

Power, Knowledge and Being: Decolonial Combative Discourse as a Survival Kit for Pan-Africanists in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The fact that modernity has created modern problems for which it has no easy modern solutions, and the outbreak of the global financial crisis that has shaken the confidence of the capitalist system, have provoked a new search for alternative knowledges, alternative methodologies, and alternative imaginations of the world. In the first place, this article seeks to project the value of decolonial epistemic perspective as a combative discourse, a redemptive methodology and a survival kit for pan-Africanists during the present moment dominated by phenomenology of uncertainty. In the second place, it also offers fresh reflections on the invisible imperial global technologies of subjectivation that continue to underpin and enable asymmetrical global power relations to persist and to contribute towards dilution of efforts to achieve pan-African unity. In the third place, it uses the case study of the disagreements over methodology of institutionalization of pan-Africanism as represented by Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere in the 1960s, revealing how these disagreements were informed by global imperial designs that hovered below and above the decolonization project. The significance of the article lies in its projection of decolonial epistemic perspective not only to reveal epistemicides that resulted in colonization of the minds of Africans, but also to systematically visibilise the invisible colonial matrices of power that need to be clearly understood by pan-Africanists as they struggle to extricate Africa from global coloniality.

Keywords: decolonial epistemic perspective, pan-Africanism, power, knowledge, being

Introduction

The conditions that brought about the crisis of modernity have not yet become the conditions to overcome the crisis beyond modernity. Hence the complexity of our transitional period portrayed by oppositional postmodern theory: we are facing modern problems for which there are no modern solutions. The search for a postmodern solution is what I call oppositional postmodernism What is necessary is to start from the disjunction between the modernity of the problems and the postmodernity of the possible solutions, and to turn such disjunction into the urge to ground theories and practices capable of reinventing social emancipation out of the wrecked emancipatory promises of modernity (Santos 2000:4).

In their seminal work on the empire, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argued that the notion of international order that European modernity created and continually recreated is now riddled by a deep crisis. They added that since its emergence as a European construction ‘it has in fact always been in crisis, and this crisis has been one of the motors that has continuously pushed towards Empire’ (Hardt & Negri 2004:4). This point has been amplified and reinforced by other scholars such as Slavoj Žižek who dramatized the unfolding of the current global crisis in his *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, noting that a combination of the 9/11 disaster and the global credit crunch delivered a double-death to liberal capitalism as a political doctrine and as an economic theory (Žižek 2009).

It is important to remember that modernity has been driven by a strong belief in perpetual betterment and overcoming of all obstacles and problems that stood in the way of the Cartesian subject as a marker of the modern world order. This strong belief is today unsustainable in the face of the failure of modernity to deliver human development, to eradicate poverty,

to enable human freedom, and even to predict the recent global credit crunch as well as the Arab Spring. Under the brave modern world human rationality had substituted God. As noted by Arturo Escobar, currently, ‘modernity’s ability to provide solutions to modern problems has been increasingly compromised’ and ‘in this modern incapacity lie both a hyper-technification of rationality and a hyper-marketisation of social life’ (Escobar 2005:212). This became the essence of capitalist neoliberalism, of which David Harvey argued that: ‘The internal economic and political contradictions of neoliberalisation are impossible to contain except through financial crises’ (Harvey 2005:188).

What is clear is that there is ‘great deal of uncertainty and acrimony in the way we understand the world, as well as the way human beings understand each other in different environments and cultural contexts’ and mainstream Euro-American ‘scientific knowledge is unable to explain’ the crisis (Nabudere 2011A:1). This is why it is important to explore the potential of decolonial epistemic perspective as an alternative way of knowing, producing knowledge and imagining the world. Decolonial epistemic perspective has a long history in global history in general and African history in particular. Its genealogy is traceable to human political and intellectual struggles against the dark aspects of modernity such as mercantilism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neocolonialism, underdevelopment, structural adjustment programmes, neoliberalism and even globalization.

At the centre of decolonial epistemic perspective are multi-faceted struggles over subjectivity and negative representations, over imposition of Euro-American epistemologies, over domination and repression, and over exploitation and dispossession. Decolonial epistemic perspective’s mission is to forge new categories of thought, construction of new subjectivities and creation of new modes of being and becoming (Fanon 1986:1). Decolonial struggle is a vast one. It cannot be fought in one site. The decolonization project must not be reduced to seeking political kingdom. It must encompass various domains and realms simultaneously, simply because global imperial designs and colonial matrices of power have permeated and infiltrated every institution and every social, political, economic, spiritual, aesthetic, and cognitive arena of African life (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986). At one major level, the African struggles involve challenging Euro-American epistemology and this dimension was well captured by Fanon, when he said:

We must leave our dreams and abandon our old beliefs and friendships of the time before life began. Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their streets, in all the corners of the globe So, my brothers, how is it that we do not understand that we have better things to do than to follow that same Europe? Come, then, comrades, the European game has finally ended; we must find something different (Fanon 1986:251).

This article is organised into four main sections. The first section maps out the key contours of decolonial epistemic perspective. The second section analyses the essence of global imperial designs as technologies of subjectivation and their impact on Africa. The third section revisits the ‘Kwame Nkrumah-Julius Nyerere curse’ that unfolded in the 1960s in the midst of neocolonialism to reveal how disagreements over methodologies of institutionalization of pan-Africanism reflected entrapment of Africa postcolonial projects within colonial matrices of power. The final section briefly explains the current state of the pan-African agenda in the process demonstrating how the Nkrumah-Nyerere curse continues to hang on the minds of present day pan-Africanists like a nightmare.

Decolonial Epistemic Perspective as Survival Kit for Pan-Africanism

Nelson Maldonado-Torres a leading Latin American decolonial theorist clearly differentiates colonialism from coloniality in these revealing words:

Coloniality is different colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to a long-standing patterns of power that emerged as result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in

books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality as the time and every day (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243).

