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Western Social Sciences[1] and Africa: The Domination and Marginalisation of a Continent

Introduction

This paper seeks to investigate the role that Western world views, or what one scholar has referred to as the Western 'sociology of ideas',[2] informed largely, but not only, by knowledge derived from the various branches of social science disciplines, played in the history of the African continent and its people. The article considers the topic from the period of the Renaissance and the wave of early European expansion that it gave rise to, through the Enlightenment and the rise of Western industrialism, the era of European colonialism in Africa, to the post-colonial era. It recognises the fact that Western social science has never been monolithic in its approaches and ideas and that what constitutes knowledge has always been contested. Nevertheless, there has been, since the development of Modern Europe, what can rightfully be called a Western view of the world, particularly with respect to non-Western societies and cultures.

The paper argues that, apart from other effects, Western science, capitalism and social science and other knowledges and practices not only led to the domination of the African continent by the West but also to its marginalisation in the world in terms of economic development and Africa's capacity to participate fully in the global knowledge community. It further argues that the domination and marginalisation that were the hallmarks of the centuries of interaction between Africa and the West continue to the present and have serious implications for Africa's future development. Finally, it calls for the development of an African social science tradition and investigates the challenges facing scholars in Africa.

The paper is organised into four segments. The first traces the rise of European expansionism culminating in the establishment of the Atlantic economic system that was built on the back of African slave labour, which, in turn, fuelled the industrial revolution in Europe. The second part investigates the impact of the Enlightenment and industrialism on Africa, especially the rise of European colonialism which was facilitated and entrenched by European technology and the social sciences and which produced particular long-lasting negative effects on African societies. The third part addresses the role of Western social science in the form of the neo-liberal paradigm pushed by multi-lateral financial agencies and its impact on Africa. The last and final part

explores the need for developing an African social science tradition and the challenges facing African social scientists.

From the Renaissance to the Atlantic system

Although the 'modern' period is often dated from the era of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, it can be argued that the trends that eventually resulted in the flowering of the Enlightenment and the industrialism that accompanied and complemented it began much earlier in the Renaissance and the Mercantilist system that emerged from it. The intellectual and cultural ferment that characterised the Renaissance resulted in a profound transformation in the way that European society conceptualised, organised and managed itself and brought about dramatic changes in Europe's economic and political systems and practices. These changes had far-reaching consequences for the rest of the world, in general, and Africa, in particular, as the societies outside Europe were gradually but progressively incorporated into an evolving international trade network with its centre in Europe in the early phase of what we now call globalisation.

The Renaissance was accompanied, among other developments, by the rise of nation states, an information packaging and dissemination revolution in the form of the invention of the printing press, the emergence of banks and insurance and other forms of financial support for commerce, the Reformation and the widespread use of gunpowder, which gave European nations great potential for destruction and, therefore, for subjugation of peoples abroad, and an acceleration in the quest to discover new lands through the voyages of exploration (not 'voyages of discovery' as the indigenous populations knew where they were). Making these voyages possible were a number of technological innovations that improved the quality of sailing ships and the development of cartography, which made navigation safer and more reliable.
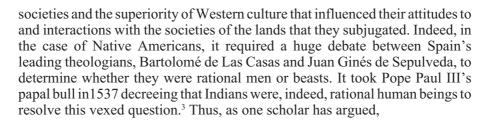
While the social sciences as academic disciplines are of relatively recent origin, the ideas that later gave rise to them had been around for a long time even if not conceptualised and articulated as academic disciplines. Thus, ideas about economic organisation, politics, law, and social organisation, among others, were influential in shaping European society and practices long before disciplines formally classified as social sciences came into existence. It was, for instance, contemporary European ideas of what constituted sound economic principles and practices, then known as Mercantilism, which guided Europe's early domestic economic arrangements and its overseas policies. The quest for bullion, then regarded as the true measure of a nation's wealth, inspired the voyages of exploration and led, subsequently, to the colonisation of the Caribbean and Latin America and parts of Africa and Asia.

Equally, even though Anthropology as a discipline had not yet been established, it was European assumptions about the inferiority of non-western

societies and the superiority of Western culture that influenced their attitudes to and interactions with the societies of the lands that they subjugated. Indeed, in the case of Native Americans, it required a huge debate between Spain's leading theologians, Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepulveda, to determine whether they were rational men or beasts. It took Pope Paul III's papal bull in 1537 decreeing that Indians were, indeed, rational human beings to resolve this vexed question.[3] Thus, as one scholar has argued,

