Part II

Discursive Constructions

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Discursive Construction of
the African People

You have all heard of African personality; of African democracy; of the African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Satre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are good as the next man but that we are better.

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Introduction

The major African discourses on identity construction have acknowledged, and perhaps been hostage to, a modernist grammar and logic of alterity. Those discourses, informed by the aspirations of African liberation from colonial domination in particular, have always made efforts to seek an alternative foundational alterity and to articulate a transcendental subject that would constitute a radical alternative to the equally homogenized non-African Other. Of course, Of course, this is not the best way to approach the complex subject of identity formation and construction. The best approach is to begin from the acknowledgement of the openness, partiality, historicity, contingency, heterogeneity and (re)construction of all human identities.

This chapter use s a combination of historical and discursive approach to explain   the politics behind the making of the African postcolonial world and the construction of African identities. It deals specifically with what Ernesto Laclau (2005: 65) termed 'constructing the "people"'.

The chapter focuses is on the construction of the 'African people' as a political and social force as well as a product of the coloniality of power of racial classification of human population mediated by inferior-superior, irrational-rational, primitive-civilized and traditional-modern dichotomies imposed by Western and colonial modernity. While Laclau's work emphasizes the centrality of populism as a way of constructing the political realities as the 'royal road' towards understanding 'something about the ontological constitution of the political', there is also a need to factor in the concrete historical realities that played a central role in the making of the 'African people'. Therefore, theory and historical analysis are twinned throughout this chapter to enlighten the complex debates on the idea of Africa and the discursive construction of the 'African people'.

The discursive construction of the 'African people' is a continuing process. This is so because there is no consensus on what Africa means and who is an African. What has been said remains partial, provisional and open to debate. Even those like Cheikh Anta Diop who worked hard to define what Africa was and sought to capture its meaning in African terms could not contain the slippery nature of the idea of Africa together with its mirage character that made it to always melt away into the domains of representation, cartography, profiling and race (Diop 1974). The making of Africa and its people involved the work of explorers, cartographers, missionaries, travellers, colonial anthropologists, colonialists, African kings and chiefs, ordinary Africans as makers of history, historians, imperialists, pan-Africanists and African nationalists and others too numerous to mention.

My entry point into the construction of Africa and African identities is the complex states of being and becoming mediated through and through by spatial, agential, structural, historical and contingent variables. While African nationalist historians, in the their demolition of the imperial historiography that denied African people any credible history, worked hard to construct Africa as a coherent entity with a singular trajectory of civilization, their successes was only partial. Africa and African identities still continue to be the subject of contestation in social and political theory as well as in practical political discourses of nationalism and pan-Africanism.

No doubt the formation of African identities has been characterized by crises and conflicts. Deeply lodged within the discursive formation of African identities were complex historical processes and activities ranging from the politics of naming, physical cartography, religious demarcations, physical boundaries, cultural mapping, and linguistic classifications to ideological

gerrymandering. Cooper (2002: 11) captured the complexity of the idea of Africa by describing it as 'many Africas'. He added that: 'At any one moment, Africa appears as a mixture of diverse languages and diverse cultures; indeed, linguistically, it is the most varied continent on earth.' Two questions immediately emerge: How then did the idea of Africa as a home of a people called Africans emerge? Do Africans exist as a collectivity pursuing common political and cultural objectives? Cooper noted, quite rightly in my view, that: 'It is only by looking over time that "Africa" begins to appear' (Cooper 2002:11).

Already Mudimbe (1988) has revealed that the idea of Africa was born out of multiple layers of inventions and constructions that commenced with explorations, so-called 'voyages of discovery', missionary activities and colonial processes. What emerged were equally complex African identities that were not underpinned by any semblance of common cultures and languages. This means that extrapolations of 'African' culture, identity in the singular or plural remained quite slippery as the notions tended to swing unsteadily between the poles of essentialism and contingency (Zeleza 2006: 13). The discursive formation of African identities was permeated by complex externally-generated discourses about the continent as well as internally-generated paradigms and politics through which the idea of Africa has been 'constructed and consumed, and sometimes celebrated and condemned' (Zeleza 2006:14).

One of the core challenges rocking the construction of African postcolonial nations is the refusal of existing heterogeneous identities to converge toward a single trajectory despite the untiring efforts of pan-Africanists who since 1900 regularly hosted pan-African conferences during which the idea of Africa was channelled towards a pan-African direction encompassing the various Diasporas. The latest manifestation of this refusal by African identities to coalesce into broader and friendly pan-African ones was demonstrated by the metamorphoses and mutations of African nationalism from civic principles founded on the slogan of 'diverse people unite' into narrow, autochthonous, nativist and xenophobic forms that breed violence rather than deep horizontal pan-African comradeship envisioned by the pan-Africanists (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2010).

The present challenge for pan-Africanists and nationalists is how to deal with the phenomenon of degeneration of plural and civic forms of nationalism into nativism, xenophobia, and even genocides that have become manifest since the decolonization period and become even more virulent since the end of the Cold War. These issues need serious and careful consideration at this

juncture when African leaders were busy toying with and implementing the mega project of establishing the United States of Africa. This is taking place within a terrain dominated by various forms of destabilizing and fragmenting bigotry, prejudices and phobias occurring within Africa itself and elsewhere.

The making of the African continent itself as both an idea and cartographic reality cannot be understood outside a clear understanding of such identity-forming processes as Orientalism, Occidentalism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, and ideologies such as pan-Africanism, Garveyism, Negritude, African Personality, Black Consciousness Movement right up to African Renaissance thought. These are some of the major discourses, that established the world of thought in which African people conceived their identities (Mudimbe 1988). The encounters between Europe and Africa, often dated to the fifteenth century, inaugurated the active imagination, naming and profiling of Africa in the West. To make meaning of what the explorers and missionaries encountered in a new environment, they had to mobilize their existing western knowledge and then re-inscribed the new geographical spaces and inhabitants in European discourse (Ahluwalia 2001: 20). Mbembe noted that:

> It is now widely acknowledged that Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West's desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world. In several respects, Africa still constitutes one of the metaphors through which the West represents the origin of its own norms, develops a self-image, and integrates this image into the set of signifiers asserting what it supposes to be its identity (Mbembe 2001: 2).

