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Debating Postcoloniality in Africa

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Introduction

This chapter critically explores the debate on postcoloniality in Africa as the basis for delineating and enhancing the understanding of the nature of crises associated with the phenomenon on the continent. Being the introductory chapter of an edited volume, I will essentially try to map out the context of the debate, and the various intellectual and practical concerns that have engaged the attention of analysts. Further, I shall engage, interrogate, illuminate and hopefully attempt to coalesce into a coherent explanatory framework some of the contending perspectives on the historical and contemporary referents, dimensions and interconnections of the crises of postcoloniality in Africa.

The concept of postcoloniality is a highly divisive and ambiguous one. Postcoloniality means different things to different scholars, and sometimes for the same scholar or proponent, the concept has different alternative and contradictory connotations. Consequently, the concept is defined, conceptualized, contested, debated, studied and arguably de-studied by various disciplines, such as English literature and comparative philology, cultural studies, history, gender studies, Diaspora studies, area studies, politics and other disciplines that epistemically or methodologically interface with the self-proclaimed 'core stakeholders'. Further, the debate on the denotations and connotations of postcoloniality is antagonistically waged across various theories, paradigms, and schools of thought within and between fields – Marxism, dependency theory, nationalist historiography, subaltern school of history, postcolonial studies in African literature, as well as postmodernism and various shades of poststructuralism. Linked to the preceding complex debates is the more epistemological contestation regarding which of the competing concepts has a more appropriate explanatory power: 'postcoloniality', 'postcolonialism' or perhaps 'postmodernism'? Some critics have

challenged and questioned the meaning of the 'post' in these various concepts. Should the 'post' be understood in its literal or linear historical form to imply 'events after' in which case 'postcoloniality' or 'postcolonialism' becomes roughly synonymous with the seemingly de-emphasized concept of 'neocolonialism' – literally, 'a new form of colonialism after the end of the original form'. Does the prefix 'post' transformatively redefine 'coloniality' or 'colonialism' to represent some ordered kind of 'discursive practices, the construction of subjectivities and identities, or concrete historical processes' as some pundits have adumbrated (see Zeleza 2006:19). Clearly, this chapter cannot attempt to resolve these multiplex conundrums but at the same time it would amount to sheer intellectual cynicism to submit, as some scholars have done, that postcoloniality defies definition simply because it is a deeply controverted and troubled concept.

Context and Conceptualization

Colonial and postcolonial discourses have to be understood in their historical, genealogical, ideological and conceptual contexts. Whereas colonial discourses emerged out of specific historical, political and ideological constructions that witnessed their climax in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe, postcolonial discourses have mainly materialized from resistance (i.e. political and ideological) and critique (mainly intellectual) of post-nineteenth century imperialism and colonialism, including the legacies of Western exploits in the global South and the contemporary power relations between the latter and the global North. Imperialism, colonialism and postcolonialism are related in a complex way, but the precise nature of relationships or connection among these concepts depends on the theoretical and ideological persuasions of various theorists and commentators. Consequently, the historical and empirical referents of imperialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism have marked variations across different regions of the world.

Postcolonial debate has been fundamentally shaped by two dominant paradigms – leftist historical materialism (notably Marxist political economy and Dependency theories of history and political science) and trans-disciplinary postmodernism. In the African context, leftist historical materialism emerged as a critique of imperialist and nationalist historiographies on the nature, *raison d'être* and outcome of colonialism (Fanon 1965; Ake 1982; Mishra & Hodge 2005). Proponents articulated counter discourses of postcolonialism that aimed to reveal the historically entrenched and exploitative structures, institutions, networks and processes that tend to reproduce and perpetuate imperialist interests in the various African states and economies (see Rodney 1972; Ake 1996). Also significantly explored by proponents were transformative proposals for surmounting the constraints immanent on postcolonialism, redressing African underdevelopment and re-positioning the continent on the path to unfettered and robust development.

Beyond Africa, contributions to the leftist political economy debate are drawn from the greatest tri-continental (Africa, Asia and Latin America) anti-colonial theorists and intellectual activists (Young 2001:6). Since the dawn of decolonization, two major concepts have been used by proponents to theorize the outcomes of colonialism. These are: 'neocolonialism' (literally, 'new' form of colonialism) and 'postcolonialism' (literally, the time-space 'after' colonialism [see Tejumola 2005]).

Dating from the end of formal colonialism, Marxist intellectuals and statesmen (mostly from the global South) were of the view that the formal termination of colonial rule marked by the 'regaining' or granting of independence to the former European colonies was largely a superficial phenomenon that resulted in the inauguration of protégé regimes in the former colonies that maintained preponderant loyalty to the ex-colonial masters in the metropole and protected the latter's economic and strategic interests in the new independent states (see Rodney 1972; Bayart *et al.* 1999). Political independence or flag independence as it was often called was said to be devoid of economic independence and the metropolitan ex-colonial authorities were perceived as still calling the shots in their former colonies. This phenomenon was conceptually described as neocolonialism, which according to Kwame Nkrumah (1965), Ghana's foremost nationalist and post-independence leader, was 'the last stage of imperialism'. The logical remedy against the thraldom of neocolonialism, as exponents have argued, is that the newly independent states should 'delink' from the exploitative international capitalist system and pursue a socialist path to development. This radical view not only gained tremendous currency among Third World intellectuals, social activists and politicians between the late 1950s and 1980s, but also fed into the Cold War politics of that era.

The concept of neocolonialism has come under vigorous attack from critics of both Marxist and postmodernist intellectual orientations, especially since the late 1970s. Among other things, the concept is criticized as analytically inadequate, not least as a result of what critics perceive as its undue determinism and reductionism, which tend to limit the impact of colonialism to economic exploitation and disabilities (Lazarus 1999). Consequently, the sweep of leftist ideology and communist revolutions across many parts of the global South resulting in the inauguration of various shades of communist and nationalist regimes, which substantially severed allegiance to the metropole and limited the economic interests of the ex-colonial powers, were seen by Marxist critics of the neocolonial discourse as having not fundamentally affected the social, cultural and intellectual legacies of colonialism in the countries concerned (ibid.; see also Bayart *et al.* 1999). For these historical materialists, the legacies of colonialism have apparently not only persisted in post-independence era but have also aggravated in some instances, leading to conflicts of varied intensities. Africa is at the same time ravaged by the legacies of colonialism and the ravages of neocolonialism (Zeleza 2006:99).

Hence, the concept of postcolonialism is postulated as having greater explanatory power in helping to understand the broad legacies of colonialism, the contemporary international structures that tend to reinforce the colonial legacies and asymmetrical relationships, as well as their consequences and dynamics. Some scholars tend to make an analytic, if not semantic, distinction between postcolonialism and postcoloniality. In distinguishing 'postcoloniality' from 'postcolonialism', Graham Huggan (2001) has argued that the former term represents a regime of value that privileges the late capitalist system of commodity exchange, while the latter term represents a politics that resists the global processes of commodification (quoted in Jefferess *et al.* 2006). Huggan's distinction tends to create a dichotomy between the cultural and politico-economic legacies of colonialism and their dynamics. But such a dichotomy is questionable given the fact that postcolonialists (proponents of all narratives), as Zeleza (2006:98) succinctly observes, are generally concerned with the experiences associated with colonialism and its present effects for both the imperial powers and the ex-colonial societies. A marked ambivalence exists amongst scholars of various intellectual and ideological persuasions on both the meanings of, and distinctions between, postcoloniality and postcolonialism.