> In the epoch of 'discovery', Western Europe had experienced an unprecedented development in technology and science, which was accompanied by a strong feeling of 'white race superiority'. The social sciences [when they eventually developed as disciplines] bore the imprint of this arrogance, and anthropology, ethnology or sociology attempted to legitimise scientifically the hegemony of Europe and the supremacy of the 'Aryan race'.[4]
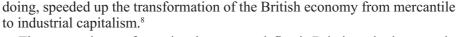
As is well documented, contact between Europe and the indigenous American population proved disastrous for the latter, as diseases brought in by the Europeans as part of the Columbian Exchange decimated the Native American population and induced a demographic collapse of immense proportions.[5] The death of Native Americans at the very time that the newly-established colonies needed as much labour as they could find in order to exploit the gold and silver resources and agricultural potential in the region led the European nations to turn to Africa for cheap labour.[6] In this way, Africa was drawn into the growing web of trade networks with its hub in Western Europe. Thus began the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade that was to see millions of Africans being forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean and forced into slavery. The enslavement of Africans was justified by an ideology which regarded them as inferior heathens who would, in fact, benefit from enslavement as this would expose them to the dignity of manual labour and Christianity and save them from pursuing a meaningless existence of bloodletting and savagery in their native continent.

The impact of the slave trade on the African continent has been well documented in the work of Rodney, Inikori, and others.[7] Generally, the loss of millions of Africa's able-bodied young men and women and the disruption caused by slave wars, among other factors, destroyed Africa's potential for development. Africa's loss was, however, Europe's gain, for while Africa lost the labour power of its most productive men and women to slavery, the West benefited immensely from the sweat of African slaves working on the plantations and in the mines of the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States. Indeed, it has been argued that the British Industrial Revolution was made possible by the slave trade and slavery, not so much because of the profits it produced for individual slave traders and planters but because of the industry's spin-off effects on the British economy. It, for instance, promoted Britain's shipbuilding industry, iron industry, banking and insurance, textile manufacturing and other undertakings that were linked to the slave trade and, in so

doing, speeded up the transformation of the British economy from mercantile to industrial capitalism.[8]

The economic transformation that occurred, first in Britain and subsequently in other European nations and the United States that has come to be known as the Industrial Revolution, took place in tandem with the Enlightenment and shared the same values, which shaped Western society's institutions and ideas. The Enlightenment, which gave birth to the French and American revolutions and championed ideas of rationality, individualism, universality, and progress, helped shape Western Europe's structures and institutions, while industrialism radically improved Western society's economic productive capacity. Unfortunately for the non-Western world, the Enlightenment also fostered in western European societies an arrogant self-image and belief not only in the superiority of their institutions and culture but also in the universality of their tenets and beliefs.
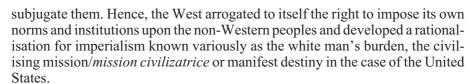
The colonial era

It was with the economic productive power that capitalism and science afforded and the arrogance born of the Enlightenment and the liberal rationalism that it spawned, now studied and developed in academic disciplines known collectively as the social sciences, that Europe embarked on its African colonisation project in Africa in the nineteenth century. It was, after all, as J. Argerich points out, in the nineteenth century when social thinking became 'an independent field of knowledge, much more than a collection of opinions and historical memories' and how the discipline of economics was born of the 'division of labour and by the expansion of trade'.[9]

Not surprisingly, these disciplines viewed the world through Eurocentric eyes and operated on the premise that western norms were universal. All other systems, societies, practices and cultures were, therefore, to be measured against them. Thus, the Western world grew increasingly to deny 'the existence of any "self" but its own'.[10] Even critiques of the dominant liberal rational paradigm such as Marxism also shared the same Eurocentricism, for eurocentricism affected all social scientists that 'grew up in an environment where European supremacy or the centrality and universality of the European experience was taken for granted – even by radical social critics'.[11] Therefore, these disciplines contributed to the development of a world view in which the superiority of Western culture, institutions and knowledge over the institutions, culture and 'knowledges' of other societies was unquestioned.

This attitude enabled the Western world to justify its imperialism as necessary and good because it facilitated the spread of civilisation. The fact that there were other civilisations with equal claim to legitimacy was not considered. In fact, the Western world was not willing or prepared to accept parity with those of a different race, language and culture but rather sought to

subjugate them. Hence, the West arrogated to itself the right to impose its own norms and institutions upon the non-Western peoples and developed a rational-isation for imperialism known variously as the white man's burden, the civil-ising mission/*mission civilizatrice* or manifest destiny in the case of the United States.

This sense of mission was promoted by a brand of pseudo-social science known as social Darwinism or scientific racism that was propounded by a number of academics and writers who argued that the white races had a God-given mission to spread civilisation to the 'darker' corners of the world. One of its most committed adherents was the American politician Albert Beveridge who argued at the end of the nineteenth century that:

> God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organisers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has made us adept at government that we may administer government among savages.[12]

For his part, Rudyard Kipling celebrated the American takeover of the Philip-pines from Spain after the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898 by writing a poem entitled 'The White Man's Burden' in which he urged white men to:

> Take up the White Man's burden –
> Send forth the best ye breed –
> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives' need;
> To wait in heavy harness,
> On fluttered folk and wild –
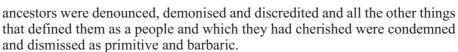> Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
> Half-devil and half-child.