But the most simplistic approach that needs to be avoided at all costs is to consider Africans as a mere datum or census rather than as a collectivity organized in pursuit of a common political and cultural end due to existing diversities. Such a positivist-empirical approach tends to gloss over the fact that the complex question of identity-making itself is a political process mediated through and through by imperatives of inclusion and exclusion. Since the time of colonial encounters Africans have ceaselessly engaged in various political projects within which they continued to struggle to define themselves in political and cultural terms. The best way to approach the idea of Africa and African identities is as political projects mediated by identifiable but complex historical and political processes.

At another level, it is important to disabuse the old Marxist thinking which tended to dismiss ethnic, religious and racial identities as false consciousness and opiums of the unsophisticated minds that were soon to be replaced by

market-generated class identities as the realities of the end of the Cold War in 1989 indicated that identities were a powerful force able to change the course of the world. For instance, the force of identities resulted in the implosion of the Soviet Union and the crumbling of pan-Slavism alongside socialism as unifying ideologies. Eastern and central Europe were not spared of the aggressive return of identity politics resulting in Yugoslavia falling into contending ethnic pieces and Czechoslovakia breaking into two ethnic pieces.

The marauding ghost of identity did not spare Africa with its fragile nation-states. For example, Somalia collapsed into contending clans rooted in precolonial history and the efforts to re-build Somalia into a single nation once more have proven very difficult and costly. Cote d'Ivoire experienced a war of 'who is who' as autochthonous discourses occupied the political centre-stage. In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe proclaimed a *Third Chimurenga* that not only repudiated the policy of reconciliation but also enabled violent 're-conquest of settler colonialism' through forcible reclamation of land from whites to create a 'Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans' only (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2010).

While this chapter is not dealing with the theme of African conflicts directly, it is clear that the subject of identity formation and its politics conjures up images of identity-based outbursts mediated by racial, ethnic, class, gender, regional and generational divisions. The slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, African nationalism and pan-Africanism were all permeated by identity considerations of one form or another. During the slave trade, black races were victims of white races who used their labour to create wealth in the Americas and Europe. Imperialism and colonialism saw white races scrambling and partitioning the African continent among European powers galvanized by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Colonialism was a racial affair through and through, with white races ruling over black ones.

This means that even unequal socio-economic and political privileges that continue to mark-out white and black races within the African continent were built using racial profiling and discrimination. Asymmetric inter-group economic power relations in a country like South Africa were largely a creation of apartheid racial discourses. No wonder then that social identities feature at the centre and across precolonial, colonial and postcolonial African terrain as a tool open to mobilization or rallying the different groups around their socio-economic and political grievances. Colonialists and African nationalists have a fair share in the manipulation of social differences for their hegemonic projects.

Zeleza (2008) has linked African conflicts to the complex discursive constructions and conjunctures of Africa's political economies, social identities, and cultural ecologies as configured out of specific local, national, and regional historical experiences and patterns of insertion into and engagement with an ever-changing world system. On the other hand, as Dorman, Hammet and Nugent (2007:4) noted, 'It is arguably in the nature of nationalism to distinguish insiders from outsiders.' The politics of 'Othering' and creation of strangers generated the Rwandan genocide and fuels other conflicts across the continent as African identities continue to be defined and redefined for various purposes. These examples vindicate the argument that the development of the idea of Africa as it unfolded across various historical epochs ceaselessly generated conflicts and new crises.

Even within the decolonization projects that were meant to create independent nations and sovereign states in Africa, lay some autochthonous and nativist forces existing as hidden script that propped up parochial rather than broader pan-African identities. For instance, Parry (2004: 40) revealed that whenever intellectual considerations of the narratives of decolonization were taken, 'rhetorics in which nativism in one form or another are evident' was noticeable. But whenever these forces of nativism and xenophobia were noticed, scholars were quick to pull out the disciplining theoretical whip to dismiss these as catalogues of epistemological errors, mannish dissent and anti-racist racism. No one was bold enough to carefully interrogate of such articulations as reflecting the problematic politics that were inherent in the development of the idea of Africa itself and the construction of African identities.

Inevitably Africa is a continent that is ceaselessly seeking to negotiate itself above the Eurocentric egoisms of singularities that continue to inform conventional and often insensitive notions of identities imposed on it and its people by external agents, such as the 'dark continent' for instance. Nyamnjoh (2001: 25) noted that Africans continued to refuse to be defined by particular identity markers imposed on them from elsewhere, choosing instead to draw from the competing and different influences in their lives as individuals and communities. This is in line with the nature of identity as a relational concept that is always permeated through and through by imperatives of power and resistance, subjection and citizenship, action and reaction as well as naming and controlling.

The idea of Africa emerged within a complex terrain of naming, conquering and controlling of weaker parts of the world by powerful ones. African politics of identity construction is permeated by complex desires for freedom and self-

reconstitution after centuries of domination of the African continent and its people by the powerful nations of the North. Even identity politics that dominated and haunted the post-Cold War world were partly informed by popular struggles for material redistribution and justice, autonomy and desires for existential integrity and security in a context of collapsing and failing states and weakening regimes.

It is not surprising that as some African postcolonial states became weaker and others collapsed including Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic of Congo (DRC), identity politics became the dominant mode of mobilization, further fragmenting the already weak states and inflaming more conflicts. Contemporary postcolonial politics is dominated by such negative phenomena as xenophobia in South Africa, nativism in Ivory Coast and Zimbabwe, 'ethnic cleansing' in the DRC and the Sudan, and genocide in Rwanda. The idea of Africa and African identity is constantly reproduced within these conflict situations.

Mbembe (2006: 144) identified the dominant elements of current intellectual thinking on Africa as dominated by rethinking histories of freedom and modernities; the nature of liberal democratic order mediated by complex politics of shifting and contested citizenship and identity; how to ensure ethical conditions of human peaceful coexistence that is sensitive to politics of recognition and inclusion across the globe; and the questions of social justice in an unjust global economic, social, and political order. Politically explosive identities and the associated politics of difference, alterity, as well as resurgent discourses of nativism, xenophobia, and autochthony, continue to impinge on definitions of belonging, citizenship and broader politics of being African. But let us begin with how Europeans constructed global identities in general before focusing specifically on the making of African identities in particular.

The social construction of global human identities and spatialization of the world

Present-day continents and their current reduction into homes of various named identities is a product of operations of coloniality of power rooted in Western modernity. The foundational myths of social classification of human population were rooted in Darwinian social evolutionism and dualism within which Eurocentrism and racial ethnocentrism emerged. In this scheme of things, those people who ended up being called Europeans deployed the benefits of Western modernity to appropriate the course of human history and defined it as proceeding from state of nature as the point of departure and culminating in Western civilization (Quijano 2000: 551).