A number of Western-based post-structuralists and liberal internationalists tend to interpret the enduring power of neocolonialism and the overall significance of postcolonialism (in conceptual, chronological and empirical terms) differently. Proponents like Ranjana Khanna (2003), Crawford Young (2004) and Dabashi (2012) have proclaimed with remarkable audacity 'the demise of postcolonialism'. Describing postcolonialism as a melancholic discipline, Khanna maintains that the factors leading to announcements of its death – for instance, the failures of anti-colonial liberation projects and the current neo-imperial forces of globalization – have in fact been sites of engagement for a field characterized primarily by the paradox of impossibility (see Jefferess 2006). In a seminal article in the *African Affairs* of 2004 entitled 'The End of the Postcolonial State in Africa?' Young (2004:23-24) argues that there has been a demise of the 'postcolonial moment' in Africa since about the year 1990. He attributes the historic demise to the convoluted forces of market liberalization and democratization in Africa, which have eroded the silent incorporation of many defining characteristics of the colonial state in its post-independence successor for the preceding three decades (Young 2004:24-25). 1990 is designated the terminal postcolonial period because this was the year when the unfolding transformations supposedly came full swing with a multitude of new functional and dysfunctional actors (informal traders, smugglers, warlords, arms traffickers, youth militias, local associations, women's organizations, religious groups and refugees) entering the political space and interacting with state agents and international agencies (ibid.).

Writing with a remarkable sense of euphoria, Hamid Dabashi christened the montage of popular uprisings across the Arab world, which started in Tunisia in December 2010 and popularly regarded as the Arab Spring, 'the end of

postcolonialism'. Dabashi (2012:5) admits that the Arab uprisings are not 'conclusive revolutions' occasioning 'a radical shift in political power with an accompanying social and economic restructuring of society' 'as we have understood them in the exemplary models of the French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban or Iranian revolutions of the last three centuries'. But he argues that they are nonetheless significant 'open-ended revolutions, wherein national politics will have consequences transnationally, and vice versa'. Dabashi continues:

> The Tunisian revolt triggered the Arab Spring transnationally, and the transnational revolt across the region has had specific national consequences, such as the rapprochement between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine, which in turn has triggered a response from the Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, who have goaded Israeli forces and stormed into their occupied homelands. These dynamics spell the end of the politics of despair and business-as-usual, in which the US and its European and regional allies on one side and the Islamic Republic and its subnational allies – Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Mahdi Army – on the other, held hostage the democratic aspirations of masses of millions of human beings (2012:12).

Dabashi and Young provide analytical details about the decay and disintegration of the postcolonial state in Africa and the Arab world but, in the end, fail to tell us what has replaced it and what has become of the sociocultural and sundry concomitants of postcolonialism in the regions. Whilst one may agree with Dabashi that the Arab Spring remains inconclusive given its contemporariness, the assertion that both the Arab Spring and the Sub-Saharan African neoliberal reforms of the 1990s have ended the postcolonial dispensation is to stretch the re-imagining of the postcolonial world too far. The Arab Spring could not have ended postcolonialism in North Africa and the Middle East when we do not yet know what has replaced the excavated and unsettled status quo. Similarly, earlier proponents of the death of postcolonialism like Young have not told us how significantly different and 'un-postcolonial' the new dispensation is (post-postcolonial?), The various contributions in this volume have tried to explore these issues by using both conceptual and empirical narratives from specific case studies.

Arguably, the greatest contributions to postcolonial studies, especially since the 1970s, have come from the field of English and literary studies where the preference is clearly for the term postcolonialism. Largely influenced by the post-structuralist and postmodernist revolution in Western liberal sciences, literary scholars of Third World origin have constructed or adopted postcolonial theory for three related reasons highlighted by Zeleza, among other scholars. The first is a political agenda – to craft a paradigm of scholarship deeply invested in the destruction and deconstruction of European hegemony spanning the economic and epistemic, as well as the political and paradigmatic aspects (Zeleza 2006:99). The second is a more practical goal of creating an applied sub-discipline that has not only expanded the canon by insisting that we read, consider, and teach literatures of

colonized peoples, but because it promised to give the so-called native people a place at the table; ultimately, the goal is that through exposure to new literatures and cultures and challenges to hegemonic assumptions and power structures, lives of the oppressed people of the Third World would be made better (Jefferess *et al.* 2006). The third is the predilection for a theory of colonial and postcolonial social formations, of concrete historical processes, as well as an ideological interrogation of texts, images and discourses (Zeleza 2006:98). Many mainstream theorists of the leftist political economy school are critical of Third World literary scholars' propensity to discursive interrogation of texts and images, arguing that such cannot substitute for a structural and even empirical understanding and analysis of global power relations.

The renowned Palestinian American and ex-Columbia University Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Edward Said, has made one of the most seminal contributions to the way postcolonialism has been conceptualized by literary studies. Said's contributions are contained in his groundbreaking books *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Although written largely with Middle Eastern and South Asian background, Said's works have been highly influential in helping to illuminate the 'complex and ongoing relationships between east and west, colonizer and colonized, white and black, and metropolitan and colonial societies' (Singh 2004). The latter is the essential preoccupation of the author in *Culture and Imperialism.*

In *Orientalism*, Said eloquently demonstrates how Western colonizers created a discursive myth or set of stereotypes that were over the years elevated to a sort of systematic knowledge and political vision about the Middle East and South Asia (ibid.). Western stereotypes about Oriental cultures and the Oriental were cast as binary contrasts between the civilized (West) and the uncivilized (Oriental – Asians, Arabs and Indians), the secularly rational and the superstitiously religious, the familiar and the strange.

The stereotypes assigned to Oriental cultures and 'Orientals' as individuals are pretty specific: Orientals are despotic and clannish. They are despotic when placed in positions of power, and sly and obsequious when in subservient positions. Orientals, so the stereotype goes, are impossible to trust. They are capable of sophisticated abstractions, but not of concrete, practical organization or rigorous, detail-oriented analysis. Their men are sexually incontinent, while their women are locked up behind bars. Orientals are, by definition, strange. The best summary of the Orientalist mindset would probably be: 'East is east and West is west, and never the twain shall meet' (ibid.).

In an avid Foucauldian thesis, Said (1978) argues that orientalism was not just a mythical idea but a powerful discourse produced, ingested, applied and perpetuated within the structures of unequal power relations between the colonizers and the colonized. The rest of Said's effort in *Orientalism* is about the interrogation, dismantling and deconstruction of some of the unfounded colonial stereotypes

that have for centuries been treasured in Western cultural and political thought as authoritative evidential knowledge.