Fired by this sense of destiny, the United States became an imperial power after 1898 with the acquisition of Hawaii, the Philippines and Puerto Rico and the establishment of a virtual protectorate over the island of Cuba, while Europe expanded its empire with the scramble for Africa also at the end of the nineteenth century when the African continent was carved up like the proverbial turkey and, in a matter of a few years, lost its sovereignty and freedom to Western colonial rule.

Partnering the social sciences in providing the justification for European imperialism and the carving up of Africa and facilitating the European takeover and control of African peoples was Western religion. As is well documented, assisting in the conquest and subjugation of the African people were mission-aries who either came in advance of colonial rule or accompanied the conquering colonial armies and colonial administrators. In converting the Africans to Christianity, missionaries, at the same time, helped destroy the African people's belief systems and world view and, through the schools they set up, imparted Western norms, tastes and standards. The Africans' belief systems and culture were subjected to relentless attack. Their gods and

ancestors were denounced, demonised and discredited and all the other things that defined them as a people and which they had cherished were condemned and dismissed as primitive and barbaric.

The colonising Western world found little in Africa to respect or appreciate. Indigenous knowledge systems were dismissed out of hand, while all efforts were made to promote and privilege Western ideas and knowledge in the name of modernisation or Westernisation. As one scholar has put it, under Western domination, the Africans saw their

> religion condemned as idolatry; their Gods were but demons or fetishes; their ancestors were lost souls, having lived and died outside the Church; their feasts and ceremonies were all idolatrous and pagan; their dances were immoral; their diviners were sorcerers; their medicine was magic and quackery; their languages were hopelessly tone-infested cacophonies, while their names were unpronounceable gibberish for which the ... names of European canonised saints had to be substituted. All was one irredeemable *massa damnata*.[13]

Thus, colonialism and its underpinning ideology and knowledge system struck at the very foundation of Africanity by destroying and condemning African beliefs and the things that defined what it meant to be African. To paraphrase Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, colonialism had severed the ties that bound the Africans together so that the centre could no longer hold.

In the field of education, all was done to remould the African's way of thinking and self-pecerption and to undermine the African's dignity and pride in indigenous culture and society. The African student was taught, for instance, that Africa had nothing in its past worth studying; that it was a 'dark continent', which was rescued from its meaningless past by European colonialism. Indeed, as late as 1960, one of Oxford's leading intellectual lights, Professor Trevor-Roper, was proclaiming, without any shame or hesitation, that Africa had no history until the arrival of the white people. Therefore African history was only the history of white people on the Continent.

Thus, while African children were drilled in the history of England, France, Portugal and Italy and could recite the life stories of European statesmen and leading historical figures like Mazzini, Napoleon, and Bismarck, they knew nothing about their own past or their own heroes. Thus they grew up to glorify the West and to look down upon things African and, therefore, became inculcated with a permanent inferiority complex. Colonial education was, in most cases, education for subservience and subjection rather than for emancipation and empowerment. Thus, in addition to the physical subjugation of societies under colonialism, there was also an intellectual imperialism that reinforced Western dominance.
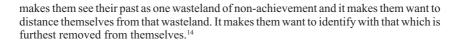
This type of education produced an educated African who was, in fact, a hybrid, for as Ngugi Wa Thiongo observed, colonial education:

> ... annihilates a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It

makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves.[14]

The inferiority complex induced by colonialism in Africa has persisted well into the post-colonial era when the structures and systems of formal colonialism are no longer in existence, particularly among Africa's social scientists and academics, for as Dennis Kwek has pointed out, in former colonies, 'education and research can continue to have colonising functions, long after imperial rule'. Thus, the production of knowledge by post-colonial elites continues to be based on 'Western epistemological schema and theories, deeply rooted in and informed by colonial thought', while Western academic institutions are revered. Promotion at African universities for academics depends on their ability to publish in 'international', read Western, journals while African journals produced by the very institutions themselves are looked down upon.

Therefore, a form of intellectual and academic imperialism continues to this day, an imperialism to which the victims willingly succumb by perpetuating an intellectual dependency on former colonisers. Commenting on this phenomenon in Asia, Kwek spoke of the persistence of 'an intellectual identity based on internalised subjugation, a bondage that denies its very self-existence within the ... academic communities while at the same time perpetuating itself', and how 'scholars seek to emulate the West in a mimetic and uncritical way'.[15]

Commentators on the social sciences in Africa have noted a similar pattern, with one scholar observing how, in the West, 'recent theories and applications of science are constantly irrigating the work of its researchers, thereby allowing them to bring pertinent, innovative readings to the analysis of contemporary occurrences', while in Africa,
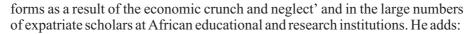
I sense no such quivering in the renewal of thought. The works of our philosophers, sociologists, political economists, economists and many more that I could mention are for the most part only private recesses inside the fields defined by Western researchers ... instead of offering us appropriate new paradigms their work gives us only variations on old themes that have been harked back to a thousand times since the various countries became independent.

