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# Myths of Decolonization and Illusions of Freedom

## Introduction

> In a Habermasian type of scenario, liberation would be subservient to emancipation; and, decolonization, likewise, would still be covered over and managed by the emancipating rhetoric of modernity, either liberal or Marxist. In other words, if 'emancipation' is the image used by honest liberals and honest Marxists from the internal and historical perspectives of Europe or the US, then looking at the world history from outside of those locations […] means coming to terms with the fact that there is a still further need for 'liberation/de-coloniality' from the people and institutions raising the flag of 'emancipation.' Thus, in this precise sense, emancipation cannot be the guiding light for liberation/de-coloniality but the other way round: liberation/de-coloniality includes and re-maps the 'rational concept of emancipation.' In this complexity, we need a relentless critical exercise of awareness of the moments when the guiding principle at work is liberation/de-coloniality and when, on the other hand, the irrational myth directs social actors in their projects for political, economic and spiritual (epistemic, philosophical, religious) decolonization.
>
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The momentous people's uprisings rocking the North African region since January 2011, culminating in the collapse of the oppressive regimes of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in quick succession as well as the collapse of Colonel Muamar Gaddafi's forty-two years of iron rule in Libya, and his death in the process, have put to rest notions of an 'end of history and the last man' that was popularized by Francis Fukuyama

at the end of the Cold War. The popular uprisings by the masses indicated beyond doubt the continuing ability of the ordinary people to make history. Massiah (2011:2) identified one of the key lessons from the uprisings that rocked the Maghreb region as the opening to the possibility of a new phase of decolonization and depicted this new phase as relating to the 'passage from the independence of states to self-determination of the people'. These uprisings which no social scientist or journalist was able to predict and forecast compel us to revisit the African past and rethink the limits of the decolonization process that culminated in the achievement of juridical freedom by African colonies from the late 1950s onwards.

The process of decolonization which Zeleza (2003: vi) calls the 'proudest moment' of African nationalism, is believed to have marked the triumphalism of black liberatory nationalism over white exploitative and oppressive colonialism. Being liberated and/or emancipated were subsumed under the rubric of decolonization to mean a single state of being. The day each of the African colonies achieved political independence is celebrated annually as 'independence day' throughout the African continent save perhaps for Ethiopia that was never colonized. But even Ethiopia celebrates its triumphalism over Italian invasion at the famous battle of Adowa in 1896. There is no doubt that decolonization occupies a nerve centre of pride in African historiography and nationalist humanism. Those who actively participated and led the struggles for decolonization became heroes of the African nationalist revolution and founders of the postcolonial African states.

This chapter re-evaluates the decolonization process in order to understand its grammar and eventually unpack it as a process that was never completed and, therefore, continues to obscure and hide the disempowering colonial matrix of power that prevented the re-birth of Africa as a confident and brave postcolonial world. Decolonization is better understood as a terrain of illusions of liberation and myths of freedom. This intervention is in no way meant to down play the sacrifices some Africans made in the name of decolonization. It is common knowledge that Nelson Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison while many others like Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique, Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau, Chris Hani and Solomon Mahlangu of South Africa, Jason Ziyaphapha Moyo and Herbert Chitepo of Zimbabwe all lost their lives. The analysis is meant to expose the ideational traps constructed by colonial modernity that diluted the liberatory ethos of decolonization and channelled it towards emancipation that did not question the alienating logic of modernity itself but called for reforms within the same system.

Moreover, the chapter articulates three core arguments. The first is that, for one to gain a deeper meaning of decolonization and its limits one needs to unpack its grammar. By its 'grammar' I mean its genealogy, ethical and ideological aspects as well as its political assumptions and implications. In unpacking the core essence of decolonization I engage with two utopic registers of liberation and emancipation that are subsumed under decolonization discourses. I disentangle liberation from emancipation as I reveal the myths and illusions of freedom bequeathed Africa by decolonization. The second is that decolonization largely manifested itself in the form of juridical freedom albeit of a complicated nature that was mistakenly conflated with popular freedom for the ex-colonized peoples. This argument is explicated by analysing the problematic character of the African postcolonial state that emerged from colonial rule rather than from African society and operated through coercion rather than consent to impose its will on the African people.

The final argument is that existing studies of decolonization have been blinded by nationalist celebratory politics to the extent of ignoring the ordinary citizens' new struggles aimed at liberating themselves from the domination, exploitation and repression of the postcolonial state. Therefore the chapter provides details of strategies the ordinary citizens use to liberate themselves from the postcolonial, neocolonized African state and which continues even today by taking the form of popular uprisings in North Africa with potential ripple effect on sub-Saharan Africa.

## Disentangling 'emancipation' from 'liberation' in the decolonization discourse

Some critics would probably think simplistically that disentangling 'emancipation' from liberation is an exercise in futility. Those who might think so are totally mistaken because without clearly disentangling both terms, failure it would be difficult to realize that the active forces of the colonial matrix unleashed by colonial modernity always fought to dilute liberation struggles into emancipatory struggles that ended up celebrating the achievement of democracy instead of freedom. The post-1994 South African situation speaks volumes about how the liberation movement was disciplined into an emancipatory force that finally celebrated the achievement of liberal democracy instead of decolonization and freedom. This means the day was won by liberals rather than nationalists. The other example is that of slaves who were emancipated rather than liberated to the extent that they continued to languish at the bottom of the racial-hierarchy of societies like the United States of America and engage in further civil rights struggles to change their oppression and domination.

So there is, indeed, a real danger in African studies accepting that the utopic registers of emancipation and liberation can be used interchangeably to mean freedom. Emancipation and liberation are related utopic registers but they do not mean the same thing and their genealogies are different. In his studies of philosophies of liberation, Dussel (1995, 2000) makes it clear that emancipation belongs to the discourse of the European Enlightenment and is today a common term used in liberal and Marxist discourses. Dussel's argument is reinforced by that of Walter D. Mignolo who argues that:

> The concept of emancipation belongs to the universe of discourse framed by the philosophical and historical concepts of modernity, which becomes apparent if we look at the particular intersection of Theo-and Ego-politics that later, in the eighteenth century, gave rise to the idea of emancipation—the Reformation. In terms of philosophical modernity, the Reformation was a crucial break-through for the emergence of critical self-reflexivity and it is easy to see how—and why—the concept of emancipation emerged from the 'transition' to 'freedom of subjectivity' and 'critical self-reflexivity' from lack thereof that began with the Reformation. The individual freedom sought to some degree within the Church by Luther became more and more autonomous through secularization until its detachment in Descartes dictum, 'I think, therefore I am,' in Kant's transcendental subject and in Hegel's freedom of subjectivity and critical self-reflexivity (Mignolo 2007: 467).

Emancipation was used in the eighteenth century to refer to three historical events, namely the Glorious Revolution of 1668 in England, the independence of the colonists in America from the British colonial empire (American Revolution of 1776) and the French Revolution of 1789 (Mignolo 2007: 455). In these three events emancipation was with reference to the bourgeois revolutions that did not fight against the edifice of modernity but for reformism and class ascendancy within the same capitalist system.

Emancipation is always informed by the reformist spirit rather than total change. It is more of a strategy used by oppressive systems to deal with opposition by opening up new concessions while gaining a new lease of life. As Mignolo (2007: 445) argues, emancipation 'proposes and presupposes changes within the system that doesn't question the logic of coloniality'. The most dangerous assumption in this thinking is that freedom for the non-Western world had 'to be planned, dictated, and executed from Europe or the US itself only' (Mignolo 2007: 457). This thinking led to such ideas of decolonization as mere transfer of power from white colonialists to black nationalists.