In this appropriated course of history, the Western world became the centre of the world. In the first place, Iberians conquered, named and colonized America that was dominated by different peoples such as the Aztecs, Mayas, Chimus, Aymaras, Incas, and Chibchas. Through colonization and naming, these people re-emerged with a single identity called Indians. In the second place, those peoples who were enslaved and were taken out of their homes bearing various ethnic names such as Ashanti and others were renamed as Negroes or blacks to distinguish them from Indians and Europeans (Quijano 2000: 551-552). In the third place, Western modernity and its coloniality created the African continent and Africans. During the same time of creating the Western identity of being white, Europeans and Americans emerged as superior beings compared to others. This is how Quijano summarized the processes:

> The first resultant from the history of colonial power had, in terms of colonial perception, two decisive implications. The first is obvious: peoples were dispossessed of their own and singular historical identities. The second is perhaps less obvious: their new racial identity, colonial and negative, involved the plundering of their places in the history of the cultural production of humanity. From then on, there were inferior races, capable only of producing inferior cultures. The new identity also involved their relocation in the historical time constituted with America first and with Europe later: from then on they were the past. […] At the other hand, America was the first modern and global geocultural identity. Europe was the second and was constituted as a consequence of America, not the inverse. The constitution of Europe as a new historic entity/identity was made possible, in the first place, through the free labour of American Indians, blacks, and mestizos […] It was on this foundation that a region was configured as the site of control of the Atlantic routes, which became in turn, and for this very reason, the decisive routes of world market. […] So Europe and America mutually produced themselves as the historical and the first two new geocultural identities of the modern world (Quijano 2000: 522).

Three discursive processes were at play that created Eurocentrism, namely, the articulation of human differences into dualisms of capital/pre-capital, Europe/ non-Europe, civilized/ primitive, modern underpinned by a linear conception of human history from state of nature to European society/traditional; the naturalization of the cultural differences between human groups by means of their codification with the idea of race; and the distorted-temporal relocation of all those differences by relocating non-Europeans in the past (Quijano 2000: 552-553). All these are core elements of the coloniality of power introduced in Chapter One. Nelson Maldonado-Torres has ascribed what he calls the

myth of continents as artificial creations of Western modernity. This is how he put it:

> In this sense it is possible to say that the 'myth of continents' is part of a larger racial myth in modernity formed in relation to imperial enterprises, in which continents denote not only space but also a well ordered hierarchy of customs, habits and potentials that are said to inhere in the people who live in them. Spaces thus become gendered and coloured, just as the forms of rationality, tastes, and capabilities of the peoples who occupy them (Maldonado-Torres 2006: 3).

What is clear is that the spatial, topological and cartographic set-up of the world today is nothing but a product of European coloniality of power (Lewis and Wigen 1997) as a continent, Africa emerged from this imperial scheme of things and African identities continued to be reconstructed since that time into barbarians, primitives, natives, blacks, Negroes, Bantu, Africans and other typologies across history and space.

The making of African identities

It is clear from the above analysis that the discursive formation of Africa is complex and has a chequered history. The name 'Africa' is an external label. Its roots are traceable to the Roman times where it was used with specific reference to North Africa before it was extended to the whole continent at the end of the first century before the current era. Zeleza (2006: 15) noted that the cartographic application was both gradual and contradictory as the idea of Africa became divorced from its original North African coding to be used with specific reference to Sub-Saharan Africa. Gayatri Spivak had this to say:

> *Africa*, a Roman name for what the Greeks called 'Libya,' itself perhaps a latinization of the name of the Berber tribe Aourigha (perhaps pronounced 'Afarika'), is a metonym that points to a greater indeterminacy: the mysteriousness of the space upon which we are born. *Africa* is only a time-bound naming; like all proper names it is a mark with an arbitrary connection to its referent, a catachresis. The earth as temporary dwelling has no foundational name (Spivak 1991: 170).

Inventions and ideas are always open to manipulation, re-constructions, representation and historical engineering. The idea of Africa has not been immune to these dialectics (Mudimbe 1988, 1994).

The processes of 'invention' and 'construction' of Africa left the definition of an African open to contestation and appropriation just like all other identities. Such processes as the slave trade, imperialism, and colonialism not only further complicated the picture but also actively played a role in the making of African identities. African nationalism and pan-Africanism that

emerged as anti-theses to imperialism and colonialism did not succeed in settling the question of who was an African. No wonder then that the question of who an African is has come to engage the attention not only scholars but also politicians in postcolonial Africa.

The safest way to define Africa is as a reality as well as a construct 'whose boundaries—geographical, historical, cultural, epistemological and representational—have shifted according to the prevailing conceptions and configurations of global racial identities and power, and African nationalism, including, Pan-Africanism' (Zeleza 2006: 15). Among key historical processes that contributed to the current identity complexion of Africa is the slave trade. Neocosmos (2008) argued that the slave trade was perhaps one of the greatest forced migrations in history that had, and continues to have, profound effects on the development of the African continent's identity complexion and meaning of Africanness. The slave trade not only led to the formation of an African Diaspora in the Americas and Caribbean but also to the formation of whole states composed of Africans transposed to other parts of the world such as Haiti and Jamaica.

The formation of African Diasporas led to the popularization of the name Africa and the increasing racialization of African identity (Zeleza 2006: 15). With this reality, the definition of an African became even more complex. Jean-Francois Bayart (2000) wrote about miscegenation (racial mixing (miscegenation) that unfolded in tandem with the unfolding of trans-Atlantic commerce leading to the production of assimilado (mixed race) elites on the Angolan and Mozambican region as one of the legacies of the slave trade.

External definition of Africa is not only attributed to white people. Rather the slave trade contributed to the creation of a large black Diaspora and these enslaved people began to think of themselves as Africans. The term 'African' was used interchangeably with the name 'Ethiopian' that was used mainly by those black people who had converted to Christianity. As Cooper (2002: 12) argued, the term Ethiopian 'evoked Biblical histories of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. "Ethiopia" or "Africa" marked their place in a universal history.' He also added that: 'The point is that "Africa" emerged as a Diaspora asserted its place in the world' (Cooper 2002: 12).

