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The Murky Present and the Mysterious Future

We have been thrown into a time in which everything is provisional. New technologies alter our lives daily. The traditions of the past cannot be retrieved. At the same time we have little idea of what the future will bring. We are forced to live as if we were free.

(John Gray 2004: 110)

Introduction

What runs through this concluding chapter is the complex theme of phenomenology of human uncertainty. The question of human uncertainty in this present century is obvious even to historians who are generally comfortable with engagement of human pasts rather than the murky present and the mysterious future. Becker (1994: xii-xiv) explained 'phenomenology of uncertainty' as being characterised by appearances of convergence and intersection of epochs resulting in instabilities and doubts about the adequacies of the existing normative order of life, lack of confidence in existing worldviews, fragmentation of identities, rupturing of known values of sociality and civility, and visible signs of emptiness of notions of the nation-state. This uncertainty engenders a new search for certainty and alternative forms of organization of human life beyond Westphalian ideas that put the nation-state at the centre of human life.

Wole Soyinka in his 2004 BBC Radio 4 Reith Lectures, spoke on one aspect of human uncertainty which he called the 'climate of fear'. His words:

A few decades ago the existence of collective fear had an immediate identifiable face—the nuclear bomb. While that source is not totally absent today, one can claim that we have moved beyond the fear of the bomb. A nuclear menace is also implicated in the current climate of fear, but the atom bomb is only another weapon in its arsenal [...] What terrifies the world, however, is no longer the possibility of over-muscled states unleashing on the world the ultimate scenario—the *Mutual Assured Destruction* (MAD) that once, paradoxically, also served as its own mutually restraining mechanism. Today the fear is one of furtive, invisible power, the power of the quasi-state, that entity that lays no claim to any physical boundaries, flies no national flag, is unlisted in any international associations, and is in every bit as mad as the MAD gospel of annihilation that was so calmly enunciated by superpowers (Soyinka 2004: 8-9).

Soyinka was meditating on global terrorism as a source of global uncertainty and insecurity which was personified by Osama Bin Laden who was killed by the United States military forces in Pakistan on the Easter eve of 2011. The human race is also facing the threat of HIV&AIDS which continues to ravage in Africa partly because antiretroviral treatment is scarce and unaffordable for the poor communities affected. The uncertainty that has engulfed the world has shaken the foundations of the strong post-Cold War neoliberal humanism that was even eclipsing well-known religious eschatologies of the twentieth century, be they of Islamic or Christian motif. What is at stake and in crisis is the ides of progress. Progress is that strong human belief in people's agency to free themselves from any kind of external limits and constraints to their lives.

Uncertainty has also manifested itself in discourses of development studies. The intellectual uncertainty and the crisis of belief in progress were traced to the 1990s. It was openly encapsulated in various versions of postmodern thinking and the rise of the notions of the risk society. The idea of a risk society was introduced by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck in 1986, capturing a developing feeling that it was useless to look into the future and to plan ahead because of unpredictable uncertainties (Beck 1994). This thinking came on the heels of development pessimism of the 1980s informed by the notions of the unbridgeable gap between the poor and rich countries that continued to widen since 1945. Wolfgang Sachs (1992:1) threw in the towel on development and proposed that: 'It is time to dismantle this mental structure.'

Uncertainty about development was felt more strongly in the 'postcolonial neocolonized world' that is discussed in this book where serious economic development has been elusive since the 1970s. The miscarriage of the decolonization project that became manifest in the late 1960s and early 1970s

opened the doors for uncertainty to reign within Africa. But the uncertainty has always coexisted with both pessimism and optimism. Nevertheless, scholars like Lopes (2010) have remained very optimistic of the economic future of Africa. Lopes argued that the African postcolonial nation-states were the youngest in the world and have strong potential to achieve economic development and claim the 21st century.

Among the positive signs of Africa's economic potential, Lopes (2010) cited the example of South Africa that is debt-free, a rare occurrence in Africa. Secondly, he cited the case of emerging powers such as Brazil, India and China that are increasingly investing on the African continent, with China becoming the biggest investor. Thirdly, he cited the growth of South-South relations that is poised to eclipse the previous exploitative South-North relations dominated by donor-recipient engagement that failed to contribute to African economic development.

To Lopes, therefore, (2010) the developing countries of the South have learnt a good lesson of working together with strategic groups from the South such as BRIC (Brazil, India and China) and G22 that enabled them space within global governance to articulate common interests. These robust and articulate groups of the developing countries have successfully turned Doha Roundtables and World Trade Organization (WTO) summits into sites of struggle. They have claimed a voice and space in global politics and economy and Africa is benefitting from this opened policy space. Lopes talked about the emergence of what he termed 'the South Agency' capable of opening the policy space for developing countries within the top global tables where economic and political decisions are made, such as the IMF and World Bank.

Lopes (2010) also argued that what was written on the global screen was increasing African renewal that was often overshadowed by concentration on such cases as the political theatrics of leaders like President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe which were then overblown to show that Africa was doomed. To him, the positive trends in Africa far outweighed the negative in the economic spheres of life. There has been a noticeable de-escalation of civil wars that have compromised the continent's economic potential and initiatives (Lopes 2010). Lopes noted that Africa survived the global financial crisis very well because their banks were not fully integrated into the global Western ones. Indeed, instead of going into crisis like other countries, Africa maintained steady economic growth during the crisis of 2008 to 2009. The optimism of Lopes was shared by John Weeks (2010) who cited the case of the Freetown Declaration drawn by African Finance Ministers in August

2009 where they declared their freedom from IMF and World Bank tutelage and committed themselves to taking control of the economic destiny of the African continent.

This optimism must also be careful not to minimize the structural straitjacket of colonial matrix of power that continues to maintain the hierarchical hegemonies of domination between the South and the North. Africa cannot maintain a good policy space at the global economic and political high table as long as the realities of neocolonialism are not completely broken and swept away in every area of life, such as culture, epistemology, discourse, language and images. What can be said with confidence is that Africa has a long battle to fight before it can claim the 21st century as its own.

At the political level, Africa currently manifests a deep ideological crisis emanating from the retreat of revolutionary imagination, exhaustion of utopian registers of freedom, and inherent limitations of neo-liberal emancipatory pretensions. While the end of the Cold War launched a new world dominated by neoliberal democracy and global capitalism, this Fukuyamite 'end of history' euphoria was short-lived and was soon replaced by a cloud of uncertainties engendered by the crisis of millennial capitalist humanism.

Since Fukuyama pronounced his 'end of history thesis', revolutionary radicalism of any kind, became considered as profoundly anti-systemic if not terror-inducing. Once depicted in this negative manner the concept of revolution became criminalized and open to systematic disciplining to serve the status quo. It was within this context that African imaginations of freedom became prisoner of the naïve neoliberalism mediated by notions of globalization, free reign of the market, and romantic celebrations of de-territorialization, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and multipartyism.