It is also ideas of emancipation that underpin present-day Western powers' use of military power and violence as part of their crusade to introduce

liberal democracy and human rights on non-Western parts of the world. The example of the invasion of Iraq is an indication of this mentality. Such military adventures, which were justified on the basis of emancipation were seen reality as a continuation of the spread of Western modernity by force to engulf the non-Western world, especially the Islamic world that is seen as resisting some aspects of cultural imperialism, including embracing Christianity. Even Marxism was informed by the spirit of emancipation; hence it did not question the logic of Western modernity and its colonial mission but simply emphasized the emancipation of the working class instead of the bourgeoisie. Today, part of the dominant Western discourse is about emancipation of the multitudes (Hardt and Negri 2000).

Understood from this perspective, emancipation is different from liberation notwithstandingthat they are two sides of the same coin of modernity/coloniality. The genealogy of liberation is in resisting the imposition of Western modernity and revolting against the darker and negative aspects of Western modernity such as the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and neocolonialism. In Africa, the genealogy of liberation discourse is traceable to slave revolts and primary resistance, and in the Diaspora to the 1781 Tupac Amaru Uprising in Peru and the 1804 Haitian Revolution. The resisters who participated in these struggles did not fight for internal reform within Western modernity and its logic of imperialism and colonialism. The revolutions in Peru and Haiti challenged and questioned the whole edifice of Western modernity and its concomitant logic of slavery, imperialism and colonialism. The clarion call was for independence not reform of the system as emancipatory demands tended to do. Liberation is the expression of aspirations of the oppressed non-Western people who desired to de-link with the oppressive colonial empires. Its grammar had a double meaning: political-economic independence and epistemological freedom.

Ideally, African liberation was expected to destroy the colonial state and culminate in the creation a new dispensation of freedom, equality and justice. Mignolo (2007: 454), in his differentiation of emancipation from liberation, posed some crucial questions: Who needs emancipation? Who needs liberation? Who benefits from emancipation? Who benefits from liberation? Who are the agents and the intended targets of emancipating or liberatory projects? What subjectivities are activated in these projects? Does the distinction even matter when emancipation has a universal ring that seems to cover the interests of all oppressed people in the world? It is clear from this chapter that emancipation is a watered-down variant of liberation in the sense that it does not take into

account the hierarchies of oppression and exploitation introduced by Western modernity across the world mediated by race. Emancipation was a strategy of the white bourgeoisie that questioned only the excesses of the logic of imperialism and colonialism such as the slave trade and apartheid, for instance.

Those who wanted liberation were the colonized people who desired a re-birth as free citizens and new, liberated beings. But the decolonization project in Africa was permeated by both imperatives of emancipation and liberation coexisting uneasily and tendentiously. The agenda of decolonization was hijacked by the 'native bourgeoisie' and channelled towards emancipation. The 'native bourgeoisie', despite its black colour, was a creation of colonial modernity and had imbibed colonial languages and embraced Western cultures; as such it aspired to occupy the positions monopolized by the white colonial bourgeoisie. Its agenda was limited to replacing the colonial white bourgeoisie (Fanon 1961: 87).

The emancipatory strand in the decolonization project was easily embraced by the 'native bourgeoisie' that was not really opposed to colonial modernity but wanted to be accommodated within the system. On this point Peter Ekeh argued that:

> In many ways, the drama of colonization is the history of the clash between Euro-pean colonisers and African bourgeois class. Although native to Africa, the African bourgeois class depends on colonialism for its legitimacy. It accepts the principles implicit in colonialism but rejects the foreign personnel that rule Africa. It claims to be competent enough to rule, but has no traditional legitimacy. In order to replace the colonisers and rule its own people, it has invented a number of inte-rest-begotten theories to justify that rule (Ekeh 1975: 96).

Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, a leading Zimbabwean nationalist and historian of nationalism, celebrated how colonial modernity eradicated tribalism in Africa and proclaimed that the African political trajectory was moving from tribalism to nationalism and to modernity (Sithole 1968: 98). What Sithole and his bourgeois class were fighting for was not very different from what the British bourgeoisie wanted during the Glorious Revolution of 1668. The difference was only that colonial modernity had added the race element to the African situation as a variable in bourgeois power struggles.

The black native bourgeoisie that spearheaded the decolonization project stirred it in the direction of emancipation rather than liberation. As long as decolonization was conceived in emancipatory terms, its failure to fulfil Fanon's expectations of total, complete and instantaneous substitution of the colonial species and colonial subject with another liberated and confident

African species and the birth of 'new men, new language and new humanity' were inevitable. Fanon emphasized that, 'The production of the new men is solely a result of their act of obtaining their freedom' (Fanon 1961: 1968a). Decolonization did not result in complete reversal of the order of society whereby, 'The last shall be first and the first shall be last' and the 'native goes from "animal" to "human"' (Fanon 1968a: 102).

At another level, Grosfoguel (2007: 219) argued that decolonization must not be articulated in terms of conquering power over the juridical political boundaries of a state akin to the old national liberation and socialist strategies of taking power. Such approaches ignored global coloniality which operates without a direct colonial administration. This means that decolonization that was simply aimed at the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to a myth, a 'postcolonial world', because from direct colonialism African states fell directly into neocolonialism.

In the 1960s and 1970s, revolutionary African cadres like Amilcar Cabral (1969: 75) became worried about the 'ideological deficiency' of the decolonization movements. Cabral urged the existing African liberation movements to pay particular attention to the form of society they wanted to construct at the end of colonial rule. He clearly understood that the attainment of political independence was not the same thing as national liberation. He was concerned about the failure of African nationalist leaders to distinguish between genuine national liberation and neocolonialism (Cabral 1969: 89).

Cabral was not alone in this endeavour to rescue the liberatory ethos of decolonization that was being confused with emancipation. Kwame Nkrumah was also very vocal about the dangers of neocolonialism being taken for African freedom. He was very concerned about the vulnerability of postcolonial African societies to the 'extended tentacles of the Wall Street octopus' (Nkrumah 1965). Nkrumah visualized postcolonial Africa as trapped within the snares of 'neocolonialism' which he called the 'last stage of imperialism' (Nkrumah 1965). He was indeed very correct.

Slavoj Zizek even derided the logic of decolonization in these words:

> One is tempted to say that the will to gain political independence from the colonizer in the guise of a new independent nation-state is the ultimate proof that the colonized ethnic group is thoroughly integrated into the ideological universe of the colonizer (Zizek 2000: 255).

This critical analysis of the myths of decolonization and its illusions of freedom takes us to the higher order question of what constitute decolonial resistance and

liberation for the African people. In simple terms, African resistance to colonial modernity had to exceed the terms and constraints imposed on Africa by Western modernity. Such resistance was expected to create decolonization as a double operation that involved the liberation of both the colonizer and the colonized. The end product was to be 'de-coloniality' which Mignolo defined thus:

> De-coloniality, then, means working towards a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal society over those that differ, which is what modernity/coloniality does and, hence, where decolonization of the mind should begin. The struggle is for changing the terms in addition to the content of the conversation (Mignolo 2007: 459).

At the time of writing this book, the majority of those who led the nationalist inspired decolonization process had already displayed signs of capitulation to the dominant world constructed by Western and colonial modernities. Replacement of white colonial administrators at the state level was celebrated as independence and as freedom in countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa. In Zimbabwe they celebrate 'independence day' every April and in South Africa they have celebrated 'freedom day' since 1995. In both countries, the African political elite proclaimed the policy of reconciliation, which Ibbo Mandaza correctly characterized as:

> The mourn of the weak, even when pronounced from positions of apparent moral superiority over oppressors and exploiters of yesterday. The reconciliation exercise, therefore, serves largely a political function, facilitating the necessary compromise between the rulers of yesterday and the inheritors of state power, within the context of incomplete decolonization (Mandaza 1999: 79).

