CODESRIA Bulletin

Number / Numéro 3, 2022

ISSN 0850 - 8712

Note to the Community

The Council's 2017–2021 Strategic Cycle is behind us. In this period, the Council made significant milestones as demonstrated in the Sida-supported Evaluation Report of the cycle, published in December 2021. The cycle was marked by a reform initiative mandated by the Executive Committee. Some of the key challenges the Council had experienced were addressed, leading to more efficient systems, especially those designed to engage the community at the research, training and publication levels. The Secretariat prioritised internal reforms and worked tirelessly to address a backlog of publications, to improve the framework for mobilising research, and revitalised the dissemination and communications systems in order to better project the Council's work to the community. These developments have led to a significant shift at CODESRIA, which has created space for African scholars to engage with the Council more efficiently and effectively.

Under normal circumstances, the Council would have commenced a new strategic and programmatic cycle from March 2022. This has not been the case. This note serves to update the community on the state of the Council.

On 15 December 2020, the Council received communication from its core funding partner, Sida, that a former member of staff had raised a complaint with them regarding unpaid provident fund benefits. This matter goes back to the 2012–2016 strategic planning cycle, when the Council was under the leadership of the immediate

In this Issue / Dans ce numéro

CODESRIA

This Bulletin is distributed free to all social research institutes and faculties in Africa and beyond to encourage research co-operation among African scholars. Interested individuals and institutions may also subscribe to CODESRIA mailing list to receive the Bulletin promptly upon release. Contributions on theoretical matters and reports on conferences and seminars are also welcome.

former Executive Secretary. Apparently, these funds were never secured separately or ring-fenced so that staff would be paid promptly upon completion of service, as has been the case throughout the history of the Council except 2016. The matter was captured in several Audit Reports before 2016 and is clear in the handover report shared in June 2017. The complaint prompted an initial investigation from a Sida controller, which subsequently mutated into two major forensic audits of the Council.

Sida formally notified CODESRIA on 20 April 2021 of its intention to undertake a special study (audit) to understand what had happened to the unpaid benefits to staff who departed the service of the Council in 2015–2016. The notification caused two significant developments in CODESRIA in relation to its programmes. First, Sida halted signing an agreement for a major humanities intervention in the Sahel that CODESRIA and the Arab Council for the Social Sciences had jointly negotiated. The intervention was due to commence from January 2021, with only the signature to the agreement pending. Second, the audit led to a restriction on the disbursement of committed funds to CODESRIA in the context of the 2017–2021 strategic plan. Coupled with the uncertainties that had been wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, these developments adversely affected programme implementation at the Council, halting preparations to transition to the new cycle, and forced a postponement of many activities, including the 16th General Assembly.

Sida appointed Ernst & Young (EY) Stockholm to undertake the audit. The audit commenced on 30 June 2021 and on 27 August 2021 Sida shared the report of the audit with CODESRIA. The report did not find any cases of fraud or corruption, but in the overall instrument against which the auditors assessed the Council, they expressed reservations that they had been unable to access some documents for the 2012–2016 strategic cycle, and therefore concluded that there remained a suspicion of fraud. Thus, after review and internal discussion, Sida decided that that audit was inconclusive. On 2 November 2021, they notified CODESRIA of the decision to conduct an expanded special study (in essence, a forensic audit) of the internal controls at CODESRIA. This study would revisit the issue of unpaid provident funds but would also be expanded to assess internal controls at CODESRIA up to 2022. Key to the terms of reference was a requirement that auditors assess CODESRIA's compliance with the terms of its Agreement with Sida.

EY was again retained for this second audit. The opening meeting was convened on 13 December 2021, this also being the same day that fieldwork for the forensic audit commenced. This fieldwork went on into the first quarter of 2022. Sida shared the report of this second audit with CODESRIA on 7 April 2022. Overall, on the specific parameters against which the Council was audited, the findings returned evidence of a low or moderate risk except for a few cases regarding activities undertaken in the 2012–2016 cycle, which were judged of high risk. The report concluded that it did not find any cases of fraud, corruption or conflict of interest in the affairs of the Council for the period 2017 to 2022. There were some weaknesses with internal controls but none was alarming. However, on the matter of unpaid provident funds and severance pay of the 2012–2016 period, the report concluded thus:

> The analysis of expenditures related to the period 2014–2016 revealed several financial management weaknesses. […] Based on above, there is a risk that irregularities and misuse of funds have occurred. However, due to the limitations that we have encountered throughout the review, we cannot perform sufficient analyses in order to reach a firm conclusion. Due to improper financial records CODESRIA have acted in non-compliance with the agreement with Sida, (refer to article 9 of the agreement). As a final remark, we have not identified any fraud. To summarise, we would categorise our conclusion in accordance with the following definition from the ToR: Non-compliance with agreement with Sida without suspicions of fraud, e.g., poor quality of supporting documentation and lack of supporting documentation. Besides flaws and errors, no suspected fraud. […] Based on CODESRIA's lack of knowledge about the Lucie system and lack of supporting documents we do not have enough information to conclude whether irregularities have occurred or not. Even if we would receive additional information from Lucie it is questionable whether EY would be able to draw any precise conclusions on the activities from the period 2014–2016.