He enjoins scholars working in the Humanities and in Economic and Political sciences in Africa to offer new paradigms that will help Africa have an independent view of itself and which will help 'to clear our horizon which is blocked by all the incongruous rubbish inherited from colonization'.[16]

For his part, Thandika Mkandawire observes that the social science community in Africa is relatively new and because of this, tends to be dependent on Western social science paradigms. This dependency manifests itself in 'the continued existence of replicas of institutional forms borrowed from the metropolitan countries in undiluted, albeit progressively tattered,

forms as a result of the economic crunch and neglect' and in the large numbers of expatriate scholars at African educational and research institutions. He adds:

> Intellectual dependence also generates a negative self-image among African scholars. Such an image may be demonstrated by forms of intellectual mimetism in which local scholarship is confined to 'empirical verification' of hypothesis thrown up by institutions in the metropolitan countries without any attempt to evaluate their theoretical appropriateness and historical status. To reinforce this mimetism is a reward or merit system which accords foreign appreciation of research results greater weight than that of the local peer group. Not surprisingly, this leads to intellectual opportunism in which choice of themes and approaches are not a reflection of one's understanding of the issues but a compliance to the criteria of the dominant reward system.[17]
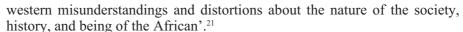
Similarly, K. K. Prah laments how African scholars who emerged in the post-Second World War era tended to define their 'scholastic roots ... within the framework of the various western philosophical and methodological schools' and have not made any efforts to develop a distinctly African research tradition and methodology 'free of the preoccupative benchmarks of the dominant western scholarship or its methodological paradigms'. As a result,

> ... they have nurtured the permanence of an appendage status to western scholarship. This outlook dictates a condition in which African scholars examine issues through western preoccupative blinkers. The selection of issues for scientific enquiry, the methodological mindsets and the prioritisation of research items are approached through western criteria... Until and unless reference is made to western academic authorities and homage paid to scholastic shrines, African intellectuals are unable to put out their own flags and stand on their own feet... This mentality reinforces inferior and appendage status for African academics, in a world where most of the prestigious institutions of higher learning are in the west, where most scholarly journals are based and where most of the financial resources for research emanate.[18]

Yet, as Prah also points out, the reaction of early African intellectuals to the denigration of and Western onslaught on Africa was not always a resort to mimetism but to a robust defence of the African past. Early black writers like James Africanus Neale Horton fought hard to combat the 'false theories of modern anthropologists',[19] while others, the most prominent of whom was Chiekh Anta Diop, advanced an Afrocentric interpretation of African history. A committed defender of the dignity of the African past which Western social science was dismissing, he was convinced that 'only by re-examining and restoring Africa's distorted, maligned and obscured place in world history could the physical and psychological shackles of colonialism be lifted from our Motherland and from African people dispersed globally'.[20] Among his publications, *African Origin of Civilization: Myth and Reality* (1974) and *Civilisation or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology* (1981) are good examples of a scholarly effort to restore to the African past what Western social sciences had taken from it. Other early writers were J. E. Casely Hayford, S. M. Molema, Jomo Kenyatta and the various authors associated with the *Negritude* movement. What they all had in common was their determination to 'correct

western misunderstandings and distortions about the nature of the society, history, and being of the African'.[21]

In the meantime, European colonialism, informed by various social sciences, which characterised African institutions as primitive and static, imposed western structures, systems and practices that had been developed in Europe under particular historical circumstances on societies with a different world view and different histories. Even the methodologies employed by Western social scientists were not appropriate, as they had been developed for a Western environment. Thus 'concepts of the individual, of class, of the state, community, justice, equity and security' were applied willy-nilly to an analysis of Africa whose culture, values and traditional practices the scholars little understood. The result was the imposition of 'structural parallels derived from the experience of Western societies' which tended to entrench 'foreign cultures and ideologies that have failed miserably to tackle the pressing problems of underdevelopment and poverty'[22] and have sometimes made the problems worse.

The determination to replicate in Africa structures familiar to them in Europe led the colonial authorities to invent traditions and institutions for Africa. Thus 'warrant chiefs' were invented and imposed on the people of south-eastern Nigeria, while self-serving laws were created and decreed 'customary law' to govern the colonised even though there were no such laws before the arrival of the colonialists.[23]

Sometimes there were glaring contradictions in the manner in which colonialists attempted to carry out their civilising mission, for while, on the one hand, their Political Science championed democracy, human rights and fair play and sought to inculcate these values into the colonised peoples, the colonisers were also quick to harass and imprison African nationalists who clamoured for the vote and for the right to participate in political decision making processes in their countries. African nationalist leaders have, of course, proved to be very good students of the fundamentals of oppressive rule, namely that demands for democracy, respect for human rights and fair play are matters best handled by the police and the military and through detention and imprisonment. It is telling, for instance, that many of Africa's first independent leaders were 'prison graduates', having spent some time in prison or detention for demanding the vote and independence. It is not surprising, therefore, that they tended to rule their countries with as much intolerance for dissent as their predecessors.[24]