Perhaps the greatest contribution by Said to postcolonial theory is the recognition that orientalism is a 'fully-fledged discourse' (Singh 2004) and in the light of that proceeding to unravel the underlying power relations behind the discourse, the interest it was designed to maximize, as well as why it is necessary to deconstruct the discourse and provide a more accurate narrative. Translated to the African setting, orientalism has a familiar resonance with the discourse of 'nativism' or simply the 'native'. The latter is discussed in the next section of this chapter. Like Said, many African scholars – literary experts, historians and social scientists alike – have used postcolonialism as a conceptual and ideological instrument to critique and challenge colonial and postcolonial discourses in Africa, and the attendant power relations they tend to reproduce between the hegemonic West and the ex-colonial societies. In so doing, the literary critics have stayed put with the concept of postcolonialism, which they have raised to a rather incoherent omnibus theory while most political historians and mainstream social scientists have favoured the concept of postcoloniality for no apparent reasons other than perhaps the need to be distinguishable from their longstanding rivals of the 'school of arts'. But more significantly, Zeleza (2006:120) has, among other criticisms, observed that postcolonialism as constructed and pursued in literary studies and the social sciences, to a lesser extent, 'does not provide us with the methodological and theoretical tools to examine African history – arguably the longest in the world – before the colonial interlude'. He submits that one might need to delve into approaches that emphasize historical materiality for a better understanding and analysis of African pre-colonial history. Have the political historians and social scientists been more coherent, focused and consistent in their use and understanding of the term postcoloniality? Not by any means! Consensus-building on the meaning and referents of postcolonial-ity/-ism has remained, for the most part, elusive to all the stakeholders involved in postcolonial studies regardless of their intellectual orientation and cross-disciplinary clusters. In a way, this lack of agreement on the epistemological and empirical content of the field is both its major strength and weakness. On the one hand, it helps the discipline to make unbounded growth but, on the other hand, it sustains seemingly irreconcilable ambiguities in terms of meaning, context, scope, content, temporality and existentiality.

Rooted largely (but not exclusively) in political history and the social sciences, this study adopts the concept of postcoloniality as a framework of analysis, keeping in mind that the intellectual heritage of postcoloniality – regardless of how one defines the concept – is integrative and transdisciplinary, incorporating some of the rich scholastic achievements in the literary disciplines. In spite of the observed lack of agreement on issues of definitional meaning and empirical referents, most scholars agree that a considerable number of the crises that have confronted African states since independence are rooted in colonial heritage and

the syndrome of postcoloniality. If postcoloniality is crisis-ridden then we can justifiably talk about the crises of postcoloniality – the nexus of interlocking, cross-cutting, embedded and enduring contradictions and conflicts in the postcolonial states directly or indirectly related to colonial heritage (political and economic structures, practices, modes of accumulation, education and cultural patterns), as well as the nature and constraints of postcoloniality itself. To further understand the crises of postcoloniality, we need to contextuate the discussion in the nature, discourse and legacy of colonialism.

Colonialism and its Antecedents

Most analyses and explanations of colonialism begin by exploring its relationship with imperialism, with the result that some scholars hardly make a distinction between the two concepts. It is important to stress that both concepts have a pretty long history and involve forms of subjugation (including actual exercise of behavioural influence) of one people or country by another (Young 2001:15). The term imperialism extends from the concept of empire. Empires, in turn, stem from significant power asymmetries among political units, and this inequality consequently enables the domination of, and control by one party, the strong (metropole or core), over the weak satellites (periphery) (Rapkin 2005:390). Both colonialism and imperialism are founded on the asymmetrical political and economic relations between the metropolitan centre and the subjected periphery.

Pre-nineteenth century imperial and colonial projects (Holy Roman empire, Chinese empire, Medo-Persian empire, etc.) had sundry motives – notably, military and ethno-cultural domination, irredentism, religious inquisition, economic exploitation, and so forth. But they markedly differ from the imperial and colonial projects of the nineteenth century onwards because the latter were clearly economically driven (access to raw materials and markets), operated as state policies, backed by the overwhelming power and bureaucratic machinery of the metropolitan state, and nurtured a global ambition. It is this capitalist-inspired phase of colonialism and imperialism that is organically related to the postcolonial. Imperialism and colonialism have not always converged in history. Arguably, the classical colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was both predated and post-dated by imperialism or what some contemporary scholars describe as 'imperial governance' (see Rapkin 2005; Omeje 2008).

Western imperialism took its heaviest toll on sub-Saharan Africa partly due to the debilitating antecedents of externally-induced slavery. The spadework for European conquest and subsequent colonization of sub-Saharan Africa was spearheaded by two devastating forms of externally-induced slavery in the region. The first was the trans-Saharan slave trade that lasted for over a period of 900 years (the ninth to nineteenth centuries) before colonial rule and in which Arab merchants bought and also conscripted slaves from various parts of sub-Saharan Africa (notably eastern Africa and the Sahel) and consequently sold them to the

Arab world (including north Africa) and parts of the Mediterranean. Most of the male slaves were used as foot soldiers, castrated harem guards, and domestic servants while the female slaves were employed as domestic servants, harem-bound mistresses and forced prostitutes. Black slaves in the Arab world were scarcely allowed any opportunity for normal family life and procreation. A limited number of slaves were also taken from eastern Africa across the Red Sea and Indian Ocean to the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent.

The second category was the trans-Atlantic slave trade which marked the first European scramble for Africa and in which hordes of slaves were taken from Africa to the Americas to predominantly work in plantation agriculture between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. For reasons of logistical convenience, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was for the most part restricted to Western Africa, omitting South Africa and Eastern Africa except for Mozambique and Madagascar; it produced fierce rivalries, as Portugal, the Dutch Republic, France, and Great Britain competed in the quest for black slave workers (Rawley 2003:6). European slave dealers conscripted their African victims by direct kidnapping, trickery, capture, and most of all, by threatening African chiefs and community leaders with conscription of themselves and their households if they did not produce the 'enslaveable' subjects. This persistent pressure, made credible by the occasional conscription of recalcitrant chiefs and royal households, instigated continuous inter-tribal raiding and warfare amongst chiefdoms competing to capture and deliver citizens of rival communities to the brutally armed and waiting slave masters and ships.

Estimates published by historians of how many Africans were carted away from the continent in the course of the different externally-induced slave trades vary remarkably but they are all in millions; perhaps as many as 9 million in the trans-Sahara/Oriental slave trade, and well over 12 million in the trans-Atlantic human trade (see M'Bokolo 1998). In fact, leading African historians like Cheikh Anta Diop (1978) estimate that as many as 100 to 200 million Africans were either killed or carried away during the trans-Atlantic slave trade (quoted in Baregu 2003:22). The consequences of the centuries of externally-induced human trade on the African economy, security and development have been well researched and documented by political economy historians (Rodney 1972; Ake 1982). Africa was systematically robbed of its labour force – the critical mass of people of the most productive age cluster required to engineer and sustain development at home – for the development of the countries and regions they were taken to. As a result, Africa stagnated in precoloniality while the rest of the beneficiary world (mostly Europe and the Americas in the case of the more devastating trans-Atlantic slave trade) made accelerated progress with the help of African labour.

Europe's quest for exploitable colonies sparked off the second scramble for Africa that culminated in the historic Berlin Conference of 1884-85 in which Africa was balkanized into colonizable parts by leading Western imperial powers.

Beyond Africa, many other parts of the world were also colonized by the Western powers. Colonial hegemony of the nineteenth and twentieth century Europe took different forms that fairly corresponded to the policy orientations and purposes of the major colonial powers. Major colonial powers like Britain, Spain, France and Portugal pursued and operated different colonial policies in different regions and colonial missions. Scholars have identified the following three broad forms of colonies and colonial practices (see Young 2001:17):

> The first, dominion colonies, are colonies predominantly established as dominions for the purpose or forms of settlement: e.g. British North America, Australia and New Zealand, diverse Portuguese colonies – Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, etc. Dominion colonies mainly involved systematic extermination and/or displacement of the indigenous populations and their violent ejection/confinement to hostile spaces like deserts and forests. Some have labelled this practice 'geographical violence' (ibid.).