Decolonial epistemic perspective is ranged against coloniality. Whereas postmodernism and postcolonialism have contributed to the repudiation of totalizing Western discourses in the process opening spaces for previously silenced voices and highlighting plurality, multiplicity and difference; decolonial epistemic perspective unmasks the very constitution of the modern world system dated to 1492 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). In other words, decolonial epistemic perspective builds on decolonization discourse but adds the concepts of power, being and knowledge as constitutive of modernity/coloniality. This is why we say that decolonial epistemic perspective stands on four concepts. The first concept being that of coloniality of power which is a description of how the current modern global Euro-American-centric and capitalist structure was organized, configured, and articulated according to imperatives of global imperial designs. Coloniality of power unpacks coloniality as that broad but specific and constitutive element of global model of capitalist order that continues to underpin global coloniality after the end of direct colonialism (Quijano 2000:342).

Coloniality of power describes modern global power as a network of relations of exploitation, domination, and control of labour, nature and its productive resources, gender and its reproductive species, subjectivity and its material and intersubjective products, as well as knowledge and authority (Quijano 2007). At the centre of coloniality of power are technologies of domination, exploitation and violence known as ‘colonial matrix of power’ that affects all dimensions of social existence ranging from sexuality, authority, subjectivity, politics, economy, spirituality, language and race (Quijano 2000:342-380). As articulated by Castro-Gomez:

The concept of the ‘coloniality of power’ broadens and corrects the Foucauldian concept of ‘disciplinary power’ by demonstrating that the panoptic constructions erected by the modern state are inscribed in a wider structure of power/knowledge. This global structure is

configured by the colonial relation between centre and periphery that is at the root of European expansion (Castro-Gomez 2002: 276).

The importance of the concept of coloniality of power for present-day pan-Africanists is that it enables them to gain a deeper understanding of two crucial realities. The first being that the achievement of political independence and the withdrawal of direct colonial administrations; did not produce a postcolonial world. What it produced were vulnerable post-colonial nation-states with a modicum of juridical freedom. Decolonially speaking, African people still live under global Euro-American domination and exploitation. Coloniality of power, therefore, allows pan-Africanists to understand the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of direct colonial administrations (Grosfoguel 2007:219). The second is that it enables pan-Africanists to notice the strong hierarchies of present modern global power structure, whereby at the apex are the USA and NATO partners and at the subaltern bottom is Africa and its people. This structure can only be changed if Africans fully embraced pan-Africanism not only as an ideological shield but also as enabler of economic freedom.

Decolonial epistemic perspective differs from neo-colonial critique which emphasises political and economic hierarchies of domination and exploitation. The former identifies 'hetararchies' (multiple, vertical and horizontal) forms of domination and exploitation. For example, Ramon Grosfoguel isolates nine of these consisting of race, class, gender, sexuality, religious, ethnic, politico-military, epistemic and linguistic forms (Grosfoguel 2007: 216-217).

Therefore the second concept on which decolonial epistemic perspective is built is called coloniality of knowledge. It is intimately tied to coloniality of power as power and knowledge operate as inseparable twins within global imperial designs. But coloniality of knowledge speaks directly to epistemological colonization whereby Euro-American techno-scientific knowledge managed to displace, discipline, destroy alternative knowledges it found outside the Euro-American zones (colonies) while at the same time appropriating what it considered useful to global imperial designs. Combinations of natural and human sciences were used to back up racist theories and to rank and organise people according to binaries of inferior-superior relations (Castro-Gomez 2002:217). Santos elaborated that in the name of introducing modern science, alternative knowledge and science

found in Africa were destroyed and the social groups that relied on these systems to support their own autonomous path of development have been humiliated as epistemicides were being committed (Santos 2007: xviii).

Schools, churches, and universities, contributed towards the invention of the 'other' as they operated as epistemic sites as well as technologies of subjectivation that naturalised Euro-American epistemology as universal. On the other hand, the same institutions became nurseries for the production of African educated elites and African nationalists who exposed hypocrisy and double standards hidden within global imperial designs (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2001:53-82). While not totally opposed to Euro-American values, the African educated elites and nationalists railed against exploitative and repressive aspects contained within Western order of knowledge. But what ensued as a darkest aspect of coloniality of knowledge were 'epistemicides' which manifested in various ways: first is academic mimetism/intellectual mimicry dominant in African scholarship; destruction of indigenous African knowledges; and a plethora of crises plaguing universities in Africa (crisis of identity, crisis of legitimacy, crisis of relevance, crisis of authority, epistemological crisis, crisis of student politics and crisis of historical mission) (Lebakeng, Phalane & Dalindyebo 2006).

Coloniality of knowledge is very important because it speaks directly to the dilemmas of invasion of imagination and colonization of the minds of Africans, which constitutes epistemological colonization. This colonization of consciousness and modes of knowing is pervasive in discourses of development, technologies of organising people into nations and states, as well as imaginations of the future.

How coloniality of knowledge unfolded is well articulated by Anibal Quijano who argued that in the beginning colonialism assumed the form of systematic repression of the specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols, and knowledges that were considered not useful for the global imperial designs and the colonial process (Quijano 2007:169). This same process involved appropriating from the colonized their knowledge especially in mining, and agriculture as well as their products and work.

But the important form of colonial invasion and repression is that which targeted modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, and of producing perspectives. This was followed by imposition of the coloniser's own Euro-American epistemology, own patterns of expression, and their own beliefs and images (Quijano 2007:169). This analysis speaks to the core issues of

colonization of imaginations and minds of Africans that need decolonial epistemic perspective as a therapy.