Mandaza also emphasized that what is generally celebrated as the postcolonial state 'has no life of its own, it has no essence; it is a state modeled on the (European) bourgeois state but without a national bourgeoisie that would otherwise provide it an anchor and even a semblance of independence' (Mandaza 1998: 3). All this analysis underscores the fact that a postcolonial world was never born; rather what decolonization facilitated was a postcolonial neocolonized world.

At the abstract level one can still begin to identify some of myths of decolonization. For instance, the idea of politically sovereign and economically independent postcolonial states ignored the crucial reality of entrapment of these states within the snares of the global colonial matrix of power that denies African leaders policy space to chart any autonomous economic or political trajectory. To argue that colonial situations ceased to exist after the demise of colonial administrations some fifty years ago also constitutes a myth of a

decolonized postcolonial African world. Grosfoguel (2004: 320-321) added credence to this argument:

> For the last 50 years, states that had been colonies, following the dominant Euro-centric liberal discourses […] constructed ideologies of 'national identity,' 'national development,' and 'national sovereignty' that produced an illusion of 'independence,' 'development,' and 'progress.' Yet their economic and political systems were shaped by their subordinate position in a capitalist world system organised around a hierarchical international division of labour […] These multiple hierarchies (including the racial/ethnic hierarchy), together with the predominance of Eurocentric cultures […], constitute a global coloniality' between Europeans/ Euro-Americans and non-Europeans. Thus, 'coloniality' is entangled with, but is not reducible to, the international division of labour. The 'colonial' axis between European/Euro-Americans and non-Europeans is inscribed not only in relations of exploitation (between capital and labour) and domination (between Europeans and non-Europeans), but also in the production of subjectivities.

Another myth of decolonization is that of conflating the attainment of juridical freedom with the achievement of popular freedom by the African citizens. The post-apartheid poverty that the black majority experienced in South African is a clear testimony of the dangers of degeneration of liberation movements into emancipatory formations concerned with simple politics of the right to vote and removal of discriminatory legislation from statute books without embarking on systematic and radical restructuring of the apartheid state. Those who fought for the liberation of South Africa from the vicious apartheid colonialism found themselves celebrating not freedom and independence but democracy. Today, one of the most defended things in South Africa is the national constitution mainly by those who benefited from apartheid simply because the celebrated South African constitution officially adopted in 1996 protects the ill-gotten wealth concentrated in the hands of white bourgeoisie and a few black elites. The constitution of South Africa does not facilitate and enable radical redistribution of resources such as land and mines. Ironically, predominantly black the African National Congress (ANC) who fought against apartheid oppression and brought about the new constitution, are now closely watched as a threat to the same constitution by the right-wing and white dominated political formation known as the Democratic Alliance (DA). South Africa is a typical example of a society where myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom are manifesting themselves in broad daylight in a most detestable form.

## Myths of decolonization and problems of juridical freedom

A body of critical literature by such scholars as Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo (1994), Claude Ake (2000), Pita Ogaba Agbese and George Klay Kieh, Jr (2007), Mueni wa Muiu (2009) and others have focused attention on the problems emanating from the character and structure of the postcolonial African state, in the process exposing some of the core myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom. Ake emphasized how the postcolonial state was shaped by colonial legacy into an all-powerful and arbitrary political formation that set it on collision course with the citizens.

The triumphant African nationalist leadership continued the colonial legacy of turning against democracy. This was so because the achievement of political independence only changed the composition of the managers of the state but not the character of the state, which remained much as it was in the colonial era. Consequently, the postcolonial state emerged as an apparatus of violence; its embedding within society was very shallow, its rootedness in social forces remained extremely narrow and this made it to rely for compliance on coercion rather than consent (Ake 2000: 35-37). Ake's central argument and observations were also echoed by Lumumba-Kasongo (1994: 58) who depicted the postcolonial African state as 'an institution of domination par excellence.'

In his interrogation of the idea and meaning of freedom in Africa, Foltz (2002) came up with a four-dimensional thesis on the trajectories of the African struggles for freedom. These are: freedom for the African state, freedom from the African state, freedom within the African state, and freedom through the African state system. Used in conjunction with the existing rich literature on the problems of the African postcolonial state, Foltz's intervention provides an ideal entry point for critical interrogation of the core myths of decolonization; how ordinary citizens have responded to postcolonial state's alienating practices, oppression and exploitation; and the pathways taken by ordinary citizens and excluded elites in search of popular freedom.

Scholars like Young (1994) and Mamdani (1996) have studied closely the colonial state which formed the template for the postcolonial state. They noted that the colonial state lacked three essential attributes found in other modern states, namely, sovereignty, nationalism and external autonomy; and crisis emanated from the fact that the colonial state was imposed by force of arms on the African society. At the initial construction level, the colonial state did not even pretend to serve the interests of the colonized African people in terms of provision of services. Coercion became the DNA of the postcolonial state.

As Muiu and Martin (2009: 54) have argued, the colonial state was 'essentially a foreign construct that could not possibly take root on African soil'. It even destroyed existing African indigenous civil society that had taken the form of age-grades and other forms. The postcolonial state was merely a de-racialized colonial state that was never structurally changed to enable it to suit African demands and aspirations. Thus the myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom become very clear if one closely analyses the politics around the transfer of political office from white colonial administrators to black administrators.

In the Francophone Africa, except Guinea, the postcolonial states were born with diminished sovereignty which still remained with France. They had no control over foreign, economic, monetary and defence matters (Mueni wa Muiu and Martin 2009: 56). In the Anglophone Africa, Chinweizu (1975: 167) noted that the African nationalists had to sign agreements to uphold some negotiated neocolonial compromises including safeguarding properties accumulated by white colonialists such as land and mines even before entering new offices. Independence constitutions were written for the African leaders by the departing colonial masters. Muiu and Martin (2009: 56) argued that Duncan Sandys who became Britain's Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations in 1960, was a notorious expert in persuading African leaders to sign independence constitutions which did not favour the aspirations of the black majority through keeping the participants talking until they signed out of sheer exhaustion. They concluded that:

> Thus decolonization was just a façade barely disguising the continuation of colonization by other means and leading to the mere 'flag' (or juridical) independence of utterly impotent and powerless quasi-states lacking the substance of sovereignty (Muiu and Martin 2009: 56).

Myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom had the negative impact of silencing the ordinary citizens through giving them a false hope that through hard work they would harvest the concrete fruits of freedom that were denied by colonialism. The postcolonial state itself was not free because multinational corporations and the ex-colonized still controlled the economy in league with metropolitan governments that ran African affairs by remote control and through African elites. The difficult question to answer is whether it was really possible for African leaders to pursue an independent political, ideological and economic path without provoking reaction from the ex-colonial powers?

This question is pertinent because Muiu and Martin (2009) and other scholars who argue for the reconstitution and reconstruction of African postcolonial states on the basis of indigenous knowledges and institutions,

seem to imply that African founding fathers of postcolonial states had a choice not to ignore indigenous institutions and to alter the states to meet the priorities and needs of the African people. At the same time, they point to the case of such leaders as Patrice Lumumba, Modibo Keita, Thomas Sankara, Mirien N'Gouabi, Samora Machel and Laurent-Desire Kabila who lost their lives while trying to radically transform the African states to serve the interests of their citizens.

What we see here is a cul-de-sac within which the African leaders operated; a path policed by colonial matrices of power that included CIA operatives, sponsored coup plotters, assassins and all sorts of dirty tricks ranged against those African leaders who tried to transcend the coloniality of power and translate myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom into real African freedom. Even Kwame Nkrumah fell victim to the snares of these forces and was toppled in 1966.

This cul-de-sac meant that the African leaders had to tread carefully including choosing to suppress African people's aspirations and demands than provoke the anger of the Euro-American political league that was capable of disciplining those who deviated from the given script on governance and state management. Instead of delivering services to the people, African leaders engaged in deluding their own people by pretending to be in charge and inviting the hungry and angry population to partake of annual celebrations of flag independence that did not change their well-being.

