, open, willing and able to change.

It was this unflinching, almost messianic, belief in the inevitable dominance of neoliberalism which was, indeed remains, its most potent force; remains because despite the economic catastrophes of the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, neoliberalism is still the fallback mode of all international institutions and many governments, for example the newly elected leader of France, Emmanuel Macron.

The economic faults of neoliberalism, particularly its blind faith in unregulated markets, have been thoroughly picked over. Its social consequences have been less well-analysed but they are, in some ways, even more devastating and pervasive. In 2007, a group of British socialists produced an analysis of what they saw as social crisis in Britain under the title Feelbad Britain. The opening lines of this were:

*The starting point for this analysis of contemporary British society is simple: the observation that in an era of apparently unprecedented overall material prosperity and economic stability, people seem to feel no better than before and quite possibly worse. Obviously the “feel-bad factor” affects us all in different ways and to different degrees, but there is enough of it about to suggest a general trend across society, amounting to what we would characterise as a crisis in social relations and others have called a “social recession”. We are a society of people who don’t appear to like themselves or each other very much. Twenty-first century Britain, our country, is afflicted with a deep-seated and widespread social malaise.*

They went on to characterise various aspects of this crisis, for example growing rates of mental illness drawing particularly on the work of Richard Layard.

Layard’s group at the London School of Economics observed that “crippling depression and chronic anxiety are the biggest causes of misery in Britain today”, with one in six so suffering. This is the view not only of this one group. You can tell a lot about a society from the health of its children. According to another appraisal, there are “sharply rising rates of depression and behavioural problems among under-17s. This year, the British Medical Association reported that more than 10% of 11- to 16-year-olds have a mental disorder sufficiently serious to affect their daily lives. At any one time, a million children are experiencing problems ranging from depression to violence and self-harm. What is truly sobering is how abruptly these problems have arisen. The incidence of depression in children was almost flat from the 1950s until the ’70s. A steep rise began in that decade, doubling by the mid-80s, and doubling again since. The rises have affected both sexes and all classes, although children in the poorest households are three times as likely as wealthy ones to be affected.”

In 2016, the British National Health Service issued prescriptions for 64.7 million items of antidepressants, a massive 108.5% increase on the 31 million antidepressants which pharmacies dispensed in 2006.

Shortly after Feelbad Britain was published, a wider international study, *The Spirit Level*, using cross-sectional analysis, highlighted the “pernicious effects that inequality has on societies: eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, (and) encouraging excessive consumption.” It showed that for each of eleven different health and social problems: physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies, and child well-being, outcomes are significantly worse in more unequal rich countries.

Trends in inequality vary between countries but, in general, throughout Europe and America there was a trend of decreasing inequality after WWII for thirty or so years with a trend of increasing inequality thereafter from around 1980. The impact that this has had on the eleven indicators examined by Pickett and Wilkinson across all these countries is very hard to sort out from all the other factors involved. But what *The Spirit Level* shows is that the key ethical underpinning of neoliberal dynamics, that greater economic inequality is acceptable, indeed necessary, as part of a general increase in economic wealth, may in fact be a driver for increased social problems.

These problems are evident at the level of social organisation as much as at the level of individuals. Indeed as Margaret Thatcher so eloquently and truthfully put it in 1987, it is at this level, what she called ‘society’, that the key destruction reaped by neoliberalism takes place. The effective destruction of trade unions in many countries is the most obvious example of this but it extends through to many other areas of what Robert Putnam called ‘social capital’ in his 2000 book, *Bowling Alone*. Putnam shows how Americans have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbours and democratic structures, and warns that their stock of ‘social capital’ – the very fabric of connections with each other – has plummeted, impoverishing lives and communities. This article is focussed on Europe but it is clear that many of the issues raised by Putnam concerning the USA have relevance across here as well. In particular, it is hardly necessary to draw comparison between the ‘wildness’ and unpredictability of much European politics and the election of Donald Trump.
As much as any other component of social organisation, European political structures themselves have been decimated. Peter Mair’s book, Ruling the Void, has been cited before in The Thinker as the most comprehensive analysis of this decline. Its opening paragraph sets the stage:

The age of party democracy has passed. Although the parties themselves remain, they have become so disconnected from the wider society, and pursue a form of competition that is so lacking in meaning, that they no longer seem capable of sustaining democracy in its present form.

Mair catalogues how electoral turnout, party membership and general participation in political activity have all declined throughout Europe and he links this decline from the 1980s with the decline of wider social organisation:

A tendency to dissipation and fragmentation also marks the broader organisational environment within which the classic mass parties used to nest. As workers’ parties, or as religious parties, the mass organisations in Europe rarely stood on their own but constituted just the core element within a wider and more complex organisational network of trade unions, churches and so on. Beyond the socialist and religious parties, additional networks ... combined with political organisations to create a generalized pattern of social and political segmentation that helped root the parties in the society and to stabilize and distinguish their electorates. Over the past thirty years, however, these broader networks have been breaking up ... With the increasing individualization of society, traditional collective identities and organizational affiliations count for less, including those that once formed part of party-centred networks.

The recent French elections provide a clear example of this decay. Initially in a Presidential contest, and then in succeeding parliamentary contests, a virtual unknown, Emmanuel Macron won decisive victories first over the far-right candidate, Marianne Le Pen, and then over all other groups, with his newly formed ‘party’ En Marche winning 350 out of 577 seats. The most humiliating defeat was for the French Socialist Party which went down to just 29 seats securing only 5.7 per cent of the vote. In the 2012 election after former president Socialist President Hollande came to power, the Socialist Party secured 280 seats. Le Pen’s Front National was reduced to only 8 seats, though its leader, Le Pen, did gain a seat in a former coal-mining district in northern France. The other left group based on the social movement, La France Insoumise, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, also did badly, gaining just 17 seats. Macron’s victory was, however, gained on the basis of a national turnout of only 42%, much the lowest of postwar French elections. In the Presidential election won by Macron, there were 20% abstentions and 10% deliberately spoiled voting-papers.

These elections were dominated in part by personalities and in part by the popular movements, often led by such personalities, which have come to replace parties in much current European politics. Often called ‘parties’ these lack most of the normal features associated with established political parties without much in the way of structure or indeed formal policies, certainly no clear process for the formation of policy nor for the election of leaders. They may not in fact have members as such; the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands only has one member, its leader Geert Wilders. Le Pen’s Front National, usually included in any list of these new formations may actually have suffered precisely because it did have many of the trappings of the traditional party.

The usual characterisation of these groups is that they are ‘populist’, a term which is used in widely different ways and with little attempt at definition. Essentially it means appealing to ordinary people and bypassing an established political elite. A recent attempt to characterise such groups has been made by David Goodhart in his book The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics. In this he advances the idea of new social categories, the Anywheres and the Somewheres, and he lists the populist groups as follows:

First, the Mainstream: parties that can mount a challenge to Anywhere liberalism but are most appealing to decent populist Somewheres, and more mainstream voters generally, and do not have roots in the far right. These include UKIP in Britain; the Five Star Movement in Italy; the Danish Peoples’ Party; Alternative für Deutschland in Germany; the True Finns; and three of the four governing parties (as of late 2016) in the Visegrad Group (the alliance of four Central European states)—the Law and Justice party in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary, and Smer in Slovakia (the Czech Republic has a populist, and popular, president in Milos Zeman but does not have a populist government). Second, the Anti-Islamists. Hostility to Islam is important to most European populists but some are overwhelmingly driven by it, and it has caused some groups to drop any traces of anti-semitism (if they had them) and often stress their support for homosexuality, female equality and free speech. Party of Freedom in the Netherlands is one of these, the Danish People’s Party also has a strong anti-Islam focus as does Pegida the German-centred movement (though it is largely a
street movement and attracts violent off-shoots). Next are the Reformed Far Right: parties which have roots in more extreme organisations, in some cases even neo-Nazi ones, but have reformed substantially and are keen to become ‘clean’ (or at least some of their factions are). Amongst these are the Front National in France, the Sweden Democrats, the Austrian Freedom Party and Vlaams Belang in Belgium. Finally, the Unreformed or Barely Reformed Far Right. Many of these parties or street movements, the unconstitutional populists, are overtly racist and white supremacist and generally support repatriation of non-natives: Jobbik in Hungary, Golden Dawn in Greece, Phalange in Spain, Kotleba in Slovakia.

Although published recently in 2017, Goodhart’s list fails to include the two recent French arrivals, En Marche and France Insoumise, both of which would fit into his first category. He also puzzlingly omits Syriza in Greece, largely responsible for the destruction of Pasok, the Greek Socialist Party, perhaps because it has been in power in Greece almost long enough to be counted as a traditional party. Goodhart makes the bold claim that “Populism is the new socialism. Almost all European populist parties now have an overwhelmingly working class voter base and most have policies towards economics and globalisation that have more in common with the left than the right, or might better be described as statist/protectionist. Indeed, several of the big parties – including both UKIP and the Front National – have been dragged sharply to the left in recent years.”

The one major European country which appears to run counter to this rise of populist movements is the UK, which in the June election saw the two major parties, Conservative and Labour, win 82.5% of the national vote, a percentage increase of 15% since the previous election in 2015. Although Labour had the greatest share of this increase, 9.5%, the Conservatives, led by the much-denied Teresa May, actually gained 5.5% more of the popular vote over 2015. The result of this swing under the British first-past-the-post system was that Labour gained 30 seats and the Conservatives lost 13, the balance being mainly losses by the Scottish Nationalists. The result is that Britain now has a hung Parliament with the Conservatives having no clear majority. However, underlying this headline are two important factors; first that the 15% was achieved by the effective destruction of the smaller British parties, notably UKIP and the Greens. Second, the results showed a major shift in the traditional class basis of the two parties in England with the biggest swings to the Conservatives in the constituencies with the biggest proportion of working-class voters as shown in Fig. 1. The shift was particularly marked in constituencies with a mostly white working class.

Once staunch Labour strongholds in old mining districts such as South Yorkshire and North East England showed swings to the Tories of 15-20% with a few actually being won by them. It is not unreasonable to compare these swings to the gains made by the Front National in the old mining districts of northern France, once bastions of socialism, now the site of Marianne Le Pen’s seat.

The British Labour Party is now in some respects similar to the various populist parties in that because of a change in party voting rules which allowed participation by a new class of ‘supporter’ as well as members proper, a rather eccentric left-winger was elected as its leader by the membership, despite the vehement opposition of most of its MPs, backed a social movement called Momentum. This new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, seems to attract almost messianic support from many of the new, younger members of the party precisely because he is not part of the established political elite but is an honest, if limited, politician. On the other hand as shown in the figures, the northern working class appear to view him with suspicion as being a London smoothy and, despite losing seats overall, the Conservatives made significant advances in northern seats.

There is an odd, if perverse, similarity between Corbyn’s success and that of Emmanuelle Macron in France despite the fact that in ideological terms they are wholly dissimilar. Macron achieved a stunning majority of almost 90% in Paris in the French Presidential elections. His En Marche movement achieved similar success in the Assembly elections at least inside the Périphérique Boulevard which marks the administrative boundary of Paris. Outside this boundary of ‘official’ Paris, in the poorer districts which were once called the ‘red belt’ round Paris, his vote dropped away and France Insoumise won seats though the voter turnout dropped down to below 30%. In the first round of the Presidential election, it was possible to walk from the Channel to Switzerland along the old, now defunct, coal and steel regions of France and from Spain to Italy through the départements in which the Front National came top
even though in the second round, Macron decisively beat Le Pen.

Macron like Corbyn attracted huge crowds of adoring young voters at his rallies. Both are accomplished public speakers and able to present themselves as outside the normal elites of professional politics, even though this stretches the record for both of them; Macron having been Minister of Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs in 2014 until 2016 whilst Corbyn has been an MP, albeit on the backbenches since 1983. Macron’s political position is quite different to Corbyn’s as he is very much a neoliberal wanting to water-down much of France protective labour law and reduce state benefits whilst Corbyn wants much the reverse, being essentially a 1970s socialist whose core belief is greater state-participation in pretty much everything. However both have benefited hugely from the social category introduced by Goodhart, the Anywheres, young graduates who have moved to metropolitan areas to pursue careers often in the new digital sectors whilst Somewheres are less well-educated, often older people who have stayed near to their birthplace and have generally suffered either unemployment or stagnation in their local economies, often the old coal and steel regions.

As illustrated by the huge ideological differences between these two, any attempt to generalise about where Europe is heading is hindered by the contradictions within the new populism. As Tolstoy wrote in the opening sentence of Anna Kerennina: All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way and this might be said to apply to the unhappy countries of the European Union. The social impact of neoliberalism compounding its economic impacts has produced a range of responses, each in their own way pulling apart the political structure of European countries but each, as Goodhart’s slightly haphazard classification illustrates, is pulling in rather different directions.

In eastern Europe, there has been a steady increase in the importance of right-wing nationalist governments which has led in the case of Poland to its imposition of controls over the press to being questioned within the EU. The similar trends in Hungary led to the former Belgian Prime Minister and prominent current member of European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt, taking to Twitter to exclaim “With its current policies, Hungary would not have been allowed to join the EU in 2004.” The EU does have the power to suspend member states that offend against human rights but this draconian power has never come even close to being implemented. However, the refusal of the so-called Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) to participate in the refugee dispersal plan agreed in the summer of 2015, whereby EU member countries would relocate 160,000 refugees across the bloc is causing strains. The decision is legally binding; however Poland and Hungary haven’t taken in a single refugee between them, and they openly oppose the mandatory nature of the scheme. The Czech Republic, which holds elections in October, took in just 12 last year and none this year, with the government saying in June that it would withdraw from the scheme because of security concerns. Slovakia has relocated just 16 refugees out of the 902 it was supposed to take. The Visegrad Group has relocated 28 refugees in total out of an allocated combined quota of 11,069. It is possible that the European Commission will take action over this but just what form it would take is unclear.

Meanwhile another issue is pulling Europe apart: the continuing impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity programmes imposed on many countries. Fig. 2 shows a key aspect of this, youth unemployment. It might, loosely, be thought that a country with more than a quarter of its young unemployed is slowly dying and on this basis, Fig. 2 shows that the unhappy countries of southern Europe including France cannot survive. Belgium and Slovakia also fall into this dismal camp but it is noticeable that the other countries of northern Europe, broadly, have much lower youth unemployment though only Germany is below 10% at 6.4% and the EU as a whole barely escapes below 20%. Comparable figures for the USA are 10% and for Japan, 4.9%.

The basis for this deep problem is the continuing impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the inability of Europe to pull out of the resulting economic depression. One factor in this, indeed the focus of the neoliberal thinking which still pervades the continent, is the high and in many cases increasing levels of public debt reduction which characterises the

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Fig 3: Youth unemployment in European Union countries, % Q4 2015
Source: Eurostat
economic mindset of institutions such as the European Central Bank and, perhaps most important, of the German and French governments. In his opening speech, the new French Premier, Edouard Philippe, made it clear that debt reduction would form the centrepiece of his economic policies, though what he spelt out remained just the same-old neoliberal nostrums of reducing state expenditure, reducing labour controls and lowering corporation tax. This fixation remains; despite the almost universal opinion of independent economists that the austerity imposed by debt-reduction programmes is actually harmful.

Altogether there are five European nations whose debts are larger than their GDP, and 21 that have debts larger than the 60 per cent-of-GDP limit set out in the Maastricht Treaty, a limit which is, in principle, legally binding, amongst whose number is the supposedly virtuous Germany. Greece’s public debt is, unsurprisingly, the highest in the EU – standing at 177 per cent of its GDP. Italy and Portugal are the next most indebted countries, with debts of 132 per cent and 129 per cent of national economic output respectively, essentially the same bloc of countries slowly dying from levels of youth unemployment. The two others above 100% are Cyprus and the one northern European country in the group, Belgium. Spain and France hover in the high 90s.

Essentially one can see Europe as containing two unstable blocs; a group of eastern European states – the Visegrad group possibly plus Bulgaria and Romania – which have relatively low public debt and reasonably stable if not prosperous economies, which are resolutely opposed to accepting any significant numbers of refugees and which have nationalist and increasingly authoritarian governments. These countries have no intention of leaving the EU and they receive substantial direct financial benefit from membership. They are not, however in the eurozone apart from Slovakia. Then there is a southern bloc including Spain, Greece and Italy plus Portugal and Cyprus which have large and unstable public debts, very high youth unemployment and other negative economic indicators and have large populist political movements. They have significant anti-EU social movements. One of the key questions is whether France should be included in this group. All the economic and social indicators suggest that it should, particularly as its established political parties have been destroyed in the recent elections to be replaced by the now commonplace social movements. On the other hand, its newly elected government is firmly bound to EU membership.

To these groups, can be added the United Kingdom which, of course, has added its own brand of instability by actually deciding to leave the European Union. The tortuous negotiations leading up to this so-called Brexit must be concluded by March, 2019 and there are no signs that the EU negotiators will offer the UK anything other than a hard ride. A key reason for this is that there is a general fear that if the UK appears to be having a soft exit, it will spark other moves to leave, particularly in Greece and Italy.

The future of Europe and the EU hinges around Germany which alone of the major EU countries appears to have a stable political system and a reasonably prosperous economy. Despite the incursions of the groups like Alternative für Deutschland and Pegida, the coalitions of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats with the smaller Green Party and the Die Linke (the left party formed by a split with the Social Democrats) still hold all the seats in the Federal Parliament, the Bundestag; and in the most important state assemblies they have formed stable coalitions. Underpinning this political stability is the performance of the economy which, notably, runs huge and increasing trade surpluses with the rest of the world including other EU countries. In May, 2017, alone the country had a surplus of €22.0 billion up from €20.7 billion in May, 2016. It is often noted in the southern bloc of depressed EU economies that their common currency with Germany prevents the usual response to running trade deficits, currency devaluation, whilst Germany benefits worldwide from an under-valued euro.

The German government now essentially runs the EU with its dominance enhanced by the election of an enthusiastic poodle, Emmanuel Macron, following behind the redoubtable Chancellor, Angela Merkel, wagging his neoliberal tail. This dominance is best expressed by the barely-concealed fact that Germany’s Finance Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, is the essential arbiter of Greece’s fate with his dogged insistence that Greece follow an increasingly harsh austerity programme if it is to receive any further bailout funds, even though nearly all economists including the IMF believe this approach to be worse than useless.

The fact is that allowing Greece to slowly die protects German interests not least in ensuring that loans made to Greece, sometimes on a corrupt basis, by German institutions are protected. The reassertion of the German-French axis which formed the original basis of the EU may yet prove the Achilles heel for German neoliberalism. If Macron fails to do anything about the dire state of the French economy and if the country descends into riotous semi-anarchy – the French do good riots – then Macron may prove difficult to put quietly to sleep. It is also possible that in the elections due in September, the SPD may become the majority party in the Bundestag. The leader of the SPD, Martin Schulz, has been critical of the failure to assist Greece and is likely to campaign on an anti-austerity programme similar in some respects to the successful Labour campaign in Britain in May. According to opinion polls, support for the SPD has fallen away since early-summer 2017, when it came close to the support for the

Meanwhile another issue is pulling Europe apart: the continuing impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity programmes imposed on many countries. A key aspect of this is youth unemployment.
CSU, but it could recover and leave Angela Merkel’s position as Chancellor in some doubt and the ‘grand coalition’ between the CSU and the SPD unstable. On the other hand, there is, so far, little sign of the fundamental political instability which has beset most other EU countries.

So where does this leave the future of Europe? Most of the factors noted above will continue to fester.

The refugee crisis continues with tens of thousands attempting to leave Libya mostly for Italy where 93,000 have arrived in the first half of 2017. In addition, to the end of May, 1,244 refugees were known to have drowned, joining Yohanna in unmarked graves. However, the flood of refugees from the Middle East via Turkey has been stemmed by the EU bribing Turkey with some €6 billion in aid plus visa-free travel for Turkish citizens. Internal borders have been closed so that those who have arrived are contained in Greece and Italy which have become huge holding pens for more than hundreds of thousands of migrants, all hoping to receive permission to travel elsewhere, a process which can take years or result in deportation to Turkey. These controls may limit the impact of immigration in most of the EU though Austria recently announced that it may deploy its army along its border with Italy to stop ‘illegal’ crossing. On the other hand, Turkey is now home to as many as 3.25 million refugees mostly from Syria and it is unclear just how long it can contain the pressure of those who want to move on to Europe. In any event, the sealing of borders both around and inside the EU produces a kind of existential crisis of fear and suspicion which continues to poison much of European politics.