Human uncertainties were generated by human anxieties to grasp the elusive Lacanian 'Real'. According to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan the 'Real' denoted the heaven-paradise-like 'non-space' within which human identity, aspirations, dreams, visions and imaginations resided in their ideal form (Lacan 1977). What is intriguing about the 'Real' is that it has resisted comprehension and symbolization and continues to exist as that which human beings aspire to comprehend. It resides beyond human knowledge and escapes human linguistic representation; as such any attempt to describe and define the 'Real' is destined to culminate in dead-ends.

But this 'Real' existed in opposition to what Lacan (1977) termed 'reality', which was the creation or result of certain historically and sociologically specific set of discursive practices and power mechanisms (Zizek 2001: 66). The 'Real'

becomes that external boundary (that present which is absent) to borrow Ernesto Laclau's terminology, existing beyond human lived experiences. Žižek (2001: 166) sees the 'Real' as an 'illusion' which persistently exist against the pressure of reality. This Lacanian and Žižekian analysis of 'reality' and the 'Real' helps our in understanding of how human beings cope with realities during inhospitable, traumatic and uncertain moments in history through production of utopian registers such as nationalism, democracy, liberalism, human rights, socialism, capitalism, civil society and public sphere, etc., as they strive to narrow the gap between reality and the 'Real'. What human beings do tirelessly and ceaselessly is to try and know and capture the 'Real' through symbolization, representation, naming and other forms of political and social engineering (Stavrakakis 1999:74). This is part of how human beings fight to transcend the phenomenology of uncertainty. Jean Hillier had this to say:

It is this 'play' which leads to the emergence of politics between different symbolic viewpoints of what the 'world' should look like and to the political institution of a new fantasy (decision/accepted view, etc.) in place of a dislocated one (Hillier 2003: 46).

The English philosopher John Gray (1994) argued that one of the key characteristics of human beings is their rejection of humanity's contingency. This they do through religious and philosophical mediations. The other common human characteristic is a belief of being a special species that are able to master its own destiny unlike cows, dogs and cats. According to Gray (2004: 4), human belief in progress is nothing but faith and superstition.

For Africans and non-Africans across the world, coping with phenomenology of uncertainty, has seen increasing deployment of utopian register of democracy which has assumed an umbrella meaning and form covering various human longings and demands articulated in languages of freedom, reform, equality, fraternity, good governance, ethical coexistence, material welfare, social justice, liberation, recognition of difference, good corporate management, emancipation, social peace, human security and even progressive nationalism.

Human rights, human dignity and people's entitlements were all implied in democracy. In post-Cold War Africa where the state in such places as Zimbabwe, Sudan, Liberia, Somalia, Chad, Northern Uganda, and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is failing to cater for its citizens' human security, material welfare and social peace, utopian registers of civil society and public sphere have come to provide hope for the weak and vulnerable, whereas the powerful but illegitimate and unwanted 'big men' continue to pursue politics of the warlord and violence (Reno 1999).

The vulnerable segments of the population, including the elderly, women, disabled and , were longing for the return of social civility, social peace and human security in those societies torn asunder by war and violence. But the African 'big men' comprising of people like Jonas Savimbi of Angola who fought a long war for power until his assassination in 2002, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe who has clung to power by all means for over thirty years; Charles Taylor of Liberia who led one of the most brutal campaigns that cost thousands of lives; and Joseph Kony of Uganda whose Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is not godly at all, among many others; who control means and instruments of violence, continue to pursue power and wealth through employment of some of the most predatory, brutal and violent means that make life for ordinary citizens very uncertain. Outside Africa there were also numerous war mongers like the former president of the USA, George Bush, and the late Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Where the weak and the vulnerable talk of and aspire for democratic governance and human rights conscious societies, the powerful talk of nationalism and patriotism. This situation is currently obtaining in Zimbabwe where:

Patriotic history asserts the centrality of Zimbabwe's radical revolutionary tradition and it is premised on four themes: land, race, a dichotomy between 'sell-outs' and 'patriots'; and the rejection of western interference based on what are perceived as 'Western ideals' such as human rights (Tendi 2010: 1).

In the midst of this uncertainty some thinkers like the veteran journalist John Pilger have become very critical of liberal democracy as a utopic register of liberation as well as of some of the ways the discourse of democracy has been deployed by the powerful states to exacerbate human uncertainty in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. According to him:

'Democracy' is now the free market--a concept bereft of freedom. 'Reform' is now the denial of reform. 'Economics' is the relegation of most human endeavour to material value, a bottom line. Alternative models that relate to the needs of the majority of humanity end up in the memory hole. And 'governance' – so fashionable these days, means an economic approval in Washington, Brussels and Davos. 'Foreign policy' is service to dominant power. Conquest is 'humanitarian intervention.' Invasion is 'nation-building' (Pilger 2008:1).

All these changing meanings and instrumental uses of the once celebrated concepts create uncertainties. These signs of global uncertainty were what provoked Zizek to write a book entitled *In Defense of Lost Causes* where he spoke directly to this apocalyptic imagery of the world (Zizek 2008). John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff described our current epoch as dominated

by 'millennial capitalism' (Comaroffs 2000: 291-343), and Žižek posed the problem of phenomenology of uncertainty in this way:

[...] Which Cause should speak? Things look bad for Great Causes of today, in a 'postmodern' era when, although the ideological scene is fragmented into a panoply of positions which struggle for hegemony, there is underlying consensus: the era of big explanations is over, we need 'weak thought,' opposed to all foundationalism, a thought attentive to the rhizomatic texture of reality; in politics too, we should no longer aim at all-explaining systems and global emancipatory projects; the violent imposition of grand solutions should leave room for forms of specific resistance and intervention (Žižek 2008: 1).

Žižek is a believer in socialist 'strong thought', 'large-scale explanations' and is confident about the possibilities of a better post-capitalist world. He does not believe that human emancipation is a lost cause and that universal values were outdated relics of an earlier age. But he is very critical of any emancipatory potential and humanistic pretensions of industrial capitalism as well as post-industrial capitalism. To Žižek (2009a), the time for capitalist-liberal and moralistic pretensions and rhetoric of salvation and emancipation is over.