Having inherited the colonial state together with its repressive apparatus, African leaders presided over a leviathan that was active in suffocating alternative popular struggles for freedom. The first group of people to react against the postcolonial state was the excluded elite who found themselves at the mercy of those who controlled the state. According to Ake (2000: 37), the excluded elite fought for incorporation, manifesting a situation where 'Africa is in constant turmoil from struggles between people who must secure power and those who must access it by incorporation'. It was often the excluded elite that resorted to mobilization of ethnicity to build a political constituency to use in bargaining for power. On the other hand, were ordinary masses of peasants and workers who struggled for economic incorporation and this demand propelled them to seek what became known as 'second independence' not from colonial masters but from the indigenous elite (Ake 2000: 47).

Generally speaking, the ordinary citizen's struggles for freedom took various forms involving disengagement from the state; agitating for internal democratization of the state; supporting opposition parties; trying to take

control of the state; outright emigration; mocking the state; trying to influence state policy from within, agitating for secession, and other subtle and softer forms of resistance and engagement such as conviviality and use of music, jokes, comic strips and satire to reveal the vulgarity, debauchery and buffoonery of those in control of state power.

In the face of internal opposition, the postcolonial state evolved various survival techniques. Mbembe' (1992; 2001) focused on the ideological production of power within the postcolonial neocolonized African world and how this configuration of political power impinged on the development of relations between the state governors and the governed (state-society relations). But scholars like Mikael Karlstrom have criticized Mbembe for overestimating the ideological power of the postcolonial state and for 'unjustifiably' creating a pessimistic portrayal of state-society relations in postcolonial Africa 'as terminally mired in inherently dysfunctional political dispositions and practices' (Karlstrom 2003: 57). While Mbembe drew his examples from Cameroon and Togo, Karlstrom studied the rural communities of southern Uganda from a Bakhtinian perspective and discovered 'reciprocity and ritualized "dialogism" between state and society' (Karlstrom 2003:57).

Karlstrom spent energy demonstrating that 'the disabling paradoxes of postcolonial politics identified by Mbembe do not arise out of any inherent pathology of the African political imagination, but rather out of the postcolonial state's tendency to deploy local models and practices of the public sphere in ways that evacuate them of much of their legitimating content' (Karlstrom 2003: 57-8). While Karlstrom tries to create a positive image of the postcolonial neocolonized world as characterized by harmonious state-society relations based on particular case study of Uganda, there is overwhelming counter-evidence that reveal what Mbembe has uncovered.

The fact was that the postcolonial state was not well embedded in society meant that state-citizen relations were not stable and political elites and ordinary citizens were constantly engaged in struggles since those who did not control the state remained closed out of economic benefits of decolonization. As such the general thesis that postcolonial state-society relations have not been characterized by deep and horizontal comradeships running across interactions of ruling elites and the governed is very plausible. Tensions rather than 'ritualized dialogics' remained a common factor in state-society relations across postcolonial Africa, with minimum achievement of consent in only exceptional cases and on very brief occasions particularly during the first decade of independence dominated by false hopes and euphoria.

A combination of Foltz's four-dimensional thesis of trajectories of ordinary citizens' struggles for freedom and Mbembe's studies of thematics and aesthetics of power constructions in postcolonial Africa reveals an intricate disjuncture between forces of juridical freedom and those of popular freedom that have a bearing on further understanding the myths of decolonization, illusions of freedom and vicissitudes of society-state relations since the end of direct colonial rule in Africa.

What revealed the myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom was the lack of legitimacy of the African postcolonial state. Ali Mazrui offered a ground-breaking explanation for this legitimacy crisis:

> In situations where the leaders are identified too readily as people who have arisen from the ranks, it is easier for those who remain in the ranks to become envious of the privileges enjoyed by their former peers. Long-established elites are sometimes forgiven luxurious living more easily by 'lower classes' than newly successful members of the privileged classes. Those who have been rich for generations have consolidated their social distance and made it appear natural if not deserved. But the newly opulent are more easily accused of 'giving themselves airs'—and are more easily resented as a result. Resentment arises not from a defined social distance but, on the contrary, from the persistent residual social nearness between these newly opulent and the power fold from whom they spring. The Africa of the first generation of independence was an Africa bedeviled by precisely this close interpenetration between the elite and the masses (Mazrui 1988: 476).

Mazrui's intervention is very important as it challenges the common intellectual wisdom which generally explained tensions between the governed and the governors (state and citizens) in terms of widening distance between the ruling elites and the ordinary citizens. To Mazrui, the issue of postcolonial legitimacy crisis must not be sought in 'social distance' but in 'social nearness' that breeds envy among the ordinary members of society and other elites excluded from corridors of power.

In African studies there is a large corpus of literature which emphasized that despite its ambiguities African nationalism was a positive force which sought to achieve decolonization, nation-building, development, democracy, and regional integration (Mkandawire 1997: 71-107). What is ignored is the reality that once liberated from colonial rule, the postcolonial state went on to deny African citizens freedom within its boundaries on a massive scale, in the process denting the whole agenda of decolonization from a freedom perspective. Celebrated nationalist discourses of nation-building and development of the 1960s became justifications for denial of freedom for citizens as well as authoritarianism. This

is confirmed by Ake who emphasized the pervasive presence of the postcolonial state in all walks of African people's lives, making it a phenomenon to be loathed, courted, and even avoided (Ake 1993: 17-25).

Praise-texts that emerged during the independence euphoria of the 1960s were less critical of denials of freedom to citizens by the postcolonial state. The freedom for the African state was celebrated as freedom for the ordinary people. Those people who questioned whether decolonization bequeathed freedom on the ordinary citizens were quickly branded as traitors and enemies of the postcolonial state. They were either forced to flee to exile or were detained, if not liquidated completely. The earliest targets were excluded elites who were trying to create opposition political formations and critical intellectuals who were easily branded as counter-revolutionaries as though decolonization was ever a revolutionary enterprise in the first place.

What has dominated and pre-occupied the minds of those who assumed state power at the end of direct colonial administration was coaxing ordinary citizens to celebrate with them what is termed 'Independence Days' each year as the time when freedom was attained. Whose freedom was it that is being celebrated, one may ask? In his studies of how postcolonial power was institutionalized, performed and displayed in his native country Cameroon and Togo, Mbembe revealed how ordinary citizens were forced to celebrate the 'taste for lecherous living' enjoyed by those in control of the postcolonial state and how elites constructed and deployed a particular official discourse that served to maintain the fiction of an African postcolonial society of happy citizens devoid of conflict (Mbembe 1992: 6).

Mbembe (1992: 3-37) introduced the concept of the 'postcolony' which is useful in capturing the mindset of a particular calibre of leadership and a particular configuration of power and unique mode of postcolonial governance (Mbembe 2001). According to him:

> To be sure, the postcolony is chaotically pluralistic, yet it has nonetheless an in-ternal coherence. [...] The postcolony is characterized by a distinctive style of po-litical improvisation, by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion as well as by distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation. [...] In this sense, the postcolony is a particularly revealing, (and rather dramatic) stage on which are played out the wider problems of subjection and its corollary, discipline (Mbembe 1992: 3).

The postcolony is dominated by tensions between the state and citizens, and the governors and the governed. These tensions were deeply rooted and traceable to the practices and politics of postcolonial power routine,

institutionalization, and broadcasting within a terrain dominated by colonial matrices of power. As the postcolonial state and those who manage it try to institutionalize their power, they invariably provoke reaction from those over whom they governed. Mbembe (1992: 4) described the complex postcolonial state-citizen relationship as 'illicit cohabitation, a relationship made fraught by the very fact of the commandment and its "subjects" having to share the same living space'.