At another level, a combination of mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and other processes introduced whites, Indians and foreign Diasporas such as Lebanese as well as other people into the African continent from as far back as before the fifteenth century. Colonialism introduced race as a major factor in the definition of belonging and citizenship in Africa. Mamdani (1996) argued

that colonialism produced colonial states that were bifurcated into citizens and subjects. What emerged out of the encounters between indigenous Africans and the colonizing whites was a complicated citizenship in which the white settlers tried to exclude the natives from full belonging. Mamdani (2001a) described this problem as 'the settler-native' question that has continued to haunt countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe that contained large populations of white settlers. He further argued that:

> In the context of a former settler colony, a single citizenship for settlers and natives can only be the result of an overall metamorphosis whereby erstwhile colonizers and colonized are politically reborn as equal members of a single political community. The word reconciliation cannot capture this metamorphosis…This is about establishing, for the first time, a political order based on consent and not conquest. It is about establishing a political community of equal and consenting citizens (Mamdani 2001a: 66).

Mamdani's intervention addressed three key questions in African studies. The first is the structure of political power inherited from the colonial state that did not facilitate easy construction of a genuinely postcolonial African nation-state. The second is the place of local African ethnic powers rooted in precolonial histories but also invented by colonialism within the postcolonial state that continued to function as a source of identity fragmentation. The third is how African postcolonial states failed to transcend ethnic differences that sat uneasily with notions of civic conceptions of belonging and citizenship. But Mamdani's main point is that the 'native question' preoccupied and determined the form of rule which shaped colonial experience and that postcolonial African governments are finding it hard to transcend this tradition (Mamdani 1996).

This pre-occupation with the 'native question' made the African state different from the European nation-state. Indirect rule as a key colonial system of administration impinged on identity formation to the extent that the postcolonial state had the task of de-racializing civil society, de-tribalizing native authority and developing the economy in the context of unequal international relations (Mamdani 1996: 287). But Pal Ahluwalia (2001: 104-5) criticized Mamdani for constructing a new set of binaries of the citizen and subject while he set out to demystify others. This criticism, however, does not diminish the force of Mamdani's argument on the pertinent issues of identity construction and power articulation in Africa.

Mamdani's analysis of colonial forms of governance and how they impinged on African identities is amplified by other scholars like Cooper (2002) who

engaged the issue of re-tribalization of Africa as colonialists abandoned the rhetoric of 'civilizing mission'. On the other hand, African nationalism as a deeply interpellated phenomenon had no capacity to solve the 'settler-native' question. Rather it turned the scale upside down, putting the 'native' where the settler was and struggling to pull the settler down to where the native was. Kuan- Hsing Chen (1998: 14) captured the explanation for this limit of nationalism well by arguing that:

> Shaped by the immanent logic of colonialism, Third World nationalism could not escape from reproducing racial and ethnic discrimination; a price to be paid by the colonizer as well as the colonized selves.

While colonial officials initially presented colonialism as a civilizing mission aimed at remaking Africans in the image of Europeans, Cooper (2002: 18) argues that by the 1920s colonial governments had realized the cost of such ventures and the limits of colonial power to govern directly using white personnel. Colonial polices shifted from the rhetoric of 'civilizing' Africans into attempts to invent African tradition. As Cooper (2002: 18) explains it, the aim was to 'conserve African societies in a colonizer's image of sanitized tradition, slowly and selectively being led towards evolution, while the empire profited from peasants' crop production or the output of mines and settler farms'. It was during this period that the idea of Africans as tribes that were static and enveloped in tradition gained importance. Those Africans that had imbibed Christianity and received western education became identified as troublesome 'detribalized natives' who were lost from their roots and traditions.

Another important contour in the debates on the identity of Africa and Africans is one that tries to reduce African identity to the 'phenotype'. As Neocosmos argued , in the attempts to define Africa at such institutions as the World Bank and even at the United Nations, there is the tendency to see North Africa more as part of the Middle East rather than Africa. In this case, Africa is defined as 'Black Sub-Saharan Africa' that is largely inhabited by Bantu-speaking peoples (Neocosmos 2008: 7). The other colonially-produced layer of identity in Africa is that which stressed the division of Africans into Francophone and Anglophone identities.

To Mbembe, African identities were a product of the combination of the 'the elsewhere' and 'the here' (Eurozine www.eurozine.com). This is so because even before the age of colonialism, Africa was already open to external influences that further complicated its identity complexion. Bayart (2000: 217) has successfully challenged the Hegelian idea of an African continent

that is 'cut off from all contacts with the rest of the world […] removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of the night'. Bayart argued that if the history of Africa is understood from the perspective of *longue durées*, the continent was never isolated from the rest of the world particularly Europe, Asia and the Americas.

This was evidenced by the antiquity of Christianity in Ethiopia, the spread of Islam on the coasts, the establishment of Austronesia colonies in Madagascar, regular trade with China, India, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. Due to these connections, the eastern and southern parts of Africa were integrated for centuries into the pre-modern economic systems of the so-called the Orient. According to Bayart (2000: 218) even the Sahara Desert was never an 'ocean of sand and desolation' that demarcated and enclosed Sub-Saharan Africa from external influences.

A combination of all the processes outlined above reinforces Kwame Appiah's (1992) argument that Africa is not a primordial fixture but an invented reality. But while it is true that Africans were not made of the same cultural clay, they have experienced some common historical processes that largely justify their claim of a common identity. But the contingency of African identities should not be used to deny that we today have an identity called African. There is abundant evidence that numerous peoples and societies have carved out a place of their own across the African continent and in the process created their own 'little Africas, each laying their bricks across the huge and intricate cartographic, cognitive, and cultural construct, known as "Africa"' (Zeleza (2006: 18).

The flows of commodities, capital, ideas, and people have coalesced to create an African identity. Even the tragedies that have befallen the continent, including conflicts and underdevelopment, have indirectly provoked a consciousness of being African. In short, even negative interpretations of Africa that created a picture of Africa as 'possessing things and attributes' never 'properly part of human nature', contribute to the consciousness of being African (Mbembe 2001: 1). Then positive works of pan-Africanists informed by discourses of African Renaissance and the languages unity used at meetings at the African Union and Pan-African Parliament consistently build the idea of a pan-African identity.

African nationalism and the making of Africans

African nationalism was the laboratory within which African identities were created. The process of creating a common African identity had to contend

with the historical realities on the ground of trying to homogenize ethnic, racial and religious differences. Indeed, due to the complex historical processes dating as far back as the 'voyages of discovery', the slave trade and beyond which coalesced to produce what we now call Africa and African identities, these became nothing but 'states of being and of becoming' (Zeleza 2006: 19). Like all identities, being African became open to claims by various peoples residing in and outside the continent.