In Žižekian thought two recent events, namely, the attacks of 9/11 on America and the global credit crunch of 2008/2009 pushed the last nail onto the coffin of capitalist-liberalism and delivered a double-death: 'as a political doctrine and as economic theory' (Žižek 2009a). Žižek's imagination of the future is driven by what he terms 'a Leap of Faith, faith in lost Causes' (Žižek 2008: 1-2). His key thesis is that 'true ideas are eternal, they are indestructible, they always return every time they are proclaimed dead' (Žižek 2008: 4). Žižek is also very critical of the present-day millennial capitalist strategy of trying to conceal its exploitative features through a process of 'culturalization' of politics. He fought against this tendency in the following words:

Why are so many problems today perceived as problems of intolerance, rather than as problems of inequality, exploitation or injustice? Why is the proposed remedy tolerance, rather than emancipation, political struggle, even armed struggle? The immediate answer lies in the liberal multiculturalist's basic ideological operation: the 'culturalisation of politics.' Political differences—differences conditioned by political inequality or economic exploitation—are naturalised and neutralised into 'cultural' differences, that is into different 'ways of life' which are given, something that cannot be overcome. They can only be 'tolerated.' [...] the cause of this culturalisation is the retreat, the failure of direct political solutions such as the Welfare State or various socialist projects. Tolerance is their post-political ersatz (Žižek 2009b: 19).

Zizek is not alone in trying to explain the phenomenology of uncertainty marked by questioning of existing capitalist-informed ethics of human coexistence. The Comaroffs were equally concerned about rethinking the shifting 'provenance of the nation-state and its fetishes, the rise of new forms of enchantment, and explosion of neo-liberal discourses of civil society' (Comaroffs 2000: 293). They have engaged with what they term 'our present predicament'. They endeavoured to make sense of why the politics of consumerism, human rights, and entitlement were coinciding with new patterns of violence, exclusion, and why there was this puzzling and bizarre coupling of 'legalistic with the libertarian; constitutionality with deregulation; hyper rationalization with the exuberant spread of innovative occult practices and money magic, pyramid schemes and prosperity gospels; the enchantments, that is, of a decidedly neoliberal economy whose ever more inscrutable speculations seem to call up fresh spectres in their wake' (Comaroffs 2000: 292).

However, there is need to carefully sieve through what Western-oriented scholars were advocating as the solution to the uncertainty in Africa. Some reflection on Zizek's ideas will reveal some uncomfortable Eurocentrism offered as a solution to global problems. When read closely, the Lacanian Marxist thought is offering regressive ideologies as beacons of innovation and hope for global salvation. Maldonado-Torres (2003) has successfully analysed Zizek's thinking and has reveal what they really represent in the current age of global ideological crisis.

Zizek's agenda is to rescue Marxism through an appeal to orthodoxy, i.e., re-rooting communist hope in Western Christianity after the collapse the Soviet Union (Maldonado 2003). Zizek is providing the world with a materialist reading of Christianity as part of a worthy but lost cause of human emancipation. Maldonado-Torres (2003, 2004) is very critical of Zizek's open Eurocentrism where he defends Christianity and lambasts non-Western religions and spiritualities that also promise salvation to its adherents. Zizek, in his seemingly radical postulations has failed to 'hide the amount of epistemic racism' rooted in Enlightenment (Maldonado-Torres 2003). His radical criticism of Western modernity fails because it is part of attempting to save the same modernity. One can read Zizek's defence of Christianity and attempts to rescue Marxism which is part of ideologies of Eurocentrism in *The Fragile Absolute* (2000) and *Puppet and the Dwarf* (2003).

In the midst of this human uncertainty, where do African imaginations of freedom and liberation lie and which form and direction are they taking? To respond to this question there is further need to critically engage the utopian

registers of nationalism that continue to inspire dreams of homogenous entities called nation-states as well notions of sovereignty and public sphere and civil society as sites of imagination of particular forms of freedom enjoyed by citizens without the interference of the state and the 'big men'. The complexities of the situation which Africans found themselves in vis-a-vis colonial modernity and their conditioned response to it is well articulated by David Attwell. According to him:

There is no escape clause from the encounter with modernity, unless one is to accept isolation or eccentricity. In practice, however, people facing this situation make a continual effort to translate modernity's promises into their own situations and histories, indeed to de-Europeanise them wherever possible (Attwell 2005: 4).

African nationalism still occupies a special place in African histories of freedom and deserves attention as a future-oriented ideology. But scholars like Mbembe (2002a, 2002b) and Appiah (1992) have criticized present-day Afro-radical nationalism as nothing but 'shibboleths of discredited geographies and histories' that served to ignite primordial pathologies, ancient hatreds, nativism and Afro-phobias including xenophobia. But some critics and rejectionists of the 'posts' (postcolonial, postmodernist and post-structuralist) such as Zeleza (2003: vi; 2006: 89-129) and Mkandawire (2005) view this assault on nationalism as 'fashionable nonsense'.

Zeleza and Mkandawire are still confident of the redemptive force of nationalism. Zeleza argues that those who dismiss nationalism do not make any attempt to:

[...] distinguish the problematic and projects of nationalism, between the repressive nationalism of imperialism and the progressive nationalism of anticolonial resistance, between the nationalism that have led to control, conquest and genocide and those that have sought decolonisation and emancipation for oppressed nations and communities, between struggles for domination and struggles for liberation, between the reactionary, reformist, or revolutionary goals of different nationalisms (Zeleza 2003: vi).

Mkandawire (2005) reinforced Zeleza's argument by saying despite its internal inconsistencies and contestations, African nationalism still sought to achieve decolonization, nation-building (the making of African people as a collectivity in pursuit of a political end and making nation-as-state, i.e., the making of sovereign African states); ceaseless search for tolerant, stable, inclusive, legitimate and popular modes of rule (democratization); achievement of economic growth and improvement of material welfare of the people (economic and social

development) as well as the construction and consolidation of political power (hegemony) (Calhoun 1997; Calhoun 2007).

But African nationalism remains as a problematic utopian register of liberation, freedom and democracy, particularly if one closely analyses its social base and understands its contingent and derivative character. Mamdani revealed the inherent weakness of African nationalism, when he said:

I argue that the social base of nationalism was the native who had crossed the boundary between the rural which incorporated the subject ethnically and the urban that excluded the subject racially. Though beyond the lash of customary law, this native was denied access to civic rights on racial grounds. It is this native—Nkrumah's veranda boys, Cabral's boatmen, and Frelimo's cadres—who formed the social basis of nationalism. For a mass-based militant nationalism to be created, though, it was necessary for the boundary between the customary and the civic to be breached. Having crossed that boundary from the rural to the urban, it was once again necessary for cadres of militant nationalism to return to the countryside to link up with peasant struggles against Native Authorities. Nationalism was successful in gaining a mass base only where it succeeded in breaching the double divide that power tried to impose on society: the urban-rural, and the inter-ethnic (Mamdani 2000: 45).

Jean-Paul Sartre was referring to a similar problem of the social base of African nationalism when he said:

The European elite undertook to manufacture native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with red-hot iron, with the principles of Western culture; they stuffed their mouth full with high-sounding phrases, grand gluttonous words that stuck to teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home whitewashed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brother (Sartre in Fanon 1967: 7).

This was true of such founding fathers of African nation-states as Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi. Zeleza (2002) noted that these educated Africans dreamt in both African and European languages. They suffered from a terrible crisis: they had been taught to hate Africa that produced them and to like Europe that rejected them.