What has not received adequate scholarly attention in this scheme of things is how 'subjects'/ordinary citizens fought and resisted being captured, dominated, exploited and being used to indulge in officially imposed postcolonial order that did not benefit them. Worby (1998: 337-354) argued that postcolonial African leaders rarely enjoyed undisputed power, meaning that their hold on power has always been tenuous and contested. This forced them to opt for and try to depend on the performance of quotidian ceremonies underpinned by extravagant dramaturgical and improvisational content, aimed at fostering popular collusion and eliciting citizen consent.

Because the postcolonial neocolonized state lacked strong essence – which forced it to operate through coercion rather than consent -- such Western institutions as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund called for 'limited state' and dominance of market forces as a solution to problems of governance and development bedevilling Africa. The postcolonial state became a condemned institution that not only threatened people's freedom but distorted operations of laws of demand and supply. On this situation, Mkandawire argued that:

> For Africa the 1980s and 1990s were a period of wanton destruction of institutions and untrammeled experimentation with half-baked institution ideas. The result was 'unconstructive destruction' in its most institutionally debilitating form. The view by BWIs of African institutions was a jaundiced one borrowing eclectically from both the rational choice and new Weberian view of the state. From either point of view the message was African institutions should be circumvented or simply destroyed often because they were guilty by association (Mkandawire 2003: 10).

The World Bank and IMF recommended the burial of the 'age of intervention' by the African state of the 1960s and 1970s that was blamed for economic and political crises. The postcolonial state was derided as 'a giant theft machine' captured by corrupt and renting-seeking leadership (Mkandawire 2003). But the current economic and political thinking is that the postcolonial state is not only the creator of the desperately needed institutions but also

an indispensable engine rather than an enemy of development and freedom if well democratized and made accountable to the people. It is within this context that the notions of using the postcolonial state as an institution that can facilitate the attainment of freedom for the people re-emerged.

This is informed by the metamorphosis of economic thinking from 'getting prices right', through 'getting institutions right' to the current thinking of 'getting everything right' (Mkandawire 2003: 25). In short, the current efforts are focused on building strong institutions, not dismantling the state. Dangers remain though that the state still continues to be captured by certain interest groups that deny others freedom as is the case in Zimbabwe where a nationalist-military oligarchy is keeping the whole nation hostage while looting such resources as land and minerals under the guise of indigenization of the economy (Hammar et al 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

The question of freedom has always been a central aspiration of the colonized peoples, and decolonization was supposed and expected to bring it to the ordinary people. Freedom in general is linked to the development of human consciousness and was articulated in various languages, metaphors and idioms. As a concept, freedom is often used interchangeably with such other broader ideas in political and social theory, as liberty, development, liberation, emancipation, democracy and even revolution. Robert H. Taylor argues that:

> Freedom is an idea which was not merely discovered once and then spread around the world like a new commodity. Rather, freedom and its institutions emerge and re-emerge out of concrete circumstances of individuals' lives in history. The story of freedom knows no cultural barriers and continues to unfold in unexpected ways (Taylor 2002: 7).

The challenge in studies of freedom is how to define it as it covers a wide spectrum of human aspirations and visions subsumed under both emancipation and liberation. It is a loaded concept. Any attempt to coin a generic meaning of freedom is a futile exercise as it means different things to different people across space and time. R. W. Davis chose to define freedom from a Western modernist, liberal and emancipatory perspective:

> We use freedom in the traditional and restricted sense of civil and political liberty—freedom of religion, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of the individual from arbitrary and capricious authority over persons or property, freedom to produce and to exchange goods and services, and freedom to take part in the political process that shapes people's destiny (Davis 2002: vii).

But in Africa, freedom can be easily understood in its relationship to those processes that denied it. This is why Crawford Young has argued that for Africa, freedom is generally understood in relation to 'its negative other'. This is how he put it:

> The ultimate sources of unfreedom, in much of the reflection upon it, are external to Africa: the Atlantic slave trade; colonial subjugation; great-power imperial pretensions, globalizing capitalism (Young 2002: 9).

African notions of freedom emerged from the sites of struggle against oppression and exploitation. The sites of struggles for freedom ranged widely from those of one person resisting domination of another person, and one society resisting the domination of another. Karl Marx, for instance, was concerned with oppression and exploitation of one class by another.

Freedom, therefore, is articulated in various forms such as the Marxian class struggles, liberation wars such as the anti-colonial wars, as well as feminist struggles against patriarchal forms of domination and exploitation of women by men. But to gain a deeper understanding of the vicissitudes and tensions within politics of juridical freedom and popular freedom, it is important to briefly analyse the nature and character of post-1945 normative order within which the postcolonial state was born and under which ex-colonized peoples graduated from being subjects into citizens (Mamdani 1996).

The end of the Second World War in 1945 witnessed the birth of a transformed global normative international order. The right of self-government and self-determination was inscribed in the United Nations Charter. By 1948, a Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted that codified human rights as another major ingredient of the post-1945 global normative dispensation. For Africa, the post-1945 period witnessed intensified struggles for decolonization.

Decolonization gained a further boost from the fact that the post-1945 international system became dominated not by major colonial powers like Britain and France but by new superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet UnionEven though these post-war superpowers became engrossed in a complex Cold War rivalry, both of them 'by different logics favoured the dissolution of the colonial order' (Foltz 2002: 28). During this period, African freedom was simplistically defined in relation to colonial rule. The conception of freedom was articulated by Kwame Nkrumah (1962: 175) who said: 'When I talk of freedom and independence for Africa, I mean that the vast African majority should be accepted as forming the basis of government in Africa.' This point is further amplified by Crawford Young who wrote that:

> 'Freedom' as the transcendental political goal, with the rise of anti-colonial natio-
> nalism, thus had as primary referent alien rule. Colonial subjects, in this doctrine
> of protest, achieve standing and rights only collectively as members of a commu-
> nity defined by territorial geopolitics of the colonial partition. [...] The compelling
> need both for solidarity in anti-colonial challenge and for consolidating the unity
> of the new state gave a collective cast to the idea of freedom (Young 2002: 31).

What is often missed in studies of decolonization with the exception of the
work of Frantz Fanon is that the departure of direct colonial rule resulted in
the birth of an undemocratic postcolonial neocolonized states that inherited
repressive structures and oppressive institutions created by colonial rule. This
is a point well captured by Frederick Cooper who argued that:

> African states were successors in a double sense. First, they were built on a set of
> institutions--bureaucracies, militaries, post offices, and (initially) legislatures--set
> up by colonial regimes, as well as on a principle of state sovereignty sanctified
> by a community of already existing states. […] Second, African states took up
> a particular, and more recent, form of state project of colonialism: development
> (Cooper.2002: 156).

This means that colonialism deeply interpellated African nationalism and the
postcolonial state could not escape the snares of colonial matrices of power.
Young captured this point is well by Young when he stated that:

> African nationalists, at the time, sought no other formula; even as they fought
> colonial power, their own education and socialization had schooled them to hold
> the institutions of the imperial occupant in high regard as exemplary models of
> freedom (Young 2002: 29).

Just like colonial administrators, African leaders embarked on state consolidation
that privileged the freedom of a clique of people and their clients and patrons
rather than expansion of frontiers of freedom for the citizens. A state-centric
concept of freedom emerged that ran counter to popular discourses of
freedom. Mbembe argued that the postcolonial state soon considered 'itself
simultaneously as indistinguishable from society and as the upholder of the
law and the keeper of the truth. The state was embodied in a single person: the
President' (Mbembe 1992: 5). Cascading from this mentality was a complicated
relationship between the state and citizens. Liisa Laakso and Adebayo Olukoshi
have an apt description of this development:

> At independence, most African governments set themselves the task of under-
> taking a vigorous process of nation-building with the aim of welding their mul-
> ti-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious countries into 'one

nation'. A central element of this official project of nation-building was the assumption that only the state could constitute it. The nation-building project was, therefore, state-driven from the outset, often relying on a top-down approach that carried far-reaching centralizing implications. In time, the unity project increasingly took on the form of a unitary project which sometimes rested on a narrow ethnic base around which a system of patronage networks was then built linking other groups and their elites. Another element of the nation-building project was the assumption that the diversity of ethnic identities was inherently negative and obstructive and that it was a requirement of successful nation-building that the different identities be eradicated, submerged under or subordinated to the identity of the group(s) that dominated state power (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996: 13).