Chipkin (2007: 2) argued that Africans across the continent 'emerged primarily in and through the process of nationalist resistance to colonialism'. This is indeed a logical argument since nationalism was and is basically a process of making people-as-nation and nation-as-state (nation-building and state-building) through homogenization of differences (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). African nationalism was, therefore, a grand project and a process of making African citizens out of colonial subjects. But earlier processes such as mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and pan-Africanism also contributed to the making of African identities of particular kinds.

But born out of a continent whose identity has remained hard to define, African nationalism was never a straightforward human affair. Its progenitor—Pan Africanism was never a singular phenomenon. Pan-Africanism fell into six versions reflective of the complexities of historical experiences of the African people. These versions were Trans-Atlantic, Black Atlantic, continental, sub-Saharan, Pan-Arab, and Global. Zeleza (2003) summarized the core imaginations in each of the six Pan-Africanisms as follows: proponents of trans-Atlantic version imagined a pan-African world stretching from the continent right into the Diaspora in the Americas; the Black Atlantic version pre-occupied itself with African Diaspora community in the Americas and Europe excluding continental Africans; the continental version was primarily focused on the unification of continental Africa; sub-Saharan and Pan-Arab versions restricted themselves to the peoples of the continent north and south of the Sahara, with Pan-Arabism extending into western Asia and the Middle-East. The global version sought to reclaim African peoples dispersed to all corners of the world into one identity.

But it was continental Pan-Africanism that became popular in Africa at the end of the Second World War. Its main achievement was the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Continental Pan-Africanism accepted the cartographic realities imposed by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 that resulted in the partition of Africa into various colonial states and protectorates. But again there was no consensus among African

leaders on how to proceed concretely to create a union of African states. The leaders were pitched into two broad camps, namely, the Casablanca and the Monrovia groups. Led by Ghana under the charismatic Kwame Nkrumah, the Casablanca block wanted immediate formation of the United States of Africa. The Monrovia group led by Nigeria, opted for the gradualist approach towards integration of the African continent into a single government (Adejumobi and Olukoshi 2008: 3-19).

African nationalism had an ambiguous relationship with Pan-Africanism. Sometimes it reinforced it and at other times subverted it due to issues of sovereignty. This also shows that African nationalism was a very complicated socio-political phenomenon on its own. It was mediated by complex antinomies of black liberation thought and propelled and also constrained by ideological conundrums (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008: 53-86). It was fuelled by a complex combination of ambiguous local struggles, diverse micro- and macro-histories and sociologies. Emerging within a colonial environment, it was already deeply interpellated by the immanent logic of colonialism including its racist and ethnic undertones, but was not completely disconnected from the fading precolonial past, myths, spiritualities and memories.

African nationalism was also shaped from 'above', meaning its enunciations remained open to continental and global ideologies, as they were seen to fit and advance local agendas. It is within this context that nationalism incorporated such external and Diaspora ideologies as Garveyism, Negritude, Marxism, Ethiopianism, Christianity, Pan-Africanism, Leninism, Maoism, Republicanism and liberalism—mixing these with indigenous resources of entitlement to land for instance (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b).

In short, African nationalism was basically a particular form of imagination of freedom. Decolonization was a popular term to define this imagined freedom. Five fundamental questions pre-occupied African nationalists as potential and actual nation-and state-builders: (i) How to forge national consciousness out of a multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups enclosed within the colonial state boundaries; (ii) How to fashion a suitable model of governance relevant to societies emerging from colonialism; (iii) What models of economic development were relevant for promotion of rapid economic growth to extricate postcolonial societies from underdevelopment; (iv) What role was the independent African postcolonial state to play in the economy and society; (v) How might the new African political leaders promote popular democracy and mass justice that was denied by colonialism.

No African leader had clear answers to these complex questions. All na-

tionalists embarked on trial and error backed by various grand theories of re-making the African identity. One of the projects of cultural and identity reconstruction was known as Negritude. Negritude first developed among African and Caribbean artist-intellectuals and emerged in Paris in the early 1930s (Wilder 2009: 101-140). It was a complex reaction to the racism and alienation that was cloaked under the French colonial policy of assimilation. Its objective was to reverse the representations ascribed to the Africans, turning those negative identities into positive images. Leopold Sedar Senghor explained it this way:

> In what circumstances did Aime Cesaire and I launch the word negritude between 1933 and 1935? At that time, along with several other black students we were plunged into a panic-stricken despair. The horizon was blocked. No reform was in sight and the colonizers were justifying our political and economic dependence by the theory of the *tabula rasa*…In order to establish an effective revolution, our revolution, we had first to divest ourselves of our borrowed attire—that of assimilation—and assert our being; that is to say our negritude (cited in Ahluwalia 2003: 32).

Indeed, such African initiatives in identity-making such as Pan-Africanism, Negritude, Consciencism, *Ubuntu* (African Humanism), and African Personality up to African Renaissance cannot make sense outside the broader African search for self-definition and identity reconstruction.

At least five imaginations of community, citizenship, belonging and coexistence are discernible from the history of freedom and modernity in Africa. Zeleza (2006: 14) identified these as: the nativist, the liberal, the popular democratic, the theocratic, and the transnational prescriptive models. The nativist imagination of African freedom has elicited widespread condemnation for being backward-looking, navel-gazing and founded on false metaphysics of difference and alterity (Mbembe 2002: 629). It is feared as the crucible of reverse racism and the nursery for xenophobia and even genocide. At the centre of the debates is the long-standing question of who is an African which sounds very clear but is very hard to answer in countries like South Africa where white races like Afrikaners were also claiming African identity, to the extent that during the heydays of apartheid, Afrikaners had managed to claim nativity and indigeneity. Yet they denied black people the collective term Africans and pushed them into Bantustans where they were identified in ethnic/tribal terms.

Who then is an African?

The question of who an African is still needs to be confronted head-on even within the midst of complex politics of xenophobia and nativism currently

operational in Africa and undermining pan-African efforts. Ali Mazrui (2009) classifies Africans into two categories: '*Africans of the blood*' and '*Africans of the soil*' (emphasis in the original source). He went further to say:

> Africans of the blood are defined by racial and genealogical terms. They are identified with the black race. Africans of the soil, on the other hand, are defined in geographical terms. They are identified with the African continent in nationality and ancestral location (Mazrui 2009: xi).