The third pillar of decolonial epistemic perspective is coloniality of being. It directly addresses the physical and psychological predicament of colonised beings. It enables appreciation of the impact of colonial technologies of subjectivation on the life, body, and mind of the colonized people. It speaks to the lived experiences of colonized which can be described as phenomenology of subjectivity (Maldonado-Torres 2007:242). Drawing on scientific racism thinking, colonialists doubted the very humanity of colonized people and doubted whether they had souls. This racist thinking informed politics of ‘Othering’ of the colonized people which culminated in what Nelson Maldonado-Torres termed ‘imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism’ as a form of ‘questioning the very humanity of colonized peoples’ (Maldonado-Torres 2007:245). The being of the colonized became that of a ‘racialised self’ open to all sorts of abuses and living a hellish life.

Slavery, war, conquest, violence, rape and even genocide constituted the way the colonial conquerors related to the colonized. Ethics that governed human relations in Europe were suspended in Africa where Africans were designated as ‘those outside the human ocumene’ (Maldonado-Torres 2007:247). Death itself was never an extra-ordinary affair among colonized and those racialised into non-beings, but a constitutive feature of their life. In short, the concept of coloniality of being is very useful because it links with the Fanonian concept of the wretched of the earth (*the damne*) – the ideas of black people as condemned people whose being amounts to ‘nothingness’. Maldonado-Torres wrote that: ‘*Indeed, coloniality of Being primarily refers to normalization of the extraordinary events that take place in war*’ (Maldonado-Torres 2007:255; e.i.o.). The list of ‘extraordinary events’ that have been normalised (making them appear as though they are constitutive of the ontology of being African) in Africa is endless, ranging from hunger, epidemics like HIV/AIDS, living in shacks (*imikhukhu* in South Africa and other parts of Africa), homelessness, political violence, communal violence, rape, to being killed by lightning every rainy season.

Just like coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being is very important for pan-Africanists because it enables a process of making visible the invisible. It also becomes a useful tool for deciphering the mechanisms that produce the dire conditions within which poor Africans are enmeshed. Finally, the three concepts so far presented

demonstrate the importance of pushing the unfinished agenda of decolonization forwards concurrently with the equally significant unfinished democratic agenda.

The last concept is that of coloniality of nature. This one is not yet fully developed but it seeks to address the pertinent issues of ecology, environment and climate. Arturo Escobar (2005), William M. Adams and Martin Mulligan (2003) and others are working on this concept. How did modernity and the capitalist system impact on human relations with environment? What can be gained by pan-Africanists if they thought about ecological and environmental problems from 'colonial difference' as a privileged epistemological and political space for social transformation rather than merely imbibing discourses from the global metropolitan centres? What emerges from such an approach is how modernity and its epistemology suppressed non-Euro-American thought, histories and forms of knowledge that had enabled Africans to coexist harmoniously with environment. The underside of modernity that includes mercantilism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid, had a debilitating impact on ecology and environment (Escobar 2005).

Modernity's push for subordination of body and nature to mind opened floodgates to reduction of the products of nature to products of labour as well as opening nature to human-driven markets. The result has been an epistemic rift between local people's episteme and modern episteme on understanding of nature and its preservation (Escobar 2007). Nature, body, mind and spirit's relationship was ruptured with serious consequences for the environment, and what is needed is to restore the linkages. This can only be done if African peoples' own understanding and knowledge of environment is taken seriously in the context of the current threat of environmental catastrophe rooted in Euro-American ways of exploiting nature informed by the exploitative capitalist thought.

Decolonial epistemic perspective carries the totality of the above four concepts in its agenda to critique Euro-American epistemology that is currently in crisis. It inaugurates thinking that calls for opening up of plurality of epistemologies to enrich human experience from different vantage points. Decolonial epistemic perspective is a critical social theory encompassing the totality of critical thoughts emerging from the ex-colonised world informed by imperatives of resisting colonialism and imperialism in

their multifaceted forms. It contributes towards imagination and construction of a different future (Riberom 2011).

Like all critical social theories of society, decolonial epistemic perspective aims to critique and possibly overcome the epistemological injustices put in place by imperial global designs, and questions and challenges the long standing claims of Euro-American epistemology to be universal, neutral, objective, disembodied, as well as being the only mode of knowing (Mignolo 2007). It is ‘an-other thought’ that seeks to inaugurate ‘an-other logic,’ ‘an-other language,’ and ‘an-other thinking’ that has the potential to liberate ex-colonised people’s minds from Euro-American hegemony (Mignolo 2007:56).

What distinguishes decolonial epistemic perspective is its clear African and Global South locus of enunciation. A locus of enunciation is a reference to a particular location from which human beings speak within the power structures. Its importance lies in capturing that there is absolutely nobody who is able to escape the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical and racial hierarchies fashioned by the modern world system (Grosfoguel 2007:213). Unlike the Euro-American epistemology, it is not fundamentalist in its outlook as it concedes space for other knowledges emerging from different geo-historical sites and different human experiences. Decolonial epistemic differs from postmodern perspective in the sense that the later constitute a critique of modernity from within. Decolonial epistemic perspective is a critique from without. It is genealogically traceable to the peripheries of modernity. But it does not even attempt to claim universality, neutrality, and singular truthfulness. It is decidedly and deliberately situated in Global South in general and Africa in particular. It privileges decolonial thinking as a form of liberation.

Decolonial epistemic perspective helps in unveiling epistemic silences, conspiracies, and epistemic violence hidden within Euro-American epistemology and to affirm the epistemic rights of the African people that enable them to transcend global imperial designs. Unless coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being, and coloniality of nature are clearly understood as enabling intellectual unveiling of colonial matrices of power and technologies of subjectivation that underpin the continued subalternization of Africa and its people since the time of colonial encounters, the pan-African agenda would not be pushed as vigorously and as urgently as it deserves.

