

Central Challenges Confronting the African State: Rethinking its Role in Development

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Introduction

The paper focuses on myriad central problematic confronting the African State, in the context of neo-liberal offensive to render the continent more vulnerable. Historically, the African State was a creation of the colonizers to serve their interests. In the post-colonial conditions it has principally served the interests of tiny powerful circles and their foreign backers, rather than that of the generality of the African people. Prolong authoritarianism on the continent has been maintained principally through the State. On the other side, only by popular democratic transformation of the State will the continent match towards development. Historically development, in all spheres, has never been attained anywhere independent of the central role of the State.

In the post-Cold War period America is on course to drag African governments, the political leaders, and to utilise the continent's economic resources in another phase of imperialist domination. The terms, terrain, politics and direction of the so-called war on terror are determined without consultations, with the African people.

The papers critically examines the major problems and challenges facing the State, which need to be tackled by governments and peoples, to avoid Africa sinking deeper into crises and making it vulnerable to imperialism. There are many impediments on the path to defend African interest. The analysis focuses on central issues of regional and continental integration, conflicts, citizenship, control and mobilization and use of resources, true democracy, managing pluralism, constitutionalism, participation, accountability and security. These require urgent tackling to ensure more forged unity and protection of the continent.

The analysis delves into concrete realities and makes suggestions in the direction of ending the quagmire of the African State. The conclusion maintains that only when the continent abandons erecting structures and institutions on shifting sliding sand, thereby building itself on solid foundation, would it move towards real development.

Africa finds itself, once more, in the contemporary phase of global hegemony, led by an imperial superpower that lays claim to democracy domestically but externally practices military aggression and dictatorship. The United States of America (USA) is a leading violator of the United Nations (UN), as well as major international laws and multilateral conventions. At various historical eras of Africa's unequal relationships with

the West the continent suffered from many injustices including slavery and colonialism. The crudest product of colonization was the white settler minority multifarious domination, the last of which was apartheid in South Africa. The continent was a major experimental theatre, and concrete battle terrain, in the course of the Cold War.

America and its western allies stood as promoters and backers of apartheid. Furthermore, they spearheaded the fuelling of authoritarianism and bad governance in many African countries, whether these regimes were led by civilians or military dictators. It was common for the leaders of the hegemonic nations to demonize African patriots and nationalists that were committed to charting alternative course for the development of their countries and peoples. One practical side of this campaign was the fact that imperialism sponsored terror, either directly or indirectly, against anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist democratic movements and governments on the continent. Mahmood Mamdani makes a poignant point that the manner in which the continent was trapped in the web of the Cold War, on terms set by foreign rival powers, had several negative impact on Africa and the people paid heavily for it (Mamdani 2004: 28).

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, America accelerated its unilateral drive for a Goliath-like domination that has been accompanied with armed-twisting of reluctant nations and threats, which involved dragging on board some African political leaders into what President George W. calls “the war on terror.” The terms of the war, its terrain, politics and direction, are determined without consultations with the African peoples.

Barely ten days after the September 11 attacks Bush, in unambiguous terms, warned the rest of the world that all countries and segments of humanity are either with the USA or are with the terrorists (Wallenstein 2003: 229). The deepest meaning, implications and essence of this for Africa have to be dissected. For despite efforts made by some governments, regional and continental organizations, as well as civic pan-African movements, there are prevailing impediments towards defending Africa’s interests and its true emancipation.

The Cold War, imperialist terror and the African State

Very complex processes and promotion of proxy actors by modern hegemonies have contributed much to the germination, growth and expansion of state and non-state terror. In a fertile analysis, of the global context in the early 21st century, Eric Hobsbawm maintains that devastating armed operations are no longer monopolized by governments and their state agents. Another dimension is that the contending forces do not have commonality in terms of characteristic, status or objectives, but in all have the willingness and determination to use violence (Hosbawn 2002).

The issue of terror in Africa has witnessed this shift. In the history of the anti-colonial liberation struggles in Africa, and the post-independence armed uprisings against dictatorial and despotic regimes, violence was directed at institutions and forces representing the State. Generally, attacks were not directed at the civilian population. Many armed movements considered the latter as near sacred, and thus predominantly guerrilla fighters were blending with the people and the civil society like fish in the water.

The most brutal shift was demonstrated in the wars such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the civilian population had to run from both the forces of the state and the rebels.

The people were either seeking for protection in camps set up by international peace keepers or in the refugees camps across the national frontiers. Mostly, both the state forces and rebels were treating their own fellow citizens as targets. Present armed groups demonstrate loyalty only to the warlords and are committed to looting from the people. In the worst circumstances civilians are killed, while some have their limbs severed .