It is these 'walking lies' that became leading nationalists and founding fathers of African nation-states. No wonder that African nationalism became constrained in its ability to deliver and reproduce African colonial subjects as autonomous citizens from the beginning. Such important task of nationalism as achieving national self-determination for the former colonies, remaking

colonies into sovereign nation-states, initiating economic development beneficial to former colonized Africans, and installation of democracy, human dignity and human rights that were denied under colonialism became vaguely articulated through and through (Mamdani 1996; Zeleza 2003).

What is beyond doubt is that African nationalism had a redemptive mission and progressive trajectory albeit a very complicated, compromised, half-baked and problematic one. Nationalism, however, cannot be totally dismissed as nothing but 'shibboleths of discredited geographies and histories' and a purveyor of 'primordial pathologies' (Zeleza 2003). The fact that its redemptive and liberatory aspects remained submerged within the complex colonial matrices of power and that it has not fully succeeded in bringing about full decolonization of Africa does not justify wholesale repudiation and total dismissal. As Moyo and Yeros (2007) have argued, African nationalism still retains some revolutionary and progressive attributes despite its usual often fall into crises of authoritarianism and violence. Moyo and Yeros provide the detailed case study of Zimbabwean nationalism that was able to deliver land to the landless people within a restrictive post-Cold War neo-liberal environment. Moyo and Yeros proceed to credit Zimbabwe for standing courageously and single-handedly for the African cause:

Zimbabwe effectively defaulted on foreign debt and has imposed heavy controls on its capital account and banks; Zimbabwe has been a leading player in the global alliances that stalled WTO negotiations in Seattle, spoke truth to power at Doha, and rejected opportunistic reform of the United Nations; and Zimbabwe has single-handedly undermined NEPAD and repeatedly confronted South African sub-imperialism and US imperialism, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), at great cost to itself (Moyo and Yeros 2007b: 178).

But it is that 'great cost to itself' that made some scholars doubt the revolutionary and redemptive power of nationalist inspired state activism as a salvation for Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya 2011). Unless African nationalism managed to completely rise above the core contradictions bequeathed it by colonialism, which includes repressive, authoritarian and intolerant tendencies, it will continue to be repudiated by some of its former supporters and formulators. The current state of African nationalism is that however hard it tries to dissociate its ideologies and practices from colonial epistemology, 'The authoritarianism of the colonial era [continues to] reproduce itself within the nationalist movements' (Mair and Sithole 2002: 23). Even the current African public sphere depicts its interpellation by the colonial public sphere which existed as a sacred site reserved for colonial

white settler bourgeois group that drove colonial public discourse and 'thought' and 'spoke' on behalf of disenfranchized and subalternized African colonial 'subjects' in very paternalistic and condescending terms. This time the paternalist and maternalistic colonial role is being played by the local and international NGOs together with international funding bodies like the Westminster Foundation, DFID and others.

One of the main realities of African life under colonialism was thorough and systematic de-oracization of Africans. Austin Bukenya defined 'productive oracy' as entailing 'self-definition, self-assertion, negotiation of relationships, claiming of rights, and indictment of their violation' (Bukenya 2001: 32; Zirimu & Bukenya 1977). De-oracization of Africans was a logical part of colonialism's denial of Africans access to the colonial public sphere that was protected by strong walls of race and racialized conceptions of citizenship (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2001: 53-83; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006: 1-18). Since colonial conquest, definition of African destiny fell into the hands of colonial masters and the public discourse was shaped and determined by colonial imperatives rather than African concerns and interests.

Inevitably, African nationalism fought partly for Africans to gain access into the racially fenced-in colonial public sphere to benefit from imagination and creation of new social sites and spaces within which Africans as citizens could get together to freely deliberate on matters of common concern and to take control of their destiny. But once direct colonialism was rolled back, the postcolonial African state continuously manifested a terrible proclivity towards destroying the emerging vibrant public sphere that Africans fought for. The African ruling elite, just like the white colonial rulers, have often demonstrated a consistent desire to close the emerging public sphere rather than to widen it and support its flourishing.

Does this character of the postcolonial state have anything to do with its complicated social base? Of course the postcolonial state is deeply interpellated by the authoritarian character of its predecessor—the colonial state. Kuan-Hsing Chen argued that 'the contemporary moment of the (ex-) colonies is still one of a process of decolonization, and in at least three connected but convolute forms: nationalism, nativism, and civilizationalism' (Chen 1998:1). Africans are captive to the invisible snares of the colonial matrix of power that continue to constrain possibilities of democracy and economic development.

The public sphere in Africa continues to exhibit the indelible imprint of colonialism and deep traces of western values that are now re-packaged as global values. The public sphere is infused with intellectual formulations coming from

the (ex-) imperial centres rather than African values, concerns and interests. It is within this context that Africans fall back on nativism as they continue to resist the forcible confinement of their history, values and identities to the barbarian margins of the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008, 2009).

What ends up being depicted as nativism begins as redemptive nationalism focused on enabling Africans to try and take control of the public sphere so as to publicly articulate their common concerns. Nativism also begins as a form of reverse discourse and an attempt to challenge Western hegemony. The key challenge remains how to articulate African problems in an authentic African voice without falling into nativism. How to talk and think about democracy without mimicking Western liberal democracy. How to talk about African public sphere without repeating the notions of the public sphere articulated and drawn by Jurgen Habermas.

Habermas defined public sphere as a 'sphere where private people come together as public and discuss matters of common concern' and this site is 'governed neither by the intimacy of the family, the authority of the state, nor the exchange of the market, but by the 'public reason of private citizens' (Habermas 1989: 27). Habermas understood the importance of this sphere in the context of the classical liberal emancipatory transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe together with the concomitant emergence of the bourgeois as a revolutionary class critical of monarchical rule based on heredity and religion.

In broad terms, Habermas was concerned with the early development of liberal democracy that was linked to the rise of bourgeois class in Europe and the discourses of enlightenment that underpinned modernity (Peters 1993: 542). But Africa which experienced the darker side of modernity that even prevented the formation and emergence of a black bourgeois class cannot follow the same path that Habermas is mapping as its public sphere.

A coalescence of 'negatives' of modernity culminated in the birth of what Mahmood Mamdani described as bifurcated colonial states that segregated its population along racial lines into 'citizens' and 'subjects' (Mamdani 1996). This colonial set-up of the state had far-reaching consequences not only for the nature of African response to colonialism but also on the development and reconfiguration of the African public sphere and the overall structure of postcolonial political communities. Craig Calhoun defined the public sphere as 'an arena simultaneously of solidarity and choice' and 'a crucial site for the production and transformation of politically salient identities and solidarities—including the basic category and practical manifestation of 'the people' that is essential to democracy' (Calhoun 2002: 165).