Read from decolonial epistemic perspective, pan-Africanism forms part of decolonial horizons involving Africans taking charge of their destiny and search for new humanism. In this context pan-Africanism becomes a singular connector of a diversity of ex-colonized African people. This must begin with epistemic and cognitive freedom. It has become clear in recent years and months the whole Euro-American structure of power in place since the fifteenth century has been undergoing a profound crisis. The Euro-American epistemology is undergoing a profound crisis of confidence. It failed even to predict the current financial crisis that is rocking the world. It has also become clear that what was universalised by global imperial designs as a universal science is in fact a Western particularism, which assumed power to define all rival forms of knowledge as particular, local, contextual and situational, while claiming universality (Santos 2007:xviii).

Decolonial epistemic perspective builds on this realisation to inaugurate and push forward a ‘decolonial turn’ that calls for recognition of alternative knowledges and alternative ways of knowing, as part of re-opening vistas of liberation from global imperial designs and colonial matrices of power. The world in general and Africa in particular finds itself in a phase of paradigmatic shift that necessitates re-invention of the decolonial liberation agenda within a context in which Euro-American civilization is devouring not only its promises of progress, liberty, equality, non-discrimination and rationality, but is repudiating and criminalising the very idea of struggle for these objectives (Santos 2007: xxi).

Global Imperial Designs and Technologies of Subjectivation

Global imperial designs refer to the core technologies of modernity that underpinned its expansion into the non-Western parts of the world from the fifteenth century onwards. Race and Euro-American epistemology particularly its techno-scientific knowledge claims were used to classify and name the world according to Euro-Christian-Modernist imaginary. African peoples and others whose cultures and ways of life were not informed by imperatives of Euro-Christian modernity, were deemed to be barbarians – a people who did not belong to history and had no history. Following Christian cosmology the cartography of the world into continents had to be followed by assigning each part to one of the three sons of Noah: Europe to Japheth;

Africa to Ham; and Asia to Shem in some of the early maps like that from Isidore (Mignolo 2007: 24). Besides this mapping of the global geocultural identities into continents, a conception of humanity according to race resulted in its differentiation into inferior and superior, irrational and rational, primitive and civilized, traditional and modern (Quijano 2000; 2007).

The idea of race was deployed to justify such inimical processes as the slave trade, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid as well as authoritarian and brutal colonial governance systems and styles. This constituted the ugly and dangerous face of modernity and these inimical processes were unleashed on the non-Western world. Race was also used as a fundamental criterion for distribution of world population into ranks, places, and roles. Boaventura de Sousa Santos depicted the bifurcated face of modernity as informed by ‘abyssal thinking’ (Santos 2007).

This thinking was constituted by ‘visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones’ (Santos 2007:45). Abyssal thinking’s invisible distinctions culminated in the division of global social reality into two realms – the realm of ‘this side of the line’ (Euro-America world) and realm of ‘the other side of the line’ (Africa and other non-Western part of the world). Ramon Grosfoguel clearly expressed how the logic of superiority-inferiority that informed ‘this side’ and the ‘other side’ informed a particular rendition of human global human experience:

We went from the sixteenth century characterization of ‘people without writing’ to the eighteenth and nineteenth century characterization of ‘people without history,’ to the twentieth century characterization of ‘people without development’ and more recently, to the early twenty-first century of ‘people without democracy’ (Grosfoguel 2007:214).

This was a presentation of how the human trajectories on the ‘other side’ (the colonial zone) was assumed to have unfolded since the dawn of modernity. On ‘this side of the line’ (Euro-American zone), the trajectory was rendered this way:

We went from the sixteenth century ‘rights of people’ to the eighteenth century ‘rights of man’ ... and to the late twentieth century ‘human rights’ (Grosfoguel 2007:214).

Harmonious coexistence was imagined as incomprehensible and impossible. In short, the two sides were characterized by ‘impossibility of the co-presence’ (Santos 2007:45). This conception and division of the world into this side and that side authorized those from ‘this side’ to assume superiority and to arrogate order, civility, law and rights, to themselves, while denying the existence of the same on the ‘other side’. Violence, lawlessness, primitivism, superstition, strange beliefs, and retrogressive knowledges distinguished the ‘other side’ (Santos 2007:47). This became the colonial zone where canons of ethics, law, rights, civility and other forms that underpinned human comfort in the Euro-American world were suspended, and war, violence, and appropriation constituted colonial governance (Maldonado-Torres 2004; Maldonado-Torres 2007).

With specific reference to Africa, Achille Mbembe categorized colonial forms of violence into three. The first was foundational violence that authorized the right of conquest while simultaneously creating the object (Africans) of its violence (Mbembe 2000). It had an instituting function. The second was legitimization violence and this one became a form of colonial language and transformed foundational violence into an ‘authorizing authority’ (Mbembe 2000:6-7). The third was maintenance violence and it ensured permanence of colonial sovereignty. Its function according to Mbembe was to ‘ratify and reiterate’ (Mbembe 2007:7). Violence and race occupied a central place within global imperial designs.

Global imperial designs are shorthand for how ‘It was from the West that the rest of the world is described, conceptualized, and ranked: that is, modernity is the self-description of Europe’s role in history rather than an ontological historical process (Mignolo 2007:35). Simply put, global imperial designs are those processes that drove the making of a Capitalist, Patriarchal, Euro-American-centric, Christian-centric, Imperial, Colonial, Hetero-normative and Modern-world system (Grosfoguel 2011). A catalogue of identifiable historical processes that produced the current unequal world order includes the European Renaissance and Christianization in the 15/16th century.

This was followed by the Enlightenment, Mercantilism and Maritime Trade in the 16/17th century. Industrialism, Imperialism and Colonialism in the 18/19th Century commenced. This was followed by Modernization and Developmentalism in the mid-20th century. Neocolonialism, Neoliberalism, Washington Consensus and the Structural Adjustment Programmes dominated in the late-20th century. Today, United States of America (USA)

super-power imperialism and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) driven imperial designs are hidden behind the mantras of humanitarian interventions and fighting global terrorism. Discourses of exporting democracy and human rights dominate at the beginning of the 21st century (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012a).