Among Africans of the soil, Mazrui included the light complexioned Libyans, Egyptians and Tunisians whose genealogical roots are traceable to somewhere else. Also, Diaspora Africans located in such places as Jamaica, Haiti, Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States of America, are defined by Mazrui as Africans of the soil but not of the blood. Whites located in Africa like Afrikaners and such other racial minorities as Arabs (Afrabians) to use Mazrui's term, Lebanese, Helens, Indians and others were African of the soil too (Mazrui 2009: xi-xv). The intervention by Mazrui is one way of dealing with the question of who an African is. He concluded that: 'Africans of the soil and Africans of the blood were converging into newer and more comprehensive identities' (Mazrui 2009: xv). The strength of Mazrui's intervention on this controversial and sensitive issue is that he adopts a non-xenophobic but historical definition of African-ness.

But there are other classificatory and definitional schemes that have been deployed to isolate one as an African, namely; racial, geographical/territorial, and consciousness/commitment to Africa (Adibe 2009: 16). The racial definition is found wanting in that it does not cater for those who were not black just as it wrongly assumed that all black people were Africans. The geographical-territorial definition simplistically categorizes all those born in the continent of Africa as Africans irrespective of their colour and other external and consciousness attributes. Its key weakness is that it excluded those Africans living in the Diaspora who define themselves as Africans.

The definition of African-ness through the consciousness of being African is one that was used by former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in his famous 'I am an African' speech of 1996. It is a pragmatic and politically loaded one. But its weakness is that it is too fluid to the extent of embracing 'anyone expressing any sort of interest in African affairs' (Adibe 2009: 22). Kwesi Kwaa Prah is also very critical of the definition of the African as anyone and anybody 'committed to Africa'. He sees it as a South African version of the definition of 'African-ness' that is specific to the context of a former apartheid society (Prah 2009: 57-60. His conclusion is that:

> It is important to remember that, the African identity (like all identities) is not a closed phenomenon cast in stone. It is a changing condition with evolving terms and conditions of reference. What remains the touchstone in this evolutionary process is that, the emerging understanding of Africanness must be emancipatory for Africans and the rest of humanity (Prah 2009: 60).

One attempt to describe Africanness in plural terms is offered by Eno and Eno (2009: 63) who tried to synthesize the complex discourses of African identity by coming up with six different typologies of Africanness. These are:

- *Africanness of accident of geography*; This refers to people who happene to find themselves in Africa without wish to be there; they are individuals who find themselves living in the continent by virtue of circumstances beyond their control.

- *Africanness by birth*; This refers to Someone who is born in Africa regardless of his/her race or ethnic group, or even political ideology or cultural doctrine.

- *Africanness by settlership*; This refers to citizenship conferred on settlers by the colonial regimes. Usually, the settlers first arrived as prospectors, then the colonial governments expropriated land for them from the African indigenes. Unlike others who came to Africa to see what prospects lay in the virgin continent, these settlers and decided to make Africa their home even after independence, and either continue to exploit African land and manpower or sell 'their' land and property to other Africans before venturing into other activities.

- *Africanness by culture or acculturation;* This refers to someone who may not be an African by ethnicity but who has lived in the continent long enough to have adopted the way of life, culture and tradition of the average African.

- *Africanness by ideology*: Someone who may or may not be an African by ethnicity background, but whose shares African thought, values, ideology and other sentiments and has the intuitive desire to be part of the African world.

- *Africanness by pretension or circumstantial Africanness*, this group comprises individuals or societies who use African identity as and when it suits them for their specific purposes; in other words, they are circumstantial Africans. Members of this group are not pleased to be identified with Negritud or blackness; they do not share, values, ideology, culture, ethnicity or any other quality except the sheer 'the accident' of existing on the continent.

While these typologies are open to further debate, they leave us with a clear message that African identity is complex, multi-layered and open to different interpretations. Both the idea of Africa and African identities are best understood as states of being and becoming that are better studied as open-ended and as developing. What is disturbing however is the tendency of this identity politics to degenerate into various phobias that run counter to the broader pan-African philosophy of unity.

Autochthonous discourses and Afro-phobias

The question of who is an African pre-occupied early African thinkers such as Edward Blyden who coined the term 'African personality' in the 1880s and who believed that Africans would forge modern, liberated and confident personalities to reclaim their rightful place in the world once they emerged from the uneasy mixture of traditional, Western and Islamic values and traditions, (Bly- den 1967). Since then the question has continued to pre-occupy the minds of academics and politicians. This is indicated by the emergence of new literature on social identities such as Ivor Chipkin (2007); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009); John and Jean Comaroff (2009), Peter Geshiere (2009), Jideofor Adibe (2009) and many others that are focused on the theme of African identities and their latest articulations in narrow terms.

This new literature explores a range of intriguing, and absurd phenomena within the broad history of African identity that is refusing to easily succumb to modernization and the current global discourses of globalization, cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism. What emerges poignantly is that humanity in general and Africans in particular, are caught up in deepening frictions between the universal and the local, with more and more people asserting their identities in local, autochthonous, nativist and even xenophobic ways. Ngugi wa Thiong'o describes the situation rather well. His words:

> The pan-Africanism that envisaged the idea of wholeness was gradually cut down to the size of a continent, then a nation, a region, an ethnos, a clan, and even a village in some instances. […] But pan-Africanism has not outlived its mission. Seen as an economic, political, cultural, and psychological re-membering vision, it should continue to guide remembering practices (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009: 61).

Mamdani (2001b; 2009) has again taken the lead in making sense of identity-based forms of violence including genocides in Rwanda and Darfur. In his examination of the factors that contributed to the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda in 1994, he tracked how colonialism drilled into the natives and settlers Tutsi and Hutu identities by emphasizing their differences and even

going as far as to concretize them by issuing identity cards along this identity/ ethnic fault lines. According to Mamdani, the Belgian colonialists turned Hutu and Tutsi into racial identities, with the Hutu reconstructed as indigenous and the Tutsi as aliens. They also created a segregated school system that amplified the reconstructed Hutu-Tutsi racial distinctions. They went further to exclude the Hutu from priesthood and local government and, in the process, built a historic grievance among the excluded and marginalized communities (Mamdani 2001b).