Key debates on the public sphere were characterized and influenced by the post-modernist liberal thought whose starting point of narration of the African story is Western modernity and its emancipatory agenda that uncritically accepted neoliberal democracy as a global movement 'into which African experiments are expected to fit' without a contest (Osaghae 2005: 1). The key problem in this discourse, as noted by Calhoun, is not only that of overemphasizing 'thin identities' as adequate underpinnings for democracy but also that of blind acceptance of 'economistic, modernising imaginaries without giving adequate attention to the formation of solidarity and the conditions that enable collective choices about the nature of society' (Calhoun 2002: 148). This post-modernist neoliberal paradigm is sweeping if not fundamentalist in what it claims and annihilatory in what it rejects, which includes Afro-radicalism that contests global colonial hegemony.

This paradigm is being contested by decolonial-liberationist approach whose starting point of narration of the African story is contestation of coloniality in its various disguises. This decolonial-liberationist paradigm is still struggling to set itself free from politics of neurosis of victimhood to enable Africans to re-launch themselves on a radical struggle to create a post-imperial and postcolonial future that the post-1945 decolonization project failed to achieve. The African desire to transcend the 'colonial-straitjacket' enveloping the African continent has seen scholars like Ekpo (2010), calling for what he terms 'post-Africanism' in the face of the poverty of such philosophies of liberation as Negritude. Ekpo motivated for post-Africanism in these words:

One such candidate for a redemptive post-Negritude renewal of Africa's modernity is what has come to be known as Post-Africanism. [Post-Africanism] is a post-ideological umbrella for a diversity of intellectual strategies seeking to inscribe newer, more creative moves beyond the age-old fixations, obsessions and petrifications of thinking that had crystallised in and around the racial-cultural worries not only of Negritude generation but also the so-called postcolonial zeitgeist. The idea came from the painful realisation that the cultural-nationalist ethos, reflexes and vocabulary that came to structure African philosophical, political and development thinking had not only dragged Africa and the African mindset into crippling Afrocentric trap, but also muddled most of Africa's modernisation projects. Post-Africanism was proposed as an attempt first to deconstruct the disaster-prone emotionalism, hubris and paranoias indwelling to most ideologies of Africanism whether in art, politics or development discourse and, second, to seek newer, fresher conditions for a more performative African intellectual engagement with Africa, modernity and the West (Ekpo 2010:181-182).

Finding itself antagonizing under the heavy weight of triumphant neo-liberalism and globalization, the decolonial-liberationist perspective continued to try and confront neocolonialism and proposed strategies of decolonizing the mind of the colonized through laying bare the hidden structures of imperial domination. This has taken the form of political economy approaches some of whose advocates even deny the importance of such discourses as human rights and democracy. The case in point is Issa G. Shivji who had this to say about the human rights discourse:

Human rights discourse has succeeded in marginalising concrete analysis of our society. Human rights ideology is the ideology of the status quo, not change. Documentation of human rights abuses, although important, in its own right, by itself does not help us in understanding the social and political relations in our society. It is not surprising that given the absence of a political economy context and theoretical framework, much of our writings on human rights, rule of law, constitution etc., uncritically reiterates or assume neo-liberal precepts. Human rights is not a theoretical tool of understanding social and political relations. At best [it] can be only a means of exposing a form of oppression and, therefore, perhaps, an ideology of resistance (Shivji 2003: 115).

Ekpo is not opposed to those like Shivji who are still committed to the struggle against colonial modernity. Instead, he encouraged what he calls 'postcolonial subjects' to concentrate in learning, copying and even stealing 'the ruses and skills of imperialist domination for the purpose of hastening economic growth and socio-political modernization in the postcolonies' (Ekpo 2010: 182). But he seems to minimize if not ignore the power of the colonial matrix of power discussed in this book that does not allow for authentic, bold, free, liberated, empowered and confident 'postcolonial subjects' to emerge. On the other hand, Shivji is also not totally opposed to discourses of human rights and democracy. He has consistently argued in support of new liberatory struggles that creatively combine material, national, democratic and social justice questions into a single new democratic consensus that is simultaneously ranged against global colonial hegemony and local/domestic authoritarianism and oppression (Shivji 2000; Shivji 2003; Mafeje 1995). For Ekpo though:

Post-Africanism's second African Enlightenment concerns a massive disburdening of mind and vision, so that Africa can embark again on its journey of modernisation, this time deliberately travelling light (Ekpo 2010: 183).

What is difficult is that the immanent logic of colonialism is still a reality that cannot be simply wished away easily. African liberation discourse is deeply shaped by colonialism that is well analysed by such scholars as

Mannoni (1950); Fanon (1952:1963); Memmi (1957); Mamdani (1996) and Mbembe (2001). These scholars have revealed how psychology and praxis of colonization had devastating impact on the evolution of African political consciousness including imaginations of liberation.

Kuan-Hsing Chen has concluded that 'colonialism is not yet a legacy, as mainstream postcolonial studies would have it, but still a lively operator in any geocolonial site' (Chen 1998: 34). Besides interpellation of its nemesis (which is African nationalism), colonialism also influenced the nature of the African public sphere in many ways as it shaped and constrained African imagination of liberation and ways of knowing. The hated nativism emerged from this milieu of the psychology of colonialism as a reverse-discourse seeking to subvert and undermine colonial ideologies through mobilization of decentred African identity and culture. Writing on the utopian register of liberation, Benita Parry said:

When we consider the narrative of decolonisation, we encounter rhetorics in which 'nativism' in one form or another is evident. Instead of disciplining these, theoretical whip in hand, as a catalogue of epistemological errors, of essentialist mystifications, as a masculinist appropriation of dissent, as more than an anti-racist racism etc., I want to consider what is to be gained by an unsententious interrogation of such articulations which, if often driven by negative passion, cannot be reduced to mere inveighing against iniquities or repetition of the canonical terms of imperialism's work (Parry 2004: 40).

The development of African political ideologies and imaginations of freedom have been consistently constrained and shaped into particular directions by the hidden mechanics of the hegemonic modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system. The crisis of African liberation discourse has partly to do with what Quijano termed repression of alternative modes of knowing, of producing knowledge and of producing perspectives—a consequence of colonization of the imagination of the dominated (Quijano 2007: 168-178).

This reality also explains the existence of a very complex public sphere that is highly contested and dominated by overlapping civic, deviant, primordial and indigenous public associations made up of a bizarre assortment of labour, professional, intellectual, student, farmers, women, and ethnic groups, articulating overlapping forms of politics, including those inspired by nativism (Ekeh 1992: 83-104; Ekeh 1975: 91-112; Osaghae 2006: 233-245). As Eghosa Osaghae argued, the ambiguities and contradictions reflected in the African public sphere are in turn reflective of the deeper fractured social foundations of African politics marked by serious disjuncture between state

and society giving birth to equally fractured and highly contested citizenship prone to retribalization (Osaghae 2006: 233-245).