The colonial period came to an end, beginning in the early 1960s when most African countries became independent, amidst an intense debate between Western social scientists, subscribing to the Modernisation or Diffusionist school of thought and supporters of the Dependency/Underdevelopment paradigm, mostly from the Third World.[25] The eurocentric Modernisation model, with its contention that the path of development followed by European

nations was the same path that Developing countries also had to traverse in order to become developed, tended to ascribe the lack of development in Africa, Asia and Latin America to cultural and other shortcomings in the societies of those continents and called for closer ties between the developed and developing worlds to facilitate the diffusion of modern values from the former to the latter. Without this process, it was argued, these countries would never develop.

Consequently, American President John Kennedy's government set up the Peace Corps and deployed them around the world to diffuse modern Western values. Hence, Modernisation was sometimes referred to as Westernisation. Modernisation, of course, justified the continued domination of developing countries by Western capital and facilitated the penetration of these markets by multi-national enterprises, which were seen as agents for the diffusion of modern values.

The alternative paradigm, Underdevelopment/Dependency theory, pointed out that the poverty and underdevelopment that Modernisation theorists regarded as evidence of the developing countries' backwardness were, in fact, the result of years of these countries' interaction with the West and that the West's wealth and prosperity were achieved at the expense of the rest of the world.[26] A powerful critique of the Modernisation approach, Dependency/ Underdevelopment, however, lost credibility due to its failure to show how developing countries could disentangle themselves from the clutches of the dominant global capitalist economic system.

The post-colonial period

After a few years of euphoria at the achievement of Uhuru, it became evident that political independence had not brought about economic independence and Kwame Nkrumah and other African spokespersons began to denounce the neo-colonial relations that had replaced formal colonialism. Economically, for a variety of reasons, including the inherited non-viable mono-cultural economies, mismanagement, corruption, the OPEC oil price crisis of 1973 and a generally disabling global economic environment, among other factors, African countries soon found themselves in trouble, with mounting debts and serious balance of payments problems.

At this point, as on many occasions in the past, Western social science inter-vened through the advocacy of a neo-liberal economic model that was touted by its promoters as a panacea for Africa's economic woes. Championed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, this economic paradigm shared Adam Smith's faith in the market to correct all economic ills and to promote economic growth and his belief in the principle of comparative advantage, among other tenets. The IMF and World Bank imposed economic

reform packages known as economic structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) on scores of African countries from the 1970s onwards.

Arguing that African governments were interfering too much in the economy and sending wrong signals which distorted the market, IMF and World Bank proponents of this paradigm called for the roll back of the state and demanded, among other things, that governments trim their bureaucracies, remove any subsidies for services and goods and price controls and privatise public institutions or parastatals. Under the tutelage of these institutions, governments across the continent retrenched their civil servants and trimmed their bureaucracies in the name of promoting economic efficiency. In addition, they opened up their economies to international competition (trade liberalisation), devalued their currencies, ostensibly to make exports cheaper and therefore more competitive, and implemented export-led growth strategies, among other measures, in line with the recommendations of the multilateral agencies.

As has been documented across the continent, the results of these reform programmes were disastrous. Escalating balance of payments problems, mounting foreign debt, domestic political unrest, mounting social problems stemming from unemployment in shrinking economies, de-industrialisation as local companies folded in the face of unmitigated competition from long-established and well-heeled multi-national companies, and a debilitating brain drain as professionals voted with their feet in search of greener pastures abroad; these have been the results of IMF and World Bank-inspired economic structural adjustment programmes.

Under the new neo-liberal wisdom, Africa is being pushed back to where it is desperately trying to run away from, namely, to the production of a few raw materials for the Western markets in return for manufactured products in accordance with the principles of comparative advantage that are championed as good economic policy. They will, thus, continue the marginal role that they have always played in the global economy.
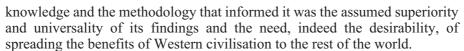
More significantly, Africa is being encouraged to continue to produce raw materials at a time when bio-technology is producing artificial substitutes for some of the raw products exported from Africa. It is urged to liberalise its economy at a time when the Western powers are consolidating their protective blocs, and to remove subsidies for their farmers at the very time that farmers in the European Union and in the United States are enjoying massive subsidies that make it impossible for African producers to compete in the European markets. As in the past, the Western world view or sociology of ideas is marginalising the African continent and facilitating the economic domination of the continent by Western multinational companies.

As has been shown above, the social sciences were born in the West and reflected the experiences and the hegemonic interests of an expanding socio-economic, political and cultural Western world. Central to this body of

knowledge and the methodology that informed it was the assumed superiority and universality of its findings and the need, indeed the desirability, of spreading the benefits of Western civilisation to the rest of the world.