Earlier on there was the promotion of terror against some African governments that were resisting the path the West wanted for all nation-states. From the 1960s to the early 1990s the United States, leading the Western bloc, viewed and treated Africa as an ideological and political battleground within Cold War contestation with the Soviet Union led Eastern bloc. The question of democracy in Africa, of any variety, was not on the imperialists agenda. Rather the USA supported authoritarian regimes, and opposed those that were nationalistic and socialist oriented. Financial aids and loans were pumped to regimes that were proxies of imperialist interests nations, no matter the repression of the citizenry by such authoritarian and undemocratic governments. Covert and overt operations were waged against African nation-states that sought for alternative development models at the political, economic, security and military levels. America has the history of being at the head of the external promoters of terrorist movements in Africa. This was the case in Angola where Washington backed UNITA to fight the MPLA regime.

Supporting the Angolan government, as Cuba did, brought out the double standards of the USA. Since the Cuban revolution of 1959, America geared using state terrorism against the former. When Cuba gave military backing to the MPLA government, America supported UNITA. This was reinforced by the military support given to the latter by the apartheid South African regime.

In a parallel manner with Africa, the United State sponsored contras terrorists carried out atrocities to show to the people of Nicaragua that a radical development alternative embarked on by the Sandinista government has no future (Mamdani 2004:14). Sandinistas were to be demonized by President Ronald Reagan as evil communists that were cruising Nicaragua towards hitting the rocks. Noam Chomsky stresses that when Nicaragua took the matter to the World Court, in 1986, a judgement against the USA was passed for “unlawful use of force”, and part of the ruling demanded America to pay reparations to Nicaragua (Chomsky 199: 24). Prior to the commencement of hearing the case, the USA had withdrawn from the court and it subsequently refused to recognize the ruling. As Roger Burbach argues this was a high demonstration of American disregard and disrespect for international law (Burbach 2003). The USA proceeded to veto a UN security council resolution that called on all states, without mentioning any in particular, “to adhere to international law” (Chomsky 2002: 23).

In the years of Reagan administration, from the early 1980s, America increasingly turned to the apartheid regime in South Africa, which unleashed proxy state terrorism in neighbouring countries. South African military, and its agents, actively fought on Angolan territory alongside UNITA. It was involved in the acts of destabilization and devastation in other frontline states. A key objective of the massive destruction of infrastructure, and other social and economic targets in the region, was to create traumatizing horrors both physically and psychological. Furthermore, it was to maintain the racist position that Africans, on their own, cannot rule themselves, without the so-called tribal conflicts in which blacks were unleashing mayhem on other blacks

(Mamdani 2004: 12- 13). Like in the case of Nicaragua many of the Southern Africa governments were portrayed as communists that were providing unworkable, dangerous and disastrous alternatives.

The Resistencia Nacional Mozambicana (RENAMO) in Mozambique was first created – from the mid 1970s – by the Ian Smith led unilateral and illegal white minority regime in Rhodesia in collaboration with former Portuguese colonialists. The Rhodesian regime launched an undeclared war to cripple the FRELIMO government, partly because of Mozambican support for the Rhodesian national liberation movement. According to Johan Leidi, after the independence struggle triumphed in Rhodesia and the country was renamed Zimbabwe, in 1980, apartheid South Africa inherited RENAMO (Leidi 2003). Coupled with the Reagan administration’s policy of “constructive engagement”, in the Southern Africa region, the war arsenal of the Renamo terrorists was oiled through the apartheid military. Mamdani stresses that in the process, the havoc caused was to prove to the population that FRELIMO could not “assure them law and order”(Mamdani 2003: 12-13). This war virtually destroyed all the developmental efforts of the Mozambican government and lasted for over 16 years, until the 1992 peace accord.

Imperialist backed terrorist movements, in Angola and Mozambique, targeted the communities and infrastructure causing enormous ruinous effects. In the course of the period 1980-1988, America and Britain supported state terrorism by racist South Africa and its military offensives. In the process the violent aggression caused over \$60 billion damages and 1.5 million deaths. This was apart from the internal violence thousands of deaths from massive repression within South Africa itself (Chomsky 2003: 56-57). Yet it was the African National Congress (ANC) – including Nelson Mandela and other leaders and activists of the national liberation struggle – that were listed among world leading terrorists and terrorist groups. Never for once was South Africa qualified, by official America, as a rogue state promoting state terrorism. As Chomsky points out the apartheid regime was a valuable ally, of the West, and was thus praised to heavens for its role in “constructive engagement” (Chomsky 2003: 57).