Lucie is the accounting system the Council used until 2017. However, the system became obsolete and its capacity to hold accounting data was limited. The software was retired in 2018 but secured safely in the Council's servers and is retrieved only with written authorisation.

The audit process concluded on 23 June 2022, when Sida formally notified CODESRIA of its decisions after the audit. Subsequently, Sida also addressed a let-

ter to the President of the Council, dated 2 July 2022, from which the above quote is extracted. It was agreed at this meeting with Sida and captured in the letter to the President, that we close investigations and work on revitalising the internal controls at CODESRIA and strengthening the capacities of the Council. Further, a window was opened to resume negotiation with Sida on two projects that had been halted: the Sahel and the Drive for Democracy projects. CODESRIA was asked to develop an action plan that specified the necessary reforms and a roadmap to address them. It is against this action plan that Sida intends to conduct an appraisal of the Council in preparation to opening a conversation on possible funding for the new Strategic Planning Cycle 2023–2027. This action plan has since been elaborated and reviewed, and implementation has recently begun. Meantime, since the Council has been operating under a no-cost extension in 2022, negotiations commenced for a cost-extension that would allow the Council to address a range of issues that had stalled in 2021.

During the audit period, the Council's programming came to a standstill for three main reasons. The first was the suspension of disbursement of funds starting in April 2021. This froze disbursement of funds to the Council completely, except for emergencies. It must be recalled that Sida was the sole partner providing core funding to CODESRIA in the 2017–2021 strategic planning cycle. Indeed, the last Evaluation Report of the Council referred to above noted that Sida provided 63 per cent of funding to CODESRIA during the cycle. With the audit going on, and the suspension of disbursement, the Council's core programmes inevitably ground to a halt.

The second reason is the uncertainty that the audit process generated. Precisely because disbursement could be triggered only by an emergency, financial planning was impossible since disbursement was contingent and therefore unpredictable. This did not allow the Council to effectively execute its 2021 Work Plan. Numerous activities were postponed due to this, among them the 16th CODESRIA General Assembly originally scheduled for December 2021 and the strategic planning process.

Three, the audit also constrained the Council from fundraising from other partners, some of whom opted to defer negotiations until the Sida process was completed. This only worsened the financial health of the Council and seriously undermined its operations. Fortunately, the Council has other funding partners whose resources nicely complement Sida's support. The limited activities the Council has been able to run during the one-and-a-half years of audit were drawn from resources from these funding partners. The Council attempted to expand its resource mobilisation activities and was able to commence discussions with three possible partners. However, one of them was undergoing a comprehensive internal reform process and was unable to enter any new agreement during the reform period. The other new partner decided to conduct due diligence preparatory to entering any agreement. As stated above, they deferred negotiations until the Sida process was completed. They explained that the audit was key to their decision-making. Thus, when they decided to shadow the audit process, awaiting its results before taking a decision, CODESRIA understood. But in the end, the delays persisted for close to one year. The final potential funding partner is currently considering CODESRIA's proposal for possible funding effective from 2023.

Though the Council has gone through this rough experience, the commitment of staff at the Secretariat and the creativity they have brought to their work has kept the Council visible and active. The Council was able to conclude the 2017–2021 Meaning-Making Research Initiative (MRI) research contracts on schedule. Most of the work has been published or is scheduled for publication soon. Given the speed in processing journal articles, for instance, the Council has established space on the website where ready articles awaiting allocation to a journal volume are deposited. The Training, Grants and Fellowships Programme was able to transition Institutes and related activities to virtual platforms and run the Gender, Democratic Governance and Summer Institutes virtually since 2021. This transition began partly as a response to the limitations imposed by the pandemic but quickly adjusted to accommodate the resource constraints at that time.