The key problem in Africa is that there is an illusion of freedom and a myth of decolonization. There can be no freedom and decolonization as long as global imperial designs are in place since conquest still shapes and informs the character of the modern world system. This point is well captured by Grosfoguel who argued that:

One of the most powerful myths of twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a ‘postcolonial’ world. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same ‘colonial power matrix’. With juridical-political decolonization we moved from a period of ‘global colonialism’ to the current period of ‘global coloniality’ (Grosfoguel 2007:219).

This critical analysis of the present condition of those people residing in peripheral ex-colonized world is in no way meant to down play the sacrifices they made towards achievement of decolonization. As Zeleza argues, while the decolonization period constituted the ‘proudest moment’ of African nationalism, Africans must not therefore relax and think that the struggle is over (Zeleza 2003:vi). The postcolonial states have remained operating like colonial states, unleashing violence on African people. African people are still often treated like subjects rather than citizens by their leaders. Juridical freedom has not been translated into popular freedom. Territorial nationalism informed by colonial matrices of power is proving difficult to convert into pan-Africanism and pan-African unity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012b:71-89).

Ngugi wa Thiong’o not only identified that colonization of the mind remained the most successful realm where colonialism deeply inscribed itself, but also that colonialism is a vast process requiring decolonization to assume the character of an equally vast process to respond and fight colonialism in its

multifaceted forms (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986). Decolonization has to assume global proportions for it to deal effectively with global imperial designs. Ngugi wa Thiong'o emphasised that imperialism is not just a slogan 'It is real, it is palpable in content and form and in its methods and effects ... Imperialism is total: it has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for people of the world. It could even lead to holocaust' (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986:2).

This unmasking of the imperialism, colonialism and colonality is necessary because there are several forms of colonizations such as colonization of consciousness, colonization of sexuality; colonization of gender, colonization of language, colonization of aesthetics, colonization of epistemology and other forms (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986:6-12). Decolonization must respond to all these forms of colonization if Africa is to be free. Decolonial epistemic perspective is therefore a necessary survival kit for continuation of the decolonization project in the present age of global colonality that is informed and underpinned by invisible colonial matrices of power. Decolonization processes of the 21st century must also deal with the problem of predatory postcolonial states and authoritarian leaders in Africa as well as push for democratization of global power structures.

Today, global imperial designs have assumed the form of neo-liberal imperialism with latent discourses of re-colonization of Africa. At the centre of this neo-imperialism is the idea that such 'beneficent nations' like Britain, American and others should recruit local African leaders and guide them to embrace free markets, rule of law, and liberal democracy in order to enable the smooth functioning of the global economic system (Mbeki 2012). These ideas were expressed openly by Robert Cooper, a British diplomat, former adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair, current adviser to EU Foreign Affairs Chief Baroness Catherine Ashton, and a strong advocate of neoliberal imperialism. This is how he put it:

What is needed then is new kind of imperialism, one acceptable to a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values. We already discern its outline: an imperialism which, like all imperialism, aims to bring order and organization but which rests today on voluntary principle (Cooper 2000:8).

Hillary Clinton the US Secretary of State also emphasised the preference for

use of ‘smart power’ that include deployment of democracy and human rights to disguise geo-strategic goals (Mbeki 2012:7). In short, democracy and human rights have been appropriated into levers of global imperial designs, leading some scholars like Chinweizu (1987) and leaders like Robert Mugabe to despise them as part of cultural imperialism. The attempt by the Western powers to use a combination of war and ideology to continue dominating the world is also captured in Tony Blair’s 1999 Chicago speech that set out the premises of liberal imperial interventions as part of British foreign policy. With reference to terrorism, Blair said the world was facing an unconventional kind of war which could not be won in a conventional way. He emphasized the need to win the battle of values – the battle for hearts and minds. This is how he put it:

To succeed, we have to win the battle of values, as much as the battle of arms. We have to show that these are not western, still less American or Anglo-Saxon values, but values in the common ownership, of humanity, universal values that should be the right of the global citizen (Blair 2006:21).

Blair explained that beyond those like terrorists who according to him ‘truly hate us,’ there are many who were skeptical of the Euro-American world’s ‘motives, our good faith, our even-handedness,’ but could be persuaded (Blair 2006:22). What both Blair and Clinton were simply saying is that Euro-American strategic interests must be articulated in terms of struggles for justice, fairness, human rights, democracy, security and prosperity. But John Pilger saw through this conspiracy, when he said:

‘Democracy’ is now the free market – a concept bereft of freedom. ‘Reform’ is now the denial of reform. ‘Economics’ is the relegation of most human endeavour to material value, a bottom line. Alternative models that relate to the needs of the majority of humanity end up in the memory hole. And ‘governance’ – so fashionable these days, means an economic approval in Washington, Brussels and Davos. ‘Foreign policy’ is service to dominant power. Conquest is ‘humanitarian intervention’. Invasion is ‘nation-building’. Every day, we breathe the hot air of these pseudo ideas with their pseudo truths and pseudo experts (Pilger 2008:4).

These are the invisible realities that decolonial epistemic perspective seek to visibilise as part of equipping pan-Africanists with knowledge to deal with global issues.

The Curse of African Founding Fathers

Ideally, the pan-Africanist movement was a redemptive project that embodied ideals of freedom from slavery; freedom from racism; freedom from colonialism; equality of human beings, right of black races to unite under a pan-African nation, right of black races to own resources in Africa, self-determination of black races and the building of Africa into an economic and political giant capable of rivalling Europe and America. Pan-Africanism arose not only as part of humankind's quest for liberty, freedom, justice and liberation but also as a direct response to the historical reality enslavement of black races (Geiss 1974; Shivji 2011).