The second is colonies established as dependencies for economic exploitation without a view to largescale and permanent settlement: e.g. most of the colonies in the high humidity tropics. Dependency colonies were mostly governed using such ideologies as the British direct and indirect rule, French assimilation theory and direct imposition of metropolitan culture, which was practiced by all colonial powers. Scholars like Jean-Francois Bayart *et al.* (1999) have argued that because a few European officials were involved in administering the vast colonial territories, all the colonial powers actually adopted a combination of direct and indirect rule even if some like the French and the Portuguese did not frame theirs in a pivotal policy as the British did.

The third is maritime enclaves, mostly islands, harbours and other strategic points acquired by imperial powers as bases for global military operations and protection of strategic interests in the outlying region: e.g. Dutch Batavia, Falkland Islands, etc.

Classical colonialism mostly involved the first two categories (dominion and dependency colonies) in the above typology. All colonial powers tended as a result to have in practice two distinct kinds of colonies within their empires, the settled and the exploited, the white and the black/coloured, which would be treated very differently (Young 2001:19). With respect to African experience of colonialism, Achille Mbembe (2001:32-35) has outlined some underlying features, which I have highlighted and illuminated in the following six thematic points:

• *First, the Instrumentality and Arrogance of Organized Violence:* Colonial rule, according to Mbembe, established systems of sovereignty that rested on three forms of violence (a) founding violence – the self-justifying right of conquest and to institute governance structures, roles, and laws by sovereign diktat; (b) justifying colonial sovereignty and violence by providing self-interpreting models for the necessity of the colonial order and its universalizing mission – discursive

violence aimed at 'converting the founding violence into authorizing authority'; (c) violence intermittently applied in accordance with need to ensure the maintenance, spread and permanence of colonial authority. More significantly, military violence was vital for creation and perpetuation of the enabling conditions to maximize the cheapest forms of resource extraction. The authoritarian predilection and unmitigated impunity of the colonial establishment has been a recurrent feature in most analyses of colonialism by virtually all trenches of historians – nationalists, 'post-nationalists', and the likes. Colonial rule was profoundly authoritarian, even though some facade of democracy was hurriedly instituted in most of the colonies towards the eve of independence. Authoritarianism was believe to be an appropriate mode of governance for the uncivilized Africans depicted as occupying the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder of the human species, just a step above the wild apes. Ostensibly, the largely centralized political structures and authoritarian culture that characterized Africa's post-independence regimes were partly a legacy of colonial rule.

- *Second, Exercising Sovereignty with Impunity:* Colonial authorities were regimes of impunity defined by Mbembe as 'the arbitrariness and intrinsic unconditionality of colonial sovereignty; lack of justice as the means and lack of legitimacy as the ends of colonial projects'. The regime of impunity, the author argues, was a departure from the common law, individual rights and principles of legal justice that were already emerging in the metropole. Forced labour, compulsory cash crop production and delegation of sovereign power to trading companies and individuals were all part of the regime of impunity widespread in the colonies. The colonizers equipped many large companies with commercial and mining privileges and with the sovereign rights allowing them to raise taxes and maintain an armed force. On the part of the colonizers and their business associates (colonial trading companies), the regime of impunity, according to Mbembe, translated into and were actually construed as 'a regime of privileges and immunities'. Sovereignty was thereby privatized.

- *Third, 'Prebendal' Privatizing of the Public Sphere:* A corollary of the regime of impunity in the colonies, Mbembe aptly observes, was the confusion between the public and the private, the agents of the sovereign could at will usurp the law and in the name of the state, exercise it for purely private ends. The tendency to usurp the powers of the state for 'prebendal' purposes, according to the author (albeit the latter did not use the term 'prebendal'), was miniaturized and ubiquitous. It tended to occur in various disguises and everywhere. Both the colonizers and their local aides (catechists, interpreters, court clerks, office clerks, uniformed guards, butlers, etc), Mbembe insists, were all culprits of this phenomenon.

Nnoli (1978; 1989) has trenchantly theorized the historical tendency towards privatization of the public sphere by state office holders in Africa, dating from the disingenuous devices of the colonizers, and how the nationalist and postcolonial elites consequently instrumentalized ethnicity to abet their aggrandizement of power

and resources. The politics of systematic plunder that has characterized and blighted a large number of Africa's postcolonial states cannot be dissociated from the self-centred blurring of public and private spheres rampant during the colonial era. Richard Joseph (1987) was apparently the first scholar to use the concept of prebendalism to rigorously re-theorize this profoundly compromising political practice.

Based on a conceptual synthesis from a variety of relevant studies, Daniel Bach (2011) has re-theorized the familiar concept of neopatrimonialism to portray some meaningful distinction among African postcolonial states. Neopatrimonialism is a post-Weberian concept originally coined by Eisenstadt (1973) to describe the confusion observable in many developing countries between the public and private spheres; between public officer and the office holder in a state that is at least formally endowed with the Weberian modern legal-bureaucratic institutions. However, beyond the façade of the public bureaucratic institutions, the day-to-day running of state affairs, including the formulation and implementation of government policies, are conducted through informal clientelist networks (often rooted in clannish, ethno-cultural and other primordial tendencies) ultimately linked to a few powerful state office holders. Neopatrimonial rule is widely believed to be the core feature of politics in Africa and central to the crises of postcoloniality.

Bach makes a relevant analytical distinction between two polar contrasts of neopatrimonialism in Africa, the regulated and predatory forms of neopatrimonialism. According to the author (Bach 2011:277-280), the regulated neopatrimonial state is characterised by a combination of personal rule, elite co-optation and a re-distributive policy of ethno-regional balance (e.g. Cote d'Ivoire under Houphouët-Boigny, and Kenya under Jomo Kenyatta), while predatory neopatrimonialism corresponds to a sultanic model where the kleptocratic patrimonialization of the state has become all-encompassing, with the consequent loss of any sense of public space or public policy (e.g. Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko). Regulated neopatrimonialism functions with significant bureaucratic institutionalization that enables the state to formulate and pursue well-meaning development policies and programmes. Predatory neopatrimonialism, on the other hand, is anti-development and a fundamental threat to the coherence and internal sovereignty of the state. Bach submits that there are a possible range of intermediate variations between the preceding two broad polar contrasts.