The other issue which will certainly arise is another financial crisis with the euro, similar to that of 2008. The European banking sector is still riddled with problems particularly in the south. Greek banks are essentially broken; whilst as recently as June this year, the Italian government stepped in to wind up two failing lenders, Veneto Banca and Banca Popolare di Vicenza, and prevent a bank run, at a total cost which could rise to €17bn. This bill will be footed by the government despite EU rules forbidding this. Meanwhile the world’s oldest bank, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, is struggling with bad debts which, over the entire Italian banking sector, are believed to total at least €360bn. In Spain, the Banco Popular had to be rescued in June by a forced sale to the larger Santander Bank for €1 whilst Portuguese banks are still in the recovery ward.

Even in Germany, the once-mighty Deutsche Bank is still suffering from falling revenues and low profits after it had to recapitalise in 2016 in order to survive. It has incurred litigation charges of 15 billion euros since 2009 on extravagant bets and poor conduct including the sale of toxic mortgages and sham Russian trades and it is still involved in litigation over claims of alleged sanctions violations.

Financial crises tend to erupt in modern capitalism every dozen years or so as some unforeseen hiccup interrupts the piling up of bad loans in asset bubbles. Chinese banks and the associated housing bubble is one possibility and so is the collapse of the UK housing market on the back of the flood of low-cost mortgages financing a London property boom amidst the general chaos of Brexit. Whatever its origins, there is little doubt that one of its consequences will be another crisis in the unstable eurozone with its uncorrected level of public debt and structural imbalances.

Meanwhile on the western fringe of Europe, the UK stumbles along in a slow-motion crisis of national and regional collapse as the protracted negotiations to set the terms of its departure from the EU limp towards their probable end in March, 2019.

This is all beginning to sound rather apocalyptic rather like the opening of the fourth seal to reveal a pale rider. Many would accept that there are troubled times ahead for Europe but prefer to believe that we will get through by muddling along avoiding the worst by settling for second- or even third-best. After all, although Trump was elected Le Pen was not. Previously I quoted our most recent Nobel laureate writing in 1967 at the beginning of the previous hegemonic crisis that “the times they are a’changin’”. This time it may more appropriate to quote another Nobel laureate, WB Yeats, writing in 1919 at the beginning of an arguably more devastating crisis:

‘There are no signs that the EU negotiators will offer the UK anything other than a hard ride. A key reason for this is that there is a general fear that if the UK appears to be having a soft exit, it will spark other moves to leave, particularly in Greece and Italy.’

‘Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity…
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?’

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8 http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/06/doe-working-class-needs-its-labour-party-back
9 In these statistics, defined as under 25 years old
10 These figures are based on mid-July statistics
11 This decision based on a referendum held in 2016 was discussed in The Thinker, vol. 70, 2016
12 Yohanna’s story is in The Thinker, vol. 69, 2016
On 1 January 2015, after just ten years in existence, we were ranked in the top eight universities in Africa and among the top 4% of universities worldwide.*

THIS IS THE ART OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

In 2001, South Africa, as mandated by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), assumed the role of mediator in the Zimbabwean crisis. By this time what can be argued to have been an economic crisis started in the late 1990s in Zimbabwe had become a serious political crisis. Since independence from colonial rule in 1980, the ruling party in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), had taken steps in economic and political management that were seen to be autocratic, economically destructive and curbing the freedoms of Zimbabweans.

The land reform programme which saw the removal of white farmers from the land and handling of elections drew criticism from European countries, individually and through the European Union (EU) and from the United States of America (USA). Consequently, these countries imposed economic sanctions on Zimbabwe. The South African mediation role, through President Thabo Mbeki, ran from 2001 to 2008 when an agreement between the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and ZANU-PF was signed. Throughout this period the EU, USA and human rights organisations criticised South Africa’s mediation efforts, the so-called quiet diplomacy, claiming that South Africa was protecting ZANU-PF and its ruler since 1980, President Robert Mugabe. However, it is argued in this article that South Africa’s mediation role was in line with principle of self-determination and sovereignty, multilateralism and also the principle of ‘African solutions to African problems’.

There is consensus in the literature that contextual factors consist of variables concerning firstly the dispute, secondly the contending parties and their relationships, thirdly the mediator, and finally the international context. Of these four contextual factors the focus of this article will be on the mediator and the mediation process, involving mainly the strategies employed by the mediator and the responses of the parties concerned.

The crisis in Zimbabwe has been of keen interest for many scholars, for example Chris Alden, Mills Soko, Miriam Prys, Jack Spence, Chris Landsberg, Adam Habib and Merle Lipton. Many of these have aimed to demonstrate the lack of capacity South Africa has to influence and effect change within its region. The collapse of the Zimbabwean economy, continuous political violence and the failure of President Mbeki of South Africa to meet the international expectations in resolving the crisis, are sometimes used as examples to contest South Africa’s leadership and regional hegemonic role.

The period 2000-2005 saw the most dramatic deterioration in Zimbabwe,
with freedom of the press being curbed, the imprisonment of political opponents, the arrest of trade unionists and large scale farm invasions. This culminated in a humanitarian crisis across the country. The main parties in this conflict were ZANU-PF, led by Robert Mugabe and the MDC, led by Morgan Tsvangirai. ZANU-PF, which was the governing party at the time, was accused of unleashing violence against citizens and especially those associated with the MDC. The approach by the South African government, led by Thabo Mbeki, has come to be characterised by many as “quiet diplomacy”:

“Quiet diplomacy is defined as a combination of measures that include behind the scene engagements, secret negotiations, and subtle coaxing. (Dlamini 2001) The mediation culminated in a global political agreement (GPA) which was signed in 2008. The main outcomes of the GPA were the formation of the government of national unity (GNU) which included power-sharing between ZANU-PF and the MDC in government and the drafting of a new constitution agreed on by both parties. The GNU ran its course between 2008 and 2013 when new elections were held and ZANU-PF was declared the victor. During this period a new Zimbabwean constitution was drafted and adopted before the 2013 elections. The focus of this article, however, is the period between 2001 and 2008 when Thabo Mbeki was the South African President and therefore the chief mediator.

Former President Mbeki captures this economic crisis, and maps this historic context of Zimbabwe since independence, as follows:

Zimbabwe’s independence was in 1980. And quite correctly the government says that there are some urgent matters that we have to attend to: education, health, rural development. And indeed they spent huge resources addressing these matters, quite correctly. But the point we made there is that they did that and didn’t pay sufficient attention to the fact that they didn’t have enough resources to finance large social development programmes at that stage. So by 1983, three years after independence, Zimbabwe already had an external debt which they couldn’t manage, because they borrowed money to finance education and to finance health. And they couldn’t pay in the end. So they then resorted to local borrowing; domestic debt ballooned – hence all the money comes into the coffers of the state, and you the factory owner, you want to borrow money, the banks are going to charge you 10 per cent interest. So we put all these things down; we said the objectives were very good and very important, but they didn’t balance this thing. That is the beginning of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and nothing to do with corruption or mismanagement or something. And the international financial institutions like the World Bank, they were quite happy to continue; they could see what was happening, that this country was over-borrowing, but they were quite happy to lend.

So the economic spending on developmental objectives which led to the country over-extending its debt was a major historical factor in the Zimbabwe crisis. Two additional challenges that directly led to the decline of the Zimbabwe economy were firstly the conflict in the Great Lakes region and secondly the subsequent decoupling of the South African and Zimbabwean economies. Each of these will be dealt with in turn a little later.

A fourth pivotal component informing the historic context of the crisis was the content of the Lancaster House Agreement. This included commitments relating to land redistribution. In order to settle the land reform question in Zimbabwe (as most arable land was owned and occupied by white farmers) the United Kingdom made certain financial commitments that would have seen this issue being addressed amicably. The fact that the UK government reneged on the terms of this agreement would ultimately be identified by some as the principal source of the crisis that persists in Zimbabwe.

There are contending narratives concerning the history of the crisis in Zimbabwe. One view which is clearly dominant among Western countries focuses on the human rights abuses, political violence and instability in that country. In this account emphasis is placed on Mugabe the man, who is considered to have lost his way politically in Zimbabwe. A second narrative contests this, viewing these issues – including Mugabe’s instability – as simply symptomatic of underlying causes. The causes underlying the symptoms are the focus of this predominantly Africanist narrative. From this perspective the crisis in Zimbabwe is not about the lunacy of Mugabe, but on the issue of land and land redistribution. As such this story involves more characters, and reflects deeply on the colonial and imperialist past: Britain (and its ally the United States) are the chief protagonists. The colonial past, Britain’s obligations as outlined in the Lancaster House Agreement, their reneging on their pledges, and their interest together with their allies in the Unites States in “regime change” as a possible political solution to this crisis take centre stage.

The Zimbabwe crisis

This section presents a chronology of the events that took place in Zimbabwe from 1995 to 2008. (See table on the next two pages) It focuses in particular on the regional response to the growing problems in Zimbabwe, and South Africa’s role in particular.

According to the GPA, all parties recognised the centrality of the land question as a key driver towards a democratic resolution of the crisis in Zimbabwe. It not only contextualised the issue as the Zimbabweans perceived it but outlined a set of measures to be put in place in order for it to be resolved amicably. Another key element informing the approach to the mediation process was with regards the equally important factor of a ‘regime change’ agenda of the UK and the USA.

The mediation process was besmirched with misconceptions fuelled by the media in the region and abroad. Some of these were the statement made by Mbeki that ‘there is no crisis’ in Zimbabwe; Mbeki holding Mugabe’s hand on occasion in full view...
### Table 1: Key Events in Zimbabwe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>KEY EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>An economic crisis marked by high interest rates and inflation provokes riots and massive support for the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions headed by Morgan Tsvangirai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1998</td>
<td>Zimbabwe sent its troops into the DRC (Great Lakes Conflict). Zimbabwe is chair of SADC organ on defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1998</td>
<td>Pledging conference convened by South Africa and involving the UK, IMF and World Bank relating to funding to resolve the land issue in Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998–1999</td>
<td>The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is formed and Tsvangirai is appointed leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Mugabe gets a taste of electoral defeat when voters back the MDC and turn down a proposed constitutional amendment which would have given the president more power</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Mugabe’s ruling ZANU-PF goes on to win a parliamentary poll amid charges of fraud and vote-rigging made by the opposition</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Thousands of so-called “independence war veterans”, backed by the government, seize white-owned farms, saying the land was illegally seized by white settlers</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2001</td>
<td>Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (South Africa) Aziz Pahad has working visit with UK Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth, Brian Wilson, including discussion on Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Zimbabwe government agrees to stop often violent land invasions in exchange for British funds to finance land reform. Mugabe later rejects criticism he has ignored the deal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2001</td>
<td>President Mbeki and five other SADC regional Heads of State attended a two-day summit in Harare, aimed at resolving the conflict in Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>September 2001</td>
<td>Abuja Agreement signed by Zimbabwe Foreign Minister Stan Madenge, and in return Britain agrees to honour commitment to pay £36 million pounds towards a land reform programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>South Africa donates R93,5 million through the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to improve food security in Zimbabwe. The country furthermore donates R12 million to Zimbabwe to purchase vaccine/drugs to curb the spread of foot-and-mouth disease in Zimbabwe and the region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2002</td>
<td>Commonwealth Chairpersons’ Committee meeting and Commonwealth Observer Group Report on the elections in Zimbabwe. A need for reconciliation was identified. Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo (Nigeria) are requested to promote a process of reconciliation between the two main political parties, ZANU-PF and the MDC. South Africa also relies on the SADC Ministerial Group on Zimbabwe to continue with their work in the context of existing SADC decisions, which in many instances coincide with those taken by the Commonwealth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2002</td>
<td>The Joint Commission for Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Co-operation between South Africa and Zimbabwe is revived to strengthen bilateral relations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>SADC restructuring, so that countries are no longer responsible for sectors, and rotating chairs are introduced. Zimbabwe is no longer chair of the organ of Politics, Defence and Security (a position it had held since 1986).</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>Emmerson Mnangagwe – Mugabe’s chosen successor appears on stage of ANC national conference in Stellenbosch</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2003</td>
<td>Commonwealth summit in Nigeria. South Africa opposes Zimbabwe’s continued suspension from the commonwealth. South Africa is accused of putting a spanner in the works; and it is nevertheless decided to continue Zimbabwe’s suspension from the commonwealth indefinitely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-9 December 2003</td>
<td>ZANU-PF and ANC secret talks on an exit plan for Mugabe, but these are revealed by Tsvangirai who does not approve of “sanitising ZANU-PF”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2003</td>
<td>President Mbeki, President Obasanjo, President Muluzi (Malawi) engaged in effort to resolve Zimbabwe crisis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>KEY EVENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The IMF begins steps to expel Zimbabwe from the fund over dues unpaid since 2001. Commonwealth agrees at summit in Abuja to continue suspension, leading Mugabe to pull Zimbabwe out of the organisation.</td>
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<td>July 2003</td>
<td>Bush-Mbeki talks in which Mbeki is identified by Bush as the “point-man”, in touch with the parties concerned in Zimbabwe.</td>
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<td>January 2004</td>
<td>Bilateral discussions between South Africa and Germany and discussion includes Zimbabwe.</td>
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<td>February 2004</td>
<td>The EU renews sanctions against Mugabe and his inner circle.</td>
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<td>October 2004</td>
<td>The High Court acquits Tsvangirai of plotting to assassinate Mugabe and seize power, a ruling condemned by the government.</td>
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<td>October 2004</td>
<td>Zimbabwe government expels a COSATU delegation that arrives on a fact finding mission.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>South Africa shifts approach on Zimbabwe from commonwealth position, to AU/SADC mandate: “South Africa continues to engage all the stakeholders in Zimbabwe to find ways and means to assist Zimbabweans in their endeavours to find a home-grown solution to their political challenges.”.</td>
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<td>January 2005</td>
<td>Another COSATU delegation sent to meet with Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions is expelled from Zimbabwe.</td>
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<td>April 2005</td>
<td>Zimbabwe celebrates 25 years of independence.</td>
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<td>31 March 2005</td>
<td>The ruling ZANU-PF wins the March parliamentary election, giving it the majority it needed to change the constitution.</td>
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<td>March 2005</td>
<td>South Africa sends the National Observer Mission to observe Zimbabwe’s sixth parliamentary elections. South African observers also participated in the SADC observer elections mission. Both election observer teams declared the Zimbabwean parliamentary elections credible and reflective of the will of the people of Zimbabwe.</td>
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<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka (South Africa) met with President Robert Mugabe and his Deputy, Ms Joyce Mujuru, as part of ongoing talks between the two countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-July 2005</td>
<td>700 000 people lose their homes or livelihoods after a highly criticised Zimbabwe government blitz on urban slums.</td>
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<td>August 2005</td>
<td>Remaining charges against Tsvangirai for plotting to assassinate Mugabe are dropped.</td>
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<td>Nov 2005</td>
<td>Two agreements entered into between South Africa and Zimbabwe: - Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Secondment of the Air Force of Zimbabwe Personnel to the South African Department of Defence - Agreement for the Establishment of a Joint Commission on Defence and Security entered into between South Africa and Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>April 2006</td>
<td>Zimbabwe's annual inflation rises above 1 000%</td>
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<td>March 2007</td>
<td>Tsvangirai badly beaten after he attempts to attend a banned protest rally, spurring international condemnation of Mugabe's government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Central bank raises its main lending rate to 800 percent from 650 percent on October 1 to fight inflation. The bank says it will launch a new currency soon to try to curtail a thriving foreign exchange black-market.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2007</td>
<td>Two-day extraordinary summit in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in March 2007. The Heads of State and Government of the SADC mandate President Mbeki to spearhead the promotion of dialogue among political parties in Zimbabwe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2007</td>
<td>Power sharing talks between MDC and Zanu PF mediated by Mbeki begin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2007</td>
<td>South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique agreed on sharing the tourism spin-offs of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, through “border free” tourism packages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>The signing of the Global Political Agreement by all parties in Zimbabwe.</td>
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of international media; the so-called “struggle buddies syndrome”; and the long-standing relationship between the ANC and ZANU-PF. When asked for a response to these issues, Mbeki provided an answer to what he called these misconceptions:

No, you see, there were two approaches which were possible with regard to Zimbabwe. One was the approach we took: “Let the Zimbabweans resolve this question and we’ll facilitate that process.” The other approach, which people like Tony Blair and others were very attached to, was regime change. So you have these two things colliding. All the criticism of us, that’s all it has to do with, people are criticising us not for what we did but because we opposed regime change. And they will find all sorts of things – that we’ve got farms in Zimbabwe, and this and that, and my wife is a relative of Mrs Mugabe – and they are cooking up all sorts of stories, essentially because we said no to regime change, which is what they wanted.19

This reveals that Mbeki’s choices were not in fact the dichotomy of “quiet diplomacy” versus the apparent “megaphone diplomacy” advocated by the West. Rather he was considering soft power tactics and approaches instead of military intervention. With the possibility of military intervention for regime change in Zimbabwe in focus, the question arose whether Mbeki’s choice for soft power tactics was informed by the failed military interventions to enforce a change of regime in both Iraq and Afghanistan. When asked about this, President Mbeki said:

Even before that, I mean, just fundamentally, it’s something that we would oppose, that you can’t have the United Kingdom coming all the way down here in order to decide who should govern Zimbabwe. It’s wrong. You know, the British Chief of Staff, Chief of General Staff of the British armed forces, around 2002, that period – Lord Guthrie, he has said this publicly – I mean, we’ve known it because we had to deal with it, but he said it publicly that Blair put a lot of pressure on him to put together a military plan for the physical overthrow of Mugabe in Zimbabwe. And he says: “I refused because it didn’t make sense”. That’s the time when we were under a lot of pressure from them, the British, Americans and the Canadians who were so determined, they wanted to base forces in South Africa to overthrow the government of Zimbabwe, and we said “No; never will you do that. No, no, no, no”. They said they had already appointed people and they will tell us when they were moving and they will put so and so in his place – and we say “No, no, no, this is not going to happen”. And they couldn’t do it without South Africa. In his book, the book that’s just been published, Tony Blair says that He says: “I wanted to physically overthrow Robert Mugabe, but I was stopped by the neighbours”. That’s how he puts it. The rest is just stories; all the things about being great buddies with Bob Mugabe from the struggle and this and that. It’s because essentially these forces wanted to overthrow the government of Zimbabwe and we stood in their way.20

These were but some of the historic factors informing the mediation process and why South Africa took the posture it did.

Now that we have been presented with a brief yet insightful historic perspective, let me outline what my concerns are going forward. My main concern is indeed the end game, in particular what will happen to a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe.

I contend that once Mugabe dies, the ruling party, ZANU-PF will split into three dominant factions, that of Grace Mugabe, the Deputy President and a third group hoping to provide some conciliation between the warring two groups above. This split will cause a climate of uncertainty, opposition parties are going to want to provide much needed direction, much to the consternation of some in ZANU-PF. The economy is going to take a further tumble just for good measure. Protest action and social unrest will be the order of the day, demanding change now that the liberation leader is no more, further exacerbating the tension in Harare and further afield in Zimbabwe.

This I contend is when the military will step in and ‘save the day’ because with such uncertainty, a failing economy and violent protest action, someone will have to bring calmness and stop lawlessness in its tracks. I argue that by so doing the military will be satisfying two very critical elements for themselves. On the one hand they will be seen as the purveyors of peace, law and order (which will at this stage be much needed); and on the other hand, they will exempt themselves from possible criminal prosecution for having propped up the Mugabe reign of terror for much of the last 20 years. It would be a win-win situation for the Generals and their lieutenants as well as for the police services (who have been on a crusade of a reign of terror on citizens daily).