It must be noted that up to 1945, the preceding four congresses were organised and dominated by members of the African diaspora. Therefore fifth Pan-African Congress held on 15 October 1945 in Manchester was the first that brought together prominent black leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Peter Abrahams and many others. It also brought together Anglophone and Francophone African leaders as well as bringing together continental Africans and those from the Diaspora. The involvement of continental Africans heralded the beginnings of the migration of hosting of the Pan-African Congress to the African soil. In 1958 the first All African Peoples' Congress was held in Ghana. This congress marked the handing over of the leadership of the movement from William E. B. DuBois to Nkrumah (Abraham 2003:49). But soon the pan-African movement under Nkrumah became affected by differing ideas on the best route and pace it should take to arrive at continental political unity. The problem began with Ghana pushing for a political union of Africa and Nigeria resisting such an approach. The question of the path to be followed in search of pan-African unity particularly its institutionalization raised animated debates with leaders like Nyerere preferring a gradualist approach.

The tentacles and influence of global imperial designs were becoming a hindrance to the realization of pan-African unity as early as 1960. Such newly independent countries as Nigeria, Tunisia, Kenya, Tanzania and the Francophone states, preferred to maintain closer links with the West.

Francophone states with the exception of Guinea under Sekou Toure had voted to remain within the tutelage of France (Martin 1995:163-188). Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, and Mali pushed for a political union of African states. They justified this move as a necessary shield against neo-colonialism (Abraham 2003:49). But other African leaders saw maintenance of close ranks with the West as a redeeming move and a counter to infiltration of communism. But the danger of neo-colonialism soon took a concrete form in Congo in 1960. A pan-Africanist leader Patrice Lumumba had just assumed power and was working towards empowerment of Congolese people at home and forging pan-African unity at the continental level. Lumumba was vehemently opposed to any vestiges of coloniality. Therefore the former colonial power (Belgium) worked in close alliance with such leaders as Moise Tshombe and Kasavubu to torpedo Lumumba's pan-African project. The secession by Katanga under Tshombe became the first counter-revolutionary crisis facing Lumumba's government (Abraham 2003:50).

The Congo crisis of 1960 split African countries into rival camps of conflicting alliances. Some supported the founding father of Congo, Lumumba (first Prime Minister of Congo) who was facing secession and Western infiltration; others supported Kasavubu (the first President of Congo), and others the secessionist leader Tshombe (see Campbell 2012 on invasion of Libya and assassination of Gaddafi). The divisions were exacerbated by Western interference in support of secessionist leader Tshombe and Kasavubu who was considered to be pro-West. The pan-Africanist and pro-East Lumumba had to be isolated and then physically destroyed according to the logic of global imperial designs. Ghana, Mali, Guinea and Morocco formed the Casablanca bloc and vehemently denounced Western intervention in Congo. Those African states that assumed considered a moderate stance in the eyes of the West, supported Kasavubu. They later met in Abidjan in October 1960 to form the Brazzaville bloc. A third grouping called the Monrovia bloc consisting of Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Senegal emerged which tried to harmonise relations between the belligerent groups, but failed (Mazrui 1982:1-28; Mazrui 1999:105-126).

The early founding fathers of Africa's divisions symbolised a divided house whose fate was destruction. The launch of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in May 1963 came within a context of divisions among African leaders over what kind of union was to be formed. Nkrumah's book *Africa Must Unite* which he distributed widely to African leaders before the historic

founding of OAU did not unite the divided African house. Nkrumah's book carried the message:

We need the strength of our combined numbers and resources to protect ourselves from the very positive dangers of returning colonialism in disguised forms. We need it to combat the entrenched forces dividing our continent and still holding back millions of our brothers. We need it to secure total African liberation At present most of the independent states are moving in directions which expose us to dangers of imperialism and neo-colonialism (Nkrumah 1970 :217).

Julius Nyerere can best be characterised as a reluctant pan-Africanist who emphasised dilemmas and problems that hindered pan-African unity while ignoring those positive factors that could be used to quicken the pace of realisation of political continental unity. He criticised Nkrumah and all those who were pushing for political union of Africa as using this pan-African idea for the purpose of propaganda. In 1966, he argued that:

Indeed I believe that a real dilemma faces the Pan-Africanist. One is the fact that Pan-Africanism demands an African consciousness and an African loyalty; on the other hand is the fact that each Pan-Africanist must also concern himself with the freedom and development of one of the nations of Africa. These things can conflict. Let us be honest and admit that they have already conflicted (Nyerere 1966:1).

While Nyerere was seen by some scholars and commentators as a realist and pragmatist, he introduced a discourse of impossibility that culminated in criticism of Nkrumah who wanted a quickened pace towards political continental unity as a survival kit in the context of vicious neo-colonial forces that worked against African progress (B'beri & Louw 2011:335-346). The irony in Nyerere's thinking on development in Africa is that he urged Africans as 'late, late comers' to 'run while others walked' so as to catch up with the rest of the world. But when it came to the issue of pan-African unity, he suggested 'walking' (gradualism) and opposed Nkrumah who suggested 'running' (Mkandawire 2011:1-36).

Broadly speaking, Nkrumah and Nyerere's thoughts on nationalism and pan-Africanism provide a unique entry point into understanding the complexities of implementing the national projects while pushing forward the pan-African agenda. Even when Nkrumah made efforts to explain what the structures and institutions of a political union would look like, Nyerere remained in a dismissive mood saying: 'To rule out a step by step progress towards African Unity is to hope that the Almighty will one day say "Let there be unity in Africa," and there shall be unity'. He even tried to dismiss the interference of imperialists when he charged that 'to say that step by step method was invented by the imperialists is to reach the limits of absurdity' (Nyerere 1967:320).