The consequences of the colonial-crafted, racialized citizenship caused animosity not only between the colonialists and the Hutu-Tutsi, but also between the Hutu and Tutsi. Hutu nationalism became opposed to both colonialism and Tutsi domination, culminating in the revolution of 1959 where the majority Hutu overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and sent thousands of Tutsi into exile. This reinforced the perception of Tutsi as aliens. When the Tutsi tried to come back in 1990 through military invasion, a can of worms broke open as the Hutu mobilized to eliminate the Tutsi 'race'. The overall result was a deadly genocide that left the world puzzled. Mamdani also located the violence in Darfur within colonial history:

> We shall see that the violence in Darfur was driven by two issues: one local, the other national. The local grievance focused on land and had a double background; its deep background was a colonial legacy of parcelling Darfur between tribes, with some given homelands and others not; its immediate background was a four-decades-long process of drought and desertification that exacerbated the conflict between tribes with land and those without. The national context was a rebellion that brought the state into an ongoing civil (tribal) war (Mamdani 2009: 4).

The degeneration of African identities into contending and violent factions within a single state continues to be a big challenge today. Frantz Fanon (1968) predicted that the decolonization project predicated on an impoverished African nationalism that was permeated by what he termed 'pitfalls of national consciousness' was going to fail to facilitate a re-birth of African humanity free from the event of colonialism and its racial bigotry. To Fanon, such phenomena as nativism and xenophobia were an inevitable product of pitfalls of national consciousness reflective of native bourgeois intellectual laziness. The lazy native bourgeoisie eventually spearheaded the liberation struggle. The consequences were what Fanon termed 'repetition without difference'. This repetition without difference unfolds from nationalism to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism and then to racism and xenophobia (Fanon 1968). This metamorphosis and mutation of African nationalism is a departure from

the civic and pluralist imaginations of the African national project founded on the earlier nationalist slogan of 'diverse people unite'.

But as nationalism assumed the new form of postcolonial state ideology, the terms of citizenship changed as chauvinism and racism were mobilized by the triumphant African bourgeoisie towards formulation of 'bourgeoisie nationalism' as opposed to 'popular-democratic nationalism' (Neocosmos 2006). Postcolonial nativism and xenophobia began with the 'native bourgeoisie' violently attacking colonial personalities as constituting an insult to 'our dignity as a nation'. These attacks would be justified as part of furthering the cause of decolonization, Africanization and nationalization processes. While the 'native bourgeoisie' attacked the 'white bourgeoisie', the workers would start a 'fight against non-national Africans'. Fanon concluded that:

> From nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism. These foreigners are called on to leave; their shops are burned, their street stalls are wrecked, and in fact the government […] commands them to go, thus giving their nationals satisfaction (Fanon 1968: 122).

The Zimbabwean 'nativist revolution' known as the Third Chimurenga falls neatly within the Fanonian explanation. It witnessed the government supporting and assisting war veterans and peasants to invade white-owned commercial farms at the beginning of 2000. The 'native bourgeoisie' in ZANU-PF declared that 'Zimbabwe is for Zimbabweans' and that as 'sons and daughters of the soil', they were entitled to land and mines of Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007; 2009). The same logic lay behind Idi Amin's expulsion of the Asians in Uganda in 1972 that was justified on the ground of a combination of fulfilling mass justice that was denied by colonialism and on the basis of indignity.

Xenophobic violence that broke out in South Africa in May 2008 is explained by Neocosmos (2006) as another example of degeneration of nationalism into nativism and xenophobia, albeit with some contextual variations. Neocosmos' interpretation of xenophobia is informed by Fanonian thought. To him, nativism and xenophobia were founded on a politics of nationalism predicated on and stressing indignity as the central imperative of citizenship. Neocosmos defined xenophobia as a political discourse and practise lodged within particular ideologies and consciousness that has arisen in post-apartheid South Africa permeated by a politics of fear prevalent in both state and society. It has three contours: a state discourse of xenophobia; a discourse of South African exceptionalism; and a conception of citizenship founded exclusively on indignity (Neocosmos 2008: 587).

The roots of xenophobia in South Africa lay in official national discourse of a democratic country with a robust economy that was being invaded by illegal immigrants who were criminals, who constituted a threat to national stability, and who put pressure on social services and made the government to fail to deal effectively with unemployment and housing shortage (Neocosmos 2008). The second strand of argument emphasizes the role of the discourse of South African exceptionalism, i.e., an industrialized, democratic and economically performing nation that was not part of the African continent invaded by poor people from Africa. The third string of argument explains how indignity has come to be used as the only way to define citizenship and claim entitlement to resources, jobs and other services. Birth place and phenotype thus become factors in defining citizenship (Neocosmos 2008).

Neocosmos is also very critical of the liberalism-based human rights discourse that produced passive citizenship and continuously reinforced notions of victimhood among the black constituencies as well as a sense of primal entitlements to resources. He sees xenophobia as also rooted in 'agency-less' people who competed to appeal to the state. His conclusion is that:

> Xenophobia and the authoritarianism of which it is but an example, are a product of liberalism, liberal democracy and Human Rights Discourse. It is not an irrational aberration brought from outside the liberal realm […] rather it is made possible/enabled by liberalism itself […] The problem is that an emancipatory politics has disappeared from post-apartheid society in favour of appeals to the state (Neocosmos 2006: 133).

What must be said is that African nationalism was itself a terrain of retribalization of identities and this compromised its ability to create stable postcolonial national identities. Secondly, nationalism suffered greatly from interpellation by the immanent logic of colonialism and apartheid, making it reproduce racism and ethnicity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). For South Africa, Neocosmos (2006) argued that apartheid colonialism created what he described as 'foreign natives' and 'native foreigners' through such projects as the creation of Bantustans. Bantustan mentality, for instance, explains the failure by some South Africans to know that people of Shangani and Venda origins were part of South Africa.

Mbembe (2002) provided a philosophically informed explanation of nativism and xenophobia. In the first place, he saw nativism as nothing but a politics of lamentation of loss of African purity, a form of culturalism pre-occupied with the question of identity and authenticity, inspired by 'a so-called revolutionary politics which seek to break away from imperialism

and dependence' (Mbembe 2002: 629). Nativism was a twin sister of Afro-radicalism—and both were 'discourses of self' and 'projects of self-regeneration, self-knowledge, and self-rule'.' Mbembe wrote that:

> A more significant development has been an emerging junction between the old anti-imperialist thematics—'revolution,' 'anticolonialism'—and the nativist theses. Fragments of these imaginaries are now combining to oppose globalization, to relaunch the metaphysics of difference, to reenchant tradition, and to revive the utopian vision of an Africanity that is coterminous with blackness (Mbembe 2002: 263-264).