The response from the regional State structures such as SADC is usually nothing short of callous and hence I question to what extent the South African government is ready for the socio-economic and political consequences of a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe. There will be a further influx of illegal immigrants, putting further strain on basic services in our metros and towns.

The political activism of both Zimbabweans and their South African counterparts in civil society structures are required now more than ever to have more co-ordinated mass actions before we reach this post-Mugabe period. The international community also needs to come to the party in regard to humanitarian assistance and the lifting of sanctions in order to stimulate the local economy.
The rent seeking behaviour of the security forces will continue unabated if we do not engage with them and find solutions, perhaps through training of how to better engage with communities and facilitate how we can reduce the trust deficit amongst all Zimbabweans. Already just some months ago, the military grew impatient and yet another intervention was required by South Africans to quell the heightened tension in that country.

As per the argument around the veracity of the ‘regime change’ matter, it is reasonable to assume that indeed there was such a desire by the UK and the USA for such change since this was their preferred strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan at the very same time. I am reminded of one of our South African judges stating that the current Zimbabwe leaves much to be desired, when some want to sing the praises of Mbeki. Well, when looking at the said countries where regime change did take place, looking at them in 2017, there is also much left to be desired in countries such as Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Ivory Coast. In fact, I might even go as far as to say that the situation is far worse in those countries than is the case in modern day Zimbabwe.

The lesson we have learned from this entire debacle is if you mess with one of the most important cornerstones of the capitalist system, that of private property relations, you will be punished severely. Hoping for the western powers to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis will bear little fruit. We Africans must find solutions for our own challenges.

Conclusion

The net result of all these efforts by the Mbeki-led intervention saw the culmination of the GPA coming into being and accepted by all parties involved in the crisis. Mbeki’s presidential term in government came to an end and the logical next step, facilitated by the Zuma administration, was for a free and fair general election date to be set and for the Zimbabwean people to go to the polls and cast their votes and indicate their preferred candidates and party. This election was fraudulent and certainly not free and fair.

There are clearly contesting narratives and interpretations about South Africa’s role. The regional responses are supportive of its engagement and Mbeki’s role within it at the time in particular. This runs contrary to the domestic media response, actions of civil society organs in South Africa and interpretations from the West. It is too easy to make normative statements about the “best” possible outcome in the Zimbabwe crisis and, thus, about the failure of South African regional leadership. Interpretation depends on whether this is being viewed domestically, regionally or internationally and each grouping itself is not necessarily internally united. It is clear that there are different interpretations on the successes of quiet diplomacy, with questions raised about what could have been the outcomes of the alternative approach of regime change, which was seriously considered as an option by some. The failures of these military interventions in other parts of the globe heighten these concerns about what alternatives may have been possible.

There are at least three distinctive regional public goods provided by South Africa: solidarity against the West and domestic opponents, the prevention of political fallout in the southern African region, and SADC unity.

Firstly South Africa’s quiet diplomacy/ soft power tactics not only provided a sense of regional unity and security against outsiders but also, and probably equally importantly, unity against domestic opponents that are perceived to be supported by the West.

Secondly, the approach of South Africa has helped to prevent a complete breakdown of Zimbabwe and the consequences thereof on the social and economic systems of its neighbours through increased illegal immigration. Among the other potential negative consequences of a more aggressive South African stance towards Zimbabwe would have been the destabilisation of uneasy racial relations. A spread of the Zimbabwean crisis would have also threatened to bring up unresolved land reform issues in some of the neighbouring states. By keeping Zimbabwe economically alive and keeping Mugabe within the circle of the respected SADC leaders, these potential side effects have been at least temporary forestalled.

This then leads to the third public good and that is SADC unity.

When considering all the above domestic responses it becomes clear that even though there were contending narratives as to the manner in which South Africa pursued its overall objectives in this regard, a dominant narrative persists in the region. This narrative speaks to the fact that South Africa, it seems, had very few options as to the way in which to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe; it had to adhere to the principle of the self determination of Africa, especially post-colonialism.

Looking at regional power hierarchies also tells us about the limitations and constraints of regional powers in the developing world in particular, as well as their continual need to straddle two worlds – the regional and the global.

Whether these measures in the contemporary setting will suffice – and more importantly whether they will stand the test if Mugabe should die tomorrow – is indeed the question that must haunt us all going into the immediate future.

References:

1 Interview with Thabo Mbeki, Former President of South Africa, conducted in Johannesburg in 2010.  
4 D. Burger (ed), South Africa Yearbook 2002/03.
5 Ibid.
6 D. Burger (ed), South Africa Yearbook 2003/04.
8 A. Sparks, Op. cit
9 Ibid, 21.
12 D. Burger (ed), South Africa Yearbook 2004/05.
13 A. Sparks, Op. cit
15 D. Burger (ed), South Africa Yearbook 2005/06.
16 Ibid.
18 D. Burger (ed), South Africa Yearbook 2006/07.
19 Interview with Thabo Mbeki, op. cit.
20 Ibid.

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There is compelling evidence to support the widely held view among observers of Africa’s development that the continent’s performance in delivering its regional transport infrastructure programmes is inadequate. For instance, the Trans-African Highways (TAH) network that was conceived in the early 1970s to link countries on the continent is still incomplete, with missing links constituting more than 20 percent of the 57,300 km network. Similarly, only 16 out of 103 projects (15.3 percent) of the NEPAD Infrastructure Short Term Action Plan were completed.

The huge gap between Africa’s regional infrastructure policy and practice is attributed to several factors, including:

- weak political will and lack of ownership of projects;
- political instability and insecurity;
- inadequate finance, technical capacity and institutional framework;
- variations in national policies, laws and regulations on investment in infrastructure;
- difficult natural settings; as well as
- low demand, lack of interest, and conflicting priorities.

This demonstrates the multidimensional nature of the hurdles to the implementation of Africa’s regional infrastructure programmes.

The slow pace of implementation of Africa’s cross-border infrastructure projects should be a major preoccupation of the continent’s political leaders, policy makers and other stakeholders.

By Robert Tama Lisinge
The primary objective of these programmes is to deepen regional integration on the continent. Specifically, they aim among other things to provide direct road links between Africa’s capital cities; contribute to the political, economic and social integration and cohesion of the continent; and ensure road transport facilities between important areas of production and consumption. It is also expected that improved regional infrastructure will enable the full realisation of the benefits of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), whose negotiation is ongoing, notably in terms of increased intra-African trade. The slow pace of implementation of Africa’s cross-border infrastructure projects should be a major preoccupation of the continent’s political leaders, policy makers and other stakeholders because it may compromise Africa’s regional integration, industrialisation and structural transformation agenda.

The current approach to managing Africa’s regional transport infrastructure programmes does not sufficiently emphasise the importance of national ownership of regional projects although this is critical to the implementation of the projects. The purpose of this article is to analyse the sluggish implementation of Africa’s cross-border transport infrastructure projects through a lens of national ownership. The article explores the factors that underlie national ownership of regional projects, with particular emphasis on the linkages between ownership and performance.

The extent to which political will and national ownership of regional programmes exist in Africa is a contentious issue. Some observers argue that the endorsement of regional programmes, such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), by political leaders, often at the level of Heads of State, demonstrate high-level political will. They contend that it is up to technical experts to translate the vision expounded in such programmes into action. Proponents of this view also allude to efforts made by the main promoters of the programmes – African Union Commission (AUC), NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) – to ensure the buy-in and ownership of projects at the national level. Such efforts include the involvement of member States and RECs in the process of developing the programmes, particularly in the selection of projects.

Those who argue that political will and ownership of regional programmes is lacking at the national level point to the limited extent to which regional projects are placed in national programming documents. They stress that African countries are not steadfast in their pursuit of the implementation of regional projects and that their effort to assure the timely delivery of these projects is dismal, if not completely non-existent. They draw attention to the absence of budgets that reconcile specific regional projects to available financial resources. Moreover, many experts at the national level are not familiar with regional programmes. This, in the view of some observers, suggests that countries may simply be paying lip service to the programmes. There is also scepticism about the level of participation of countries in the process of developing regional programmes. In this regard, the quality of participation of countries in the design of programmes is deemed to be inadequate, as reflected by the level of representation at strategy analysis and formulation meetings – often attended by staff with limited responsibility and authority.

In light of the above conflicting views, what would it take for countries to own regional projects and how would that impact on the implementation of the projects? In other words, to what extent do African countries own regional projects? Why should national ownership be an issue for projects that are already endorsed by Heads of State? What needs to be done for the implementation of regional projects to become an issue at the national level? In establishing what the answers to these questions might be, the analysis that follows is a synthesis of empirical findings from case studies of selected regional transport infrastructure programmes in Africa.

Institutional Landscape for Regional Infrastructure Development in Africa

There are three major groups of actors in Africa’s regional infrastructure programmes, namely the continent’s regional organisations – particularly AUC, NPCA, AfDB, ECA and RECs; member States; and development partners. The private sector and civil society organisations are also involved, but to a limited extent. Partnership is the main strategy to implement these programmes and there are two main dimensions in this regard. The first is partnership among African regional organisations and countries and the second is partnership between African organisations and countries on the one hand and development partners on the other. Shared ownership is well established as an essential ingredient of effective partnerships, which underscores the importance of African countries to own the continent’s regional programmes, together with regional organisations. In this context, reference to ownership of regional programmes revolves mostly around funding and strategic decision making related to the planning and implementation of their projects.

Regional organisations, with the financial and technical support of development partners, spearhead the implementation of regional programmes. The Economic Community for West Africa States
(ECOWAS), for instance, has created a Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU) while a Project Preparation and Implementation Unit (PPIU), housed at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), was created for the North-South Corridor Programme that links a number of sea ports and hinterlands in Southern and Eastern Africa. The extent of the involvement of member States varies across programmes and they are part of steering and technical committees, among other mechanisms, created to facilitate the implementation of the programmes. Generally, however, these committees meet irregularly. Member States are also supposed to nominate national focal points for the different programmes but many of them fail to do so. This is particularly the case for the Central African Transport Master Plan where various structures created by Heads of State for its implementation are dysfunctional.

Recently, intergovernmental agreements for the implementation of regional programmes have been signed at the highest political level. For instance, the Treaty on the establishment of the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor was signed by the Heads of State of Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria in March 2014. However, key provisions of the Treaty such as the establishment of the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Management Authority and the creation of a Seed Fund have not been implemented. Similarly, the intergovernmental agreement on the Trans-African Highways was endorsed by African Heads of States and Government in June 2014 but will only enter into force after ratification by 15 AU member States, which is not yet the case.

The Institutional Architecture for Infrastructure Development in Africa (IAIDA) attempts to provide a clear picture of where each of the numerous actors fit in the complex decision making and implementation process of Africa’s regional infrastructure programmes. IAIDA articulates the different stages and institutions involved in the decision making and implementation of infrastructure programmes in Africa. There are three main challenges in operationalising IAIDA. First, the roles and responsibilities of the various actors have to be clearly defined – which is currently being done through the development of a manual for the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). Second, all concerned institutions have to be aware of and agree with the roles and responsibilities assigned to them, which is critical for collective ownership of IAIDA. Third, these institutions, especially AUC, NPCA, RECs, and member States need to have the political will, capacity, and financial resources required to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in IAIDA.

In terms of structures to fund regional projects, NPCA has created the Service Delivery Mechanism (SDM) which is a funding mechanism to support activities at the early stages in the preparation of projects and to complement the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF) housed at AfDB. It is worth mentioning that AfDB has also launched a fund of US$ 100 billion for financing infrastructure projects in Africa – the Africa50 Fund. It is envisaged that the Fund will help finance AU’s Agenda 2063.

Concerning the private sector, NPCA spearheads the Continental Business Network (CBN) which was established to address the lack of involvement of the private sector in PIDA and to complement other platforms such as the NEPAD Business Foundation (NBF). However, the private sector is generally not interested in projects that are not bankable. Therefore, engagement with actors in the sector should focus on projects that are fully prepared or in an advanced stage of preparation. To this end, President Macky Sall of Senegal convened the Dakar Financing Summit in June 2014, aimed at building and strengthening innovative synergies between the public and private sector towards mobilising financial investments for infrastructure development in Africa. Civil society organisations increasingly want to be involved in decision making on Africa’s regional infrastructure projects. However, they are not necessarily supportive of these projects. Some of them question the objectives, selection criteria, and impact of the projects, especially in the context of poverty reduction and benefits to local communities. Mega projects are being subjected to intense scrutiny because of the perception by some sections of the civil society that such projects are beneficial to big business corporations and not necessarily the local community.

Development partners play a dominant role in the implementation of Africa’s regional infrastructure programmes. The North-South Corridor Programme is a good example of the deep involvement of development partners in these programmes. The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) supported the Programme through Trade Mark Southern Africa (TMSA), one of its programmes in the region designed for a period of 5 years with a budget of £100 million. In December 2013, the UK’s Secretary of State for International Development announced the early closure of TMSA following a review by the UK’s Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI). As a result, approximately £42 million of uncommitted funds was reclaimed by the UK Government. Indeed, those who had questioned the sustainability of programmes that hinge on the financial support of donors felt vindicated when these funds were reclaimed. Some experts and observers, particularly in South Africa, had expressed the view that DFID through TMSA, had entrenched itself in the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite and effectively took ownership of the development of regional roads in Southern Africa, notably those of the North-South Corridor.

China is significantly involved in Africa’s cross-border infrastructure projects. For instance, it constructed the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway and is involved in the Nairobi-Mombasa railway which is under construction and is envisaged to be extended to Uganda and Rwanda. China has also announced that it would assist Africa in building a high-speed railway network, an initiative that is a flagship project of AU’s Agenda 2063. While this project could close Africa’s infrastructure gap and enhance
its economic development, many wonder if the continent is drifting with the tide and allowing others to make important decisions on its behalf, in terms of which projects should be prioritised, when and how they should be implemented and by whom. This is the core of the debate on ownership of Africa’s infrastructure projects. Both enthusiasts and bashers of China would agree that it is a valid concern.

Considerable effort, mostly spearheaded by regional organisations, has been made to set up structures to facilitate the implementation of Africa’s cross-border infrastructure programmes, and multiple actors – with different interests, values, power and knowledge – are involved in the implementation of these programmes. While regional organisations play a prominent role, their actions are limited by their mandates and capacity and are unlikely to lead to significant progress of projects without the ownership of the projects by member States.

Prioritising regional projects at the national level

The main proposition of this article is that African governments do not pay sufficient attention to regional infrastructure programmes because they are not necessarily their priority. They generally do not initiate the programmes; are not represented appropriately in selecting projects; and do not necessarily accept that the choice of projects is based on a balanced consideration and analysis of the costs and benefits of different options. Moreover, few member States mobilise stakeholders, make public commitment and allocate resources to the programmes. In addition, new governments on the continent do not necessarily pursue the policies of their predecessors.

Agenda-setting theory offers useful insights into the persistent lack of political will to domesticate and implement regional infrastructure projects in Africa. According to the theory, the interaction between preferences, information and institutions generate policy attention, in this case, related to placing regional projects in national programming documents. Regarding preferences in relation to transport infrastructure development, politicians tend to prefer national rather than regional projects; and short term rather than long-term projects to enhance their chances of being associated with successful projects. This is because national projects that could be completed within a short period of time are more visible and can be identified with the immediate needs of the population as opposed to regional projects that are more complex and require longer periods to be completed. The general perception is that costs are lower and benefits are more obvious for national projects compared to regional ones. Strong governance institutions, including parliaments, government departments and state-owned enterprises can help to ensure that infrastructure policy, funding and implementation follow a longer term strategy driven by critical need rather than political imperative. Strong institutions also ensure that long term infrastructure projects stay on track, even when political power in a country changes hands.

Overall, it is helpful when there is a connection between a regional project and a country’s vision of economic growth and development. A project is more likely to be prioritised if it contributes to the achievement of a regional vision that is aligned to national vision. It appears that significant effort is not being made to establish linkages between regional projects and national visions as articulated in national development strategies.

In terms of information, the second component of the agenda-setting theory, the importance of an informed public and policy makers to policy change cannot be overemphasised. In the context of Africa’s regional transport infrastructure programmes, the information required to attract attention and stimulate policy change – from ignoring or paying lip service to placing these programmes on the national agenda – could be related to the problems that they seek to solve and their solutions as well as the costs and benefits of the programmes.

For instance, information and data on the quantity and condition of existing infrastructure assets, the future demand and supply mismatch and estimates of potential economic and social benefits could trigger policy change. A key message that could be targeted at the public and national policy makers is that physical connectivity is an integral part of regional integration and that the benefits of regional integration, particularly increased intra-African trade, would be compromised by inadequate cross-border infrastructure. Similarly, there is empirical evidence that improving Africa’s cross-border infrastructure would support the full realisation of the benefits of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

Given time, cost and expertise limits, a disciplined process is required to determine the projects with the potential to most efficiently yield economic and social benefits for countries. Policy makers need to be sufficiently informed to make this decision. The key question is whether the information provided to them is picked up or ignored and this would depend on the strength of the case that is made for the implementation of regional infrastructure projects.

Regarding institutions, the third component of the agenda-setting theory, actors may prefer to devote attention to certain issues and have the necessary information to do so, but they may not act because they are constrained by various rules that must be satisfied before being able to devote attention to an issue, or because of capacity limitations. This may explain why the NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative

“Member states should be fully involved in decision-making on regional projects which should be integrated into national plans and be assigned budgets.”
(PICl) projects, for example, still experience delays although they have high-level political champions. In this case, PICl projects are political priorities and political leaders have access to all the necessary information about the projects but institutional issues, such as government ineffectiveness, may hamper their implementation.

Overall, the ingredients to influence policy change with respect to Africa’s regional transport infrastructure development are generally known. These include the preferences of politicians; relevant information on the challenges and solutions to the implementation of regional projects as well as their benefits; and the state of African institutions, particularly capacity and governance challenges. Placing regional projects on the national agenda is the core of creating an enabling environment because these projects only kick-off after they get the attention of national politicians and policy makers. Without national buy-in, the projects remain regional dreams with shakу foundations – not deeply rooted at the national level – and therefore have slim chances of being implemented.

Some regional projects have made progress under the leadership of RECs that have mobilised funds particularly to undertake feasibility studies. But doing the feasibility study for a project does not necessarily mean that it is a national priority, particularly when such studies are not funded by countries themselves. That may even reinforce the belief by most national stakeholders that regional organisations are responsible for implementing regional projects. Member states are not opposed to regional organisations being responsible for implementing projects, if the projects are not perceived to be against national interest, mostly because it takes away the burden of implementation from them. The fundamental problem with this approach is that regional organisations are not well equipped to implement projects, in terms of their mandate as well as human and financial capacity. They have, therefore, fallen short whenever they have tried to play the role of implementers, with the limited success recorded being at the preparatory stages of the project development cycle.

The limitation of the model of implementing regional programmes, where regional organisations take the lead and member states play a passive role, has been exposed to be inappropriate by the slow pace of implementation of existing programmes. To reverse this situation, member states should take full ownership of projects with regional organisations playing a coordinating and facilitation role. For this to happen, member states should be fully involved in decision-making on regional projects which should be integrated into national plans and be assigned budgets.

Conclusion

Partnership is the main strategy to implement Africa’s regional infrastructure programmes and shared ownership is a core attribute of successful partnerships. While regional organisations, with the support of donors, spearhead the implementation of these programmes, most member States rarely demonstrate the attributes that one would expect of owners of the programmes.

Prioritising the projects of Africa’s regional programmes at the national level is therefore a critical missing link in the implementation of these projects. Closing this gap requires an understanding of national preferences and aligning the projects to them; communicating the business case, particularly the benefits of the projects to the public and policy makers; and factoring time and resource constraints at the national level when introducing regional projects. It is when regional projects are treated as national priorities that the scale of government effectiveness or ineffectiveness to implement them could be objectively and thoroughly assessed. This in turn will place efforts to build capacity and mobilise financial resources in proper context. For instance, projects that are part of national plans are more likely to be funded by financial institutions and investors than those that are not, because this indicates long term commitment of countries to projects.

Regional organisations are playing a commendable role in spearheading the implementation of cross-border projects but their actions are limited by their mandates as well as human and financial capacity. These actions hover around the preparation of projects and are unlikely to lead to a significant level of delivery of projects. They should therefore focus their attention on mainstreaming regional projects in national development plans. This is more likely to happen if their performance is measured by the extent to which they influence the integration of such projects in national plans.