It is against this background that African experience and imagination of freedom is subject to two meta-narratives with one of them informed by Western epistemology and the other by resistance to coloniality. It is important to briefly explore the key tenets of the postmodern neo-liberal and decolonization-liberation paradigms as two sides of the same coin. The African national project that encompasses strategies of achieving nation-building, state-consolidation, economic development and poverty reduction, and introduction of popular forms of governance, is hostage to these two ways of making sense of the African world in particular and the human globe in general.

Epistemologies of freedom

Walter D. Mignolo emphasized that ways of analysis and speaking are always influenced by analysts' particular location in the power structures and that ways of knowing and perceiving the world were always situated (Mignolo 2000). For Africa, two dominant epistemic loci of enunciation of histories, discourses and developments are easily discernable though they were not mutually exclusive.

The first is that which sought to tell the story of Africa from the perspective of Western modernity and the interpretation of African history in analogous fashion. The second is that which begins the story of Africa from the perspective of coloniality and is linked to subaltern epistemic perspectives that are critical of Western philosophy's claims to a single version of truthful universal knowledge (Mignolo 2000: 721-748). The first is broadly a narrative of the story of modernist emancipatory project whose starting point is Enlightenment discourses that were opposed to feudal monarchs with their hereditary notions of power, the conservative churches with their privileging of beliefs over knowledge and superstition based on blind religiosity underpinned fear and ignorance.

The postmodern neo-liberal discourse is permeated through and through by bourgeois Enlightenment intellectual thought, intellectual arrogance including celebration of violent conquest of Africa in such colonial euphemisms as 'pacification', 'civilizing mission', 'white man's burden' and 'modernization' (Crong 1984; Rostow 1960; Roper 1965; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2001; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006). This paradigm has assumed universalism and pretends not only to be universalistic but also to be a neutral and objective point of view.

While the second paradigm tells the complex and unfinished story of liberation from colonialism, neocolonialism, neo-liberal imperialism and hegemonic globalization, the first tells the human story from the perspective of Western modernity which 'lays claim to the homogeneity of the planet from above—economically, politically and culturally' (Mignolo 2000: 721). It is backed up by what Wallerstein (1991: 1) termed the 'nineteenth century social science paradigms' that were consumed holus bolus in the African academy and have terribly constrained the development of autonomous and original African intellectual thinking and imagination of the world. Wallerstein noted that:

It is quite normal for scholars and scientists to rethink issues. When important new evidence undermines old theories and predictions do not hold, we are pressed to rethink our premises. In that sense, much of nineteenth-century social science, in the form of specific hypotheses, is constantly being rethought. But, in addition to rethinking, which is 'normal,' I believe we need to 'unthink' nineteenth-century social science, because many of its presumptions—which, in my view, are misleading and constrictive—still have far too strong a hold on our mentalities. These presumptions, once considered liberating of the spirit, serve today as the central intellectual barrier to useful analysis of the social world (Wallerstein 1991: 1).

African intellectual and liberation initiatives have found it very difficult to 'unthink' the epistemologies created by enlightenment intellectuals and to 'reproduce itself outside these relations' (Quijano 2007: 169). The end product has been 'scholarship by analogy' that has pervaded some of the influential intellectual works in and on Africa (Mamdani 1996; Zeleza 1997). Osaghae defined the neo-liberal narrative of the African experience as taking a globalist and comparative format in which it evaluated the African world on the basis of the extent to which African states have conformed with the precepts of liberalism, including liberal democracy, as determined by the post-Cold War global hegemonies. Within this discourse capitalism and liberalism were projected as trajectories that all societies have to pass through (Osaghae 2005: 14).

Osaghae contrasted this trajectory with the decolonial-liberationist narrative of the African experience that is more discerning and more sympathetic of the peculiar challenges facing the state in Africa. Within this discourse, democratization and development were approached as instruments of liberation from political domination and economic underdevelopment. Even the accent on human rights was understood and seen not as a matter of democratic finesse, but as a weapon of weak and oppressed groups struggling for liberation and empowerment (Osaghae 2005: 14-15).

But this decolonial-liberationist approach was under the constant policing eye of the postmodernist neo-liberal approach. If it was not dismissed outrightly, it was disciplined. If it was not disciplined, its agenda was stolen, diluted and destroyed. But it has refused easy burial. Its resurrections have taken various forms such as insurrectionist nationalism, Afro-radicalism, cultural nationalism and nativism. All these resurrections were taking place within a terrain in which neoliberal dispensation had assumed hegemonic proportions. This neoliberal paradigm has since the end of the Cold War attained global outreach and continued to evaluate African experiences, successes and achievements in terms of how far they have 'conformed with the precepts of liberalism, including liberal democracy, as determined by the post-Cold War global hegemonists' (Osaghae 2005: 14).

Neoliberal evaluative criteria of African progress was informed by the extent to which market reforms have been embraced; the extent to which African political systems have been opened up to pluralist and multi-party politics; the extent to which good governance, measured by constitutionalism, civil control of the military, popular participation, respect for human rights and rule of law, as well as transparency and accountability, has been entrenched; and the extent to which free and fair elections as well as orderly change of government were possible (Osaghae 2005: 14). What must be made clear is that the decolonization-liberatory approach is not opposed to democracy; rather it is consistently trying to appropriate democracy and human rights tenets as weapons of the oppressed and the weak in its endeavour to push forward the frontiers of decolonization into new horizons of economic empowerment, social justice and autonomous control of African destiny.

However, the postcolonial state has continued to serve the interests of global capital rather than the interest of the people of Africa because of the snares of the colonial matrices of power. The African state is yet to serve the interests of the popular masses rather than global capitalism (Nyong'o 1987:25). This is no easy task to achieve because of the disciplining power of global capital and the policing eye of powerful multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization all informed by the interests of the rich nations of the North.

One of the difficult questions that continue to pulsate within the decolonization-liberatory narratives is how to restructure the postcolonial African state in line with the popular African demands? Ake (2000: 167) provides two options for the transformation of the African state:

One direction is for the state to become a community that is embedded in a modern republic. This will require among other things a highly accelerated capitalist development, which does not appear to be on the cards for much of Africa. This will entail the breakdown of African countries into something like ethnic polities, a process which could be extremely violent and traumatic. One possible compromise could be a confederal, federal or consocietal arrangement. But there are no easy solutions to this formidable problem, which is hardly recognised much less addressed (Ake 2000: 167).