• *Fourth, the Native Discourse:* Famous scholars like Fanon (1965), Rodney (1972) and Memmi (1991) have all brilliantly expounded the discourse on nativism. Colonial rule thrived on a racial and cultural dichotomy between the colonizers and 'natives'. Intrinsic to this dichotomy was the colonizers' denigration of the natives' modes of social organization as primitive, and the use of brute force in the self-imposed mission to civilize the natives. To justify the civilizing mission, colonial discourses produced a string of derisive images of the African 'as sub-human species, unformed clay of primitive multitudes, a special human type – a child-like human – with a child psychology and outlook, a child race who can

never grow up, children with a bundle of drives and dysfunctional capacities that needed perpetual guides and guardians' (Mamdani 1996:4). In their state of nature, the natives lived as creatures of instinct, incapable of rational thinking and wallowed in unmitigated barbarism marked by wars of mutual destructions. Lacking in rational thought, the natives were incapable of any achievements in science, technology, literature, politics and government. The body of thought that comprise the theory of colonization can be found in some of the works and pronouncements of well-regarded political theorists, philosophers, historians, explorers, statesmen, Christian missionaries, novelists and other social thinkers of the late feudal/early modern Europe, as well as the early stages of colonialism. It is pertinent to reproduce three of the striking thoughts of early modern European thinkers about the Africans or natives (see Oluwole 2006:10 for the excerpts):

> It is a serious question among them whether [the Africans] are descended from monkeys or whether the monkeys come from them. Our wise men have said that man was created in the image of God. Now here is a lovely image of the Divine Maker: a flat and black nose with little or hardly any intelligence … If their understanding is not of a different nature from ours, it is at least greatly inferior. They are not capable of any great application or association of ideas, and seem formed neither in the advantages nor the abuses of our philosophy – Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire, eighteenth century French philosopher.

> The negroes of Africa have received from nature no intelligence that rises above the foolish. The difference between the two races is a substantial one. It appears to be just as great in respect to the faculties of the mind as in colour – Immanuel Kant, eighteenth century German philosopher.

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No indigenous manufacturer amongst them, no arts, no sciences. … On the one hand, the most rude and barbarous of the Whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men – David Hume, eighteenth century Scottish philosopher.

Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, the nineteenth century French public intellectual widely regarded as the father of modern Euro-Western racial ideology, historically classified humanity into three unequal races – the white, the yellow and the black – postulating that the Aryan-Germanic white are by dint of genetic superiority endowed with the creative genius directly or indirectly responsible for all the remarkable achievements in all human civilizations throughout history. It is indeed remarkable that even the famous civilization of ancient Egypt under the kingship of the Pharaohs, a widely acclaimed black civilization that predated the Arab-Muslim conquest of north Africa, was credited by Gobineau to the hegemony

of the Aryan-Germanic Diaspora. A few excerpts from one of Gobineau's classic works, *An Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853-1855), will suffice to illustrate his pseudo-scientific racial ideology (quoted in Seilliere 1914; see also Ayoub 2012):

> Almost the whole of the Continent of Europe is inhabited at the present by groups of which the basis is white, but in which the non-Aryan elements are the most numerous. There is no true civilization, among the European peoples, where the Aryan branch is not predominant … No negro race is seen as the initiator of a civilization. Only when it is mixed with some other can it even be initiated into one …. Similarly, no spontaneous civilization is to be found among the yellow races; and when the Aryan blood is exhausted stagnation supervenes.

> The negroid variety is the lowest (*of the three races*) …

> The yellow races are … clearly superior to the black …

> We come now to the white peoples. These are gifted with reflective energy or rather with an energetic intelligence. They have a feeling for utility … a perseverance … a greater physical power, an extraordinary instinct for order … a remarkable, and even extreme, love of liberty …

> The white races are, further, distinguished by an extraordinary attachment to life. When they are cruel, they are conscious of their cruelty; it is very doubtful whether such a consciousness exists in the negro.

Fabricated bigotries of the preceding nature, which were widespread during the so-called Enlightenment Age in Europe, were powerful legitimizing ideologies of both colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade that preceded it.

During the colonial era, there was a deliberate and systematic destruction of different forms of social organization of the natives and outlawing of some cultural practices that existed prior to the advent of colonial rule. Through Christianization, Western education and direct imposition of metropolitan cultural forms, the colonizers aimed to civilize and groom the Africans to become 'proper' humans. These derogatory discourses and castigation of the African did not originate with colonialism, but, as already highlighted, was part of the philosophical rationalization of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that preceded colonial conquest. Every colonial authority had to come up with policies and conventions on how to deal with the native question (Mamdani 1996:4). One of the most prevalent policies was the promotion of separate settlement and development schemes for natives and European settlers in colonial urban centres. In some countries, the policy was extended to local indigenes and migrants from other ethno-cultural groups. 'Indirect rule' using native authorities and traditional institutions was another famous policy.

•   *Fifth, the Fiction of Compassion and Benevolence:* The colonizers created the fiction of selfless humanitarian intervention to support the ideology of civilizing the natives. Left alone the natives were said to be defenceless against external forces,

the vagaries of nature, diseases and wild beasts (Mbembe 2001:33). The colonizers'
intervention was therefore partly aimed to rescue the natives from self/enemy
destruction, and from poverty and debased conditions. As a matter of fact, most
of the colonizers' discourses of the motives and *raison d'être* of colonialism were
deliberately intended to conceal its materialist purpose, namely – to secure resource
enclaves for raw material extraction and other forms of economic exploitation
(Musah 2002:915). It is significant to point out that all the arms of the colonial
establishment – state officials, big businesses, and Christian missionaries and
educationists – were united in creating and instilling the patronizing discourse that
colonialism was a necessary and urgent humanitarian intervention. Victorian
anthropologists of the evolutionist school reconstructed, disguised and elevated
the discourse into a self-fulfilling theory of human and societal progress. Even
the theory of modernization and political development vigorously promoted by
American social scientists since the 1950s and repackaged by different Western
agencies in contemporary history using various universalizing euphemisms (e.g.
neoliberal peace, democratization, globalization, developmentalism, liberal
internationalism, market reforms, etc) are essentially disguised offshoots of the
classical colonial fiction of compassion and benevolence.

Sixth, the Progressive Distinction between 'Citizens' and 'Subjects': As colonialism
developed to a stage where it was inevitable to gradually concede civil and political
liberties to some of the vociferous and groomed natives, a distinction was
progressively introduced between 'citizens' and 'subjects'. Originally, colonial
subjects were the natives who were denied civil and political liberties, only meant
for the 'citizens' - the colonizers and other European or white immigrants/settlers.
But as Africans stepped up the anti-colonial struggle, limited citizenship status
was progressively extended to some of the privileged natives. In many countries,
this created a new stratum of Africans who prided themselves as 'mini-Europeans',
the *evolue* as the French branded it under their famous Assimilation policy. Rodney
(1972) and Mamdani (1996) are among the most noted scholars to have eloquently
expounded the 'citizens and subjects' discourse.

Postcolonial Discourses

Postcolonial discourses are about particular paradigms of appreciating, engaging
and critiquing the material and discursive legacies of colonialism (Young 2001;
McEwan 2002). Although there are nuances in different scholars' appreciation
and rendering of the material and intellectual legacies of colonialism, Cheryl
McEwan (2002:127) has tried to identify four key pillars of postcolonial discourses,
which I have outlined and elaborated as follows:

- The first is destabilizing or deconstructing the dominant intellectual
discourses of imperial Europe believed to be rooted in European (post-)
Enlightenment civilization and worldview, and which are implicitly or explicitly
ethnocentric. The dominant intellectual discourses, McEwan argues, comprise

such disciplines as history, philosophy, development economics, anthropology, religion, politics, and linguistics. Critics challenge some of the assumptions at the heart of these disciplines – the values, biases, prejudices, distortions and misconceptions they promote.