The Council took advantage of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic to focus on revitalising CODESRIA's publications. This programme had a serious backlog, publications had been delayed, and there was a general inability to effectively communicate with members of the community interested in publishing with CODESRIA. In March 2020, a strategy was initiated to deal with the backlog, to improve on quality and to instill efficiency and consistency in the work of the programme. The peer-review process was revisited and improved, record-keeping and archiving were strengthened, while dissemination and communication were accorded renewed attention. The Council also strengthened and professionalised manu-

script production processes. This helped to resolve the backlog with our key journals and brought them up to date. We are especially proud of *Africa Development*, which is fully up to date. As former Managing Editor, Suleiman Adebowale, argued twenty years ago (and this remains true today), "*Africa Development*, one single CODESRIA journal, has published more African authors than all the combined three non-Africa-based journals" that he studied.

The Council set up a new website, created several platforms for manuscript submission and processing, membership application and an online bookshop. CODESRIA manuscripts are now submitted, processed and archived online. The new website has grown into a window through which CODESRIA can be easily accessed. There is active communication through the website and other social media platforms and a dedicated team ensures that members remain fully updated. Having resolved the issue of speed, regularity and quality of publications, this has consequently created enough relevant content to share with the community. Thus, there is consistent notification to members about new or forthcoming publications. The speed, consistency and efficiency of the production, dissemination and communications process are restoring the brand and visibility of the Council.

These initiatives seem to have masked from view the difficulties the Council has experienced since 2021 and the accumulated 2016 problems that have persistently haunted the 2017–2021 programmatic cycle. In the course of 2022, there were repeated complaints, shared publicly, that suggest that the Council had intentionally refused to support different activities that it used to support earlier. Other complaints claimed, wrongly and by cherry-picking what to remember, that the Council intentionally refused to pay outstanding benefits owed to staff who left the Council in 2016–2017. In most of these cases, those who complained preferred to individualise the issue while deliberately ignoring the overall context the Council has operated under since 2017. Indeed, some who have complained have adequate knowledge of the context referenced here. The Secretariat has directly communicated with them and shared detailed explanations about the challenges we have experienced while making measured commitments to when we anticipate these challenges will be resolved. This context started with a multitude of inherited audit challenges in 2017. In all, between 2017 and 2022, the Council has undergone a combined total of fourteen evaluations, audits and special studies.

It is the commitment of the CODESRIA Secretariat not to conduct the administrative and management affairs of the Council on social media platforms. But the silence of the Secretariat cannot be treated as confirmation of guilt. With the completion of the Sida audit, the positive overall verdict and the re-opening of partnership discussions with several funding partners, the Council has been able to resume the partnership with Sida and to bring Norad on board as a new funding partner. Additional discussions with other potential partners are underway and will be formally announced in due course. I write to assure members that the future of CODESRIA and its programmes remains positive. The CODESRIA Secretariat plans to recover the time lost, launch the new strategic plan, and initiate the accompanying programme cycle and convene the 16th General Assembly once modalities for a new support system are concluded.

Godwin R. Murunga
Executive Secretary,
CODESRIA

Note à la communauté

Le Cycle stratégique 2017–2021 du Conseil est derrière nous. Au cours de cette période, le Conseil a franchi des étapes importantes, comme le démontre le Rapport d'évaluation du cycle soutenu par l'Agence Sida, publié en décembre 2021. Le cycle a été marqué par une initiative de réforme mandatée par le Comité exécutif. Certains des principaux défis auxquels le Conseil avait été confronté ont été relevés, ce qui a permis de mettre en place des systèmes plus efficaces, notamment ceux conçus pour impliquer la communauté au niveau de la recherche, de la formation et de la publication. Le secrétariat a donné la priorité aux réformes internes et a travaillé sans relâche pour rattraper le retard des publications, améliorer le cadre de mobilisation de la recherche et redynamiser le système de diffusion et de communication afin de mieux faire connaître le travail du Conseil à la communauté. Ces évolutions ont conduit à un changement significatif au sein du Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA), et ont créés un espace qui permet aux chercheurs africains de s'impliquer de façon plus efficace et plus efficiente au niveau du Conseil.

Dans des circonstances normales, le Conseil aurait entamé un nouveau cycle stratégique et programmatique à partir de mars 2022. Mais cela n'a pas été le cas. La présente note vise à fournir à la communauté des informations sur la situation actuelle du Conseil.