It has also been argued that Western knowledge systems, ever since the dawn of the modern era, have not served Africa well and have led to the domination and marginalisation of the African continent. This, therefore, behoves African scholars to develop their own social science tradition that will enable African societies to fully understand the nature of their problems and provide solutions to them and that will contribute towards the correction of the distortions of African society and its culture perpetrated by the many years of the dominance of Western world views and interpretations. What are the prospects for this happening?

Towards an African social science tradition

As various scholars have demonstrated, there is a growing pool of African social scientists working in and on Africa, often in the face of very difficult economic and political circumstances. However, declining economies, weakening currencies, political instability, heavy teaching loads, and non-existent financial and other research resources have meant that the quality and volume of research in the universities has dwindled in the last thirty or so years, following a brief period of vibrancy soon after independence.
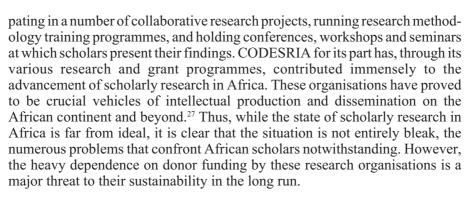
The need to earn a decent living has also seen scholars moving away from basic research to the better paying consultancy work, which produces reports for Non-Governmental Organisations, international organisations and Western governments and their agencies but does not contribute to the pool of knowledge that will inform policy and shape strategies to answer Africa's fundamental problems and challenges. Because the consultancy work is foreign funded, it only addresses the issues that are of interest to the funder and not necessarily matters that are of importance either to the researcher or to his/her society.

A hopeful development in the last few decades is the establishment of regional and continental research organisations that have revived social science research in Africa and provide both funding for research and publishing outlets for African scholars. The most prominent among these are the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organisation of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), and the Association of African Political Scientists (AAPS). These and other donor-funded research organisations encourage research, provide post-graduate level training and support universities.

Since its formation in 1980, for instance, OSSREA has encouraged basic research by running a number of programmes, including research competitions for young scholars, research grants for senior scholars, networking and partici-

pating in a number of collaborative research projects, running research method-ology training programmes, and holding conferences, workshops and seminars at which scholars present their findings. CODESRIA for its part has, through its various research and grant programmes, contributed immensely to the advancement of scholarly research in Africa. These organisations have proved to be crucial vehicles of intellectual production and dissemination on the African continent and beyond.[27] Thus, while the state of scholarly research in Africa is far from ideal, it is clear that the situation is not entirely bleak, the numerous problems that confront African scholars notwithstanding. However, the heavy dependence on donor funding by these research organisations is a major threat to their sustainability in the long run.
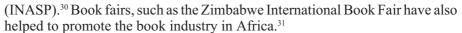
A major constraint facing African social scientists is the lack of publishing outlets. It is common cause that the African publishing industry is grossly underdeveloped. Evidence of this is the fact that in 2002, Africa's contribution to the world's total of 900 books published was a mere 1.5 percent.[28] This is not really surprising given the numerous problems that confront efforts at developing a viable publishing industry in Africa, which include among others, lack of capital and skills, severe national economic problems, the smallness of domestic markets, the lack of a reading culture among African communities, resulting in non-viable domestic markets for books, and competition from the more established multinational publishing companies.[29]

The publishing sector was not always weak and unviable, for soon after independence in the 1960s, the industry experienced a boom in response to the rapid growth of the education sector, as governments poured resources into this sector which was seen as the key to national development. The period also saw a boom in university education and was characterised by the publication of vibrant academic journals by the various university presses across the continent. The subsequent economic decline, the result of global factors and mismanagement by the ruling elite, the rift between academia and the ruling elites as the former increasingly criticised the governing styles of the latter and the destruction caused by the economic structural adjustment programmes imposed on the continent by the IMF and the World Bank since the 1970s; all this negatively impacted on the African publishing industry.

Of late, however, there are signs of recovery. Contributing to this recovery are various organisations that are providing training in the area of publishing, establishing and running publishing and distribution networks and helping with the dissemination of scholarly research through electronic journals. Key organisations are the Africa Publishing Network (APNET), African Book Collective (ABC), Pan-African Bookseller Association (PABA), the Bellagio Publishing Network, the Working Groups and Learning Materials of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications

(INASP).[30] Book fairs, such as the Zimbabwe International Book Fair have also helped to promote the book industry in Africa.[31]

While some locally published academic journals exist in Africa, many are finding it difficult to continue operating, partly because of lack of adequate funding, but also partly because, for reasons already noted above, African academics are reluctant to publish their best work in local journals, preferring to publish in the more prestigious 'international' journals. Thus, a vicious circle is perpetuated where scholars in Africa avoid publishing their best research in African journals because they are not prestigious and the journals remain weak and not prestigious because African scholars do not publish in them.