Endnotes

2 The case studies were part of research undertaken by the author to obtain a doctorate degree at the Maastricht School of Management. The cases include the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Highway Development Programme; Central African Transport Master Plan; and North-South Corridor Programme. The Abidjan - Lagos Corridor covers a distance of 1,028 km and connects the West African cities of Abidjan, Accra, Cotonou, Lome and Lagos. The Programme consists of modernising and upgrading the Corridor by constructing 4 One-Stop-Border Posts (OSBPs); and a 6-lane (2x3) dual carriage highway with provision for rail and fibre optics. The Central African Master Plan is a programme that addresses the collective transport infrastructure needs of the sub-region and covers all transport modes – road, rail, air, maritime and inland waterways. An objective of the Action Plan is to link Central African capital cities with paved roads. The inter-state capital links have a total length of 14,240 km and involves the following countries Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad. The North-South Corridor Programme was launched by the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite platform as a pilot Aid-for-Trade Programme in Lusaka, Zambia in 2009. It spans across 8 countries (Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and has a total length of 10,647 km. The Programme consists of upgrading, rehabilitating and maintaining roads on the Corridor.

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Transformative Thought Leadership Among Women In Kenya

Perhaps the major factor that has been identified as a barrier to women’s leadership and participation in political parties is the male-dominated leadership and patriarchal culture.

By Francis Onditi

Studies on politics and elections have revealed a strong relationship between electoral politics and the occurrence of violence in African countries (Larry Diamond 2016; The Economist 2015; Steven Levitcky and Lucan Way 2015). For example, “armed conflict and electoral politics may be strategic substitutes, in that political actors may optimally choose to submit to the ballot box or instead attempt to impose their will by force; or they may be strategic complements, in that actors use violence to bolster their electoral aims” (Thad Dunning 2011: 328).

On a positive note, women could use disputed electoral returns as sources of information to advocate for more representation of women in leadership positions as a balancing act against the gender based violence associated with political campaigns. In Kenya, women still remain seriously underrepresented (19.5 per cent) in leadership and decision-making positions compared to Rwanda (63.8 per cent) (Kingsley Ighobor 2015). This representation still falls short of the target set out in Article 81 of Kenya’s Constitution, which states ‘not more than two-third of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender’ (Government of Kenya 2010). Moreover, it contravenes the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security.

A key question which remains unresolved is: How to institutionalise TTL (Transformative Thought Leadership) as a preferred ingredient for ensuring gender-responsive politics and peace-building processes? On this note, some scholars have espoused that the continent requires transformative thought leadership defined by African intellectualism (Vusi Gumede 2015a; Rosaline Achieng 2014). In this debate, however, there seems to be one line of thought that remains under the carpet: the role of the ‘African initiative’ in building a ‘women’s agency’ (Francis Onditi and Josephine Odera 2017). And how can such initiatives translate into substantive women’s participation in political leadership and national cohesion and integration?

It is against this African conceptual renaissance that the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (shortened in this article to ‘UN Women’), in collaboration with Kenyatta University in 2013 established the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL). This partnership evolved and later institutionalised the notion of TTL by designing training, coaching and mentorship programmes for developing a critical mass of women, men and youth across sectors-politics, conflict resolution, public sector and civil society organisations (Caroline Parver and Rebecca Wolf 2008).

In this article we define TTL as a condition necessary for advancing women’s inclusion in national politics as a means to consolidate peace in countries experiencing cyclic electoral related violence such as Kenya. Such insights demonstrate the payoffs to a more systematic integration of policy and scholarship on leadership, institutional evolution and women’s quest for representation in key national processes such as peace-building (Amanda Reinke 2016) as well as the dynamics of women in politics (Rashida Manjoo 2016). This article suggests that further attention to the linked dynamics of leadership and participation of women in politics and peace-building would shed more light on important but separated themes. It should help to lay out a new research agenda focused on one of the key ingredients of this conceptual relationship, which is the institutionalisation of TTL in African-based institutions.

What is Transformative Thought Leadership?

The notion of TTL is essentially an idea that seeks to provide a holistic
picture of how Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) could be achieved holistically within the ‘boundary’ of the UN Women’s past and ongoing work within the thematic area, ‘leadership and political participation’. It includes UN Women’s corporate contribution to GEWE across its integrated mandate: normative, operational and coordination (UN Women, Coordination Division 2015). This paper explores how the TTL concept may have evolved over time and its socialisation through space and time, including within Pan-African scholarship, and its linkages with women’s struggle involvement in political leadership and peace-building processes.

From a Pan-African perspective, the notion of TTL is characterised by four attributes. These are the ability: to inspire other leadership; to ignite imaginations; to explode old myths; and to illuminate paths to the future that others can follow (Akbona Nkenkana 2015; Li Wen-Dong et al. 2012). This implies that under the influence of such leaders institutions should depict radical departure from the norms or ‘business as usual’; instead, champion new ideas rather than anything to do with managing people (Loren Naidoo 2016; Robin Ryde 2008).

On a similar note, Vusi Gumede (2015b) suggests that responding to institutional challenges facing Africa will require integrating TTL into the African development agenda. The growing interest in the need to institutionalise TTL is mainly driven by the fact that while Africa’s development and economic integration continues apace, studies indicate that unleashing the development potential rests in the ability of institutions not only to reform their political architectures (Nicholas Cheeseman 2016), but also capacitate women to significantly contribute to leadership in all aspects of life (Roger Coate and Donald Puchala 1990).

TTL’s definition encompasses democratic principles: egalitarian, ephemeral, non-hierarchical, and is not easily monopolised (Richard Bolden and Philip Kirk 2009). This means that, unlike the traditional concept of ‘leadership’ that needs to exist for the life of an organisation, TTL starts with the spark of a new idea and ends with the implementation readiness for the idea (Tony Barnes 1996). Hence, a transformative thought leader creates new ideas, sustains them and inspires others to take the lead. Likewise, women’s ability to elevate innovation as an integral part of TTL within the framework of the partnership between UN Women and Kenyatta University is a grand strategy.

The strategy is not only a platform for evolving societal values, but also a tool for the strategic engagement of women in politics by advocating violence-free electoral processes as part of the protection of women (Naomi Wekwete 2016; Aili Tripp 2003). In ethnically divided societies such as Kenya, electoral related violence is almost inevitable, occurring along the electoral cycles (Said Adejumobi 2000; John Hickman 2011).

Indeed, Melinda Adams (2016) observes that in order for women to contribute to legislation and avert potential political violence, deliberate efforts must be undertaken to illuminate their capabilities through the institutionalisation of initiatives such as thought leadership. The paucity of thought leadership in the political arena has always been blamed on electoral related tensions or the violence that rocks African countries during elections (Dunning 2011). In situations of violence, studies have shown that women are disproportionately exposed to risks of gender based violence and sometimes disempowered to voice their opinion (Sibokuhle Ndlovu, and Soni Mutale 2015). It is critical therefore, to ensure the institutionalisation of TTL in Kenya to enable women to make significant contributions to decision-making, not only during elections, but across the full cycle of the electoral process.

It is against this vicious cycle of gender inequality in political leadership that Pan-African scholars such as Vusi Gumede argue: ‘the entrapment of African leadership and citizenry by the said foreign thoughts make thought liberation an important imperative’ (Gumede, 2015a; George Stevenson 2016; Japhase Poncian and Edward Mgaya 2015). This, coupled with low levels of critical thinking – otherwise known as transformative thought leadership in this paper – traps and tethers African people in the chains of poverty and circles of gender inequality (Gumede 2015b). Yet TTL, which essentially is what the African ‘soil’ is lacking in the 21st century, has the potential to build sets of progressive ideologies, belief systems and movements (Verta Taylor 1999), hence reversing the current skewed trend in political leadership. In Kenya, the number of women represented within the ranks of political parties also falls below the legal threshold contained in the Political Parties Act (2011), which requires that at least one-third of political parties’ office bearers be female.

It is not difficult to link the lack of qualities of TTL with the exclusive style of politics in Kenya. The key contention of the TTL is that a top-down leadership style leads to the exercise of personal power by a dominant few individuals, which is often in direct contradiction to the will of collective (Achieng 2014). Based on a similar notion of domination by the few, advocates of TTL also contest the perennial exclusion of women in politics and peace-building (Sidonia Angom, 2011; Ronnee Shreiber 2016). Such a notion of leadership takes into account the actual reality of gender exclusion.

In Kenya, for example, the new Constitution that was promulgated in 2010 states that no single gender should make up more than two thirds of the membership of an elected or appointed public bodies. The debate around this provision has been sluggish and contentious. Hence, women’s substantive participation in politics and national cohesion and integration is not meaningfully implemented.

The participation of Women in Kenya

Scholars have linked authoritarian regimes to prospects of violent conflict, particularly during highly contested general elections (Thomas Carothers 2002). Similar studies have indicated that democratically stable states are more likely to tolerate inclusive political processes, while those on democratic decline are more likely to register
violence during important national events such as elections (Hal Brands 2017). As gender equality is strongly associated with a country’s degree of democratic and peaceful consolidation (Carothers 2016), this section examines the levels of women’s participation in various aspects of politics and peace-building processes in Kenya:

- political leadership;
- peace-making processes;
- police reforms; and
- the role of political parties.

Firstly, Kenyan political leadership depicts mixed gender representation. The country is currently ranked at position 75, under the World Classification of Women in National Parliaments. According to the 2015 Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU 2015), the proportion of female parliamentarians stands at 19.7 per cent within the National Assembly and at 26.7 per cent within the Senate (IPU 2015). The positions of deputy speaker and deputy majority leader are held by women, but only 7 out of the 27 parliamentary committees within the National Assembly are chaired by women. It is ironical that although women comprise 52 per cent of the Kenyan population and 60 per cent of the country’s registered voters, political representation is heavily skewed in favour of men (National Endowment for Democracy 1996). In regard to executive leadership, 6 of the 18 Cabinet Secretary posts in government are held by women. During the 11th Parliament (2013-2017), almost 30 per cent of the Principal Secretary seats are also occupied by women (Kenya Women Parliamentary Association, KEWOPA 2016).

During the same period, women occupied approximately 31 per cent of the seats in the entire Kenyan Cabinet. Significantly, women are in charge of some security matters. Ambassador Rachelle Omamo is the Cabinet Secretary for Defence. In 2015, the Ministry of Defence recommended Brigadier General Fatuma Ahmed for promotion to the rank of brigadier, making Ahmed the first female brigadier in the Kenyan military. Also, Ambassador Monica Juma has been the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of Government since 2014 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2015). The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also led by a woman, Ambassador Amina Mohamed.

In contrast, women’s representation at the county level is low. During the 11th Parliament beginning 2013-2017, out of the current 47 county governors, none is female. Only 19.2 per cent of the deputy governors are female. Also, only 6.1 per cent of Members of the County Assembly and Councillors are female. Indeed, out of a total of 1450 persons who were directly elected as respective County Assembly Members, only 82 women were elected as members representing only 5 per cent of those directly elected (KEWOPA 2016). Based on these figures, there is clearly a need to encourage and support women to take up elective positions, particularly within political parties, parliament and at the devolved levels of government within the counties.

Secondly, during the Kenyan post-election violence, women played a significant role as negotiators, mediators. Through inter-regional networks, South Africa’s former first lady Graca Machel was among the mediating team, as were two Kenyan women – Sally Kosgey and Martha Karua (both political protagonists in the conflict). Despite this participation, lack of capacity and continuous training for gender officers has hampered the sustainable participation of women in long-term peace-building processes (Jane Wakahi and Mary Salvaterra 2012). In addition, the state-centric approach to peace and security issues is an impediment to women’s free participation in politics and peace-building processes, and this limits women from the grass-roots from participation in Kenya.

Kenya has a system of local peace structures in the form of peace committees (commonly known as Nyumba Kumi), but this structure is yet to be engendered. Their representation at the county level and sub-county level peace committees is mostly in supportive roles and few women hold leadership positions.

While some of the barriers to women’s inclusion in peace negotiations remain the same as the barriers to their inclusion in high-level political positions, which include norms and customs that kept women subordinate to men as outlined above, there are other more ‘mundane’ reasons, such as: ‘a lack of information about the timing and location of formal and informal negotiations, particularly closed door negotiations that excluded women; difficulties in obtaining visas to attend negotiations; national laws or traditions that restricted women’s movement; and a lack of access to communication technologies and networks.

The third hindrance to women’s political participation is the sluggish pace of police reforms. Although the Kenyan government has put efforts in police reforms by transforming it into a service approach to peace and security issues and by creating the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), representation of women is limited to only high level appointments. Women are under-represented in Kenya’s rule of law sector-police service with available figures estimating that out of the 73,000 members, only 11 per cent are women (Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development ACORD 2009). Police reforms, which are still ongoing, are intended to address such gender imbalances through gender mainstreaming but the pace of reform is slow. The creation of women’s networks in the Police Service has assisted women to organise, share experiences and articulate their concerns (Ruth Aura 2015).

Fourthly, political party patronages

“\nIt is ironical that although women comprise 52 per cent of the Kenyan population and 60 per cent of the country’s registered voters, political representation is heavily skewed in favour of men. \n”
disadvantage women political leaders. Given their responsibility for presenting candidate lists, political parties are decisive actors in Kenya in determining which aspiring politicians are nominated to stand for election. Additionally, their role in providing mobilisation and logistical support, volunteers, financing, media attention and votes gives parties great influence over which candidates secure election. Perhaps the major factor that has been identified as a barrier to women’s leadership and participation in political parties is the male-dominated leadership and patriarchal culture. This is both unfavorable to women’s participation and unaccommodating in relation to the challenges they might face in terms of reconciling family commitments with political activities. The other key factor is the lack of gender commitment in party constitutions. Research in Africa found that parties tended to “mention gender in election campaign promises without defining gender as a priority objective in the party constitutions, which more systematically inform political parties’ internal processes and practices” (International IDEA 2016). In Kenya, structural inequalities count against women, including insufficient financial means and support, lack of political experience, and the lack of mobilising power necessary to build a broad and strong electoral base. Once women are in political office, it does not necessarily mean that they will become effective agents of change for gender equality issues. Some of the challenges include the fact that some women in politics are not particularly literate or articulate in gender interests and do not want to take up the gender cause simply because they are women; and often once women are in politics, they find themselves marginalised, resisted or silenced by their male counterparts; and women tend to be side-lined into ‘soft’ issues or social sectors once in government.

To sum it all up, it is important to appreciate the fact that, in order for ACTIL to effectively capacitate women to participate in political leadership in Kenya, the model should have the right tools and capacity. Four years after its establishment, ACTIL still rates below standard in regard to tools, processes; and systems for partnership identification, selection, formalisation, management and monitoring are not aligned with the needs of strategic partnerships. They are mostly geared towards implementing partners involved in short term projects, rather than strategic partners that are peers in mutually beneficial and longer term relationships. They do not reflect the transformational vision of strategic partnerships, or acknowledge the need to support institutional partners in the long term, or provide ways to track long term results that may be difficult to quantify. Because of lack of systematic approach to capacity development, this constrains the ability of ACTIL’s partners such as UN Women to address the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination. There is a strong need to complement the notion of TTL with both longer term partnership agreements and more systematic and responsive tools and processes.

Lessons from the last 4 years, since the establishment of ACTIL in 2013, demonstrate that increasing the number of women receiving training does not necessarily translate into the substantive and equal engagement of women in politics and peace-building processes. It is, however, emerging that strengthening the institutional capacity of ACTIL – including developing on-line knowledge exchange platforms, restructuring the centres human resource capacity and building partnerships that will guarantee comparative advantage towards self-sustainability by 2018 could have a significant impact. It should offer opportunities for women political leaders to significantly engage in politics, and eventually consolidate the peace and stability of the country and the region.

In order for ACTIL to achieve this level of efficiency, social re-engineering will be required in its activities. This will involve the following:

• deepening national reach, widening regional presence and enhancing global partnerships;
• sustaining women’s networks as a thought leadership quality;
• confronting patriarchy;
• actively ensuring the sustainability of the ACTIL model; and
• growing women’s representation in mediation and on negotiation platforms.

ACTIL: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

The establishment of UN Women in July 2010 was part of the broader mandate and reform of the United Nations system (UN Women Coordination Division 2015) to accelerate the UN’s goals on gender equality and women’s empowerment. As earlier noted in this paper, the partnership between UN Women and Kenyatta University established ACTIL. ACTIL’s mission is anchored on the principles of gender equality, “To raise transformative leaders, particularly women and youth, as agents of change for more equitable, accelerated and sustainable development in Africa, through capacity building, mentorship and transformative alliances.” (ACTIL Bulletin 2017).

Deepening national reach, widening regional presence and enhancing global partnerships

The location of ACTIL at Kenyatta University was a well thought-out idea as it provides a ready supply of future transformative thought leaders from among students and faculty members. The latter also form part of the resources for driving transformational processes-training, coaching, education and policy research. Moreover, the academic freedom engrained in a university environment provides a vantage point for this partnership to explore solutions and models for addressing challenges facing not only women leaders but the entire society.

With support of organisations such as the Israel-based Mount Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC), ACTIL has continued to develop and implement the notion of TTL through customised training initiatives across sectors. Despite this potential partnership and opportunities for north-south exchanges, like many other similar institutions in the global south, the ACTIL model is yet to establish a systems approach to capacity building, which is a pre-requisite
ingredient in ensuring a cogent network of knowledgeable women leaders capable of undertaking peace-building processes. Implementation arrangements for the TTL notion within ACTIL also have implications with regard to UN Women’s Regional Architecture. Although the centre serves the continent, its location at Kenyatta University in Kenya has inevitably given the initial activities a ‘Kenyan’ flavour – with, it would seem, relatively low ownership of the Centre by other potential partners operating regionally or globally.

Sustaining women’s networks as a thought leadership quality

ACTIL represents a case example of capacity development/peace-building intersection. Scholars have described such an intersection as source of sustainable peace, conditions for inclusivity and people-centered development (Maia Hallward et al. 2016: 4). In this article, we postulate that foundations of TTL are pointers to the practical empowerment of the most vulnerable people in the society – women and girls (Sidney Schuler 2016). TTL as implemented by the ACTIL model and its relevance to women’s salient contribution to stability is a subtle form of what we refer to us ‘peace-building from the roots.’

An important result achieved through the partnership has been the number and diversity of people trained by ACTIL between 2013-2016, including approximately 880 women politicians, senior officials in public service, and women drawn from civil society as well as the private sector from 23 African countries. Kenya has particularly benefited through joint initiative between ACTIL and some governments. In ACTIL the notion of TTL forms the basis of the innovative nine-month mentorship and coaching programme. This has not been fully effective due to financial constraints.

As the mentorship period of the initial cohorts of trainees is coming to an end, there are some emerging success stories of how trainees have used newly acquired knowledge and capacities, and leveraged their expanded professional networks in favor of GEWE, both in terms of individual behavioural changes and institutional changes.

However this evidence is still too limited and anecdotal to systematically assess the partnership’s contribution to its final objective. The main challenge in the partnership between Kenyatta University and UN Women is to sustain the long term vision to build a critical mass of transformative leaders that can influence GEWE in the country. This can only be achieved through sustained engagement between ACTIL and the Kenyan government on key institutions such as the Kenya Independent and Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) as well as the Kenya National Cohesion Commission on a variety of initiatives aimed at ensuring that political processes such as the 2017 General Election is gender-responsive as well as peaceful.

Similarly, application of TTL to peace-building processes through the ACTIL model would require not only institutionalisation of the concept, but also a conscious understanding that improvement begins with the admission that challenges are inevitable. The most effective framing for social change should therefore aim at promoting cross-functional teams of women and other gender advocates who can be empowered to challenge the status quo and drive the change through a learning process. The TTL provides such a platform.

For example, the HeForShe campaign, being led by UN Women, is a typical example of how the ACTIL model could systematically configure, standardise and customised the notion of TTL to different contexts and create advocacy for policy makers in the country and beyond. In essence, the TTL ethos and practice goes beyond the ‘women’ ecosystem to embrace inclusivity and stewardship in politics for tranquility and stability of the country.