This conception of freedom by the African elites in charge of the postcolonial state marked the beginning of the crisis of the postcolonial nation-state project. One after another, the postcolonial states 'abandoned the multi-party political framework on the basis of which freedom from direct colonial was attained and adopted single party rule or slid into military rule' (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996: 13-14). Once this process was on course; the state increasingly became predatory and unrepresentative. A majority struggled to free themselves from predatory postcolonial states. Victor Azarya and Naomi Chazan argued that this struggle involved a shift from an 'engagement paradigm' to a 'disengagement paradigm' as the state failed to afford ordinary people material welfare and freedom (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 110-111).

Given the cataclysmic changes of the 1990s, described by Larry Diamond as the 'second wind of change', provoked by the collapse of the Soviet Union, implosion of communist regimes of eastern and central Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall did not succeed in facilitating the gaining of sovereignty by the ordinary people (Diamond 1998: 263-271). This argument is amply demonstrated by recent political developments that took place in Kenya and Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2008 where political elites continued to display extreme lack of respect for citizens' lives, disdain for ordinary people's choices in elections, and proclivities to use violence to re-assert freedom for the governing elites as opposed to the freedom for the people (Ranger 2008). During a campaign for the March 2008 elections, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe had the audacity to tell the electorate:

> You can vote for them [MDC], but that would be a wasted vote. I am telling you. You would just be cheating yourself. There is no way we can allow them to rule this country. Never, ever! We have a job to do, to protect our heritage. The MDC will not rule this country. It will never happen. We will never allow it (Quoted in Solidarity Peace Trust 2008).

This extreme disdain for the sovereignty of the citizens prompted a leading Zimbabwean opposition leader and academic Welshman Ncube to argue that:

> If all political players were to accept that it is the sovereign right of the people to freely elect a government of their choice no matter how we may disagree with their judgment. Even if we fiercely believe that it is wrong judgment we must accept it as their sovereign choice. If the political parties were to embrace that principle that the will of the people is sovereign [...] in my view that is the problem that faces the country at the moment—the refusal by the major political players that people can make a judgment, which is different from theirs. For as long as there is unwillingness to accept the judgment of the people we will have this crisis where the major political players seek to manipulate the will of the people (Financial Gazette, 22 November 2008).

Both in Kenya and Zimbabwe, citizens have found themselves hostage to the elites in charge of the postcolonial state. For both countries, it became clear how difficult it was to remove from power those elites that had entrenched themselves within the postcolonial state structures. Elections proved to be inadequate as a means used by the ordinary people to reclaim their sovereign power to choose their leaders. In Kenya, the December 2007 elections resulted in the worst form of violence ever experienced since the Mau Mau period; and in Zimbabwe, the post-29 March 2008 harmonized parliamentary, council and presidential elections were greeted with extreme forms of violence that targeted ordinary citizens (Prunier 2008; Masunungure 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). These examples help to show that juridical freedom cannot be conflated with popular freedom.

## Struggles to translate juridical freedom into popular freedom

Since the end of colonization the struggle for freedom has taken complex forms. As noted by Foltz (2002: 40): 'Often, these relations have pitted freedom--or freedom of manoeuvre--for the political elite against the freedom and human rights of the ordinary citizens.' What is beyond doubt is that freedom of the African state entailed among other things admitting it to membership in the international society of sovereign states. The immediate struggle by the elite in charge of the young postcolonial states was to consolidate 'freedom of the state' into 'freedom for the state' (Foltz 2002: 40). This thinking developed within a terrain of emergence of African states as unique 'quasi-states'. Robert H. Jackson defined 'quasi-states' as new polities which were recognized as sovereign and independent units by other states within the international system, but which could not meet the demands of 'empirical' statehood (Jackson 1990).

Empirical statehood is measured by the state's capacity to exercise effective power within its boundaries and ability to defend itself from external attack (Clapham 1996: 15). The crisis of the postcolonial African state was well captured by Christopher Clapham who said: 'African independence launched into international politics a group of the world's poorest, weakest and most artificial states' (Clapham 1996: 15). These realities forced the African leadership to search for 'freedom for the African state' (Foltz 2002: 40). This took various forms including nationalization of the economy making it the domain of elite plunder and introduction of authoritarian one-party-state regimes and other forms of regime security rather than human security.

The postcolonial state assumed the character of the proverbial goat that grazed where it was tethered—preying upon the people, capturing, dominating, exploiting, and squeezing the local citizenry. Examples include Ghana and Guinea under Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure (see Azarya and Chazan 1998: 115). These two West African states were practizing socialism that was used to justify extreme forms of centralization and politicization of every aspect of society.

Youth movements, trade unions, women's movements and other voluntary associations became integrated within the ruling parties. At the end of it all: 'Every citizen had to be a party member, and every village, neighbourhood, factory, and office had its party committee' (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 115). The underlying logic was to bring larger and larger segments of the population into the state domain of surveillance, repression, domination and exploitation.

No doubt the search for the freedom to African states in reality became the search for the freedom of those who were in control of the postcolonial neo-colonized state and their select clients and cronies. Sooner than later, it became apparent that the immediate benefit of decolonization accrued to the political elites in charge of the state rather than ordinary citizens. The postcolonial state soon became a symbol of repression, oppression and deprivation rather than a facilitator and guarantor of ordinary people's freedom. Those who felt excluded from the state responded by seeking 'freedom from the African state' (Foltz 2002: 41). This happened when the postcolonial state had undergone a cycle of deliberate circumscription of opposition, closure of the democratic space, squandering of political legitimacy, and increasing failure to deliver public services.

## Seeking freedom from the state

The failure by the postcolonial state to deliver material benefits and freedom to the ordinary people resulted in a problematic relationship between the

state and the citizens. Those in control of the state became the only full citizens together with their clients and cronies. The majority of the ordinary people became subjects once more after the end of colonial rule (Mamdani 1996). Instead of governing, the elites in charge of the state became rulers in the crudest sense of the term whereby their words became law and they reduced citizens not only to subjects but also to powerless sycophants and hungry praise-singers (Mazrui 1967).

Azarya and Chazan identified four common mechanisms employed by ordinary people to disengage from the state. These are 'suffer-manage syndrome', 'escaping', 'creation of systems parallel to those of the state', and 'self-enclosure' (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 110-135). One can add secession and attempts to seize the state itself as other forms employed by the dominated to attain freedom. The 'suffer-manage syndrome' involved constant adjustment to a deteriorating state performance. It encompasses a coterie of activities of learning to manage life and survive during moments of depravity and crisis. The activities ranged widely from altering diets and adjusting consumption habits to accord with existing meagre food supplies; urban dwellers cultivating vegetable gardens for home consumption and conversion of home craft into cottage industries (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 115-116).

These survival and suffer-management strategies were recently manifest in Zimbabwe where the economy experienced a free-fall from 2000 to 2008 (Vambe 2008). Those groups and individuals that failed to extricate themselves physically from the domain of the malfunctioning state resorted to 'suffer-management' as a mode of survival. Suffer-management is a form of coping with crisis and cannot be seriously considered as amounting to a form of freedom or a form of disengagement from the state. The advocates of active citizenship often blame those people who 'resort to suffer-management 'suffer-management' as passive citizens open to victimization by the state.