To defy the oppression, domination, exploitation and dictates of the hegemonic nations is a criterion which qualifies a country for being classified as a rogue state. In 1986 the Reagan administration bombed Libya and justified the wanton act of naked imperialist aggression on the basis of self-defence (Chomsky 1999: 26). This was the first direct modern American state terrorism in Africa. For at no time did America declare war on Libya. In due course America officially classified Libya alongside Cuba, Iran, and North Korea as rogue states. At the time of the initial declaration, official America was celebrating secularist Iraq as it was yet to be labelled as a rogue state. The USA government supported Baghdad in the war with the Islamist Iran. America provided Iraq with deadly weapons, including chemical ones, which were used in the confrontation with externally enemies and internally perceived enemies. It is maintained that Saddam Hussein, then a worthy client of the West, was “to train several hundreds of Libyans sent to Iraq by the United States so that they could overthrow the Qaddafi government” (Chomsky 1999:43-44).

Hegemonic influences on economic and political reforms in Africa

All over Africa, mostly from the 1960s, many nationalistic regimes were overthrown. The West was linked with many coups after which more tyrannical dictatorships were installed. Then, as Issa Shivji succinctly puts it, the authoritarian order and policies were not bad and unfair “for today’s champions of democracy and good governance” (Shivji 2003). Today, in their perception, discourses and thinking, the hegemonic neo-liberal Western political leaders and the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) portray the African people as helpless victims. For them African people are no longer the agency of change, and the African societies are merely at the mercy of bad governance. What this somehow implies is that only the hegemons and the donor community – in collaboration with the “good African political leaders” – can save the continent.

It is significant to observe that especially from the early 1980s many of the African governments – regardless of the nature of the state and the economic policies and political orientation – were gripped in economic crisis and imbibed the neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as spearheaded by the World Bank and the IMF (Shivji 2003). SAP, in reality, came to mean the dominant role of market forces in the economy, liberalization and deregulation, devaluation of national currencies, retrenchment of workers in the public and private sectors, privatization of public property, withdrawal of subsidies, and government retreat in the area of social provisioning and welfare services (Bangura 2001: 41-42; Beckman 1992: 89; and Mkandawire and Olukoshi 1995).

Privatization and commercialisation of public companies were basically limited to key actors of the ruling classes and foreign companies, as they went about accumulating wealth and plundering the countries without consultation and consent of the peoples. The health, education, water, electricity and other sectors seriously declined. Local industries could no longer afford foreign exchange. Many of these were bankrupt and unable to “withstand the imports of cheap goods” (Shivji 2003). In several African countries the political leaders embarked on implementation of the ruinous prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In many cases the capacity of the African State was weakened, while in others the state degenerated or even collapsed. The analysis by Yusuf Bangura vividly depicts the concrete situation in which the state distanced itself from the society vividly. Governments became less presence in the spheres of provision of extension services, infrastructure such as roads and railways, schools and hospitals, postal and public services and there was the neglect of the security for the people. The latter partly explains why rebels groups in some countries took over the rural areas and further moved into the urban areas to overthrow governments swiftly (Bangura 2001: 42).

Global trends and developments in international politics have affected the degeneration of the African State. With the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989, which was subsequently followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, worse was to be the lot of Africa. From then onwards, the imperialists have no longer been envisaging serious and formidable threat to their interests on the continent. African governments lost the space of manoeuvring relations – such as being lobbied to support the West with votes at the UN and other multilateral bodies. Imperialism began to design, and promote, a neo-

liberal political agenda for the continent. As Anyang' Nyong'o points out, a component of the new strategy was the push that it was curtain time for authoritarian regimes to continue in their usual neo-colonial ways. Many governments were denied the unlimited licence – by their Western backers – to govern in the old fashion (Anyang' Nyong'o 2004: 15). Thus, apart from the externally imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) conditionality, another line of a political project of democratization was required of the African nation-states. That is, to embark on reforms towards multi-party democracy, human rights and good governance (Shivji 2005: 10-13).

It is relevant and worth observing the historical reality that despite all sorts of problems that Africa faced, some gains were made in the different sectors in the 1960s and 1970s, in quite a number of countries. Established and maintained were institutions that many of the citizenry cherished. However, this honeymoon was over when economic and political crises deepened in the era of structural reforms. By the mid-1980s many states had sunk into deeper crises, of various dimensions and proportions, with the implementation of neo-liberal reforms. Many workers, peasants, women groups, students, academics, farmers and the professionals became increasingly restive around Africa.