Confronting patriarchy

In Kenya, although the form of government is devolved as espoused in the 2010 constitution, power remains highly centralised, even the women in government hold little to no power. In addition, the introduction of a special measure to increase women’s representation in Kenya’s parliament resulted in a backlash from both men and women (International IDEA 2016). Political parties themselves often have rigid structures that act as a barrier to women’s ascending the ranks and internal candidates tend to be the better-known male candidates. This tilted political architecture is embedded within societal patriarchy.

Male-dominated political structures expect compliance from women elected or appointed to positions of power in Kenya. In view of this, quotas do not always deliver the expected outcomes, as ‘adding women to unaltered social and political structures is likely to lead to frustration as women continue to suffer discrimination and exclusion in spite of their representation in decision-making’ (Stephen Burchard 2014; Leslie Schwindt-Bayer and William Mishler 2005). Given that in Kenya, as is the case in other parts of the continent, quotas do not always translate into women holding any real power, opportunities for ACTIL to deepen the notion of TTL not only to women, but also men political leaders would immensely benefit from this notion as a system-wide strategy towards addressing some of the root causes of gender discrimination in politics.

**“Out of the current 47 county governors, none is female. Only 19.2 per cent of the county governors are female (KEWOPA 2016). Also, only 6.1 per cent of Members of the County Assembly and Councillors are female.”**

![TTL ethos and practice goes beyond](https://example.com/ttl-ethos.png)
has set conditions for sustainability, including provision of staff, facilities and executive engagement, the implementation and the tracking of the results of this partnership are still constrained by one-year planning and funding frameworks and related monitoring tools. Kenyatta University lacks the organisational means to secure long-term institutional commitment from development partners or to align behind the notion of TTL. There is therefore, a need for the model at large to reflect on partnership tools that can ensure multi-year commitments (on a reducing basis to encourage sustainability).

There is a need for the centre to have a mechanism for identifying, aligning behind, and tracking longer term results of its initiatives. Modern approaches for tracking outcomes and sustaining networking among the alumna may be required (e.g., social media, and other mobile-based applications) are key in local ownership of the model.

Growing Women’s representation in mediation and on negotiation platforms

Although Kenya held relatively peaceful elections in March 2013, this may not be guaranteed in future elections. This can be largely attributed to ethnic polarisation as well as the unresolved historical injustices, ranging from land disputes and marginalisation of some communities by the subsequent regimes.

As a result, the security of women continues to be jeopardised. Women are both victims of and active participants in this violence. Responses to terrorism have also tended to be reactive with policy approaches seemingly not gendered. Yet the role of women as mobilisers, sympathisers, preventers and peace-builders is important to appreciate and acknowledge in any form of response.

The development of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 Kenya National Action Plan (KNAP) began following the 2007/2008 post-election violence (Vicky Karimi 2015). The action plan was developed through a participatory and consultative process, very much in line with global best practices (Torunn Tryggestad 2009). It is premised on a human security framework, under the theme “Kuhusisha Wanawake ni Kudumisha Amani” (involving women is maintaining peace). However, its implementation faces integration dilemmas (whether to mainstream it within government and other development policies or having a well-resourced and separate and distinct national action plan).

ACTIL’s capacity in conflict resolution is limited to partnership within such experiences. Institutions such as the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) and KEWOPA are regarded as a “natural” partners with whom ACTIL and UN Women could contribute to cohesion efforts during elections. Through such collaboration ACTIL could contribute to the country’s peaceful and stable elections in various ways, including:

- monitoring, facilitating and advising on the integration of the principles of equality and freedom from discrimination in all national and county policies, laws, and administrative regulations in all public and private institutions;
- acting as the Focal point for the State in creating awareness among political and security stakeholders;
- co-ordinating and facilitating the mainstreaming of issues of gender and other marginalised groups in national cohesion and integration; and
- building the capacity of those institutions mandated to monitor and facilitate development of affirmative action for gender equality in politics.

One striking contrast, however, is that training initiatives at ACTIL compete with local, regional and global training solutions in other countries in terms of relevance and cost. This speaks to the wider question of whether the ACTIL model should be led by the UN Women Regional Office, or by clusters of country offices that are coordinated by the Regional Office. For this reason, the success of ACTIL and the subsequent effective institutionalisation of the TTL notion may not necessarily come from direct implementation (as is currently the vision), but in positioning the centre as a model example and partner to similar initiatives elsewhere on the continent.

Conclusion

Analysis in this article shows some limitations with the conceptualisation and implementation of ACTIL and the notion of TTL: which is too elitist and less interactive with grass root realities; insufficiently attuned to the salience of national political and peace-building machineries; too focused on deliverable as opposed to long-term institutional ownership; and overly prescriptively committed and blind to the benefits of localisation and ownership of the notion of TTL. As a result of these conceptual and practical discrepancies, ACTIL is riddled with structural challenges. As such, there are questions that will require reflection.

Firstly, do its partners (UN Women and Kenyatta University and others) have a shared vision and mission? Secondly, what should be the strategic comparative advantage of ACTIL to other similar structures in the country or in the region? Thirdly, who should be the rightful owner of the transformative thought leadership idea, UN Women or Kenyatta University? And finally, what should the ACTIL architecture look like in order to sustain the development of women’s capacities towards consolidating peace?

Responding to this set of questions will require some reflection on the UN Women-Kenyatta University partnership strategy in defining the scope, content and rules that frames their partnership. Further institutionalisation of the TTL idea may help the partners understand that politics and peace-building processes are not events, but a highly webbed network of institutional development that should be designed to respond to societal perennial challenges, particularly those that require mind-set transformation. In this case, ACTIL should be treated as the ‘means’ and not the end to the inclusion of women in politics and peace-building processes. And the idea of TTL should be added to the Kenyan national peace-building tool-box.
Like members of the South African Parliament gather every February for its first major event of the year, the National People’s Congress (NPC) of China usually convenes in early March every year for a 10-14 day long plenary session. During this time, around 3,000 deputies of the NPC travel to the capital city Beijing to debate and deliberate on a wide range of issues that concern the governance of the nation. This is also the occasion where the Premier of the State Council of China, who is the head of the Chinese Government, delivers a Government Work Report to the NPC for discussion and adoption. As the top legislative authority in China, the NPC shares certain similarities with legislative authorities of other countries around the world. They are however not entirely the same, as the Chinese People’s Congress carries distinctive features that are unique to the Chinese political structure.

The system of people’s congress constitutes the fundamental political system of China. In 1953 China for the first time conducted on an unprecedented scale the election of deputies to the people’s congresses at all levels in accordance with the Election Law. The First Session of the first NPC of the People’s Republic of China was convened in September 1954, at which the Constitution and the Organic Law of the NPC were adopted. The Constitution clearly provides that “All power in the People’s Republic of China belongs to the people. The NPC and the local people’s congresses at various levels are the organs through which the people exercise state power”. This marked the establishment of the system of people’s congress throughout China.

As a state organ that reflects the will of the people, the NPC is not a mere equivalent of a legislature in the western political system, but rather the organ with the highest state power. The relations between the NPC and other state organs are not in the nature of checks and balances. Instead, the NPC exercises oversight on others, and their existence are not in parallel with each other. The NPC ranks as the top state organ not only in terms of its relations to other structures at regional and local level, but also in its relations to other organs at the national central government level. The NPC has the power not only to make laws, but also to discuss and make decisions on major national affairs. The NPC elects national administrative, judicial, procuratorial, and military organs, and exercises oversight on their work.

Specifically, the NPC elects the leadership of state organs, reviews and approves national economic and social development plans and the state budget, and oversees the implementation of the Constitution and the work of the Supreme People’s
China's successful practice of the system of people's congress over the past 60 plus years offers strong proof that it is suitable to China's national conditions and reality. Since the turn of the 20th century, the Chinese people in pursuit of national development and prosperity have tried many different kinds of social systems, including constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary system and a presidential system. However, various domestic and outside restraints have led all these attempts into failure. The establishment and development of this system has been the preferred outcome of history and an inevitable choice for the Chinese people.

First, the system of people's congress is conducive to the realisation of people's democracy. The system gives expression to the political idea that all powers belong to the people, and offers a fundamental channel for the people to exercise the power of the state through the guarantee of the legal system. Through democratic elections, deputies to the people's congresses can elect, oversee, and remove public officials. This system is consistent with China's national condition and its nature of being a socialist state, and implements the governance principle of power by the people and for the people.

Second, the system of people's congress is suitable for China's unique national condition of a large population. It makes it possible to realise people's democracy though deputies elected at all levels throughout the structure of the state. As deputies come from different social, ethnic, and professional backgrounds, their representative and collective decision-making not only ensures the interest of the majority of the population, but also helps protect the views and interest of the minorities. While ensuring wide participation of all political parties and groups, the CPC-led multi-party cooperation and political consultative system in the people's congresses also reduces negative competing checks among different parties, strengthens unity, and is instrumental in fostering policies that could serve the larger interest of the public.

Third, the system of people's congress ensures efficient and effective exercise of political power in China. As the system implements the principle of democratic centralism, political power is unified and coordinated at the central level, making China's political power structure different from the western ones which feature "separation of powers". The NPC is both a legislature and an organ of state power, through which the work of other state organs are efficiently and effectively coordinated. The legislative, administrative, and judicial organs each share different tasks and coordinate their work to focus resources on the economic and social development of the country, which is fundamentally significant for the rapid growth of a developing country like China.

In 2011, the National People’s Congress of China launched a regular exchange mechanism with the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, and over the years, exchanges and cooperation between the NPC and the South African Parliament have recorded great progress, contributing tremendously to the growing ties between the two countries in the fields of legislation, supervision and governance. Moving forward, China is willing to further strengthen exchanges between the NPC and the South African Parliament and make a greater contribution to the overall bilateral relations between China and South Africa.
Like a parent trying to console his panic-stricken young, South Africa’s new Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba was again playing the reassurance game at the confusingly named World Economic Forum for Africa: “Even with the issues that the ratings agencies are raising with us, we think that we can regain our investment grade”, he told Reuters. The phantom won’t harm us; hush now little children, the shadow is just passing.

The past few months have been nothing short of traumatic on our collective psyche. At the very highest levels of government, we have witnessed, aghast with horror, shenanigans that have made the economy and political landscape look frighteningly vulnerable – a vulnerability some will argue has been there for a long time but has been hidden from view.

Then it happened. The long-dreaded hammer fell, striking a resonant gong across boardrooms and living rooms and 16-seater taxis: downgrade. It’s the kind of floating signifier which, although not fully grasped by many adults, elicits fear and loathing even from a primary school learner. You don’t need to be a quant to know that ‘downgrade’ is an ominous term.

Then, as grief theory would have it, the steady flow of ‘analysis’ and fist-shaking vitriol followed. In characteristic irreverence, few offered a more fitting summation of the mood than Richard Poplak, who surmised that ratings agencies can be thought of “as basically Western-imperialism’s leather-clad, whip-wielding dominatrix, because that’s exactly what they are”.

Still, once we’ve gotten the dismay off our chests the sheer phantom-like presence of these institutions persists. Who or what are these ratings agencies and where do they come from? More pointedly, what is the source of their authority? How and why do they grip government and corporate attention so tightly?

By Zama Moyo

Who or what are these ratings agencies and where do they come from? More pointedly, what is the source of their authority? How and why do they grip government and corporate attention so tightly?

Accounting for the Grip of the Big 3

RATING THE AGENCIES
second aim – and this is what is sorely lacking in most ‘political analysis’ – is to account for what is referred to as the ‘grip’ (Glynos, Howarth, 2007)2 of these given institutions on our socio-economic psyche. This means attempting to explain why it is so widely accepted as a norm, as the norm.

It is instructive to begin by highlighting a simple fact about South Africa’s investment status according to the Big 3 (Fitch, Moody’s, and Standard and Poor’s). Firstly, while considered for most of the post-Apartheid era to be the premiere African destination for Foreign Direct Investment, this is not the first time we are at the wrong end of the ratings spectrum. Two of the Big 3 agencies classified South Africa’s sovereign credit rating as sub-investment – or ‘junk’ – from 1994 to 1999, when both Fitch and S&P decided that South Africa was a less speculative investment destination. Moody’s had maintained an investment-grade rating throughout the same time period, upgrading South Africa to ‘lower-medium grade’ in 2000. The upward trend continued with all 3 agencies through the mid-2000’s, peaking – perhaps ironically – in 2009, right after the 07/8 crisis which swept the globe. At this point, Moody’s deemed South Africa to be in the ‘upper medium grade’ echelon, with Fitch and S&P opting for the more conservative ‘lower medium’ verdict. 2011, however, marked the beginning of a steady collective ratings decline; in what seems to be a repetition of history, here we are back in the non-investment grade chamber according to Fitch and S&P.

And, just like the pre-1999 period, Moody’s is once again the lone agency not to label the country’s sovereign bonds as junk. Moody’s downgrade has gone from the current Baa2 to Baa3, which is still in the lower medium, non-speculative category. Simple English: we still wouldn’t be ‘junk’ – not for Moody’s, anyway.

Of course, the above is a very simplified and consolidated overview of the country’s ratings history with the Big 3. It is, however, sufficient to show two patterns. First, that the 3 agencies generally reach similar conclusions in terms of their assessments of a country’s ability to repay its creditors – which is essentially what sovereign ratings are supposed to show. Secondly, you will notice that I keep referring to the ratings of ‘the big 3’, as opposed to simply saying the ratings agencies. This is a deliberate tool to highlight the dominant market share that Fitch, Moody’s, and S&P have in the ratings space. There are, in fact, a handful of other ratings agencies that do not get as much media attention. Later in the article, I will pay more attention to this wider ratings landscape – its regulation, concentration, and role.

The fact that the big 3 show some long term alignment in their ratings is not necessarily troublesome; indeed one can argue that this points to, say, generally effective ratings criteria. However, when one considers that ratings are, in the words of the agencies themselves, no more than “opinions”, it begs the question why opinions should have such a large impact on state bonds – more pointedly, why these opinions move national treasuries to call for urgent press briefings in which the public is assured that the house is not on fire.

The natural path of enquiry if we want to understand the pre-eminence of credit ratings is of course to ask, ‘are there other ratings agencies? And if so, why do we not hear their names bandied about as often?’ In what follows, I address both of these issues in turn, beginning with the second of the two themes I have just isolated.

The Big 3: Tracing the Origins of the Phantom

The story of the rise of ratings agencies cannot be divorced from the wider historical development of 19th century American Railroad expansion. There are other historical factors to keep in mind, such as the eminence of the financial sector as opposed to the ‘real’ economy of manufacturing and traded goods. However, the former forms the initial context against which the necessity of ratings institutions can be understood.

Finding itself needing to facilitate economic activity (transportation of goods, human capital etc.) across a vast land mass of “continental proportions” (Sylla, 2001), America turned to railroads to connect the country. This however, would require considerable capital outlay, which at the time, simply was not available in the requisite quantities to either the state or the corporate entities. The traditional solution for railroad companies, which before 1850, tended to be small and limited in operational locale, had been to source credit from banks. Post 1850, though, saw the expansion of the size and scope of the railroad corporations in keeping with the demands of economic development. Thus the need for new sources of finance arose, and the answer was found – or more aptly, created – in the form of corporate bonds.

Richard Sylla, in his historical survey of the ratings business, provides a crisp description thereof:

A bond is contract. I, the bond investor, part with my money. You, the borrower, pledge that in return for receiving my funds now, you will make specified, scheduled payments to me in the future. Bond rating agencies claim that their ratings provide me with an indication of your ability (and willingness) to live up to the terms of the contract. That might include a notion of the probability that the funds will be returned with interest according to the schedule, and also an indication, should the contract go into default, of how much of the funds lend will be returned, and when.3

With these debt instruments, railroad companies were now able to raise enough money to continue construction. The debt incurred would, as per the bond agreement, be paid back to the investors at certain appointed times over a set period. As one would imagine, the demand for an independent entity to assess the likelihood of these repayments grew as the bonds became larger – that is, as...
there was more money at stake for the investors. The said independent entity would eventually evolve to what we know today as ratings agencies. Against this backdrop, it then makes sense that Moody’s, the first ratings agency to appear on the scene in 1909, started out exclusively rating railroad bonds.

In the meantime, while ratings only surfaced at the back end of the 20th century, some had already begun providing financial information aimed at potential railroad investors. The first of these gathered and collated information on, inter alia, railroad company assets and liabilities. Henry Varnum Poor had, together with his son, published his Manual of the Railroads of the United States, the first edition of which appeared in 1868. The Poor Company would then enter the bond rating arena in 1916, 7 years after the establishment of Moody’s. Standard Statistics, established in 1906 and specialising in corporate, government, and municipal bonds would be merged in 1941 with Poor to form Standard and Poor’s (hereafter S&P). S&P and Moody’s remain the biggest ratings agencies to this day.

The smallest of the Big 3 was founded as Fitch Publishing Company in December 1914. It issued investment-related statistics in The Fitch Stock and Bond Manual and The Fitch Bond Book, before introducing in 1924 the AAA though DDD system of rating that has become the industry standard. It has become a major player through a series of acquisitions and mergers, notably with a London-based ratings agency owned by the French Holding Company FIMALAC in 1997. Fitch also acquired the Duff and Phelps Ratings Company in 2000, consolidating its market share behind S&P and Moody’s.

How the Phantom’s Shadow Came to Loom so Large

Having delved into the historical beginnings and relevance of ratings agencies, one is now in a position to interrogate more critically the apparent hold of these institutions in the sovereign and corporate bond space, even in the wake of a crisis in which these agencies are said to have been complicit.

There are, as I see, at least three aspects that account for the continuing grip of ratings agencies. One has to do with the regulatory environment in which ratings operate. The other has to do with ownership structures – the tensions inherent in a setup whereby public assets or services are in private hands. The third factor has to do with human psychology, and more specifically, the fundamental drive towards trust and risk management. This third one explains not only why ratings agencies in general seem to hold such sway, but also why political commentary on the matter does not transcend the mere rehashing of who downgraded which sovereign bonds, when, and how it could have been avoided. I now turn to each of these three reasons in turn, before concluding with some policy implications.

Regulatory Enablers

The debates around regulation versus deregulation in the financial sector will continue to rage along ideological lines. This is not my concern here. I am interested rather in particular regulations themselves in the evolution of the Big 3, and the (probably unintended) consequences thereof. As White (2009) intimates, individual and corporate investors had, up until the mid-1930s, been free to buy and sell whichever bonds they deemed worthwhile, judging from the ratings manuals bought directly from the ratings agencies. However in 1936 the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), an independent arm of the U.S. Treasury, moved to prohibit banks from investing in securities deemed ‘speculative’. This in itself was sensible enough; if banks could invest in any asset or liability, they would effectively be given free-reign to gamble with money that was not even theirs. However, the problem was that OCC left it to ‘recognised rating manuals’ to determine whether securities were speculative or not. At the time, ‘recognised rating manuals’ was a de facto term for Moody’s, Standard Statistics, Poor’s, and Fitch, although in theory this could be any agency in the business of providing such financial information. What the OCC had done, then, was to give the opinions of these agencies alone “the force of law” (White, 2009, p. 4).

Perhaps in partial recognition of the undue authority this would give to ratings agency, the OCC later amended the provision to correct this, but the damage had seemingly been done as regulators continued to rely heavily on the ratings from the preeminent agencies. Writing for American Banker all these years later in November 2013, Alex Pollock is unflinching in his summation: “It [The 1936 OCC provision] fostered a government-sponsored credit-ratings cartel”.