Nevertheless, although unsatisfactory, the publication of scholarly research in Africa has not been entirely non-existent, as a number of university presses, multinational publishing houses and smaller independent publishers have published many good titles. In Zimbabwe, for example, the University of Zimbabwe Press, Baobab Press, Weaver Press, Mambo Press and others have published some of the best scholarly works to come out of the country in the past two decades. Also to be commended is James Currey Publishers who have entered into co-publishing arrangements with African publishers to publish African editions to be made available to the local market at affordable prices.

As in the field of research, regional organisations are doing tremendous work in promoting publication of scholarly research on the continent. Apart from books, these organisations also publish research reports, workshop reports, and journals that help disseminate scholarly research in Africa and beyond.

As can be seen from the above, there are signs that, despite many challenges and problems, social science research is growing in Africa although there is still need for African social scientists to establish a truly African social science tradition and not to continue to be dependent on the paradigms initiated by scholars in the north. The theoretical frameworks that they should develop independently of the North must address African realities and challenges and help develop appropriate policies that resolve African issues in ways that reflect the lived experiences of Africa's societies.

It is important that 'knowledge of Africa must reflect on Africa's reality not as constructed through Eurocentric prisms, but through a deep immersion in Africa's popular social realities'.[32] In addition, Africa must make its own unique contribution to world knowledge and forge 'the theoretical and philo-sophical lenses through which Africa can be truthfully understood'.[33] In the words of Walter Bgoya, Africa needs to develop its own 'knowledge production centres and knowledge producers, recognised not only locally but internationally as well'.[34]

An African social science tradition is absolutely essential if the distortions perpetuated by Western social science in the past are to be corrected, for as Cyril Obi pointed out, there is need for African scholars to 'transcend the

limitations of truthful lies, [or] imperialism at the level of the sociology of ideas' which have characterised Africa's relationship with the North since the days of European colonialism and which have privileged Northern knowledge, ideas and practices at the expense of African 'knowledges'. The deliberate marginalisation and silencing of African knowledges and voices facilitated the North's mission to construct and perpetuate 'truthful lies' about Africa which present the Continent as the 'insignificant other'.

Accompanying Northern colonialism in Africa was an epistemology that validated Northern presence in Africa and presented colonialists as 'saviors [sic], initiators, mentors, arbiters' in what was, in the words of Ake, 'imperialism in the guise of scientific knowledge'.[35] This tendency continues to manifest itself in these days of globalisation where Africa continues to be marginalised and to be subjected to Western paradigms, research methods, knowledge production and dissemination and the measure of what should be regarded as 'authoritative scholarship'.

In any case, Africa's dependency on knowledges imported from the North has serious implications for the African people's self image and pride in African institutions and practices. As J. Mugambi correctly observes, where knowledge is generated and packaged is very important because of the cultural, ideological, political contexts, which it embodies and conveys. Africa, as a net importer of published knowledge generated abroad, runs the danger of losing its identity and of underdeveloping and undervaluing its own unique forms of knowledge. This is because, when textbooks used in schools and universities in Africa are generated from abroad, they are not likely to speak to the lived experience of the African students or to help them come to terms with their own identity as Africans. In the words of Mugambi, Northern-based publishing houses with outlets in Africa have been:

> ... exporting into this continent, books that are culturally intended for schools, colleges and universities in Europe and North America. Education is a cultural enterprise. Ideally, the publishing industry ought to support that enterprise. Thus, the ... publishing industry has contributed immensely towards the alienation of the African élite from its own culture, by providing texts that are culturally uncontextualised ... How can Africa's élite chart the future of this continent when its education is based on policies and ideas intended for other cultures? How can Africa's youth develop new insights to solve problems in the context of its own culture, while it is exposed only to literature coming from other cultures? The time has come for Africa's élite to contribute towards shaping the future of this continent through publication of the knowledge and experience accumulated at home and abroad.[36]

The emphasis on imported knowledges is at the expense of a rich fund of indigenous knowledge (IK), which has yet to be tapped, transcribed, recorded and published. IK is 'the common sense knowledge and ideas of local peoples about everyday realities of living which form part of their cultural heritage. It includes the cultural traditions, values, belief systems and worldviews of local peoples as distinguished from Northern scientific knowledge'.[37] IK in Africa has generally been sidelined and denigrated as Northern knowledge has been

privileged, especially in the development discourse.[38] Yet, such knowledge is perhaps more appropriate for the needs of African societies and is, certainly, more acceptable to them than imported knowledge, since it emerges out of their lived experiences, traditions and collective wisdom.

Lastly, it is important to note that Africa's economic development will depend greatly on the extent to which its people are empowered to transform their lives and to chart their own destiny instead of being at the receiving end of ideas, schemes, and policies designed elsewhere outside their control, particularly in a globalised world where information is of critical importance. Without empowerment, Africans will remain victims of other people's machinations, for as UNESCO correctly observes, 'those who lack knowledge see their fate shaped by others in the light of their own interests'.[39] Similarly, societies that lack knowledge are doomed to perpetual manipulation by others. This demands, in part, that relevant knowledge generated from African realities and which speaks to the African people's lived experience be made available. It is the duty of African social scientists to make this knowledge available to their societies rather than continue to echo imported wisdoms from Western social sciences.