The position being advanced here is that both the global context of the end of the Cold war and the internal dynamics of politics in Africa contributed to mean that the popular forces and opposition parties could not be repressed, as was the practice since the 1960s. Adebayo Olukoshi argues that this new opening, however, had caveats for political forces that wanted to transcend what the global hegemony wanted for the continent. Firstly, the rise of the global neo-liberalism did not only mean that internal political reforms and changes were inaugurated in the conditions of increased economic decline and structural adjustment, but also that elected governments had to reckon with “the hegemonic political forces in the international system that had themselves taken on board the neo-liberal ideology of the market in dealing with the countries of the Third world in general and Africa in particular” (Olukoshi 1998: 12). Secondly, that the “emergence in the post-Cold War international system of conditions favouring political reforms in Africa did not simultaneously produce conditions for the reversal, or even tempering, of neo-liberalism or structural adjustment”. Thirdly, that the post-cold war order did not “produce a greater freedom of choice of economic policy direction for the countries of the Third World”, especially Africa (Olukoshi 1998: 12).

Africa in the post-September 11 global hegemonic offensive

In 1998 bombs exploded and destroyed the America embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and killed tens and tens of Africans. The American administration specifically mentioned the Al-Qaeda organization as culprit (Wallenstein 2003: 228). As a continuation of terror by the non-state actors the offensive was carried to American territory directly on September 11, 2001 when terrorists hijacked commercial airlines, on internal flights, and used them as flying bombs to crash into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC. In all this about 4000 people perished, largely civilians, among who were citizens of over 60 nations (Wallenstein 2003: 229). Many were convinced that the heinous terror was committed by Al-Qaeda.

Mamdani argues that ranging from the bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi to the attacks on American soil – and the USA led war on Afghanistan and Iraq – a new

phase of both state and non-state terror has been set in motion in the context of which “victims are not necessarily the target; victims may as well be chosen by lottery”(Mamdani 2004: 4)

The official American unilateral course in international politics was soon spelt-out. Addressing the joint session of the United States Congress on September 20, 2001, President Bush clearly defined how unlimited the scope of the frontiers and targets of the American war were. In this regard he declared that “our war on terror begins with al-Qaida but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated” (quoted in Wallensteen 2003: 229). The yardstick for qualifying groups as terrorists was not defined, and it was left in ambiguity. This is a major challenge that Africa has to face.

By this vagueness, nationalist, patriotic movements and organizations could be labelled as terrorists and subjected to reprisals. It is also possible to use the pretences to deal with states or countries that either defer or resist the official line of America in international politics. Furthermore, Bush declared in a more blatant way that nations could no longer be of critical judgement or toy independent paths. They were seriously warned to accept the new American “global commitment and involvement”. It was unilaterally dictated to all nations that “every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (quoted in Wallensteen 2003: 229). From then on some African governments have joined the bandwagon by depicting as terrorists all sorts of political opponents and rival groups, in competition for the control of political power (Mamdani 2004: 4). By this some of the political leaders have completely gone on board to be subservient to the hegemonic powers.

What the September 20, 2001 declaration means to the rest of humanity is that American unilateralism, interests and dictates assume primacy over other considerations in the international system. Only weaker nations, Africa inclusive, are to be demanded to abide with multilateral laws and decisions. This is dangerous for humanity. For as observed on the eve of the military attack on Afghanistan in 2001 by the Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzon, who issued the warrant of arrest of former Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet, in London, in 1998, “lasting peace and freedom can be achieved only with legality, justice, respect for diversity, defense of human rights and measured and fair responses” in the global system (as cited in Burbach 2003).

In the current global hegemonic drive, in different locations around the world, the United States has “spread carnage and war, violating civil liberties and human rights” (Burbach 2003). The democratic voices of the American civil society do not matter. The world is increasingly divided sharply, with the position of the majority of humanity totally ignored by the neo-conservatives fundamentalists in control of the White House. Beyond this, according to Peter Burbach, on the “one side stands a(n) arrogant unilateralist clique in the US that engages in state terrorism and human rights abuses while tearing up international treaties” (Burbach 2003). While on the other “is a global movement that is determined to advance a broad conception of human rights and human dignity through the utilisation of law, extradition treaties and limited policing activities”. What is happening is a fundamental struggle over where globalisation in the context of state and non-state terror will take humanity. And the big question is whether the powerful economic and political interests of the hegemons, led by neo-conservative American political leaders “will create a new world order that relies on intervention and

state terrorism, or whether a globalist perspective from below based on a more just and egalitarian conception of the world will gain ascendancy' (Burbach 2003).