These discourses constituted a crucible within which the argument of autochthony was born with its perception that 'each spatio-racial formation has its own culture, its own historicity, its own way of being, and its own relationship with the future and with the past' (Mbembe 2002: 264).

A more recent study of xenophobia in South Africa that is propelled through the ideology of M*akwerekwere* (see Matsinhe 2011) reveals more clearly what is at stake. Matsinhe saw Africa as suffering from 'fear of itself' that is 'exemplified by the loathing of black foreign nationals in south Africa.' His key question is framed in terms of: 'How did victims of apartheid become victimizers with such violent gushing of ire almost exclusively against Africans?' (Matsinhe 2011: 295-296). His explanation based on empirical research done in South Africa is that xenophobia in South Africa, is located within complex dynamics of colonial group relations constructed by apartheid that built a collective Afrophobic self-contempt among Africans as a result of painful 'socio-emotional imprints of apartheid power asymmetries that produced a colonised self among blacks' (Matsinhe 2011: 299). He concludes thus:

> In the context of South African history the violent aversion towards African foreign nationals in South Africa can best be described as Afrophobia. The ideology of Makwerekwere seeks to make visible the invisible object of fear in order to eliminate it. The roots of this ideology "must be sought in the psychological realm of ego-weak characters who construct their identity by denigrating others […] [in need of] scapegoats to externalize what cannot be sublimated.' The ideology of Makwerekwere externalizes internal repression (Matsinhe 2011: 310).

On the other hand, Dunn (2009: 115) dismissed autochthonous politics as functioning as a trope, without any substance of its own, within the process of constituting political identities, which revolved round questions of citizenship and the concept of citizenship as the bearer of rights. But the ghost of xenophobia continues to haunt many postcolonial societies such as Ivory Coast where the Ivorian crisis that began in September 2002 with

its Ivoirian ultra nationalism at its centre. There was some amalgamation of anticolonial and autochthonous discourses in Ivory Coast with those peddling autochthonous politics not only expressing anti-foreign elements but also railing against the presence of French forces as a reminder of continuation of colonial tutelage (Marshal-Fratani 2007: 31). Richard Banegas (2006: 1) argued that since September 2002, 'Cote d'Ivoire has been floundering in a poisonous morass of identity politics.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe's *Third Chimurenga* (third liberation war for black/native economic empowerment) was also punctuated by some xenophobic politics, anti-colonial trope and pan-African rhetoric, making it very hard to classify as a form of nationalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a; 2009b). Like the Young Patriots in Cote d'Ivoire who christened their struggles as the second national liberation, the *Third Chimurenga* was articulated as 'conquest of conquest' whereby African sovereignty was prevailing over white settler colonialism ushering in new economic independence. But the *Third Chimurenga* had some positive aspects, the most important of which was its distributive agenda that witnessed land that was monopolized by white settlers being given back to the African people who were dispossessed of their land by settler colonialism (Moyo and Yeros 2007). (The case study of Zimbabwe is discussed further of chapter seven of this book). At its centre were rival patriotisms competing over redefinition of the contours of political community as well as the content and modes of citizenship. Banegas (2006: 2) correctly described the violence that accompanied the autochthonous struggle in Cote d' Ivoire as 'a war of identification, with deep historical roots.'

Cote d'Ivoire has since 1960 exercised a much compromised sovereignty as France maintained suzerainty over its ex-colony, including placing a permanent French garrison in Abidjan. This colonial presence provoked 'Operation Dignity' that resisted continued French presence. The second strand was the anti-foreign nationals who were not purely Ivoirians and had come to the country as migrants to work on plantations. Thus Cote d'Ivoire provides yet another case study of degeneration of plural and civic nationalism into nativism and xenophobia. For Zimbabwe, the nationalism that had emerged in the 1960s, proclaiming civic and liberal ideals founded on 'one man, one vote' and projecting the policy of reconciliation in the early 1980s, quickly degenerated into Afro-radicalism, nativism and xenophobia at the beginning of 2000 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a).

Conclusion

What is clear from this chapter is that the idea of Africa and the issue of African identities can be safely approached as part and parcel of complex and dynamic historical process mediated by equally complex spatial, agential, structural and contingent factors that have continuously changed since the fifteenth century. This chapter, however, managed to track historically the complex processes that combined and coalesced in the formation of what is today termed Africa and African identity. The way the African continent emerged as an idea as well as a reality impinged on the complexion of African identity.

Pan-Africanism and nationalism, as the two major laboratories within which African identity was constructed, became dominated by various experiments—some inspired by Liberalism, Africanism, Christianity, Marxism, Republicanism, Nativism and even precolonial African religion and communalistic ideologies. What exist as African identity or identities are products of complex histories of domination, resistance, complicity, creolization, and mimicry—all mediated by various vectors of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, region and generation.

The process of unifying Africans into a common community to pursue common ideological, economic and political ends has been ceaseless. What is disturbing is that the pluralistic and civic nationalist traditions of the 1950s and 1960s had been increasingly degenerating into nativism, xenophobia and, in extreme cases, into genocides. The roots of these negative aspects are traceable to the ontology of nationalism itself as an identity phenomenon seeking to create a 'nationalist' state as a successor to the colonial state. The colonial state on which the postcolonial one is based was deeply racist and xenophobic. African nationalism, in principle, sought to represent what was considered authentic national subjects and it inevitably proceeded through exclusion of those considered outsiders. It is in the centre of complex economic, social and political histories of the making of Africa a continent and Africans a people that the roots of nativism, xenophobia and other phobias are to be found.

Throughout the nationalist struggle there was no agreement among nationalists as to who constituted the subject and object of liberation. The subjects of liberation were vaguely and variously defined as Africans, the oppressed, peasants or workers. The issue of nativity was central in the debates on inclusion and exclusion, though some nationalist organizations like the African National Congress (ANC) evolved an all-encompassing definition of citizenship based on the slogan 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it'. But its splinter group, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) vehemently opposed

this fluid definition of belonging, preferring the Garveyist slogan of 'Africa for Africans' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009c).

What has worsened the degeneration of African nationalism into nativism and xenophobia is the globalization process that provokes uncertainties. Deepening poverty and diminishing resources have heightened struggles over resources and also increased reliance of the poor on the state. The liberal ideology of rights has not helped to prevent the flourishing of autochthonous, nativist and xenophobic politics of entitlement. Unless Africans re-launch African national projects that are not antagonistic to pan-Africanism and that form the basis for a United States of Africa, the phobias will remain to haunt the continent.