• The second is challenging the constructions of power and, by implication, discursive violence inherent in many concepts, labels and classifications (mostly binary) found in colonial discourses, which in postcolonial history tend to pass as received knowledge. For definitional clarity, discursive violence refers to the barrage of intellectual and ideological discourses enunciated and propagated by the colonial establishment (European colonial officials, missionaries and scholars, especially colonial anthropologists) to justify colonial sovereignty, as well as the necessity of the colonial order and its universalizing mission. Discursive violence against the black race was ubiquitous before and during colonialism. During the era of colonialism especially, discursive violence was mostly about constructions of binary contrasts on the white and non-white races (in the case of Africa, the Black race) aimed at two mutually reinforcing objectives. The first objective was to denigrate, disparage, belittle, humiliate, ridicule, rubbish and pour scorn on everything about the 'natives' – their humanity, culture, religion, knowledge, history and civilization. The second objective of the binary discourses was to nurture, cultivate and transform the 'natives' into mini-Europeans or 'modern' persons living in a new civilization crafted in European image. Discursive violence was applied in tandem with coercive force, but in most cases preceded, followed and tried to justify the use of force in the colonial mission (McEwan 2002).

• The third pillar of postcolonial discourses identified by McEwan is a critique of the hegemonic accounting of history (time) and spatial distribution of knowledge (power) between the West and Third World employed in Western discourses. The Western sense of difference from other parts of the world and superiority (modernity) in both history and knowledge, the author observes, has often been presented by proponents as a timeless independent variable. As Zeleza has aptly captured the dominant thesis:

> … prior to the rise of postcolonial studies, there was a tendency to see the metropolitan-colonial connection in one direction; to emphasize the flow of ideas, influences, institutions, and even individuals from the metropole to the colony. Postcolonialism has stressed the importance of reverse flows, of flows in both directions. The metropole was made by the imperial project as much as the colonies; … More than commodities came from the colonies: new constructs of nation, race, gender, class, and modernity in the metropole were fashioned and refashioned in the combustible furnace of empire (Zeleza 2006:120).

Postcolonial critique highlights the dialectical interconnections between the developed world and the Third World and the multi-faceted contributions of the latter to the development of the former.

• The fourth and last pillar pinpointed by McEwan is that postcolonial scholarship attempts to recover the lost history and contemporary voices of the marginalized, the oppressed and the dominated through a radical reconstruction of history and knowledge production. It recognizes and tries to reconstruct the strong civilization of several parts of the developing world prior to European contact, the majority of which were distorted, disacknowledged and rubbished by colonialism.

Exploring the 'Post' in Postcolonial Discourses

On a global transhistorical scale, the 'post' in postcolonial discourses is still a subject of intellectual contestation because of the varied outcomes of colonialism in different parts of the world. As Robert Young (2001) has queried, if the 'post' in postcolonial refers to the disadvantaged circumstances of former colonies, for instance, how do we classify countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, to some extent, who today speak of themselves as having been formally colonized? Similarly, are the non-indigenous people of European extraction in the former colonies of north/south America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand colonizers or colonized given the nature of their historical relationships with the indigenous people and, in the case of the north/south America, relations with the 'imported' black populations? (See Young 2001 for further elaboration of these views). Other scholars like Tejumola (2005) have argued that postcoloniality might be inapplicable to Africa because the continent has not in reality surmounted or transcended coloniality. Tejumola similarly relates the metaphor to postmodernity and modernity, arguing that the former – a historical condition associated with the contradictions of overdeveloped modernity in the West – may not apply to Africa where modernity is still substantially a mirage. Tejumola's critique seems to presuppose a linear historical progression from coloniality to postcoloniality and from modernity to postmodernity, a perspective that many analysts do not share. Most experts tend to favour the idea of a more dialectical and concatenated transition or evolution as opposed to a linear succession of dispensations and temporalities. Mbembe (2010) asserts emphatically that 'as far as Africa is concerned, colonialism is over' and that 'Africans are now the free masters of their own destiny'. Seeing Africans as masters of their own destiny, Mbembe largely blames African leaders for the crises of postcoloniality. He depicts most of the African post-independence leaders as 'potentates' wielding 'necropower' – i.e. 'sovereign power deployed for maximum destruction of persons and for subjecting vast populations to a social existence of deathscapes or conditions of living dead' – and 'operating through capture, looting and predation' (ibid.). The African masses and the subject classes are not spared by Mbembe as he perceives them to be spellbound to the potentate through a mutually disempowering political culture that legitimates and celebrates elite

grandiosity, vulgarity, obscenity and banality of power expressed through predatory amassing of public resources at the expense of the impoverished gullible subjects. The dramatic pattern of relationship between the postcolonial potentate and his clientelistic elite on the one hand, and the downtrodden subjects on the other hand, is described by Mbembe as a paradox of 'conviviality' (ibid.). Mbembe's allusion to 'conviviality' is an essentialist meta-narrative that should not be understood as a total but partial (if not ambivalent) subjectivism. This critique is fore-grounded by the evident context-specific fragmentation, fluidity and pliability of social classes and class relations in Africa. However, the observed tendency towards circumstantial and partial conviviality is part of the nexus of 'practices, routines and mentalities' (Young 2004:23) that reinforces and reproduces what I have described elsewhere as 'the domestic social relations of postcoloniality' (Omeje 2008:91). The historically unequal and exploitative intercourse between the metropole and the hegemonic elites in the postcolonial states constitutes the 'external social relations of postcoloniality' (ibid.). Mbembe (2010) lampoons the 'pervasive discourse of victimization and resentment' in which African nativists, nationalists and Afro-Marxists tend to blindly 'blame everything on the (colonial) past', a discursive predilection the author likened to 'an endless process of sorcery or witchcraft'. Whether or not Africans are in charge of their own destiny and the extent to which they could be regarded as being in charge at different stages of the postcolonial era are some of the most controversial questions in the debate on postcoloniality. These are certainly not questions that could be resolved in a collective trans-disciplinary book project of this nature; however, the various chapters of this volume have made contributions to extend the frontiers of the debate.

Postcolonial Theories, Transhistorical Ambivalence and the Legacies of Colonialism

It is significant to note that colonialism created an ambivalent position in the 'settler or dominion colonies' where the 'colonizers' at a point in the historical development of colonialism either metamorphosed into anti-colonial nationalists as in the case of north/south America or cooperated with the imperial metropole to gain political and economic independence as in the case of Australia, New Zealand and most ambiguously South Africa (see Young 2001:20). 'Many of the countries of south America, such as Chile or Peru, simply replaced Spanish colonial rule by a form of internal colonialism, the autocratic rule of a European settler minority' (ibid.).

Postcolonial theorists generally attribute the crises of postcoloniality to the multifaceted legacies of colonialism, including the variegated, ambivalent and ambiguous experiences of decolonization and declaration of independence in the ex-colonial states. In the African context, there is hardly any facet of life that was not affected by colonialism. The direction of the impact of colonialism on

African societies is arguably both positive and negative, although most Africanists on the left of the ideological spectrum argue that colonial rule had no intended constructive impact on Africa and that whatever positive outcomes that emerged from colonialism was essentially incidental, unintended and inevitable for the furtherance of the imperial dictatorships (see Fanon 1965; Rodney 1972).