Evidence that this has been recognised as a major enabler of the considerable influence of ratings agencies may be found in some recent reforms by the U.S. government. Specifically, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform legislation was compiled in response to the 2008 crisis. Section 939A prohibits “all reference to or requirement of reliance on credit ratings”. With President Donald Trump having sworn to repeal Dodd-Frank, the future of these reforms is uncertain. Another spin-off of the OCC move was to concentrate the ratings market, entrenching the dominance of the ‘reliable’ (then) 4 agencies. It was not just Standard that would merge with Poor’s to form a larger entity with greater market share back then; the trend towards consolidation has continued, with the Big 3 acquiring various smaller entities along the way. In the 1970s, the Securities Exchange Commission began a system by which they would identify other agencies, partly to render the ratings space more open to new players, and partly to ensure that government’s regulatory oversight would not be lost in the process. Thus an entity could officially be issued the Nationally Recognized
Statistical Ratings Organization (NRSRO) designation, adding to the pool of ‘reliable’ sources of ratings. This, however, did not stop the trend towards consolidation: there were 7 NRSROs in the late 70s, but by 2003 there were only 3 - that is, the Big 3.

Currently, there are 10 registered NRSROs according to the SEC. Seemingly, the lowering of ‘barriers to entry’ has not shaken the monopoly. To illustrate the point, one need only point to the 2015 fiscal year figures: of the nearly $6 Billion in income reported by all 10 NRSROs, the Big 3 accounted for no less than 93.2% of it. Even on this prima facie evidence, it is clear that increasing ‘competition’ is not the answer to the Big 3 domination problem, let alone the problem of a private entity rating sovereign bonds.

Ownership
Perhaps this incongruity between private and public interests is even more evident – and jarring – when one considers the ownership structure of the rating agencies themselves. Fitch, the smallest of the Big 3, is an interesting case in point. Fitch Ratings is 80% owned by the Hearst Corporation, an American conglomerate with interests in mass media and financial information. Hearst is in turn controlled by a 13-member board of trustees, 5 of which should always be of the Hearst family, as per the will of founder William Randolph Hearst (died 1951). The other 20% of Fitch Ratings is owned by FIMALAC, a French Holding company with subsidiaries in real estate and financial services. Owned and controlled by one French Billionaire, FIMALAC has no board of directors or executive committee. Marc Ladret de Lacharrrière is both CEO and 100% shareholder. Ultimately, then, Fitch is controlled by two private families – or more accurately, one American family, eight of its associates, and one Frenchman.

Quite aside from whether or not a few powerful individuals can be trusted with agencies that rate national government bonds, I would argue that they shouldn’t be allowed to be in such a position in the first place. In the political sphere this would be tantamount to an oligarchy.

Given the Fitch case study, one may be tempted to propose that ratings agencies be designed as public entities, that is, to be shareholder-owned. The logic, I’m supposing, is that if the ownership of a ratings agency is in the hands of the public, then there will be greater accountability, mitigating the conflicts of interest that do agencies under the current setup. Theoretically it’s easy to see the merit in this argument, and it seems a simple enough fix to the problem of concentrated private ownership. Empirically, however, a different picture emerges, as the case of Moody’s shows.

Moody’s Investors Services and Moody’s Analytics are two operational divisions of parent company Moody’s Corporation, which is a public entity. According to its 2016 Annual Report, the corporation had just over 2100 registered shareholders. There are more shareholders not included in this number as “a substantially greater number” of its stock is in the hands of “beneficial shareholders” whose records are kept by brokers and “other financial institutions” (see page 24).

At minimum, then, 2100 entities and/or individuals have a say in the direction the company goes, and more crucially, can represent a diverse range of interests. Of course, these shareholders do not own all of the company, and not all shareholders are equal. The major shareholders will naturally get more of a say. One company that features prominently among Moody’s major shareholders is Vanguard, which by its own description is “one of the world’s largest and most respected investment companies”.

The largest institutional holder of Moody’s equity is Warren Buffet’s Berkshire Hathaway, but Vanguard holds, by far, the largest chunk of Moody’s debt through various index funds. Put another way, the majority of the bonds issued by Moody’s have been purchased by Vanguard.

What all this means is that the ‘diverse interests’ potential is diluted because again the ownership, even though public, is in the hands, quite simply, of those with the big money.

Yet this is not something, one may object, that the agency itself can help. All the board can do is to ensure the possibility of public ownership by issuing shares and leaving the rest to the market. This is of course true. Nonetheless, going public seems to simply shift the twin-problems of concentrated ownership and conflict-of-interest from the private to the public spheres. The issues are not necessarily addressed; they are transferred to another domain.

In a study by academics from the Rutgers Business School and Emory University, statistical analysis was employed to determine whether credit ratings agencies (CRAs) are influenced, in their corporate bond ratings, by the interests of their majority shareholders. They concluded that “Moody’s ratings for corporate bonds issued by large investees of its stable large shareholders are more favourable relative to S&P’s ratings on the same issue.” In other words, think of two companies. Company X has invested in Company Y. If company X is a large and long term shareholder in a ratings agency, and company Y is being rated by that very agency, then the rating of company Y’s bonds will likely be more favourable than the ratings of another agency on the same company Y bonds.

While the findings pertained to corporate bond ratings, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the same bias could be found with sovereign bonds. Government debt may after all be purchased by private and public entities, including corporates.

Risk Aversion and Trust
It is reasonable and even prudent for
any investor to want to know the risk incurred with any investment made; this is necessary if the risk will be eliminated, mitigated or in any way controlled. Readers will remember that the history of ratings agencies is in the first place traceable to the need by potential bond investors – effectively buyers of debt – to know the likelihood of their money being paid back by the issuer of the debt securities. The simple question is, can I trust this entity to pay back my investment, with interest (if applicable), within the specified period? Trust and distrust are on opposing ends of the risk spectrum; they are not a function of common sense.

One of the perplexing features of the post-crisis era is the enduring presence and credibility of the same institutions implicated in the crisis itself. CRAs are no exception: it is publically available information, for instance, that both S&P and Moody’s were sued by the U.S. government, at federal and state level respectively, for inflating their ratings of subprime mortgages. S&P would later pay about $1.5 Billion in settlements, according to Reuters.8

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Some Policy Implications

If historical regulatory enablers, skewed ownership, and the psychological need to mitigate risk help explain the grip credit ratings agencies, where can we go from here?

There is likely no need to reinvent the wheel. On the institution front, there is already a Credit Ratings Services Department (CRSD) within the Financial Services Board; think of the latter as South Africa’s version of the SEC. The CRSD can begin to address the skewed ownership problem by requiring certain corporate governance standards for any ratings agency operating in South Africa, especially when it comes to sovereign bonds. The FSB could also, along with the first step, retain a pool of independent analysts who can be deployed on a short term basis to any agency wishing to conduct and share South African sovereign bond assessments. This will minimise the risk of sovereign bond ratings being used as pawns for private ends.

As a matter of interest, Fitch was actually removed from the list of registered CRAs in South Africa at its own request in 2015. For reasons unexplained in the CRSD 2016 report, Fitch was then granted an exemption from certain Credit Ratings Services Act provisions, allowing it to issue sovereign ratings even though the FSB had found that Fitch had neglected its ‘recommendations’ just the previous year.

To better monitor noncompliance by the Big 3, and to counterbalance their disproportional influence, the SADC region could establish its own regional credit ratings regulatory body – something akin to the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA). Apart from strengthening regional tiers and spreading financial best-practice, this will keep the Big 3 honest. For example, the EU, after a damning report by the ESMA in 2013, has already threatened to sanction the Big 3, prompting a quick response from both S&P and Moody’s to the effect that they would keep in line with EU regulations. There is no reason why Africa, or regions therein, cannot take a similarly stern approach.

Ultimately, the calls for to either ignore the ‘junk’ label slapped on our sovereign bonds by the Big 3, or to launch ‘our own’ agencies, will not solve the current conflicts of interest and continuing domination in the ratings space. Nor will it do away with the age-old tendency to mitigate risk. What we can do, at least in the short to medium term, is ensure that public or national bonds are not used as tools in the hands of a few, and that we use our institutional capacity smartly to prevent financial bullying.

The phantom, once in the light, is not so impervious after all. ■
1. The Competition Commission ("the Commission") has initiated a market inquiry into public passenger transport (taxis, long distance and commuter buses and rail) in South Africa. The initiation was done in terms of Chapter 4A of the Competition Act No. 89 of 1998 (as amended) ("the Act"). The Terms of Reference ("ToR") for the Inquiry were published in the Government Gazette No. 40837 on 10 May 2017. The ToR, Stakeholder Participation Guidelines and Call for Submissions are available on the Commission’s website (www.compcom.co.za).

2. The broad issues identified in the ToR as the scope of the Inquiry are summarized as:

   2.1 Price setting mechanisms
   2.2 Price regulation
   2.3 Route allocation, licensing and entry regulations
   2.4 Allocation of operational subsidies
   2.5 Transport Planning
   2.6 Transformation in the public passenger transport industry across the value chain

3. The broad themes can be further summarized by the following:

   3.1 Understanding the value chain across all transport modes and identifying impediments to competition at each level of the value chain;
   3.2 Assessing which transport modes are subjected to price regulation and what form does price regulation take;
   3.3 Evaluation of whether there are regulations that impede competition or proper function of the public passenger transport sector;
   3.4 Explore the competitive dynamics between operators in the same transport mode and competition among operators in different transport modes; and
   3.5 Identify the state of transformation across the value chain for all the transport modes and suggest mechanisms to improve the pace of transformation across the value chain.

ALL QUERIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

POSTAL ADDRESS: Public Passenger Transport Market Inquiry: Private Bag x23, Lynwood Ridge, Pretoria, 0040

PHYSICAL DELIVERY: Public Passenger Transport Market Inquiry: The DTI Campus, Mulayo (Block C), 3rd Floor 77 Meintjes Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria, 0002

Email: PPT@compcom.co.za

Contact Number: 012 762 6939 or 012 763 8635 or 012 762 6903
Toivo ya Toivo as a social product and a historical agent

On 24th June 2017, one of Namibia’s most illustrious and celebrated sons, Andimba Herman Toivo ya Toivo was laid to rest at the Heroes Acre, some twenty kilometres south of Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia. Since ya Toivo’s passing, on 9 June 2017, aged 92, many of his comrades, family members and friends paid tribute to this iconic son of the Namibian soil in the most colourful tones. I will, however, try to analyse his role in Namibia’s liberation struggle by adding a little bit more to the contextual flavour; i.e. stretching ya Toivo a little bit further as a social product and as a historical agent in the context of his times.

What do I mean by that and why is that important? It simply means

I know that the struggle will be long and bitter, but I also know that my people will wage that struggle whatever the cost. Toivo ya Toivo, 1967

By Gerson Uaripi Tjihenuna
colonial Namibia had to produce a ya Toivo; and equally, that ya Toivo had to contribute to the unfolding of the anti-colonial struggle; and by extension to the history of Namibia. In order for us to be able to understand and appreciate why certain human beings react in a certain way under specific circumstances, it is imperative to locate and analyse those individuals and their actions in a broader context of the historical epoch that has produced them.

There is a constant interaction between humankind and his/her social environment. In other words, a person is influenced or shaped by his/her social environment, but as he/she tries to understand and react to that environment, he/she also shapes that environment in turn. That is why interpretive disciplines like Sociology and Philosophy instruct us that a person is both a social product and a historical agent at the same time. This dialectical interplay between his/her social environment takes place in the context of time and space. That implies that that interaction happens in a certain geographical space and during a specific historical epoch. It is imperative to note that the degree or extent to which we influence our social environment may be different depending on who we are and the choices we make. To the extent that we are all shaped by our social environment, being a social product is a given, but being a historical agent is, to a larger degree, a matter of choice.

In the process of influencing or shaping his/her social environment, people make history, but as Commandant Fidel Castro Ruz once said "...objective conditions are created by history, but subjective conditions are created by man." Again, as my late Ghanaian Political Science lecturer, Chris Hesse would say "...man makes history, but he/she does not make history according to his choosing...". In other words, as human beings we are actors on the stage of life, but history takes its own arbitrary (random), and if you will, “independent course” apart from and despite their subjective intervention. However, as human beings we can decide to act so as to change our objective conditions and this is where subjective factors like political mobilisation, agitation, political activism and self-sacrifice for the sake of a just cause come into play.

During this interaction between a person and his/her social environment, ideas, songs, dances, vocabulary, poetry, and imagery are created by people as he/she is trying to interpret and influence his/her environment. All these different modes of expression can be captured in one word: culture. Culture, as Stephen Duncombe (2002) would argue, allows us to navigate our world, guiding our ideas of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, possible and impossible.

Economic determinism, which is based on the premise that socio-political change is determined by economic forces was the central plank that underpinned classical Marxism. This theory hit a brick wall in the sense that socialist revolutions did not happen in the developed capitalist countries according to Marx’s “prediction.” In trying to “solve” that puzzle, the Italian Marxist theoretician, Antonio Gramsci came to the conclusion that the answer to that was to be found in how the ruling capitalist class, through state power, was using ideology in cultivating, what he called, a hegemonic culture to maintain consent to the capitalist order without using physical coercion.

Duncombe also explained that the strength of cultural hegemony lies in its invisibility because it does not seem “political” and it is a lot harder to notice; and therefore does not create enough room for counter-resistance. When a culture becomes hegemonic, it becomes “common sense” for the majority of the population – including the oppressed. That is why Karl Marx was to say: “...the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas.” However, even under the most complete systems of control, there are always pockets of what Gramsci and Hall called “counter-hegemonic” cultures. It is the duty of the political activist not only to identify, but to also exploit these cultural pockets in order to build a radical counter culture that should lead to the birth of the new, ideal society with a new cultural hegemony.

In colonial Namibia, where ya Toivo grew up, the hegemonic culture was premised on white supremacy. By their mere involvement in the struggle, political activists like ya Toivo were, consciously or unconsciously, involved in the creation of a counter culture for the masses of the people to understand that political change was possible and that they were to be the architects of that change.

Toivo ya Toivo, whose Finish Christian name means hope, was one of the few people who, in the 1960s, chose the road less-travelled of confronting Apartheid colonialism in Namibia. He was born on 22 August 1924 at Omangundu village in the Ondonga Traditional Authority of the then Ovamboland. He grew up in colonial Namibia which was a German colony until the end of the First World War. After the defeat of Germany in the First World War, the territory was given to South Africa as a League of Nations Mandate. The United Nations (UN) that replaced the League of Nations after the end of the Second World War, introduced a Trusteeship system to bring all former German colonies in Africa under the UN. South Africa objected to that and instead colonised the territory and introduced its draconian Apartheid laws that promoted “white supremacy” at the expense of the black majority.

After the Ovaherero and Nama uprisings against German colonial rule (1904-1907), the ethnic groups that occupied the central parts of the country faced near extermination at the hands of the German colonial troops. As a result, the German colonial
administration (and later the new South African colonial administration) were facing a serious labour shortage to sustain the capitalist-based colonial economy. Cheap labour was needed to, inter alia, support extractive mining, fishing, and white commercial farming. The South African colonial administration had to look up north to recruit young men as cheap labour. Although this recruitment process was started during the German colonial era, it gained density during the South African colonial rule.

The workers, who were mainly recruited from the former Ovamboland and to some extent from Kavango, were subjected to the most humiliating and exploitative working conditions. These workers had to be stripped half-naked as they were being inspected to assess their health condition and their fitness. They would then be categorised into different groups based on this physical examination. The type of work they were going to do was then determined on the basis of the “level of their fitness.” Needless to say these workers did not have any say regarding the choice of the job they wanted to do or the boss they wanted to work for. The workers would be given a tag with a number which they had to carry around their neck. They would then be put on a crowded truck or train and then dropped at different stations along the way where their bosses were to collect them. They were not allowed to bring their family members along and they would normally be away on contract for anything between one to three years.

Not only were the living and working conditions of these workers inhumane and unbearable, but their wages were very meagre as well. This was a perpetual cycle of poverty and enslavement in the sense that after the contract, your earnings were so poor that you could hardly sustain yourself and your family and you were thus duty-bound to re-join the next round of the contract labour system. The working conditions of the farm labourers were, relatively speaking, even worse than those of their colleagues who were working in towns. Given the fact that the farm workers were, for the most part, isolated from other people, their fate was totally in the hands of their employers.

During the contract period, the understanding was that the worker would be given some accommodation and food rations but would then get his wages at the end of the contract period. Instead of paying the worker his wages at the end of the contract period, some white commercial farmers would simply shoot their workers dead and bury the body somewhere on the farm. In colonial Namibia this was common practice. These white commercial farmers would then get a new employee through the contract labour system.

Ya Toivo joined the contract labour system as a farm worker at farm Ombona in the Kalkveld District (in present day Otjozondjupa Region) and experienced at first hand the terrible conditions of the workers. His political activism was informed by being subjected to these unbearable living and working conditions as a contract labourer. He was not only a social product of his environment, but most importantly, he decided to act to change the then prevailing objective conditions in his native Namibia. In other words, he chose to be a historical agent; and that came about at a very high cost.

After a short stint as a teacher at St. Mary’s School (Odibo) in 1945, young Ya Toivo left for Cape Town, South Africa, where he worked in several capacities as he was trying to earn a better living. Here he began to work closely with the ANC, the South African Communist Party, the Liberal Party, and other progressive forces in Cape Town, which were working to dismantle the Apartheid system. In Cape Town, he was thus further re-shaped and re-moulded as a social product and that, in turn, enhanced and refined his skills as a political activist and historical agent.

While in South Africa, he began to organise with other Namibians working in Cape Town and together they established the Ovamboland People’s Congress. This was later transformed into the Ovamboland People’s Organisation (OPO) and eventually into the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) Party of today. OPO was initially formed to fight against the semi-slavery conditions of the contract labour system, but it was later transformed through heightened political consciousness into SWAPO so as to create a dialectical link between the plights of the workers and the struggle for the total liberation of Namibia. Ya Toivo and his comrades came to appreciate the fact that the semi-slavery conditions of the Namibian contract workers were but a part of a bigger problem, the illegal colonial occupation of their country by Apartheid South Africa. It became clear that the independence of Namibia should be the main focus of the struggle. One could further argue that the success of SWAPO, compared to other political formations of that time, was the fact that SWAPO, as a movement, had its genesis and roots in the struggle of the workers.

Ya Toivo was eventually deported from South Africa back to Namibia because of his political activism and he was put under house arrest in the north of the country. Despite police harassment, ya Toivo continued with his political activism in northern Namibia after his deportation from South Africa. Between 1965 and 1966 he was actively involved in assisting the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) guerrillas who were infiltrating the country from Zambia. This led to his arrest in 1966 and he, together with 36 other comrades, were put on trial in...
South Africa in 1967-68.

After their arrest, he and his comrades were subjected to all manner of brutal interrogation and torture, for which the then notorious South African State Security Police were known. During the trial and on Robben Island where he spent 16 years, ya Toivo emerged as the de facto leader of the group and the others always looked up to him for guidance and encouragement. The quality of his leadership came to the fore during the darkest of hours when he spoke on behalf of his comrades from the dock at their trial in Pretoria when he said: “I know that the struggle will be long and bitter, but I also know that my people will wage that struggle whatever the cost.” This particular quote became a rallying point and an anchor for many Namibian activists who followed in his political footsteps during the difficult years of our liberation struggle. Ya Toivo did not only refuse to accept that the Pretoria regime had the right to try him and his co-accused but he also continued to challenge the prison regulations on Robben Island because he did not accept their right to imprison him in the first place; and that led to him being put in solitary confinement for over one year.

After Namibia’s independence in 1990, he served in different ministerial positions. He served his country and people with dignity, distinction and grace until his dying day. I had an opportunity to rub shoulders with him at the 5th Continental Conference on Solidarity with Cuba which was held in Windhoek, Namibia, June 6-7, 2017; barely two days before his passing. He was the President of the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association and he came to the conference to deliver a statement in that capacity.

Humility, courage, fairness, and a reassuring demeanour were some of his endearing traits and therefore part of his enduring legacy. Above everything else, he was a man imbued with exceptional moral standing. Many of his compatriots would affectionately refer to him as Tatekulu Ya Toivo or grandfather Ya Toivo, because he was a father-figure to many. Fractionalism, with strong ethnic and regional undertones, has been rearing its ugly head within his beloved SWAPO Party over the last ten years or so, and this broke his heart as he did not want to associate himself with any faction.