Ake argued that a transformation of the state only is not enough. It needs to go hand-in-glove with societal transformation to rectify the situation of bifurcation of society into 'the country of the elite, usually less than 10 percent of the population' that is 'organically linked and oriented to the highly industrialized societies' on the one hand, and the country of the poor symbolized by the rural dweller engrossed in mere survival (Ake 2000: 167-168). He suggests that postcolonial Africa must adopt 'structural democratization' as opposed to 'processional' democratization. Structural democracy involves restructuring of the state and transformation of the society simultaneously (Ake 2000: 186).

But those scholars wedded into the postmodern neoliberal thinking, see the salvation of Africa as lying with the civil society as the fertile terrain embodying the popular interests of the people. What is often not opened to critical analysis is the question of representation and the values driving civil society in Africa. Osaghae (2005) is very critical of the legitimacy of civil society as the embodiment of popular mass interests. To him civil society was a middle-class/elite project that did not approximate the broad range of popular forces. Second, the emergent civil society (as opposed to embedded one) was largely a creation of global capitalism that has continued to finance it in its concubinage with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Third, NGOs were nothing but important agents of globalization and Western hegemony in Africa. Finally, 'civil society today does not have the national appeal and conviction that distinguished the anti-colonial alliances of the old' (Osaghae 2005: 17). As such, civil society is not a legitimate embodiment of popular forces capable of delivering a people-sensitive state in postcolonial Africa.

Osaghae's critique of the civil society agrees with that of Moyo and Yeros (2007: 177) who deployed a class analysis and exposed the following weaknesses if not dangers of Zimbabwean civil society. Its membership is largely urban in a largely agrarian country; its leadership is largely middle-class professionals; its autonomy is heavily mortgaged and dependent on donors and its ideology is petty-bourgeois, bourgeois and even neocolonial (Moyo and Yeros 2007:

177-178). In the face of all these intellectual and political contestations over the state and civil society, where does African redemption lie? This is a difficult question to answer

Murky present and the mysterious future

Peter Ekeh's 1975 seminal article on 'colonialism and the two publics' became the first serious academic engagement with the issue of African public sphere, defining it as differentiated into primordial and the civic public. Ekeh located the bifurcated character of African public sphere at the centre of colonial modernity:

If we are to capture the spirit of African politics we must seek what is unique in them. I am persuaded that the colonial experience provides that uniqueness. Our post-colonial present has been fashioned by our colonial past. It is that colonial past that has defined for us the spheres of morality that have come to dominate our politics (Ekeh 1975: 111).

In 1992, Ekeh expanded his 'two publics' thesis as he engaged with the character of civil society in postcolonial Africa. He identified four-fold core types of civil society organizations, namely: *civic public organizations* (labour, professional and student associations, mass media); *deviant civic organizations* (secret societies, fundamentalist religious movements); *primordial public associations* (ethnic and communal associations); and *indigenous development associations* (farmers' and traditional women's associations) (Ekeh 1992: 187-212).

What is clear from Ekeh's four-fold categorization of civics was that it reflected unique historical foundation of African experiences particularly the experiences as shaped by colonialism and nationalism. It revealed how African civics were mediated by professional, religious, ethnic, indigeneity, and gender imperatives fashioned by colonial modernity.

Mamdani seems to reinforce Ekeh's basic argument about how the legacy of colonialism bequeathed a particular kind of civil society on postcolonial societies. He analysed the exclusionary character of colonial civil society founded on racial hierarchy of natives and settlers. In this colonial set-up, the excluded natives remained squashed into primordial sphere marked by rigidified and compartmentalized ethnic categorizations.

African nationalism and the anti-colonial struggles were therefore partly aimed at de-racialization and Africanization of existing white-dominated civil society as well as opening of sites for public deliberation by Africans beyond the policing eye of the colonial state. Mamdani (1996: 21) was correct in arguing that at the end of colonialism, the initiatives to de-racialize civil society happened simultaneously with its increasing tribalization. This was

inevitable for a people emerging from a bifurcated colonial discursive set-up where race and ethnicity were the key vectors in the social organization colonial population.

At the end of colonial rule, civil society developed a complex relationship with the postcolonial state as the state became the most ubiquitous phenomenon regulating people's lives. Consequently, to the triumphant postcolonial nationalists in charge of the state the objectives of new struggles that were located in the civil society were not understandable. Was it to substitute the state or just to make it more open to pluralism and diversity? To African nationalist leaders, particularly those who participated in protracted armed liberation struggles in countries like Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Algeria, Guinea-Bissau and Zimbabwe, the decolonization project resulted in the emergence of African states serving the interests of the ex-colonized peoples. They consistently pushed forward the idea of a 'people's state' that needed to be supported by everyone rather than opposed as it carried forward the historical mission of economic liberation.

Within this thinking that was often informed by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist avant-garde notions of the state and party, there was no room for civil society and public sphere existing separate from the state. But to those scholars informed by liberal notions of organization of political and social life like Michael Walzer (1991: 293-304), civil society was important as it was constituted by associational networks within which civility was constructed that enabled democratic politics to take place.

In liberal thinking, civil society existed mainly to make the state more accountable in its governance practices. But, to the nationalist elite running the postcolonial state, they needed no other form of association than their political parties to make them accountable as they brought both democracy and freedom to the ex-colonized peoples. To them, the postcolonial state was inherently pro-people as it was fought for and knew what the people wanted. Guarding the postcolonial state's sovereignty became the most prized value. Zimbabwe provides us with a typical example of a 'nationalist state' that does not tolerate existence of civil society and public sphere unmonitored by the state and the ruling party. President Mugabe does not mince words on who brought democracy to Zimbabwe:

We, not the British, established democracy based on one person one vote, democracy which rejected racial or gender discrimination and upheld human rights and religious freedom... In short, the advent of an independent Zimbabwe restored dignity to our people (*The Herald*, 19 April 2008).

In this context where the state and its leadership proclaim a high moral ground, civil society was often branded as a threat to state sovereignty and civil society organizations that deal with issues of democracy and human rights were delegitimized as fronts for external enemies of the state (Tendi 2010). Civil society is not free from complex workings and dynamics of power pitting advocates of nationalism against those for democratization on the one hand, and on the other, the South-North power division. The question of power is well treated by radical scholars like Rita Abrahamsen (2000) who identified how power imbalances between the rich North and the poor South tainted discourses of democracy, development and good governance as mere pillars of global governmentality, open to use as justifications to discipline deviant states of the South.

The challenging question in African studies in general is what exits for ordinary people who do not benefit from juridical freedom and who are at the receiving end of postcolonial states that have metamorphosed into 'privatized', 'patrimonial', 'rentier', 'kleptocratic', and 'gate-keeper' states? (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Cooper 2002; Nugent 2004) Are notions of civil society and public sphere as those empty signifiers and utopian registers that were conjured up and deployed by ordinary citizens to envision a life beyond the statist spheres where there is no human care the solution?