Imperialist control of oil and the strategic importance of Africa

Bush administration now maps out the control of the Atlantic waters of the "Gulf of Guinea as a zone of special strategic interest" (Vanguard 2002). This is more so due to America's rethinking of its over reliance and vulnerability on the Middle East oil, in the context of post-September 11 (Vanguard 2002). In 2000 Bush, as a presidential candidate, declared that Africa "doesn't fit into the national strategic interests as far as I can see" (The Canadian Press 2002). However, on coming to power and accompanied with anticipation of more turmoil in the Middle East, Washington turned to Africa for strategic oil interests. Typically, there was no explanation for the reversal of Bush's position.

Africa was to, henceforth, get a growing commitment by the USA and, thus, be of strategic interest. African oil fields were formerly projected to account for 6% of the world's known oil reserves. But in 2001 prospectors discovered 8 billion barrels crude oil reserves. Seven (7) of these "were in the offshore fields of the Gulf of Guinea, on west and central Africa's Atlantic coast." The zone has an advantage of laying short, and safe, journey from the United States. In terms of shipping the distance, from America, the Gulf of Guinea is half the distance from the Persian Gulf.

Projections are that the cheap and high quality oil supply from Africa to the United States would rise from 15% presently to 25% by 2020. With increased world consumption rising by 59% over the same time, Africa would reduce United States dependence on countries such as Saudi Arabia with the uncertainties and strained relations since September 11 (New York Times 2002).

Furthermore, the main new oilfields are offshore. This informs the thinking of the America strategists that the Gulf of Guinea oil is far away from "any social and political troubles" (The Canadian Press 2002). This is official American thinking, even though the Bakassi Peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon is still unresolved – despite the ruling of the International Court of justice at The Hague. Of course, the security situation in Nigeria's Niger Delta has many uncertainties.

There are indications that the West, led by the USA, has been on an offensive to undermining OPEC. The cartel is perceived as protecting the interest of the oil producing countries. The imperialists have not forgotten the decisive historic role of OPEC in determining oil prices since 1973.

On the continent Angola and Cameroon are not OPEC members. And Gabon withdrew membership of the organization way back in 1995, perhaps due to imperialist pressure. New oil fields ranging from Morocco and Western Sahara, down the Atlantic coast to Angola, are being discovered. The island country of Sao Tome and Principe, with a population of 150,000, has given consent for a big United States naval base on its small territory. Despite earlier denials, by some officials, the American congress and the pentagon have discussed the matter. There are other American military exchanges with other countries in West and Central Africa (Monbiot 2003).

Equatorial Guinea, hitherto perceived in the manner of an enclave under bloodthirsty dictators, has become a country of interest because of oil. There are indicators that suggest the existence of American military observatory stations in

Maiduguri (Nigeria), Niger, Mali, Senegal and elsewhere in the West African Sahel region. These have implications in terms of United States military policing from Sahelian region to the Atlantic Coast of West Africa.

The picture becomes clearer if one adds the ongoing United States drive to play a role in the control of 1.25 billion barrels known oil reserves in Sudan - which could even triple if the peace settlement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) works fine. It would guarantee more access to oil control and exploration in Southern Sudan.

The Chad through Cameroon oil pipeline is estimated to cost \$3.5 billion. The pipeline is to move oil from the Chad to the Atlantic coast, as from the end of 2004. Chad is expected to produce 255, 000 barrel per day. Equatorial Guinea is expected to produce 350, 000 barrels per day by 2005 (New York Times 2002). Also, the projection is that Nigeria currently producing over 2 mm barrels of oil per day will increase to 3.5 mm barrels by 2007. With America having lifted sanctions on Libya, as the country with the largest oil reserves in Africa, the latter is presently a focal point of interest to the West.

Within the complex process of strategic interest in African oil resources in the international economic system, and the use of military bases in the aftermath of September 11, there are governments that are serving the United States in “war on terror”. Among others are countries such as Djibouti, Uganda and Ethiopia. The principal motivation of the current American policy towards Africa is a tenacious interest and concern to control oil resources. By hegemonic calculations, America does now exercise strategic control of virtually all the global regions producing oil and their transport corridors (Monbiot 2003).