Even though colonialism set out to *inter alia* destroy African indigenous systems and modes of social organization and to conversely impose metropolitan cultures and systems (the so-called 'modern' equivalents) on Africa, it is significant that most of the African institutions and cultural patterns survived the onslaught of colonial devastation, albeit not without significant metropolitan distortions and acculturation. Many factors accounted for the survival of a large number of indigenous systems and institutions. These include: the defiance and resistance of the 'natives'; the limited scope and lopsided nature of colonial penetration due largely to inadequate resources and local hostilities; the receding underground of some proscribed cultural practices, agencies and institutions; as well as the sheer absence of functional alternatives for some of the proscribed and denigrated social practices and institutions. The widespread conflicts between indigenous systems and their modern Western counterparts, which cut across the various spheres of state and society, are at the heart of the crises of postcoloniality in Africa. The role and interests of various local groups, especially the ruling and governing postcolonial elites often contribute to an exacerbation and deepening of the crises. The most critical in this respect is probably what Mbembe (2010) describes as the 'looting, brutality and predatory practices of the local elites' associated with the 'banality of power' in 'the potentate's postcolony'.

With the end of the Cold War and the evident failure of both the right-wing modernization project and left-wing (quasi)socialist experiments in Africa, the debate on postcoloniality seems to have moved on to a searching critique of African social formations. What is peculiar about African systems and institutions that seem to make them susceptible to failure? Ostensibly, one of the most intriguing critiques has come from the various shades of post-structuralism, notably the postmodernist school. With their avowed 'incredulity towards meta-narratives' (Lyotard 1984:7), most postmodernist commentators generally recognize the historical fact of colonial underdevelopment, but tend to place a greater weight of analysis on social fragmentation in Africa (i.e. ethnicity and other forms of identity, as well as politicization of fragmentation), the neopatrimonial nature of politics and the brazen misgovernance and corruption of the African hegemonic elites (see Monga 1996; Mbembe 2001; Tar & Durrani 2007). In other words, while recognizing historical antecedents and constraints imposed by inherited colonial structures, proponents are of the view that much of the tragedy of postcolonial Africa has to do with the perfidy, disservice and unwholesome activities of various African local actors (especially, but not exclusively, the privileged classes). Proponents further argue that to better appreciate and understand African

conditions, there is need for country-specific analysis as opposed to generalization given the differential impacts of colonialism and variations in the quality and style of postcolonial governance.

An Epilogue to this Volume

Postcoloniality is in deep-rooted crisis in Africa. But the crisis is neither monolithic nor has it just begun. It is a mosaic of transhistorical crises that, using biomedical metaphors, were in part conceived and constituted in the loins of precoloniality, mutated, incubated and produced in coloniality, and ultimately prolificated and aggravated through the incontinency of the postcolonial. Far from being an idyllic timespace of purity, geniality and communality as portrayed by the chief proponents of Negritude (Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Leon Damas), precolonial Africa had all the contrasts of transitional societies – intergroup cooperation and conflict, as well as configuration and reconfiguration of political authorities, formations and demographic boundaries, etc. In the absence of mutually-legitimated Westphalian-type states and an 'international society with distinctive rules, norms, and institutions that actors embrace in conducting international relations' (Jackson and Sørensen 2007), the propensity for rivalry between political communities, and wars of aggression and domination of weak communities by their more powerful counterparts (empires, principalities, chiefdoms, etc) was substantially high in precolonial Africa. The contribution by Raphael Njoku in this volume, among other things, succinctly explores the nature of African indigenous political systems, as well as the power game and attendant conflicts within and between them, prior to Western colonization. Internal slavery partly related to the montage of feudal wars and inter-community raiding with diverse motives were some of the processes through which domination and enslavement (sometimes of war prisoners) of the vulnerable were perpetuated for extraction of tributes and as cheap sources of labour. In contrast to internal slavery, two types of externally-induced slavery with far more devastating consequences were carried out in Africa south of the Sahara during the precolonial era, which have already been discussed in the preceding exposé.

Colonialism was ultimately conceived as a replacement for the seemingly more obnoxious trans-Atlantic slave trade to continue the acceleration of Western Europe's development at the expense of Africa's resources. The crises unleashed by colonial rule on Africa were monumental and have been extensively captured by many of the contributions to this volume, notably the chapters by Munene, Abubakar, Njoku, Machakanja, Onyango and Mutisi. Colonization in a nutshell arrested and unravelled African civilization, imposed Western imperial structures on Africa, and in the process, produced deleterious distorting, disorienting and disarticulating effects on the entire political, social, legal and economic structures of societies. Coloniality generated enough crises to go round, with a potential energy to outlive and reproduce itself in perpetuity.

Postcoloniality is logically linked to two levels of crises unleashed on Africa by colonial destabilization. The first level is the physical aspect and this is concerned with the political and economic structures inherited from the colonial dispensation, which privilege the metropole (ex-colonial masters and the West) and the local postcolonial political elites. The contributions by Yates, Keenan and Abubakar (to mention a few) to this volume have eloquently underscored the symbiotic relations between Africa's postcolonial elites and their Western allies, and how the self-serving exploitative relations have continued to reinforce Africa's strategic marginality, subservience and underdevelopment. In particular, Murithi and Kabia have extended the frontiers of the debate to African regional institutions (African Union and ECOWAS) by demonstrating the complex interplay of postcoloniality in conflict regionalization, as well as how the phenomenon has historically affected the efforts toward regional security, development, unity and integration. The second level of crises is the mental and social aspect, which has to do with the binary values and stereotypes, internalized behavioural patterns, attitudes, and idiosyncrasies that tend to reinforce the social relations of postcoloniality. The second level further extends to the structurally embedded, influential and continuing discourses of Africa and Africans in a (neo-) nativist sense. In the end, it is evident from the various contributions to this volume that, contrary to Crawford Young's proclamation in 2004 announcing 'the demise of the postcolonial moment', postcoloniality remains a contemporary African reality.

Contributors' Perspectives on the Crises of Postcoloniality in Africa

In Chapter 2, Raphael Chijioke Njoku explores the nature of precolonial politics in Africa, against the backdrop of which he illuminates the institutionalized disorder and complications brought about by colonialism. Njoku reviews a spectrum of precolonial political systems in Africa – from decentralized to centralized systems, which he observes were at different levels of evolution and essentially underscored by a political culture of accommodation, consensus, collective responsibility, and a people-centred sovereignty. The author argues that Africa's indigenous political development was arrested, distorted, and reversed by the imposition of colonial rule, which came with Western cultural values, institutions and normative standards. African postcolonial leaders, the chapter concludes, have been torn between conflicting imaginations of what could be salvaged from the convoluted colonial experience, their visions of how to restructure the postcolonial state and the vested interests of the powerful neocolonial forces.

Dauda Abubakar in Chapter 3 analyses how the historical insertion of Africa into the global economy has confined the continent to a marginal role in world politics, a continuing tendency that, as the author argues, is reinforced in the contemporary dispensation by the political economy of postcoloniality. Abubakar submits that 'Africa's incorporation into the global economy, the subsequent imposition of colonial rule and the plunder of Africa's human and material

resources significantly altered the social, economic, territorial and political relations on the continent'.

Writing in Chapter 4, Douglas Yates demonstrates how the postcolonial contexts in Africa have shaped and exacerbated the conditions for different forms of armed violence, especially among countries that are richly endowed with and dependent on oil resources (notably Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, São Tomé & Príncipe, Cameroun and Angola). The author attributes the close association between oil and armed violence to Mbembe's theses that the postcolony is 'characterized by a tendency to excess and lack of proportion', and consequently 'has a series of corporate institutions and political machinery that constitute a distinctive regime of violence'.