Conclusion

As has been argued above, Western social sciences or sociology of ideas, in combination with Western science and capitalism, have led to the domination and marginalisation of the African continent through imposing an alien world view, institutions and practices on African societies, being dismissive of African knowledges, cultures and institutions and promoting Western ones and also through imposing an economic regime that underdeveloped the continent and bequeathed weak and skewed economies to the incoming independent governments. The latest Western neo-liberal economic paradigm is subjecting Africa to harmful experimentation by multilateral financial agencies through their economic structural adjustment programmes, which further entrench Africa's marginalisation in the world economy.

It has also been argued that there is a need for African scholars to develop an independent and truly African social science tradition to enable them to reflect on African problems, address the challenges confronting African societies and economies and help undo some of the distortions that resulted from centuries of Western domination.

Notes

1. The term 'social science' is used here loosely to refer to a variety of disciplines, which include sociology, anthropology, economics, social science, psychology, political science, education, and history. Because of the centrality of the social sciences to the development of Western knowledge systems, the term 'social
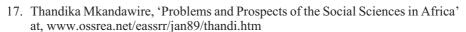
sciences' is used to denote the Western world view in this paper; a world view that was buttressed by and operated in tandem with science and capitalism to promote a particular world system.

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4. Franz J. T. Lee, 'The Historic Roots of Oligarchic Racism: A Venezuelan View', at, www.africaspeaks.com/articles/2004/2708.html

5. Charles Gibson, *Spain in America* (New York: Harper, 1966); C. H. Haring, T*he Spanish Empire in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1947.

6. Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984); Leslie Rout Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (London: CUP, 1976).

7. Walter Rodney, 'African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade', *Journal of African History*, vol. VII, no. 3, (1966), 431-43; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1972); J. E. Inikori (ed.), *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1982).

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9. John Argerich, 'A Study of Modernity' at, www.immi.se/irf/invandraren/inva982/modernity.htm

10. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2.

11. 'Marxian Theory and Social Change in India (and the subcontinent)', in *Theories of Social Change and Social Liberation* at members.tripod.com/~INDIA_RESOURCE/marx.html

12. Albert J. Beveridge in Congress, cited in Richard Hofstadter, *Manifest Destiny*, p. 193. For a detailed examination of Social Darwinism, see Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Bacon Press, 1944).

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15. D. Kwek, 'We Took Them On, They Took Us Over: Academic Imperialism and Intellectual Bondage in Asia', at, www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/research/ejrot/cmsconference/2003/abstracts/postcolonial/Kwek.pdf

16. Emmanuel Dongala, 'Clearing the Horizon: Science, Social Science and Africa' at, www.arts.uwa.edu.au/motspluriels/MP2403index.html

17. Thandika Mkandawire, 'Problems and Prospects of the Social Sciences in Africa' at, www.ossrea.net/eassrr/jan89/thandi.htm

18. K. K. Prah, 'In Search of a Tradition for Social Science Research in Africa and a Vision for the 1990s', at www.ossrea.net/eassrr/jan89/kwesiprah.htm

19. Ibid.

20. Samar Ibrahim, 'Chiekh Anta Diop The Pharaoh of Knowledge', at, www.sis.gov.eg/public/africanmag/issue15/html/prof01.htm

21. K. K. Prah, 'In Search of a Tradition for Social Science Research in Africa and a Vision for the 1990s', at www.ossrea.net/eassrr/jan89/ kwesiprah.htm

22. Claude Ake, *Social Science as Imperialism* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1979); P. E. Temu, 'Reflections on the Social Sciences in Africa', *International Social Science Journal*, 27, 1 (1975), 20.

23. For a discussion on the invention of traditions, see, Terence Ranger, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-262.

24. The notable exception is, of course, Nelson Mandela of South Africa who came out of prison after twenty-seven years a forgiving and loving individual who became a role model for all the world and did much to help the transformation of South Africa from its apartheid past.

25. There were, of course, several Northern scholars who subscribed to the Dependency approach, perhaps the most well known being Andre Gunder Frank.

26. For a good summary of the intellectual arguments of the Modernisation and Dependency theorists, see C. Leys, *The Rise & Fall of Development Theory*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1996).

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29. Hans M. Zell, 'Digital Media and African Publishing', The Book & The Computer at, http://www.honco.net/os/index_0310.html

30. Hans Zell, 'Digital Media'; Paul T. Zeleza, 'Dynamics'.

31. Hans Zell, 'Digital Media'; Paul T. Zeleza, 'Dynamics'; Carol Priestley, 'International Development Support to the Book Chain in Anglophone Africa' at, http://www.inasp.info/pubs/bookchain/profiles/zeleZA.html

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38. George Dei, op cit., 105.

39. UNESCO, 'Domination or Sharing: Endogenous Development and the Transfer of Knowledge', Paris: UNESCO, 1981.

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