A rethinking note on African conflict and NEPAD as a development model

In 1994 about 1 million people were killed in the state-perpetrated genocide targeted at Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda. This was the peak of the history of Hutu/Tutsi atrocities in Burundi and Rwanda especially since the 1950s. Also, it is estimated that over 4 million people have been killed in the violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1994 onwards. But because its interest, which is oil, is not involved, America does not show concern (Chomsky 2003: 105). Figures of the internally displaced and homeless people were put at about 4 million in 2004. This excludes refugees that exited from elsewhere, most especially people from other wars ridden neighbouring states that moved into Congo.

The state, in many of the countries of the Great Lake region, is not in control of many zones. Diverse violent armed militias and the warlords are operating in different enclaves. In connivance with some multinationals, the militias – such as the Mai Mai – forcefully conscript people and use them as slaves in illegal gold, diamond and other mining activities as well as in drug and human trafficking (BBC 2004b). All this vicious chains of the intra-and-inter-state wars seem to be conspiring against the United Nations Organization (UNO) efforts, even though the history of the UNO has been marked by dismal failure in the Congo right from the 1960s and Rwanda in the 1990s. The vicious conflicts are taking place in the context of sub-Saharan Africa with a median life expectancy standing at 5 years, as provided by Amartya Sen (Sen 2000: 102).

Disarming the brutal militias would be a hard task - whenever that point is reached. Much has to been done about managing citizenship problematic in the countries,

across national boundaries (Adejumobi 2004: 4-8). This zone has witnessed bloody internal and regional conflicts, for decades, and should not be allowed to sink deeper into anarchy. If the continent is to move forward it must solve its wars.

Some of African political leaders, such as Thabo Mbeki, seem to appreciate the historicity and political context of the present challenges. But it is baffling to find several contradictions, between the ideals and practicability, of what they often talk about. Mbeki enunciates the challenges towards African renewal and renaissance, which influenced the formation of African Union (AU) and its development programme – the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). The position is that Africa has to order its political and constitutional systems to enable the people govern and to ensure that it becomes a continent where democracy and human rights reign. Thabo Mbeki does emphasize that this is not based on foreign prescription but “to enable every African to play a role in deciding the future of our countries and continent” (Mbeki 2003: 3).

Mbeki stresses the need “to respect and promote the dignity of all Africans.” An end has to be put to violent inter-and-intra-State conflicts on the continent. In addition because of Africans interdependence and common destiny, authoritarianism in governance is unacceptable and should be given zero tolerance. Furthermore, neutrality in the old clause of non-interference in internal affairs of countries, in situations in which criminality by the state and non-state actors is committed against the people, shall no longer be accepted. Therefore, Africans must be their own brothers/sisters keepers (Mbeki 2003: 3).

In promoting NEPAD Mbeki advances that Africans must “act to end poverty and underdevelopment”, think for themselves by not allowing external powers prescribe to them what should be done and that the continent has to elaborate its “own development programmes and take responsibility for their success” (Mbeki 2003: 3). Furthermore, the African State is seen at the centre of playing “a developmental role, from local to the national sphere of government.” To achieve this public servants have to be inculcated with the value that the people and their interest are first, which means that political leaders must lead by example. Therefore, a mechanism to fight and defeat corruption has to be entrenched. This should start with the political leaders, for some of these leaders abuse position of authority and power and steal from African countries and the poor people. It is emphasized that Africa has human and material resources to confront the “challenge of poverty and underdevelopment” and build capacity for self-reliance. To Mbeki this does not mean repudiating mutually beneficial partnership with developed countries, but Africa must not turn to slavish dependence of foreign aid (Mbeki 2003: 4).

There is the other side of the reality, which constitutes a critique of NEPAD. Many analysts are questioning whether NEPAD is an idea pushed and reinforced by the West. For in many African countries the generality of the citizenry, trade unions, civil society, religious groups, opposition parties, academic and intellectual organizations, and democratic forces have not been engaged or formally consulted by the political leaders and technocrats that are constructing NEPAD (Akinrinade 2003; Bond 2003; and Melber 2002). In Nigeria, for example, very few academics - in the universities – know about NEPAD. In the year 2004, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, one of the leaders that peddles NEPAD, made accusation that the programme has been employing by far more staff from English speaking countries and few from French speaking ones. At a 2004 Durban conference, attended by African leaders on NEPAD, the media widely reported

Wade criticism of NEPAD approach to economic integration and he concluded that NEPAD is a waste of time and money. Many analysts have provided ample evidence that NEPAD is an old pro-imperialist project repackaged in new cloths, by the neo-liberals (Bond 2003; Bujra 2004; and Shivji 2005).