In exploring the conflicts between traditionalism and modernity in postcolonial Africa in Chapter 5, Kenneth Omeje and Chis M. A. Kwaja argue that 'colonial rule had an extraverted agenda conceived to serve the overall interest of the colonizers at the expense of the colonized', an agenda which necessitated 'the tendency towards a systematic obliteration of the entire African social structures and the imposition of their Western equivalents or alternatives where such existed'. However, the authors argue that because colonial rule was not successful in displacing and destroying indigenous African social institutions considered to be primitive, postcolonial Africa has been particularly characterized by structural and often violent conflicts between 'indigenous social systems (alternatively conceptualized in extant literature as 'traditionalism') and modernity in all spheres of African life'. The conflicts, as the joint chapter demonstrates with a myriad of ethnographic illustrations, have far-reaching consequences for the various African states and societies.

Focusing on west Africa in Chapter 6, John M. Kabia analyses how the crises of postcoloniality is linked to incidents of failing and failed states, armed conflict, conflict intervention and post-conflict peace building. Kabia examines 'the impact of colonialism on the sub-region and how it laid the foundations of authoritarianism, state collapse and conflicts'. Focusing chiefly on Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau, the chapter further evaluates the conflict responses and humanitarian interventions of the regional body ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), its efforts to institutionalize conflict resolution and peace building mechanisms, as well as the challenges and opportunities facing security governance in the West African region.

Macharia Munene analyses how European imperialist interests, ideologies and strategies, among other negativities, fostered problematic identities in Eastern Africa and the Horn that have been the predominant basis for postcolonial conflicts in the zone (see Chapter 7). Having arrogated to themselves the rights to enslave and reshape the Africans to suit imperial whims, the West masterminded 'the mental enslavement of Africans, orchestrated ethnic divisions, invented *dysfunctional* ethnicities and nations, and cultivated loyalty to colonial masters; colonies in the

zone became states and plunged into prolonged disputes'. Because the struggle for independence in Africa was principally aimed at getting rid of white colonial rule, postcolonial Africa has for the most part retained the inherited divisive colonial structures, territorial boundaries and identity formations that have perpetuated virulent conflicts in eastern Africa and the Horn. The penchant of African regional institutions (e.g. African Union, Intergovernmental Authority for Development, and the International Conference on Great Lakes Region) to rigidly insist on the inelasticity of inherited colonial borders when addressing transnational border and identity-related conflicts, as Munene argues, seems not to be helpful in redressing the divisive colonial legacy. The result, as the author concludes, is that (pre)colonial identity fragmentation whereby the identity of the Kenyan Maasai is, for instance, different from that of the Tanzanian Maasai, and the Tigrean in Eritrea believes he is different from the Tigrean in Ethiopia, continues to have negative implications for both national and regional integration.

Jeremy Keenan in Chapter 8 explores postcolonial imperialism in Africa's Maghreb and Sahel region, arguing that the 9/11 2001 terrorist attacks on the US and the ensuing US-led global war on terror (GWOT) 'have played a key role in facilitating the renewed imperialization of the continent'. The concealed interest of the West in the regions is access to energy (oil and gas) and other valuable mineral resources. The author systematically documents and analyses how political regimes in the region (notably the sub regional hegemon Algeria) have played the role of willing collaborators in the 'new imperialism'. In the process, they often fabricate terrorist threats and securitize domestic opponents and insurgents as Islamist terrorists – all in a bid to ensure regime survival and attract sundry aid from America and its Western allies. The waging of this fictitious war, Keenan infers, has logically led to Washington's self-fulfilled prophesy of radical Islamist groups gravitating towards Al Qaeda, as well as the much hyped Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) increasingly attracting recruits in the region.

Writing in Chapter 9, Martha Mutisi 'appraises the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in conflict intervention in Zimbabwe, following the *protracted* conflict between the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)'. Based on a balanced evaluation of both the achievements and challenges of the mediation effort by the sub-regional body, the author posits that SADC's experience in intervening in the Zimbabwean conflict impels a rethink of the philosophy and role of regional organizations, particularly in the context of intra-state conflicts that are rooted in colonial legacy and which have significant regional consequences. While acknowledging that SADC's conflict mediation diplomacy was instrumental in achieving a negotiated settlement that prevented the descent into a full-scale civil war in Zimbabwe, Mutisi argues that, on the downside, SADC's intervention paradigm tends to essentially serve the interests of the heads of state at the expense of the citizens of the sub-region.

Moses Onyango sets out in Chapter 10 to demonstrate how precolonial antecedents, and especially colonial heritage, have fundamentally conditioned postcolonial political discourses and struggles in Kenya. Two major consequential features of colonial politics in Kenya were: (a) the structural exclusion of the colonized; and (b) the forcible expropriation of the vast arable farmlands owned by various ethnic communities, such as the Maasia and the Kalenjin communities, to promote cash crop capitalist agriculture. Whilst the recovery of land from the colonial imperialist served as a popular mass mobilization rhetoric in the Kenyan anti-colonial liberation war, Onyango argues that Kenya's post-independence rulers used their control of state power to distribute among themselves, their family members and cronies, the vast tracts of land abandoned by or recovered from the ex-colonial masters. In effect, the postcolonial leaders who have invariably tended to articulate and represent some narrow ethno cultural, elitist interests essentially replaced the interests of the colonial masters in the land economy with their self-serving interests to the betrayal and consternation of the common people. This unjust land grabbing, which subsequent political regimes have perpetuated and politicized rather than redressing, according to the author, is at the heart of the crises of postcoloniality in contemporary Kenya.

Pamela Machakanja examines the historical transitions in the role of women in the indigenous African political systems, including the effects of colonialism on African women, and the challenges and opportunities facing women in contemporary African societies (see Chapter 11). Using various ethnographic examples, the author argues that the various African indigenous political systems respected the rights and dignity of women, stressing that the crises of gender inequality and subsequent impoverishment and denigration of women were largely an outcome of colonial destruction of the indigenous Africa social structures. To restore gender equity and women's dignity, Machakanja emphasizes the need for the reconstruction of the African state based on Africa cultural values, history, traditions, priorities and needs in a manner that will be responsive to the day-to-day realism and challenges of the people.

In Chapter 12, Tim Murithi evaluates how Pan-Africanism relates to, and attempts to address, the crises of postcoloniality. He argues that in the postcolonial dispensation, 'the crises of postcoloniality in Africa manifest as the internal issues of social and political exclusion, authoritarianism, economic mismanagement and the misappropriation of state resources'. All of these manifest tendencies are squarely an indictment on the *modus operandi* and banality of purpose of the African postcolonial elites who principally exercise political power for their selfish and inordinate aggrandizement. Murithi traces the evolution of pan-Africanism from the precolonial to colonial and postcolonial stages where the ideology has *inter alia* represented a philosophical rally for the liberation, dialogue and unity of both the Africans in the Diaspora and on the continent. With particular reference to the

present circumstantial dispensation, 'the underlying agenda of the creation of the African Union (AU) was to promote solidarity, cooperation and support among African countries and peoples in order to address the crises of postcoloniality'. The AU has also established a range of institutions designed to redress the crises. Murithi concludes that 'the ability of the African Union to address the crises of postcoloniality will largely depend on the extent to which it can transform the extensive range of principles, norms and values that it has adopted over the years into practical implementable policies'. Leadership on the part of the African leaders and their conscientious partnership with the people will be key to such a desired transformation on the continent.

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