Grappling with the global meaning of civil society, the Comaroffs (2000: 330) argued that the notion emerged as a 'Big Idea of the Millennial Moment' and 'as an all-purpose panacea for postmodern, post-political, post-native, even 'post-human' condition.' They further argued that civil society 'is known primarily by its absence, its elusiveness, its incompleteness, from the traces left by struggles conducted in its name' (Comaroffs 2000: 330). Indeed, when subjected to closer analysis, the notions of civil society and public sphere were better understood as utopian registers capturing human aspirations for popular freedom unencumbered by state's interferences.

The notion of civil society and public sphere are today serving as the remarkable potent battle cry across the world for freedom. At the centre of these imaginations and aspirations are utopian registers of democracy, moral community, justice, and populism politics that were mobilized and deployed to breathe life back into societies of uncertainty that have been 'declared dead almost twenty years ago by the powerful magi of the Second Coming' (Comaroffs 2000: 331).

John Ralston Saul in his book *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World* (2009:15) wrote about the crisis of globalism whose core beliefs

were that the power of the nation-state was waning; states as we knew them were dying; in the future, power would lie with global markets; economics rather than armies and politics, would shape human events; global markets freed of narrow national interests would establish international economic balances; and that there would be a 'shrivelling-away of irresponsible nationalism, racism and political violence'. At the global level, it is these values of globalism and others that fell into crisis and were increasingly questioned at the beginning of the new millennium.

Across the world, it is clear that human beings do not tire of trying to make sense of their murky present with a view to prescribing the mysterious future if the current beliefs proved inadequate. Nationalism continues to pre-occupy human minds particularly those still confident about the future of the nation-state, territoriality and sovereignty within a fast globalizing world. The nation-state has not withered away as globalists predicted. Alongside nationalism is civil society and public sphere that exist as empty signifiers with a potential to fire human imagination into another life of civility, sociality and peace within and beyond the precincts of the postcolonial state that has tended to use its juridical freedom to deny popular democracy within its boundaries.

The bigger struggle today is that of trying to revive revolutionary and liberatory politics and to originate a new language that resonated with the present generation and capture the future so as to restore lost human certainty. All this is taking place at a time dominated by what the radical thinker Chantal Mouffe described as the 'democratic paradox' characterized by the intermingling of popular democratic aspirations with questions and struggles of definition of the people as well as re-constitution of human identities (Mouffe 2000: 56).

What the notion of 'democratic paradox' reveals are the inherent limitations of neo-liberal democracy as an utopian register capable of firing human imagination beyond the current dead-ends. African nationalism has metamorphosed into such phobias as nativism and xenophobia that devoured those Africans deemed to be the toxic other, to use a Zizekian terminology. Such other utopian registers as civil society and the treasured notions of public sphere where rational thinking is said to reign, remain part of 'aspirational politics' emerging within the context of phenomenology of uncertainty.

The current global and local challenges are very complex and some scholars like Samuel Huntington had turned xenophobic as revealed in his book *Who are We? The Challenge to America's National Identity* (2004) where he identified those people he considered non-Americans, particularly the

growing Hispanic presence in the US, as constituting a threat to American national identity. Such publications indicated ideological confusion of the first order where culturalism was turned into a tool of analysis to the extent of singling out multiple languages and cultures as constituting cultural terrorism. It is paradoxical that a country like America which is basically a nation of immigrants and settlers can turn around and worry about immigration and multiculturalism in the 21st century. We are back to the medieval fear of barbarians at the gate! This argument is reinforced by Francoise Verges who argued that:

Xenophobia is back in Europe. The foreigner is once again the target of attacks, the explanation for everything that goes wrong: loss of jobs, insecurity, criminality. He embodies the fear of being overwhelmed in one's own country, of losing 'national' values, 'national' identity, of no longer feeling 'at home' (Verges 2011).

Conclusion: Is another world therefore possible?

Western humanism informed by coloniality is in crisis. The people from the South have continuously contested Western domination. The credit crunch has indicated serious cracks within the seemingly strong edifice of capitalism. Western hegemony that was hidden under notions of 'Whiteman's Burden,' civilizing mission, developmentalism and liberal democracy has been unmasked and declared as coloniality that is supposed to die for a new humanism to be born. John Ralston Saul (2009: 281) concluded that:

The economic collapse of 2008 represents the failure of Globalism. It is a mistake to treat this crisis as something provoked by a financial crisis. A burst boil is a symptom, not a cause: lance it fast and move on in search of the real problems.

He went further to emphasize that:

Everyone can now see that the Globalist approaches of the last three decades were old fashioned. And most of us can see how the ground has shifted. The key to dealing with this crisis is not to rebuild the old structures based on the old assumptions. We have an opportunity to build a more sophisticated sort of wealth based upon a balancing of social, environmental and market needs. This could easily be the project of a century (Saul 2009: 296).

But from the African side, it is clear that another world cannot be possible as long as the continent and its people are not fully decolonized and the snares of the postcolonial neocolonized world are not broken. This will require an epistemic rebellion that enables the formerly colonized people to gain self-confidence, enabling them to re-imagine another world free from Western

tutelage and African dictators that enjoy Western protection. A new imagination that liberates both the colonizer and the colonized simultaneously is needed. This will mean levelling of the racial hierarchies created by colonial modernity as well as fundamentalism created by various nationalisms. Perspectives from the South must be given more space as they promise another world free from Western hegemonic thought that was constructed on oppressive and exploitative values of slavery, imperialism and colonialism.

The recent revolutionary and popular events that began in Tunisia forcing dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to flee the country on 14 January 2011 and which spread to Egypt forcing Hosni Mubarak to step down from power after thirty years as president raises some hope about the power of the ordinary people to shape their destiny through freeing themselves from autocracies (Arieff 2011: 1-23). The Maghreb region had survived the democratic changes of the 1990s with autocratic governments maintaining their grip on power. But what began in Tunisia is shaking not only the Maghreb region but also the Middle East and the rest of Africa. The popular uprisings that have sent fears down the spines of dictatorial leaders across the world provides some hope that ordinary people are still prepared to claim and shape the destinies of their nations. But let me end this book with the searching questions of Santos (2007: 49) as an indication of the future research and direction of intellectual in the Global South:

How can we identify the perspective of the oppressed in real-world interventions or in any resistance to them? How can we translate this perspective into knowledge practices? In search for alternatives to domination and oppression, how can we distinguish between alternatives to the system of oppression and domination and alternatives within the system or, more specifically, how do we distinguish between alternatives to capitalism and alternatives within capitalism? In sum, how can we fight against abyssal lines using conceptual and political instruments that don't reproduce them? And finally, a question of special interest to educators: what would be the impact of a post-abyssal conception of knowledge (as an ecology of knowledges) upon our educational institutions and research centres?

The struggle must continue. *Aluta continua*—this time taking the form of a committed epistemological resistance against epistemic violence that had prevented alternative imaginations of the world and freedom from the knowledges and cosmologies of the Global South!