Despite Nyerere's attempt to dampen Nkrumah's spirit, he continued at the 1965 OAU Conference to urge his fellow African leaders to realize that the political and economic crises bedeviling Africa were a clear testimony of the dangers of neo-colonialism and pan-African unity (Biney 2008). There is no doubt that Nkrumah and Nyerere operated within a complex postcolonial terrain that exacerbated tensions among African leaders. The immediate postcolonial period was dominated by popular expectations that needed to be fulfilled and political turmoil emanating from outside that needed to be avoided. The question of regime survival in the midst of the Cold War impinged on national and social transformational agendas of the world's youngest states (Nkrumah 1965).

Julius Ihonvbere has roundly blamed African founding fathers, for numerous betrayals of the national project(s). He blamed them for failure to restructure the state; to empower Africans; to challenge foreign domination and exploitation of Africans; and to challenge the cultural bastardization in the continent (Ihonvbere 1994:5). However, Nkrumah's national project embodied both a nationalist and a pan-African vision. To him, there were complementarities rather than tensions between nationalism and pan-Africanism. This vision was clearly expressed in three of his widely quoted statements: 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto it' (Mazrui 1999:105-126). He also made it clear that 'The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless linked to the total liberation of the African continent'. He elaborated that 'The independence of Ghana was the first crack in the seemingly impregnable armour of imperialism in Africa. It created and furnished the bridgehead for organised assaults upon colonialism' (Nkrumah 1965:xiv).

Nkrumah interpreted the attainment of political independence by African states as a beginning of a political trajectory to real freedom predicated on pan-African unity. Territorial nationalism was to him a means to pan-Africanism. This is why he placed the independence of Ghana at the centre of the pan-African project, linking its sovereignty to the total liberation of the continent. Nkrumah identified two core problems that faced postcolonial Africa. The first was lack of pan-African unity. The second was the danger of neo-colonialism. His analysis of these problems was that no African country stood a chance of pursuing an independent national project without inviting the wrath of neo-colonialism (Nkrumah 1965:5-12).

To Nkrumah pan-African unity was a nationalist survival shield rather than a threat to sovereignty as Nyerere insinuated when he said: 'It is some curious animal to which our individual state do not surrender sovereignty, and yet somehow becomes the strong instrument which we require to fulfill the purposes of modern states' (Nyerere 1967: 303). To Nkrumah pan-African unity was the only real African protection from vulnerability to neo-colonialism. Pan-African unity was also an enabling factor for Africans to own their natural resources and pursue independent economic policies. Nkrumah concluded that 'The socio-economic development and progress of Africa will come only within the political kingdom not the other way round' (Nkrumah 1965:10).

Unfortunately in 1966, Nkrumah had to prematurely exit the political stage as consequence of a military coup that was funded by the CIA. By this time Nkrumah was allying more closely with the Soviet Union and China. He was toppled just four months after the publication of his *Neo-Colonialism* (October 1965). Its publication had elicited an immediate protest from the US government, which promptly cancelled US\$35 million aid to Ghana (Shivji 2009:152). One of the architects of the coup, Colonel A. A. Afrifa wrote a revealing book about the coup, vilifying Nkrumah's pan-Africanism and support for the liberation movements. He stated that:

At the attainment of independence, the British handed over to us a decent system of government in which everyone had a say Organization of African unity or no Organization of African unity, I will claim my citizenship of Ghana and the Commonwealth in any part of the world. I have been trained in the United Kingdom as a soldier, and I am ever prepared to fight alongside my friends in the

United Kingdom in the same way as Canadians and Australians will do (Afrifa 1966:11).

This was a clear case of embracing the former colonial power as a friend rather than a neo-colonialist formation. By 1966 Nkrumah's dream of continental political unity had not materialized. His vision of turning Ghana into an economic paradise had not succeeded either. The coup removed from power a committed pan-Africanist who had even predicted his political demise at the historic founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. He told his fellow African leaders that:

If we do not come together, if we do not unite, we shall all be thrown out, all of us one by one – and I also will go. [...] The OAU must face a choice now – we can either move forward to progress through our effective African Union or step backward into stagnation, instability and confusion – an easy prey for foreign intervention, interference and subversion (Batsa 1985:30).

Nkrumah's foresight was confirmed by the fact that the second decade of independence became the age of military coups in Africa as well as rehabilitation of imperialism.

While Nyerere claimed that like Nkrumah he believed in the pan-Africanist project as the ultimate end of the African struggle for freedom, he did not push the pan-African agenda with the same zeal he pushed forward his Tanzanian national socialist project predicated on Ujamaa villages (Hyden 1980). He emphasised tensions between territorial nationalism and pan-Africanism, while in principle agreeing with Nkrumah that realization of an African continental government was 'our greatest dream of all'. He explained that:

For it was as Africans that we dreamed of freedom; and we thought of it for Africa. Our real ambition was African freedom and African government. The fact that we fought area by area was merely a tactical necessity. We organised ourselves into Convention People's Party, the Tanganyika African National Union, the United National Independence Party, and so on, simply because each local colonial government had to be dealt with separately. The question we now

have to answer is whether Africa shall maintain this internal separation as we defeat colonialism, or whether our earlier proud boast – I am an African’ –shall become a reality (Nkrumah 1970:2).

Nyerere interpreted the dilemma of the pan-Africanist as that of how to deal with territorial nationalisms that were diverging and moving away from pan-Africanism. The divergences were motivated by local realities such as promotion of nationhood to contain imperatives of disunity, economic imperatives that dictated inter-country competition over attracting foreign capital and investments, and promises to the people that needed to be fulfilled. He concluded that:

And the truth is that as each of us develops his own state we raise more and more barriers between ourselves. We entrench differences which we have inherited from the colonial periods and develop new ones. Most of all, we develop a national pride which could easily be inimical to the development of a pride in Africa (Nyerere 1966:2).

Unlike Nkrumah, Nyerere privileged the agenda of ‘grappling with serious and urgent problems within our states’ and dangers from outside over ‘serious thinking about the way forward to Pan-Africanism partly because ‘we are always assailed for “wasting money on conferences,” or being “unrealistic” in our determination to build roads or railways to link our nations’ (Nyerere 1966:7).