But when all avenues of exiting from the predatory state become closed, some citizens rely on resilience and constant adjustment to endure diminishing circumstances (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 117). In Zimbabwe, those responsible for causing deterioration of the economy through corruption and implementation of ill-conceived policies like the fast-track land reform programme, turned around and advised the suffering citizens to persevere in the midst of extreme scarcity of basic commodities. The common 'official jingle' that became banal on Zimbabwean television and radio was a song 'Rambamakashinga' (remain resolute and persevere).

The other common route is that of escaping from the malfunctioning or oppressive state physically. This takes the form of emigration. This option is commonly utilized by those who are better educated such as teachers, nurses, doctors, and academics. This group is usually followed by unskilled and semi-skilled groups who also experienced unbearable consequences of socio-economic and political crises. Political activists opposed to those in control of the state form another layer of those who emigrate.

During the crisis years under Kwame Nkrumah, 10 per cent of Ghana's population exited the country while about half of the Guinean population moved to live in countries such as Senegal, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gambia and Mali. Ghanaians were mainly trooping to oil-rich Nigeria (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 115). In the southern African region, too, Zimbabweans have responded to the unprecedented economic and political crisis in their country through emigration. About 3 million Zimbabweans are estimated to be living in South Africa and another 2 million in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world (Sisulu et al 2007: 552-573). Escaping or migrating to another country is one of the oldest strategies that have been employed by Africans to escape political persecution, economic depravity and other forms of oppression.

The main constraint to this form of disengagement is the existence of modern boundaries that are often manned by state functionaries that require such documentation as passports and visas that are issued by the same state they are disengaging from. While in exile and in the Diaspora, some groups organize themselves into various political movements, campaigning for democracy such as the Campaign for Democracy in Ghana that was headed by Boakye Djan in the 1970s. Zimbabweans in exile and in the Diaspora have also formed various quasi-political groups including Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC) calling for secession of Matabeleland from Zimbabwe as well as numerous welfare associations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008: 167-199).

Secession is another of the routes to freedom that some frustrated constituencies and groups tired of oppression, domination and expression have attempted. It was the most radical form of claiming political freedom. The idea was to disengage from the state and attain recognition as a new sovereign state. The most commonly cited examples are those of Biafra in Nigeria and Katanga in Congo in the 1960s. Other stirrings of secessionist struggles occurred in Senegal (Casamance), Ethiopia (Eritrea) and Sudan (Southern Sudan). For sometime Eritrea remained the only example of successful secession until recently when Southern Sudan succeeded in breaking away from Arab dominated Northern Sudan..

Foltz (2002: 48) has  explained why secessionist movements were few and had limited success in Africa. According to him, Secession 'ran strictly against the African state system's norms of preserving territorial integrity and the inherited colonial boundaries'. This norm was underwritten by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which institutionalized the principles of inviolability of existing colonially-crafted borders in its Charter. The consequences of this decision by the founding fathers of postcolonial states was that minority groups that were often segregated from employment, excluded from benefitting from the national wealth and whose history, culture and languages were deliberately sidelined, had to endure bondage of boundaries.

The other option that was available to politically motivated military elites was to try and seize state power. This took the form of rebellion and military coups. The earliest examples included that of the Chadian rebellion of 1965. This was followed by other examples that culminated in civil wars in Uganda (1981-1986), Angola (1975-2002); Ethiopia (1974-94); Rwanda (1990-1994); and Mozambique (1980-1993) (Foltz 2002: 48). For several decades in countries like Ghana and Nigeria, military coups became the means of changing government and military strong-men succeeded each other via the barrel of the gun (Austen and Luckham 1975). Monopoly of force rather than elections and other softer forms of political bargaining became a raw material for political power.

The other option available to those excluded from power and its elaborate clientilist and patronage networks was to create alternative if not parallel systems to those of the state as an outlet for human needs that the state failed to fulfil. Examples include informal markets (black markets), smuggling, corruption and the use of alternative methods of justice. The logic behind these alternatives is that they override official channels and skirt the state's laws (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 123).

This form of disengagement involves attempts at beating the state systems and laws. In Zimbabwe, the late 1990s and early 2000, witnessed the mushrooming of flea markets that were not fully regulated by the state. There was also proliferation of informal street money-markets where hard currencies were sold and bought. But as the state became more and more desperate with the national banks running short of money, it had to act through a military style 'Operation Murambatsvina' (Operation Clean-Up) (Vambe 2008). It involved the demolition of structures and displacement of over 70,000 people as the state reacted against overriding cynicism towards official structures and widespread non-compliance with its laws (Tibaijuka 2005).

Azarya and Chazan have also noted that other forms of disengagement from the state have taken the form of conversion to new Pentecostal religious sects and magical cults where the ordinary people seek new spiritual redemption and material security (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 127). John and Jean Comaroff have drawn our attention to the proliferation of 'occult economies' involving ritual killings, use of magic, witchcraft and zombie conjuring in South Africa. They see these developments as an integral element of a thriving alternative modernity (Comaroffs 2000: 310-312). One of the most striving new religious movements in South Africa is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God whose roots are traceable to Brazil. It has skilfully deployed the protestant ethic and combined it with enterprise and urbanity to link spiritual and material world issues that appeal to the poor.

Within the Universal Church, prayers are deployed in such a way that they speak directly to mundane issues of depression, lack of employment and financial problems (Comaroff 1996: 297-301). Because of this, the Universal Church and other Pentecostal religious movements have become an alternative space where people concentrate their search for material and spiritual deliverance. This is happening alongside with the proliferation of popular cultures with anti-establishment overtones, drawing on both traditional and Western sources. These forms of popular protest take the 'soft' forms of underground press, song, dance, poetry, theatre and literature. Ayi Kwei Armah's widely read novel The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, was part of protest literature (Armah 1971).

Mbembe (1992: 8) has identified ways by which ordinary citizens used their laughter to 'kidnap power and force it, as if by accident, to examine its own vulgarity'. For Zimbabwe, those in the Diaspora have evolved other forms of doing the same thing by setting up private radio stations and online newspapers. Examples include the British-based SWRADIO Africa and American-based Voice of America's Studio 7 staffed with exiled journalists and DJs. The most popular online newspaper is Newzimbabwe.com that consistently carries uncensored writings very critical of the state and its leadership.

Disengagement also took the form of 'self-enclosure' (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 128). This involved attempts to insulate oneself from the state, thereby gaining protection from its uncertainties. For example, the white minority groups in Zimbabwe have been using this strategy from as far back as 1987 when the twenty seats reserved for them were scrapped from the voter's roll. They withdrew from national politics and took refuge in their farms, business premises and gated communities located in the expensive suburbs (Muzondidya 2010: 5-38). They only came back to the public political

domain when their land ownership was threatened through the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme whose modus operandi was compulsory acquisition of white-owned farms for resettlement of the black people. Only then did they become visible in large numbers in support of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

'Self-enclosure' also took the form of withdrawal: some urban dwellers withdrew to the rural enclaves; medical doctors withdrew from government contracts to establish their own firms; and other professionals loosened their ties with the state as a means of self-protection (Azarya and Chazan 1998: 130). Goran Hyden has argued that even peasants also participated in the evasive 'self-enclosure' technique, particularly those he described as 'uncaptured' ones who opted for a return to an ancestral 'economy of affection' (Hyden 1980).

## Seeking to democratize the postcolonial state

Some African people still believe that they can attain freedom through fighting from within the boundaries of the oppressive state. The main method has been to deploy post-Cold War global normative values of democracy, human rights, and good governance to contest the basis of state authoritarianism. This strategy became very popular in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union and implosion of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

A convergence of local and global voices called for democracy as the pre-condition for any economic and military support for African postcolonial regimes. This began in 1990 with the French president, Francois Mitterrand, telling the Franco-Africa Summit attended by numerous heads of state from Francophone Africa that French economic and military assistance would be given to those regimes that were committed to progress towards democracy (Marchesin 1995: 5-24).