It is time for committed national and pan-African movements, organizations and groupings to intensify efforts and co-ordinate actions on charting the course for the future of alternative economic path for the continent. Africans can no longer be waiting for the ruling circles of the elite to take the lead. Labour movements, youth, community, civil society organizations, environmentalists, political parties, women organizations and the intellectuals need to articulate alternative views and course in relation to economic and political challenges in Africa. This should be posed to the African peoples. The culture of debate in both state and civic arena has to be broadened. The political leaders, and their consultants, have not bothered to explain to citizens what happened to the previous grandiose alternatives such as the Lagos Plan of Action.

Socio-economic and political challenges: examples from Nigeria and South Africa

For Africa the debt crisis has been made worse in the era of globalization. In sub-Saharan Africa's the overall total debt did rise from \$60 billion to \$206 billion in the years 1980-2000 (Bond 2003). South Africa has the strongest economy in Africa and it is rated in terms of purchasing power as the 21st biggest economy in the world (Monbiot 2004). It has been moving to invest elsewhere on the continent. But many are said to perceive the country's Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy – introduced in 1996 – as South Africa's self-imposed version of the SAP.

One current problem is the South African government attempts to run its social services such as water and electricity on free-market principles, which many of its people especially the poor cannot afford to pay. In 2000 pre-paid water metres were installed for the first time in Madlebe, in Kwazulu Natal, and those who could not pay had their water supplies disconnected and thus resorted to fetching water from the rivers. A heavy negative implication was one of the continent worst-ever cholera outbreaks that “infected over 100,000 people and killed 260” (Monbiot 2004).

Although the Madlebe scheme was dropped, similar ones have continued elsewhere. In early October 2004 there were blockades, ripping-up pipes, and attacks on workmen. This was a resistance to the installation of pre-paid meter projects in some communities around Johannesburg. There is much suspicion – although the government denies it – that the IMF, Britain, United States have advisers and consultants operating behind the scene in the country right from when apartheid ended and that they promote the notion of “market disciplined” (Monbiot 2004).

The argument is that there should be no subsidies but injection of “market discipline” that restrains wastage by demanding 100% cost-recover, and that this would eventually help the poor to escape from poverty. A major consequence is that “ten million people reported having had their water cut off...and ten million experienced electricity disconnections” in a situation where general unemployment did rise from 16% in 1995 to 30% in 2002 while youth unemployment is 47% (Bond 2003). A survey, by *The Economist Magazine*, in early 2001, shows that the scourge of AIDS is cutting the rate of the growth of the most active population – the working-age. Meanwhile, since 1994 nearly 500, 000 jobs had been lost up to the year 2000 (The Economist 2001b: 1).

Compared with elsewhere on the continent, South Africa is a democracy with a viable electoral system through which the choice made by the people is respected and thus prevails. There is a raging war on corruption both in the public and private sectors, and a vibrant civil society is playing a key role. There are viable opposition parties. In addition its legal system is superb by world standard and it enjoys much political stability (The Economist 2001b: 4).

Another complex problem for South Africa is that many Africans from other regions of the continent are migrating and flocking there for it “has become the continent’s great hope.” (The Economics 2001a: 3). Often many Africans argue that there should be unlimited movement for people on the continent. Certainly that should be the ultimate ideal and target. However, there is the need to recognize the fact that the present context is somehow different from the decades prior to globalization. In many countries the youth have not been given a dignified and deserved place within the system. Millions of African youth are sceptical about their future within their national frontiers. Several countries on the continent are marked with dismal failure of governments to cater and provide opportunities for the citizenry, and the ruling circles behave like foreign occupiers.

In this age of globalization there is so much information about where there exists better opportunities – real, deceptive and illusionary. The youth question has to be taken seriously by the African states and societies. Images of Africans escaping from the continent across the Sahara and the Mediterranean to Europe and elsewhere, with many dying in the process, and others treated in the most dehumanized ways when arrested, are beamed all over the world. The current situation cannot be justified on the basis that Africans are flocking to Europe because the Europeans were in Africa, prior to and during colonialism, without invitation and having no entry visas. Something more concrete has to be done about the existing internal conditions in several African countries in terms of the social, economic, political and other rights of the people (Aina 1997: 72-73).

Free and fair elections are like a fairy tale in African countries, where the electoral system is ineffective. Corruption, constant increases in prices of goods, neglect of national and social security, government increasing withdrawal from provisioning of social services, retrenchment of workers, and high level of unemployment are among the common features of national life.