Ya Toivo did not have an ethnic or racial bone in him; and he had a special place in his heart for anyone who interacted with him regardless of ethnic or racial background and across generations. I remember that upon finding out that I was a lay preacher of the gospel, he would always teasingly greet me in flawless Ojibherero language (my mother tongue) by saying: “Kora muhonge.” In English, “how are you pastor?” He had touched the hearts of the mourners at the vigil of the late Ovaherero Paramount Chief, Kuaima Riruako, in 2014 when he, despite old age, spent two nights with them in open air until late into the night, braving a freezing Windhoek winter. Being the then President of the National United Democratic Organisation (NUDO), Chief Riruako was supposed to be Ya Toivo’s “political rival.” However, Ya Toivo, being what he was, disregarded that because for him the fact that both of them had, at some point, come under the spell of the political tutelage of legendary Ovaherero Chief, Hosea Kutako, was more important than belonging to different political parties.

I watched the series of memorial services that was held in his memory in different parts of the country with keen interest and in awe, as various speakers rose to pay homage to this beloved son of the Namibian soil. At the memorial service that was held at his home town of Ondangwa, some of his childhood friends and close associates rose to pay tribute to their beloved son in his native Oshindonga dialect. I am sure ya Toivo was very proud of his Ndonga roots, but certainly not at the expense of his national identity as a Namibian or at the expense of his humanity for that matter. He always regarded himself as a Namibian first. You could not peg or confine ya Toivo to a particular ethnic group because that would be too small to contain him; and certainly contrary to his nature. The fact that after his release from prison he got married to his beloved wife – Vicky Erenstein-Ya Toivo – a US-born labour lawyer and activist of Jewish extraction testifies to his open-mindedness. For someone like Ya Toivo, the struggle of the Namibian people for self-determination was not just another heroic piece of history that he had read in a school text book. He was a historical agent and an organic activist in that history. It was a reality that he had to deal with on a daily basis and that led to his arrest and torture; and eventually to his long trial and imprisonment together with his comrades in a foreign country, away from home, away from family and friends. This was not a walk in the park; and as Chairman Mao would say: “… revolution is not a dinner party, it is not like writing an essay…”

I am sure ya Toivo, humble as he was, would certainly want to be simply remembered in the words of Amilcar Cabral who, in reference to himself, once said: “I am just a simple African trying to do my duty for my country in the context of our times.” As he departed from this life, his expansive soul was embraced by the waves of our gigantic Atlantic Ocean and beyond into the heavens; for he, just like the Atlantic Ocean, belonged to Namibia but also to humanity at large. He was both a social product and a historical agent in the context of his times; and history has indeed absolved him.

The author of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe’s biography, Benjamin Pogrund, chose a very interesting title for that biography, namely: “How Can Man Die Better: The Life of Robert Sobukwe.” I think this could as well be a befitting description of ya Toivo’s life. How could a man, who was larger than life, have died better? ☀️

“During the trial and on Robben Island where he spent 16 years, ya Toivo emerged as the de facto leader of the group and the others always looked up to him for guidance and encouragement.”

☀️
Deepening the participation and representation of women in politics in Africa

August is known as “Women’s Month” in honour of the August 9, 1956 march by women to the Union Building to demand the end of laws that required black South Africans to carry internal passes to regulate their movement within the country. The march to the offices of the Head of State was indicative of the strong link between political power, socio-economic transformation and gender parity.

Women are a vibrant force and occupy an important space in advancing social, economic, and democratic progress, safeguarding human rights, and promoting peace. There is a growing recognition of the impact that women have on political institutions and agendas. Women’s approaches to governance are generally more transformative, non-hierarchical and participatory. This type of approach assists in creating change and

The value of initiatives around engendering the political landscape is significantly enhanced if these initiatives are widely communicated and if they are monitored, reported on, and evaluated regularly.

By Reneva Fourie

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developing people and communities, giving priority to disadvantaged sectors.

In the past decade, women’s visibility in and impact on public life has grown. A 2015 review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action reflected that 167 countries, of which 51 were in Africa, reported successes in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment.

According to UN Women (2015:30), “Women’s representation in national parliaments has been steadily increasing over the past 20 years. Globally, in 2014, women occupied 23 percent of the seats in single or lower houses of parliament, up from 12 percent in 1995.” The report further states that “The most substantial progress between 1995 and 2014 was made in sub-Saharan Africa, where women’s representation increased from 9.7 percent to 24 percent.” (UN Women 2015:30).

In recognition that politics is an important site of struggle, dedicated effort is required to optimise access to and participation of women in this field. Such efforts should extend beyond marches, pickets, and “Women’s Day” gifts. Initiatives are urgently needed to holistically transform the structural and systemic manifestations of patriarchy. Patriarchy has unique manifestations at country level, but a number of generic initiatives with local nuances can be undertaken across the African continent to more comprehensively address inequities and to deepen the participation and representation of women in politics.

The first is encouraging a climate of peace, stability and security. Political and economic instability affects the development of a political culture with democratic norms. Socio-economic norms, religious interpretations and traditional patriarchal systems are frequently used for challenging and reinterpreting women’s rights and limiting their access to information, skills and opportunities.

It is also important that countries have enabling legislative frameworks. It is important to facilitate so that statutory provisions interface between constitutional, traditional and religious law in a manner that not only guarantees women fundamental political rights, access and opportunities; but also ensures the promotion, protection and enforcement of human rights, social and physical protection of women, and equality in the economy and the workplace. Such statutory provisions should be linked to international instruments on women’s empowerment and gender equality as part of ensuring the application of these instruments within each of the countries in the continent.

The enabling legislative frameworks should be supported by political systems that advance gender equity. These include decentralised systems of governance as women candidates are more likely to be known to local voters; and the party list system of election, which enables the reservation of a quota of seats for women.

As a demonstration of commitment to gender parity, governments should also establish specific women’s departments and/or dedicated, budgeted, measurable programmes that promote equality, empowerment and access for women in relation to education, economic opportunity and social security. They must also ensure adequate child-care facilities as parental duties are amongst the key inhibitors of political participation.

The social structural barriers to women’s participation in politics have to be broken. This will require the creation of a consciousness across gender on the cultural and traditional practices that infringe on women’s rights and the facilitation of the challenging of these practices using mechanisms that consider the material conditions. Furthermore, women have to be skilled to manage the often domineering, adversarial and aggressive nature and modes work that prevail in the political sphere due to socialisation and to deal with other aspects of oppression within the terrain of power such as sexual harassment, rape and gender-based violence.

If we are serious about increasing women’s access to and participation in politics, we have to address economic empowerment and the cost barrier. Campaign expenses are prohibitive for women, given the continued high prevalence of wage inequality. Once elected the rate of remuneration can be insufficient. Funding for political parties should have a gender quota bias.

Lastly, the value of initiatives around engendering the political landscape is significantly enhanced if these initiatives are widely communicated and if they are monitored, reported on, and evaluated regularly. The collection of data on women’s participation in politics and advocacy on what is available and progress on its implementation adds to the visibility of women, thereby encouraging gender parity broadly.

In conclusion, women everywhere continue to face challenges and barriers to substantive participation in the political sphere. The obstacles are even greater to overcome in countries with high levels of conflict or countries that have significant levels of poverty such as those on our continent. We acknowledge that there is progress, but believe that the pace is still too slow. The exclusion of women from participation in the political arena deprives the world of the rich experiences, talents, and perspectives that women have to offer. It is thus imperative that we remain committed to advancing opportunities for women to meaningfully participate in politics by availing all requisite resources to make this a reality.

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Limpopo province is one of the provinces which has high agricultural activity both at subsistence and commercial level. The Hoedspruit area, situated at the foot of Drakensburg Mountains in the low-veld Mopani area has climatic conditions which are conducive to a variety of commercial farming operations focusing on products such as citrus, wine, dairy, subtropical fruits and annual crops such as sweet corn and vegetables. Accordingly, the area harbours a substantial number of farm workers from the surrounding communities which include Acomhoek, The Oaks and Maruleng village.

There is limited information about the lives of farmworkers in South Africa. In order to understand the situation in the context of farm lives, a research study conducted in Hoedspruit has illuminated a number of social and structural challenges faced by farmworkers and children in respect of education on the farms. This article places accent on the education system faced daily by children and farmworkers. These are their lived experiences: waking up in compounds, walking to schools, being taught in multi-grade classrooms, receiving quality or non-quality education…

The aim of this study is twofold: firstly to conduct research on the livelihood of farmworkers; and secondly, to seek an understanding of teaching and learning in farm schools. Studies of farm school education have been undertaken broadly within the overall performance of public schools and yet there is little understanding of the hardships and impediments children go through on the farms. Researchers visited farms, schools, clinics and NGOs in 2007 in Hoedspruit and also asked questions on the implementation of new legislation such as the sectoral determinations that have been put in place since the dawn of democracy. A follow-up visit was made in 2016.
to monitor the progress made with regard to policy implementation and important observations were made on the following:

- Unemployment, and employment of cheap labour from Mozambique;
- the scourge of HIV/AIDS;
- being a child of a farmworker who resides in a farm compound; and
- crime in Hoedspruit town and farms.

Information gathered on farms such as Hoedspruit is intended to inform the policy makers, members of the legislature, delegates in the NCOP and other industry stakeholders in the province and departments such as education, labour, social development and health on how to address challenges of farmworkers with respect to working and living conditions, and equally important farm school education.

The Research Approach

Bronisław Malinowski’s (1884-1942) anthropological study on the Trobriand Islanders sought to understand daily living experiences of the islanders by enmeshing the participant in the community. The participant therefore felt a sense of empowerment by telling a story from an ‘insider’s perspective’. Despite Malinowski’s ability to afford treatment in private hospitals, he took the decision to be hospitalised in a homestead and be healed following an orthodox method.

Researchers in this study visited both farms and farm schools based in the Bavaria Estate Farms Olifantsfontein estate, Moria route, Swadini, Pamilart and Drieboek in Hoedspruit in 2007 and 2017. However, data collectors were booked accommodation in the Hoedspruit town’s lodges mainly used by international tourists. This is the existing gap in the study and it is now recognised that researchers should have stayed in the farm compounds over a period of time, in this way enmeshing themselves in the study.

This article concerns the results of data findings collected in 2017. Information was sought from farmworker representatives who attend regular workshops at clinics and the local Training Trust in line with a qualitative approach of using interviews and observations. The approach used in this study is what Denzin (1978) defines as ‘within-method’ kind of triangulation which uses multiple techniques within a given method to collect and interpret data and involves cross-checking for internal consistency or reliability. Following this approach, the researchers were more confident of their results. Data was cross-checked and used for some confirmation and completeness, which brought balance to the study.

A total of 18 farmworkers, male, female, youth and adults were interviewed following a specially designed instrument. The tool generated various sub-themes such as salary, living conditions and farm school education, and these sub-themes formed the corpus from which this study was structured. Different employees in different industries, namely subtropical crops, citrus, vegetables, pack house and game industries were interviewed. Data validation was conducted by interviewing stakeholders in Hoedspruit such as the South African Police Services, a Primary School, a Clinic in Bavaria Estate and NGOs.

**Farmworkers**

Farming for food production is a tough job for both the farm-owner and farmworker because practically, every farm-owner is expected to be the first one to be present in the morning and last one to leave, thus leading from the front by example.

Farmworkers having worked in the farms of Bavaria and Parmalat for many years indicated that these farms had now become multinational corporations through acquisitions, and farmworkers had to adjust to the new ownership and new rules of loss and profit. Regardless of the experience and contribution which they had sacrificed for all their life to the farmer, they were absorbed into the new contracts as new farmworkers.

Farmworkers had for many years been accommodated at the compounds where the only time for happiness is at the month-end when friends and relatives from the nearby villages visit the farms. Rooms were found to be small, not suitable to accommodate families with children and this stands in contrast to the other children who are learners in the nearby farm school. South African music Weekend Special from Brenda Fassie and Month End Lover still fills the passages and atmosphere in Jongoma farm compounds, combined with Zimbabwean and Mozambique music being played at the same time in the sleeping hall and kitchen until the month end wages get finished. Each farmworker pays accommodation of about R100 including electricity and water, and this is deducted from their salary. Many of the farmworkers say they initially stayed in the farm compounds provided by the employer but now prefer to stay at home because their net salary is not sufficient to take care of two households. It therefore becomes more economical to travel to work while staying with the family, more so since they are also expected to pay R10 for care of their children in the early childhood development centres.

Respondents believed that they are not being treated well by supervisors based on the colour of their skin and sometimes treated as suspects especially when criminal activities take place.
farmworkers get sick due to the nature of their work, they are forced to go to the local farm clinic of Hlokomela and the cost of R50 is incurred by the worker. If they do go to another clinic the health care letter is deemed invalid which leads to a deduction from their salaries since the employer will consider it as absenteeism.

Housing
The responses of farmworkers varied according to farms. Farmworkers who stay on the farms indicated that there is provision of accommodation for individual farmworkers but some are still sharing. The common problem observed during the research is that the houses are old and of poor quality and sometimes dilapidated while the employers continue to deduct money for accommodation monthly. The houses are reportedly not properly sealed to protect them from cold weather and rain and there is no provision for kitchen and toilets. One respondent summarised that farmworkers “are staying like dogs and pigs”, although they pay between R90 to R200 per month for the accommodation with electricity and water for free.

Participation of stakeholders and children’s education
The South African Police Services conduct farm patrols by visiting farms and schools to ensure that there is public order. Police also go into the community areas and farm schools seeking to understand the problems which are experienced in the farms. In partnership with the farmers “Community-Farm watchers” has been established and these farm-watchers conduct regular searches through road blocks to deter criminal activities in the area. SAPS has largely built good relationships with the schools and community. However, SAPS noted that major cases reported in the area include the unfair labour practices as well as the non-payment of debts to each other when there is borrowing of money. The police then refer cases of the unfair labour practices to the Department of Labour so that they can intervene and assist the workers.

The composition of the workforce includes workers from Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Swaziland; however despite this situation the police had not experienced xenophobic attacks. Police indicated they have enough resources to respond to the crimes in Hoedspruit and to enable them to deal adequately with farm attacks. There is a responsible person in the police station that is allocated to serve as farm watch secretary. Further, one police officer has also been allocated to the school to have workshops with learners to let them know about their roles in the community; how they can protect themselves and also how not to get involved in criminal activities like stealing on behalf of an older person.

The Department of Health and Social Development in partnership with the Hoedspruit Training Trust is assisting through the payment of the community health workers (Nompilos) in farms to ensure that health care work becomes a priority on the farm. Furthermore, there is a new initiative regarding Hlokomela’s partnership with SASSA, which will focus on food provision to individuals who are needy in the farming area.

The Department of Labor continues to play its role in regulating and providing guidelines for the employment conditions of farmworkers. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the province is also playing its role to ensure that farmworkers remain employed and thereby contribute to the GDP.

Work security, training, career growth and wages
During the interviews it was evident that since the introduction of the Sector Determination by the Department of Labour, the majority of the farmworkers indicated that they have been employed as permanent workers and they have a written contract with the employer. Many of them further show that they get trained for the work that they are expected to do as it may enhance their chance for career growth in their line of work.

The majority of farmworkers interviewed (general workers, drivers, and administrative staff) reported that they earn salaries between R2000 and R5000 according to the salary determined by the Department of Labour. Interviews indicate that the majority of farmworkers are working a maximum of between eight to nine working hours daily. It must be stated that the farm wages differ from farm to farm, the kind of work (maintaining fences, kitchen) and position or level: but there are few employees that earned below the sectoral determination by the Department of Labour. However, some workers’ salaries did not correspond with the position indicated; for example, where a supervisor still earns below R2000. According to the 2016 sector determination, the farmworkers should be paid about R2778.83 per month or R641.32 per week or R128.26 when working 9 hours in a day.

Importantly, it can be recorded that the majority of the respondents (general workers, drivers) indicated that their salaries are increased once a year and have the following as benefits:

- paid vacation leave;
- paid sick leave;
- maternity leave for female workers;
- provision for UIF deductions.

Due to the absence of a union, farmworkers are negotiating their own salary increases. This has affected the sectoral determination salary framework, and no accommodation and travelling allowances are paid. Consequently some farmworkers stay on the farms while others have to travel distances to and from work.

Leave days and Working hours
Farmworkers work between 7 to 9 hours a day, with a majority working 9 hours, which is in line with the latest sectoral determination by the Department of Labour. Some workers expressed dissatisfaction with the issues of working hours indicating that the employers tend to reduce the number of hours which they work, thus resulting in farmworkers getting paid less money. Some indicate that when they work overtime, the employers do not pay them accordingly or timeously.

Most of the surveyed farmworkers indicated that they have paid vacation leave, maternity leave as well as paid sick leave. However, it
was strongly indicated that that even with the provision of sick leave some farmworkers complained passionately that they are still not allowed to go to the clinic to consult during working hours, especially to collect medications.

Health, social welfare and occupational health and safety

A provision for UIF deductions in their salaries as per the law is available and most also have pension or retirement fund arrangements. However, almost all of them do not have provision for medical aid especially by the employer. This is one of the concerns raised by a farmworker who showed that when they get injured or sick, the employers do not want to pay for their medical expenses.

A number of farmworkers are affected by a variety of sickness such as TB, HIV/Aids, Diabetes and Epilepsy. It has been found that some farmworkers who already have chronic conditions such as diabetes and HIV/Aids are drinking too much alcohol which also affects their wellbeing. The wellness programme led by Hlokomela NGO, and now in partnership with the Department of Social Development is being implemented and farmworkers are attended to medically. They receive ARVs as well as information and most farmworkers appreciate the NGO and government response to these challenges as some farmworkers have died already. However, some of the workers who are affected by HIV-Aids are still not willing to adhere to ARV medications, even when information is disseminated or medicines available. The other challenge mentioned is that some farmworkers do not want to go to collect the medications due to strict time adherence by supervisors. There is some provision for sick leave but when workers leave for the clinic to collect treatment medications their day is recorded as a half day, which then impacts on their monthly wages. When the employers are approached by the Health Care Representatives, they agree that they will release employees but there are always contestations on deductions and working half-day. This requires the Department of Labor to tighten up its policies and supervision.

An area of concern raised by some of the respondents is that they are not provided with proper protective uniform which is suitable for their work. There are incidents of some of the employers being reluctant to take responsibility for the payment of workers’ medical expenses, and that, even when the employee is injured or unwell, the employers expect them to continue to operate fully in their position without taking into consideration their personal situation.

Discrimination, nepotism and abuse of the leadership role

Overt or subtle racism in the farms is still prevalent as some of the respondents said. For example, when something is reported missing, black people are the first to be searched or suspected while white people are not searched. There is a main gate where the vehicles are signed in and out but when going out only black people are searched. In some farms, the trusted staff is mainly white supervisors. As the narrative of rhino poaching began to make headline news in the area of Hoedspruit, respondents say; “black employees are always the first suspects in Rhino Poaching incidents” and this perception provides one of the discourses and debates amongst the farmworkers as they retire to their compounds after a long heavy day.

Respondents were concerned that white employees are paid more than black counterparts while many of African workers have better work experience and more skills. The recruitment process has been highlighted as a major concern, as respondents say they hire those that are close to them and there is overt favouritism by managers.

The working hours are not stable as they differ from season to season, as do the working conditions. Sexual relationships between supervisors and workers are a complex thing to debate, and even more complex when it comes to making a judgement. These incidents can involve unfair labour practices such as favouritism, sexual harassment and corrupt promotions.

These narratives continue to demonstrate in some respect lack of adherence to the conditions of service as provided by the Department of Labour Act. This further impacts on the deeper societal imbalances that are explicit in the abuse of women and children, leading to concomitant poverty and neglect of children. Pregnancy rate by female workers by their supervisors coupled with racism, discrimination and favouritism are powerful vignettes emanating from the fieldwork notes.

Farm school Education

When the schools reopened not all the children were present due to lack of transport because most were still at home. Some learners had not returned to the farms where the schools are located because their parents were still on holiday. Learners in the main benefit from scholar transport provided by the provincial department of education. However, it was reported that the number of children making use of scholar transport had decreased because at least more than 20 learners or families from other farming areas were evicted. Some of these children eventually dropped out of school while others migrated to nearby towns such as BaPhalaborwa and Tzaneen.