Since that time, France has scaled-down on its practise of giving military support to autocratic African leaders, the first casualty being Hissein Habre of Chad who was toppled violently from power while and the French stood aloof because he refused to follow the new path of democratization. The global financial institutions -- notably the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and even the African Development Bank -- joined the voices of those fighting for democracy and made financial aid conditional on progress towards good governance (World Bank 1995). Foltz concluded that: 'Taken together, these external factors, interacting with domestic pressures, opened a political space in which Africans seeking political freedom could manoeuvre' (Foltz 2002: 53).

The 1990s also witnessed the mobilization and organization of Africans into civil society organizations (CSOs) ranging widely from churches, trade unions, women's movements, student movements, to ethnic-based pressure groups. As the Comaroffs:

> [...]Civil Society has served as a remarkably potent battle cry across the world. During inhospitable times, it reanimates the optimistic spirit of modernity, providing scholars, public figures, poets, and ordinary people alike a language with which to talk about democracy, moral community, justice, and populist politics; with which, furthermore, to breathe life back into, 'society,' declared dead almost twenty years ago by powerful magi of Second Coming [...] (Comaroffs 2000: 331).

African-based CSOs worked closely with Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and aid agencies to campaign for freedom. In Francophone Africa, the embers of freedom culminated in what became known as 'the National Conference' phenomenon that began in Benin as a convergence zone of those groups fighting for an end to authoritarianism practised by the one-party regimes (Robinson 1994: 575-610).

Indeed, a few one-party authoritarian regimes that had come to power in the 1960s crumbled under the weight of a combination of civil society and opposition forces' resistance to oppression and exploitation. Ready examples include Mathieu Kerekou of Benin, Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi. These regime changes were celebrated by Samuel P. Huntington as the 'third wave' of 'democratization in the late twentieth century' (Huntington 1991).

Despite the chequered history of the freedom struggles of the 1990s, with some proving to be false starts and others hijacked by incumbent dictators thirsty for relevance and re-birth, they formed a strong background for the current push for transparency, accountability, predictability, good corporate management and good political governance. By 2000, a new continental and global consensus had emerged on the complementarities of democracy and development.

The development of authoritarianism of the 1960s and 1970s was replaced by a strong belief in democratic development of the 1990s and 2000s (Sen 2000). Those fighting for freedom were no longer calling for the death of the state but for its restructuring to serve the interests of the people rather than that of the elites. Issues of corruption, kleptocracy and nepotism were identified as obstacles that needed to be removed if the African state was to serve the interests of the ordinary people. Some of the most corrupt and kleptocratic states like that of Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now Democratic Republic of

the Congo) could no longer rest until Mobutu himself was forced to leave the country to die in shame in exile. These realities led Young to conclude that:

> The democratic era of the 1990s, in spite of its disappointments and limitations, situated ideas of freedom in a multiplicity of sites, opened many new debates, and revived older ones on making freedom authentic by rooting it in an indigenous heritage (Young 2002: 37).

The new millennium witnessed the continuing struggles of ordinary people for widened frontiers of freedom consonant with the millenarian mood of hope for new life. The voices range from those of women and girls still pushing the remaining frontiers of patriarchy into the dustbin of history; youths claiming their space as a new generation; ethnic groups flexing their muscles for recognition and calling for decentralized forms of governance; and religious congregations creating a niche for their flock. What is common among these voices is the clarion call for democracy that would free them from the control of the centre and how to make the centre serve the ordinary people.

## Seeking to reconfigure the postcolonial state into an engine of development

Since 2000 increasing voices have been calling stridently for new African states that would serve the ordinary people and promote popular freedom. In some literature, this type of state is described as a democratic developmental state. It is a state that is capable of working to fulfil the democratic and developmental aspirations of the majority of the people within its borders.

The envisaged democratic developmental state is to be defined by its institutional characteristics. The first key feature is that of embedding in African society, that is, a state that has formed strong and broad-based alliances with society and ensures effective and active participation of citizens in decision-making. The second is that of building autonomous institutions free from control by capricious and venal cliques bent of fulfilling personal selfish agendas. Such a state is expected to be totally freed from the trappings of autocracy of the 1960s and 1980s (Mkandawire 2001: 289-314).

Foltz attributed this change in thinking about the state to the impact of normative and historical transformation in the larger external environment. He identified two factors responsible for this normative shift: reduced global and continental tolerance for those leaders who seized power through coups and other violent means, and the questioning of the non-interference in national affairs norm (Foltz 2002: 58). The other contributory factor was the coming to power of a 'new generation of African leaders' that included

Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, who were less authoritarian and less dogmatic unlike the founding fathers of the postcolonial states of the 1960s and the military leaders of the 1970s (Ottaway 1998).

While the 'new generation of African leaders' degenerated into authoritarianism of varying degrees, they remained better than those who presided over one-party and military dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s. They were committed to the reconstruction of the African state in the direction of the fulfilment of popular demands for economic development and democracy. In combination or as individuals, they engaged and toyed with bigger plans for Africa such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Pan-African Parliament (PAP), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). These pan-African institutions were meant to create a new momentum for Africa characterized by economic development and democratization (Murithi 2005). As Timothy Murithi puts it:

> With the creation of the African Union, African governments and their societies are expressing the desire, as yet unfulfilled, to address the unjust practices of the past which led to the social and economic marginalization of members of their societies. In so doing it is also an expression that Africa wants to play a constructive role in international relations as an equal partner and that the first step towards achieving this is to put its own house in order (Murithi 2005: 166).

The decision to build pan-African institutions as part of the plan to concretiz African aspirations for economic development and democracy is happening in conjunction with the return of the state as the legitimate driver of development and democratization. The Nigerian scholar, Eghosa Osaghae, noted that it has dawned on many researchers that the state remains the sole anchor for citizenship. It has also been realized that the state is the only institution that can carry and drive the distribution of resources (Osaghae 2010). The continuing struggle is over the nature and the type of state that will not be a menace to the people but a facilitator of economic development and provider of freedom and security.

## Conclusion

Decolonization cannot just be celebrated uncritically. Such praise-oriented approaches towards decolonization have obscured the myths and illusions of freedom and tend to ignore the poor and problematic ethical, ideological, and political foundations of this project. Decolonization remained hostage

to Western notions of emancipation that did not seriously question the ontological and epistemic essence of colonial modernity from the snares of which it tried to free Africans. Throughout the unfolding of decolonization, the radical liberatory aspects were compromised by the privileging of emancipatory-reformist ideas that did not predict the neo-colonial traps.

On top of unpacking decolonization in general, this chapter also analyzed the complexities of African struggles for freedom transcending those studies that conflated juridical freedom (freedom for the state) with popular freedom (freedom for the people). It has given empirical flesh, expanded and further problematized the pathways followed and pursued by ordinary people in search of freedom beyond Foltz's four-dimensional thesis.

Combining Foltz's thesis and Mbembe's work on dialectics, dynamics and entanglement of the interests of those who command and those expected to obey those commands within the postcolony, the chapter has discussed the complexities of postcolonial constructions of power and hegemony and how ordinary people have ceaselessly satirized, mocked, deflected, contested it; and even exited from the harsh domains of the postcolonial state at its most predatory moments.

The chapter unearthed multiple pathways to freedom pursued by ordinary citizens that transcended the conventional binary categories of domination and resistance, power and passivity, and autonomy and subjection that have shaped conventional wisdom. In the process, such issues as the crisis of legitimacy of the postcolonial state and the supposed redemptive aspects of the decolonization process are cast in new light that expands frontiers of knowledge on constructions of power within the postcolony, struggles for citizenship and popular sovereignty.