The neglect of the public universities can be illustrated in the context of Nigeria (Eribo 1996: 65). In the 2005 budget proposal, the federal government allocated a mere 8% of total expenditure to education. In 2003 the country made \$26 billion from the sell of oil in the international market, but the education sector was allocated a mere 3% in the national budget (ASUU 2004). One basic question is about what the government does or give to its citizens, in a period the country is earning huge money (than ever) from the sell of oil in the world market well the leaders steal and keep the money in European and American banks.

The various intra-state violent conflicts are estimated to have killed hundreds of thousands of people. In the country’s post-independence history – from October 1960 – Nigeria with a present population of over 120 million is yet to have a constitution derived from a national democratic debate and political dialogue of the people, citizens participation by all sections of the people and their organizations, in a process that would

make it a product based on popular and inclusive decisions and broad national consensus (Chafe 2003: 8).

The political process of never-ending democratic experiments has been guided by military regimes with the collaboration of some conservative lawyers and politicians. A T. Aina puts it, without mentioning the country, in less than 50 years the people “have lived through colonisation, seen independence, experienced military coups, fought at least one civil war and have elected both a parliamentary style Prime Minister and an Executive President” (Aina: 2003: 79). Many years of the absence of governance based on the consent of the citizenry, and the lack of an enduring democratic culture and practice has contributed in galvanizing various forces to pose challenges to the state and factions of the ruling elite (Kazah-Toure 2004: 41-49).

The emancipatory discourses on putting Nigeria on a democratic course cannot be restricted to the exclusive confines of the ruling elite, who massively came to power through fraudulent elections – especially the most flawed and neither free nor fair elections of 2003 – which was both the conclusion of local and international elections observers and monitors (Bond 2003; and Momoh 205) .

Conclusion

Africa requires a new internationalism, led by anti-imperialism/anti-globalization forces and pan-Africanist movements, to challenge the present order. This has to be done if the African State is to be made more relevant towards the development of the continent. In the history of the world no country has developed without the State playing a central role. A lot more needs to be done to shake off the “debilitating economic and geopolitical aggression” in the present hegemonic offensive (Bond 2003). The neo-liberal agenda on democracy, human rights, good governance, accountability and the economic policies are not presently determined by the African people.

Africans need to do more to keep the memories of the past and present alive, which would enable them to shape their destiny for a better future. What Edward Said, in his last days, called on the people of the Middle East to do is also worth some deep reflections and expanded rethinking in Africa (Said 2003). Let Africans expand the frontiers of their memories and do a rethinking on the historical and other complex and hard processes that have been their bondage. Including the experiences of slavery, colonialism and racism, anti-colonial nationalism, independence and the post-colonial projects and proxy regimes that serve the Western interests. Reflect and rethink the scourges of coups and counter coups, civil wars, inter-state wars and sectarian conflicts.

Africa has to do a rethinking about its dominant political leaders, ruling classes and governments that have been brutalizing their own citizens and those that were (and indeed are) at the centre of igniting xenophobia against sections of the citizenry. Fundamentally there ought to be a rethink about the promoters of the scourges and the beneficiaries at the different phases. It is worth noting that in each of these processes there have always been those who stood and struggled for the larger interests of the continent and the people, on the one hand, and those who have never relented in keeping the continent within the hegemonic noose, on the other.

Africa has to do more to solidify regional and continental integration and employ more mechanisms towards the resolution of violent intra-and-inter state conflicts. The AU has to take the question of citizenship more vigorous. Citizens, civil organizations

and all stakeholders have to take up the challenges and work out positions to be pursued in concrete terms so that the control, development, and distribution of resources are foremost guided by the interest of Africa in all spheres. There is need for pan-African peoples' movements and political parties to intensify the struggles for democratic governance on the continent, as alternative to the superimposed neo-liberal hegemonic variant. Instructive is the stark reality that defiance can only be meaningful if real power in all spheres is taken seriously. For defiance without power would be as if nothing has been learned over the centuries. Africa has to do more for better management of pluralism and constitutionalism (Ginwala 2003: 2-3).

If Africa has to free itself, determine its place in the present world, and be a strong player in global politics, there is the need to beat its tragic internal swords into ploughshares. The continent must put in place mechanisms to achieve true independence, and advance its interests, in the face of the hegemonic hurricane. Only when Africa abandons erecting its economic, political and social systems – as well as their structures and institutions – on weak and subservient foundations, thereby building itself on solid grounds, that it will achieve lofty heights for present and future generations.

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