The Limpopo Provincial Department of Education’s School Nutrition Programme has a budget of at least one billion rands with which to provide all learners with food at school. Unfortunately it uses the statistics of the attendance during the first 10 days of the school term to calculate the amount of food required. At this time the enrolment is low. As the year progressed more children returned to the farm schools which meant...
that the available food needed to be shared amongst all the learners. The government continues to allocate food according to the initial statistics taken in the first 10 days. The issue was raised with the Department of Education and the matter needs to be addressed as it impacts on the application and usage of conditional grants.

Enrollment in the multi-grade schools is higher in Grade 1-3 and then the number of learners decreases towards grade 6 and 7. The decrease is caused by children living with parents in one room and when they grow up it is no longer functional or healthy to share one room with adults. Therefore children are forced to relocate to other schools where they will stay with grandparents or other carers and often go to school with inadequate parenting. Unfortunately many eventually drop out.

These are the harsh realities and daily experiences of children who grow up in the farms. Already their destiny in life has been decided. Many of them do not have the same opportunities as children in villages, townships or suburbs.

These children are in multi-grade classes of:
- Grade 1, 2 and 3: Sepedi class;
- Grade 1, 2 and 3: Xitsonga class; and
- Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 English classes (one educator).

There are 3 educators in the school (including the principal) for 48 children and therefore the staff establishment is no longer in their favour because the recommended ratio of 1:32 is not applicable. The school only qualifies for 2 educators based only on the ratio of teacher to learners unless parents can hire additional teachers and pay them salaries.

The content, epistemology, teaching, pedagogy in these classes is heavy for only the 3 existing educators. For instance, the workload for each of the 3 teachers is in the following format:
- Grade 1, 2 and 3 have four subjects,
- Grade 4, 5 and 6 have 6 subjects,
- Grade 7 has 9 subjects.

With the new developments at the school, two teachers are expected to share the 9 subjects in these classes and the challenge is that when they attend to one set of learners, one class will remain without a teacher. Ultimately this will continue to affect the quality of education for these children due to staff limitation in this multi-class system. The Department of Basic Education (2001) shows that at least 1 130 659 learners get enrolled in Grade 1 in South Africa which indicates improved access, but only 520 000 reach matric. The low throughput is highlighted by the National Development Plan 2030 and premised on this data, this study indicates that rural and farm school education is a major contributor to the dropout rate. According to the principal the challenges listed below affect learners, especially whose parents are farmworkers, which ultimately affects their participation and performance in school.

- Children come to school untidy which implies that the parents might not be having time to attend to them in the morning.
- Children come to school sick because parents say are not allowed to take the children to the clinic by their bosses (farmers). This compels teachers to leave school and take the children to the clinic thereby taking the educator’s time to teach in a school which already experiences a shortage of educators.
- The children on the farms often have to share the room with parents, which impacts on their behaviour.
- Learners demonstrate violent behavior (especially fighting) towards each other and others playing while acting as adults – which suggest they could be copying something from home.
- According to the principal, some learners who drop out of school may go to other schools while others go to look for jobs in the farms prompting child labour. However, the school encourages the local businesses not to hire those who are still of school-going age as a way to reduce school dropouts.

Concluding Recommendations

The visit and interviews conducted in Hoedspruit with the farmworkers and responsible officials demonstrated that there is a need for further and in-depth research to observe and understand the situation faced by farm workers not only in the area but farms in Limpopo and South Africa in general. However, this study provides an eye-opener for stakeholders and policy makers interested in challenges faced broadly by farmworkers and particularly by learners attending farm schools.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data from farmworkers in various capacities, health representatives and the police service. However it will be useful to obtain information from the employers. Based on the few interactions, it is evident that there are some signs of improvement from the initial study undertaken in 2007 especially when focusing on the support by the police.

The employee assistance programme, and educational facilities to support the children of the farmworkers demand that the stakeholder departments such as Health, Social Development and Education must intensify human resource capacity in the farms. It is evident that the conditions of farmworkers in the workplace still need to be improved, especially when considering alleged subtle mistreatment of employees by the supervisors and employers. However, concrete and substantive information on these findings needs to be gathered following anthropological methods of research not only through interviews but observations with researchers enmeshed in the compounds and farms.

“An area of concern raised by some of the respondents is that they are not provided with proper protective uniform which is suitable for their work.”

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Pan-Afrikanism or Man-Afrikanism?

By Tshepo Mvulane Moloi

The bulk of literature concerning Pan-Afrikanism is mired with flaws, particularly in relation to its institutionalisation phase, which dates back to the commencing convention in London, England in 1900. The two gravest shortcomings include the lack of acknowledgement of its original scholar-activist founders and a strikingly sparse recognition of women as participants, in its historical trajectory. If one may be allowed to be blunt, then questions such as follows, need to be asked - What is known about the chief convenor and founder of the initial 1900 Congress, the Caribbean Trinidadian barrister Henry Sylvester-Williams (1869-1911)? Furthermore why has so little been said about Sylvester-Williams’s co-convenors in the form of the Haitians, Joseph Antenor-Firmin (1850-1911) an anthropologist, journalist and politician and Benito Sylvain (1868-1915), who was also a politician and diplomat? Secondly from the sparse pioneering coterie of Pan-Afrikanists, were there any female participants?

If the response to the second question posed above, is in the affirmative then why are the identities of such female torchbearers overwhelmingly anonymous from the vast scholarship concerned with narratives of Pan-Afrikanism? Although both questions posed above are crucial and critical, for scholars seeking to secure a better command of the history of Pan-Afrikanism, this article however opts to focus on the latter question, on the basis of recurring women’s invisibility, in the historical outline regarding Pan-Afrikanism. This focus aims to acknowledge their contribution as scholar activists; and in the process also to set the record straight, about their due place in the discourse of Pan-Afrikanism.

This article will depart commonly utilised spelling of ‘Africa’ in favour of ‘Afrika’, as inspired principally by the Afrocentric literature of Es’kia Mphahlele, who occupies the central role in my current doctoral thesis, pursued at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). Remarkably “Africa remains a complex area for scholarly study because the ambiguity of the subject continues to be a source for imagination, interpretation, and debate based on what we have learned from Europe. This distorts everything and renders us unable to digest African thought and culture” (Asante, 2008: 55). Disappointingly “Rarely is it revealed that colonialism deliberately replaced enabling and empowering African traditional education with disabling and disempowering Eurocentric education” (Sesanti, 2016: 34).

Mike Stainbank in his capacity as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Es’kia Mphahlele Institute, explains why Mphahlele “deliberately used Afrikan with ‘k’ and not ‘c’ to denote ‘unslaved’ as opposed to ‘enslaved’ ” mentality (Mphahlele and Mphahlele: 2016:36)

While scholars have differing opinions on the origins & “correct” spelling of Afrika, The Es’kia Institute has chosen the Afrika spelling to reflect the reclamation and change from a Eurocentric point of reference to an Afrikan one, in line with the views of Prof. Es’kia Mphahlele more so in terms of language and pronunciation, Africa spelt with a “c” has no identifiable Afrikan root, to the extent it even does not belong to (or “is foreign to”) many Afrikan languages. This is true of many names created by the colonial powers, whose intention was to convey meaning that made sense to their European audience (Stainbank, 2002).

Seemingly “Africa was an imposition, an invasion of the conqueror...the memory that Africa is an invention, as well as an imposition upon the indigenous inhabitants of the continent, from time immemorial must lead to the acceptance of this naming with protest” (Ramose,1999:4). Based on the above, ‘Africa’ will be acknowledged “decidedly under protest” (Mazrui, 1988:38). The debunking of Africa (with a ‘c’), in

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favour of Afrika (with a ‘k’) within the scope of this article, should be read as symbolic defiance, as explained above. Such decisions must reflect consistency of efforts of decolonisation. This may satirically “turn our faces to the West” (Wells-Barnett, 1996: 654).

On the other hand “Afrocentricity is the centrepiece of human regeneration. It challenges and takes to task the perpetuation of white racial supremacist ideas, in the imagination of the African World, and by extension the entire world...is purposeful, giving a true sense of destiny based upon facts of history and experience” (Asante, 2003, 2-3). So “voices of the silenced, whose words and deeds are preserved in unconventional ways, as far as Western scholarship is concerned” (Keto, 2001:2) is thus vital when Afrocentric. This remark is valid when critiquing Eurocentric education, due to its limits a “stream cannot rise higher than its source” (Cooper, 1996:647).

In the current heightened phase of decolonisation, contemporary actions such as deciding to respell ‘Afrika’, in conjunction with jargon preferred for use in this article, such as ‘Afrocentric’, are intended to also be read as part of the liberating vocabulary, which should assist in the ongoing efforts related to a prospective decolonised curriculum. The envisioned decolonised curriculum must be able to oppose “coloniality, conceived as a matrix of knowledge, power, and being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2012:2).

The bulk of historical accounts to do with Pan-Afrikanism sparsely mention any women. Yet evidence from archives, as noted below, support the view that women were present from the initial congress of 1900 and actively participated on the agenda of pursuing Afrika’s self-determination and agency, with some elected to serve as part of the initial executive committee, at the closing of the first conference. Overwhelming concerns about patriarchy or misleading hegemonic ‘man-Africanism’ of Pan-Afrikanist narratives, make it imperative that the role of women as Pan-Afrikanists is addressed. “Social consciousness does not occur spontaneously” (Davis, 1996: 765).

There were at least six women (Anna H. Jones, Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Barrier Williams and Ella D. Barrier from the United States, and a Mrs. Loudin and Ms. Adams from Ireland) among the fifty-one African delegates at the conference. These women were not simply observers at this international gathering. Anna Julia Cooper, an educator, a woman’s club leader and anti-racist advocate, delivered a presentation entitled The Negro Problem in America. Her compatriot Anna H. Jones, a linguist, woman’s club activist and educator, tackled the subject The Preservation of Racial Individuality. These women delegates were actively involved in social movements committed to transforming the oppressed condition of Africans. For example Ella Barrier was an educator and an active participant in the Washington, D.C. colored women’s League (Nangwaya, 2016).

The envisioned decolonised curriculum must be able to oppose “coloniality, conceived as a matrix of knowledge, power, and being.”

The above submission is supported by Carole Boyce Davies, who remarked that women, to date, have been “consistently erased from the history of Pan-Africanism. It is important to assert the presence of active women, from the very start of Pan-Africanism” (Davies, 2014: 78). Notably the names of the female delegates, recorded as having been elected to serve on the executive from the pioneering 1900 congress, included Anna Jones and Annie Julia Cooper. Jones was a school teacher, opposed to native labour and indenture in Zimbabwe and Kimberly in South Africa, originally from Kansas City Missouri (USA). Annie Julia Cooper, an academic who completed her doctorate in history in 1925, at the Sorbonne University in Paris, also served on the executive. Cooper was an activist against racism, from Washington (USA).

Anna Cooper attended the initial congress after having already authored her text entitled A Voice from the South. It is arguably believed to be “one of the first books to put together theoretically race and gender and perhaps one of the reasons she was invited to the 1900 conference... It is clear from the orientation of Cooper’s work towards race and gender that she could not also follow a masculinised Pan-Africanism as a singular discourse” (Davies, 2014:78-79). Amongst the other female delegates was Amy Ashwood Garvey (first wife of Marcus Garvey, who co-founded the ‘Universal Negro Improvement Association-African Communities League’ – UNIA-ACL).

Female delegates at the second Pan-Afrikan congress included amongst others:

Jessie Redmond Fauset (African American poet, essayist, novelist and educator) – as a delegate on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of colored people, Fauset penned her reflection of the conference entitled Impression of the 2nd Pan-African Congress; Mabel Dove Danquah (married to Joseph Boakye Danquah, who was believed to have been groomed by Amy Garvey, while he was in the Western African Students Union, in London) – Danquah was popular for her short stories; and Claudia Jones (Trinidad born Journalist and revolutionary activist).

The fourth Pan-Afrikan congress was graced by amongst others Adelaide Casely Hayford (she was married to J.E. Casely Hayford).

It is crucial to note that “ Pan-Africanists who were feminists... practised the art of navigating a variety of complex positions around race, gender, class, national origin and culture within the larger goal of the liberation of African peoples internationally” (Davies, 2014:78). Further reading is available in Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood’s Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787 (2003) and Beverly Guy-Shettall’s Speaking for Ourselves. Feminisms in the African Diaspora (2003).

In hindsight the query over participation of women in Pan-
Afrikanism appears almost synchronised with the narrative of discourse of leadership in Afrika. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union (AU), can serve as an example. 25 May 2017 marked the 54th Afrika Liberation day, as a consequence of a continental unity sought by Afrikan leaders, such as Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie I. He successfully convinced fellow Afrikan leaders, from the five regions of the continent (Northern, Eastern, Central, Western and Southern), about the rationale of forming what became the OAU. His efforts culminated in thirty-two signatory governments, setting the ball rolling for mutual relations amongst all Afrikan countries. As a result of ongoing continental developments within Afrika and its international allies, this multilateral political organisation was disbanded, on the 9th of July 2002, by former President of South Afrika, Thabo Mbeki, in his capacity as the then incumbent Chairperson of the OAU. Mbeki became the last chair to preside over the OAU, as it was replaced by the African Union (AU), which successfully enlisted fifty four states in Afrika, excluding Morocco. Although Mbeki served as the inaugural chairman of the AU, this post rotates on an annual basis amongst the five geographic regions of Afrika. With all its shortcomings notwithstanding, post that memorable date of the 25th of May 1963, due to the achievements that have been made possible since the formalisation of the OAU, this date has since been commemorated by both continental and diasporic Afrikans. The OAU’s and AU’s historical narratives of leadership, have unashamedly been captured below:

... On the Security Council, the African Union should be responsible for the selection of Africa’s representatives in the Security Council. 5. The question of the criteria for the selection of African members of the Security Council should be a matter for the AU to determine, taking into consideration the representative nature and capacity of those chosen (Ezulwini Consensus, 2005:9-10).

With the exception of Egypt, South Afrika and Nigeria are affiliated to the Commonwealth and thus the abovementioned clause, was recorded after acknowledging that the “Harare Declaration has made significant impact on the world community... Full representation of Africa in the Security Council means : ii. Five non-permanent seats” (Ezulwini Consensus, 2005:9).

In summary, the merits and de-merits of Dlamini-Zuma’s ascendency as AU Chair, have been clouded by typical state-centric chenagians of men. Since returning to South Afrika in February 2017, Dlamini-Zuma’s name has been thrown into the hat as a contender to lead the ruling African National Congress (ANC). If she succeeds in her presidential bid, she will become the second female head of state in Afrika, joining Ellen Sirleaf who has been President of Liberia since 2006

In conclusion it is affirmed that women have been active participants from the first Pan-African congress. Most of them were community activists, educators and authors. These women engaged the challenging issues linked with culture, such as race, gender and class. If patriarchy privileges ‘man-Africanism’, then it is high time those scholars interested in Pan-Africanism cease to erase woman from narratives of Pan-Africanism. Indeed the following clairion call captures the way forward: “exigencies of this present age require that women take their places beside their men” (Garvey, 1996: 503).

Bibliography


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South Africa must adapt its approach towards research and innovation to what a vibrant industrial economy requires. Participants attending the second Innovation Bridge held in Johannesburg recently cautioned that the country needs industrialisation. There is a need for haste in empowering young people through as wide a variety of technological innovations as possible at such a time of rapid change. According to the World Economic Forum, 65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that do not yet exist.

Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor, who opened the Innovation Bridge, a technology showcase and matchmaking event, said the time has come to step up efforts to position South Africa and the greater continent as a global leader in the development and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). This is required to solve Africa’s challenges whilst opening up new opportunities for socio-economic transformation for all the continent’s people. Minister Pandor notes that Africa has laid a strong foundation in the use of ICTs in the public and private sectors, citing widely circulated evidence that innovations that began in Africa are now spreading across the world. These include innovations such as the use of dual sim card cellular phones or using mobile technologies for the remittance of payments.

Organised by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the event’s objective is to enable linkages and networking between South African and international innovators, industry, public and private technology entities, and development and commercialisation funding partners. A key focus of this bi-annual event is to bring together local companies and entrepreneurs needing investment opportunities, to be able to take their products towards commercialisation. The event was supported by the DSTs, entities, the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), and the National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO).

Also attending was the DST Director-General Phil Mjwara, CEO and co-founder of Aurik Business Incubator, Pavlo Phitidis, Managing Director of SiMODiSA, Matsi Modise and leading entrepreneur, global keynote speaker and venture capital expert Vusi Thembekwayo, among others.

The event brought together a multi-generational audience of over 1000 people comprising academia, entrepreneurs, youth, policy makers, scientists, industry and a host of
stakeholders from the science ecosystem.

“Closer to home our National Development Plan (NDP) recognises science, technology and innovation as central to the country’s efforts to achieve higher economic growth. It seeks to ensure that South Africa’s public policy fosters socio-economic growth and industry-science linkages through increased investment in research, human capital development, intellectual property and trade in high technology industries”, said Minister Pandor. She extols the launch of the Innovation Bridge portal as a key milestone for the 2017 edition of the event. The portal is a website that serves as year round online technology innovation marketplace for South Africa and the country’s innovation partners in greater Africa and across the globe.

“The Innovation Bridge must be used as a space where ideas are refined. Over the years, around 28% of the ideas that have been brought here are still being pursued; 12% have been shelved and 5% have failed. It is through the Innovation Bridge that we have managed to keep track of their performance,” she explained.

Minister Pandor added that a key focus of the Department is to strengthen commercial connections between business, government, science councils, higher education institutions and society.

“Various policy and strategy documents have identified the existence of what is called an ‘innovation chasm’ in our system. To address this, in 2008 we established a new institution which we called the Technology Innovation Agency. Government envisaged a public institution that would strengthen the country’s capacity to translate research and development into technology-based products and services for socio-economic development.”

Meanwhile, Dr Mjwara said that the Innovation Bridge aims to encourage and accelerate the utilisation and commercialisation of new and existing knowledge and technologies that have been developed in publicly funded South African research and development institutions. He added that government is continuously working on ensuring that the space for innovation is open. The DG explained that government has been providing support to universities, science councils and industries that have innovations and ideas that could go into the market place.

Minister Pandor urged the private sector to come on board and partner government to raise the level of research and development with resources targeted towards building the research infrastructure and commercialising the brilliant ideas brought forth by innovators.

Meanwhile, Dr Mjwara said that the Innovation Bridge aims to encourage and accelerate the utilisation and commercialisation of new and existing knowledge and technologies that have been developed in publicly funded South African research and development institutions. He added that government is continuously working on ensuring that the space for innovation is open. The DG explained that government has been providing support to universities, science councils and industries that have innovations and ideas that could go into the market place.
Palestinian Blues!
By Pikita Ntuli

Palestine is my bleeding wound/
I am the blood that flows/
In the geo-politics of denial/
My mind barefootedly treads on the/
History of betrayals of our ancestral Lands/
Raped by missiles bombs and minefields/
Of Zionist generals!/
I fed on poetic images leaping from Pages/
Of the volcanic mind of Mahmoud Darwish/
Sizzling with images of heartbeats Of Palestine./
I am a disembodied lips of children In Ramala/
Declaming poetries of defiance/
I have become a finger pointing at demons/
A finger painting Guernicas of dreams/
I am every child killed by Zionist bombs/
And raging missives of hate/
I am the resurrection of dreams of a free land/
Touch my lips!
Touch my bleeding heart!
Touch me and my vibrations-/
These volcanic eruptions will drown/
Enemies of love in the lava of desires/
Of peace and security!/
Do not seek me only in the streets Of Palestine/
I walk the streets of Pretoria and Johannesburg/
Carrying echoes of my land usurped/
Usurped by bigots of power/
Am I not Leila or Shaeera?/
I am a million names resisting borders/
Of language planted on our tongues/
That speak of peace across borders of hatred/
I am the child of Palestine/
Child of the world!!

We are honoured to be able to reproduce this poem by Pitika Ntuli, the world-famous South African sculptor, poet, writer, and academic. To paraphrase South African History on line, Ntuli combines different mediums as well as narratives to create a visually articulate set of ideas. His work has multiple dimensions that urge the viewer to challenge perceptions of representation, whilst considering the relationship between art, politics and culture as a whole.
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