Nyerere became one of the most eloquent exponents of the gradualist approach to continental political unity. He pushed forward for step by step progress towards pan-African unity, beginning with strengthening individual states’ sovereignties and building of regional economic communities (Nyerere 1967: 300-306). His gradualist approach informed the formation of the OAU with a limited mandate of ensuring the total decolonization of Africa as the first step towards achievement of continental political unity. It would seem that unlike Nkrumah, Nyerere underestimated the colonial matrices of power that made it impossible for him to achieve self-reliance in one country. Nyerere had to live with a tenuous relationship with the Bretton Wood institutions, critiquing their conditionalities and prescriptions, while seeking their funding. In 1997 at the 7th Pan African Congress that coincided with the 40th anniversary of Ghana’s independence, Nyerere argued that:

Kwame Nkrumah was the state crusader for African unity. He wanted the Accra summit of 1965 to establish Union Government for the whole of independent Africa. But we failed. The one minor reason is that Kwame, like all great believers, underestimated the degree of suspicion and animosity, which his crusading passion had created among a substantial number of his fellow Heads of State. The major reason was linked to the first: already too many of us had a vested interest in keeping Africa divided (Nyerere cited in Biney 2008:147).

Nyerere added that after Nkrumah, ‘We of the first generation leaders of independent Africa have not pursued the objective of African Unity with vigour, commitment and sincerity that it deserves. Yet that does not mean that unity is now irrelevant’ (Nyerere cited in Biney 2008:147).

The Nkrumah-Nyerere debates highlight the difficulties of pushing forward the pan-African agenda without consensus at the political level of leadership. It also magnifies in the case of Nyerere how those leaders how did not put pan-African unity first could torpedo the efforts of committed pan-Africanists and derail the whole project. Instead of present day pan-Africanists degenerating into another Nkrumah-Nyerere curse, they must learn from it what not to do.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that advances have been made on institutionalization of the pan-African agenda at the beginning of the new millennium. Since the launch of the African Union (AU) in July 2002, Africa seemed to be awakening from the crisis of pan-African ideas that dominated the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, when the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) under the leadership of Adebayo Adedeji had to fill the gap. UNECA did so by producing plans that embodied pan-African thought. The case in point was the formulation of the the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 which was informed by a clear decolonial epistemic perspective as it projected towards an autonomous development trajectory informed by ideas of self-reliance. Unfortunately it was never fully implemented, partly because the realities on the ground were dominated by neoliberal structural adjustment programmes that were hostile to pan-Africanism and any traces of

decolonial epistemic perspective (Khadiagala 2010:375-387). Structural adjustment programmes were nothing other than another global imperial design that worked towards opening up African economies to Euro-American capital.

But despite the triumphalism of global imperial designs in the 1990s, some African leaders like the late Colonel Murmur Gaddafi of Libya, former president Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika of Algeria, and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal – the ‘African Renaissance coalition’ worked hard in trying to revive the pan-African agenda at the beginning of 2000s. Gilbert Khadiagala noted that this coalition emerged ‘at a vital historical juncture when a leadership vacuum had developed on continental issues’ (Khadiagala 2010:382). They took advantage of the new millenarian optimism to launch the African Renaissance as the philosophical anchor for renewal of Africa. Despite differences among ‘Renaissance coalition’ particularly with Gaddafi who wanted a United States of Africa to be declared immediately, it initiated and shepherded an impressive process of building pan-African institutions and formulation of plans for Africa. Examples include the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the controversial New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and most recently the launch of the Pan African University (PAU) in December 2011.

The challenge facing these pan-Africanists has been how to circumvent the long shadow of global imperial designs whose agents continue to intervene in African issues and initiatives, disciplining and channeling these to serve Western interests. NEPAD is a typical example of an initiative that indicated how colonial matrices of power were still active in shaping fake partnerships that do not work practically. What is most disappointing though is the failure by proponents of NEPAD to learn any lesson from Nkrumah’s long standing argument about neo-colonialism as a major threat to Africa’s struggles to take charge of its destiny. If Nkrumah’s ideas were taken seriously, he never believed in a partnership between Africa and the Euro-American world as long as global imperial designs informed the current world order. Adebayo Olukoshi and Yao Graham correctly noted that:

If domestic SAPs in Africa tore up the post-colonial nationalist compact, NEPAD gutted the long-held belief that a pan-African economic strategy should promote *less* not *more* dependence on

foreign capital (Olukoshi 2006 cited in Adesina, Graham & Olukoshi 2006:xv).

This policy mistake that rehabilitates global imperial designs could have been averted if current pan-Africanists could have armed themselves with the armour of decolonial epistemic perspective that is consistently alert to the snares of colonial matrices of power. African discourses on African Union Government have proven to be stuck within the confines of ‘gradualists’ versus ‘immediatists’. Wade and Gaddafi appropriated the Nkrumah position and pushed for fast-tracked Union Government that would be a precursor to the United States of Africa. Khadiagala categorized their position as that of ‘unionists/continentalists’ as opposed to Mbeki, Obasanjo and others who can be correctly labelled as disciples of Nyerere’s gradualism (Khadiagala 2010:383 - 384).

The return of this curse in the 21st century is a reminder that perhaps the graduation of nationalism into pan-Africanism is taking time to materialize, in the process dictating the necessity for caution and gradualism, according to which it is not known when there will be an atmosphere conducive to a Union Government. The future of Africa lies in effective deployment of decolonial epistemic perspective as a combative discourse, a redemptive methodology, and a survival kit in the face of invisible global imperial designs. Decolonial epistemic perspective teaches pan-Africanists to be always vigilant and never to adopt a complacent view towards the persistence of global imperial designs underpinning asymmetrical global power relations.

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