Le 15 décembre 2020, le Conseil a reçu une correspondance de son partenaire financier principal, Sida, selon laquelle un ancien membre du personnel l'avait contacté pour se plaindre à propos d' indemnités de prévoyance non payées. Cette question remonte au cycle de planification stratégique 2012–2016, lorsque le Conseil était sous la direction du précédent secrétaire exécutif. Apparemment, ces fonds n'ont jamais été sécurisés séparément ou réservés pour que le personnel soit payé rapidement à la fin de son service, comme cela a été le cas tout au long de l'histoire du Conseil, sauf en 2016. La plainte a suscité une première enquête d'un contrôleur de Sida, qui s'est ensuite transformée en deux grands audits judiciaires du Conseil.

Le 20 avril 2021, Sida a officiellement notifié au CODESRIA son intention d'entreprendre une enquête spéciale (audit) pour comprendre ce qu'il est advenu des redevances non payées au personnel qui a quitté le service du Conseil en 2015–2016. La notification a provoqué un double changement significatif au CODESRIA par rapport à ses programmes. Tout d'abord, Sida a interrompu la signature d'un accord pour une intervention majeure dans le domaine des sciences humaines au Sahel que le CODESRIA et le Conseil arabe des sciences sociales avaient négocié conjointement. L'intervention aurait dû commencer en janvier 2021, mais seule la signature de l'accord était en instance. Ensuite, l'audit a conduit à une restriction du décaissement des fonds engagés au CODESRIA dans le cadre du plan stratégique 2017–2021. A cela s'ajoutent les incertitudes engendrées par la pandémie de COVID-19, ces facteurs ont eu un impact négatif sur la mise en œuvre du programme du Conseil, freinant ainsi l'organisation de la transition vers le nouveau cycle, et ont forcé le report de nombreuses activités, y compris la 16^{e} Assemblée générale.

Sida a désigné Ernst & Young (EY) Stockholm pour mener l'audit. Cet audit a débuté le 30 juin 2021 et le 27 août 2021, Sida a partagé le rapport d'audit avec le CODESRIA. Ce rapport n'a trouvé aucun cas de fraude ou de corruption, mais dans le dispositif global par rapport auquel les auditeurs ont évalué le Conseil, ils ont émis des réserves sur le fait qu'ils n'avaient pas pu accéder à certains documents pour le cycle stratégique 2012–2016, et ont donc conclu qu'il restait un soupçon de fraude. Ainsi, suite à un examen et une discussion interne, Sida a décidé que cet audit n'était pas concluant. Le 2 novembre 2021, l'Agence a notifié au CODESRIA sa décision de mener une enquête spéciale élargie (en fait, audit judiciaire) des contrôles internes du CODESRIA. Cette enquête devait réexaminer la question des fonds de prévoyance non payés, mais également être élargie pour évaluer les contrôles internes du CODESRIA jusqu'en 2022. L'un des éléments clés du cahier des charges exigeait que les auditeurs évaluent la conformité du CODESRIA avec les termes de son accord avec Sida.

EY a de nouveau été retenu pour ce deuxième audit. La réunion d'ouverture a été convoquée le 13 décembre 2021, le même jour du démarrage du travail sur terrain de l'audit judiciaire. Ce travail de terrain s'est poursuivi jusqu'au premier trimestre de 2022. Le Sida a partagé le rapport de ce deuxième audit avec le CODESRIA le 7 avril 2022. Dans l'ensemble, en ce qui concerne les paramètres spécifiques par rapport auxquels le Conseil a été audité, les résultats ont fourni des preuves d'un risque faible ou modéré, à l'exception de quelques cas concernant des activités entreprises au cours du cycle 2012–2016, qui ont été jugés à haut risque. Le rapport a conclu qu'il n'a trouvé aucun cas de fraude, de corruption ou de conflit d'intérêts dans les affaires du Conseil pour la période 2017 à 2022. Il y avait quelques faiblesses au niveau des contrôles internes mais aucune n'était alarmante. Toutefois, en ce qui concerne les fonds de prévoyance et les indemnités de départ impayés de la période 2012–2016, le rapport conclut ainsi :

> L'analyse des dépenses relatives à la période 2014–2016 a révélé plusieurs faiblesses en matière de gestion financière. [...] Sur la base de ce qui précède, il existe un risque que des irrégularités et une mauvaise utilisation des fonds aient eu lieu. Cependant, en raison des limitations que nous avons rencontrées tout au long de l'examen, nous ne pouvons pas effectuer des analyses suffisantes pour parvenir à une conclusion ferme. En raison de la mauvaise tenue des comptes, le CODESRIA n'a pas respecté l'accord avec le Sida (voir l'article 9 de l'accord). En conclusion, nous n'avons identifié aucune fraude. En résumé, nous classerions notre conclusion selon la définition suivante des TdR : Non-conformité avec l'accord avec le Sida sans soupçon de fraude, par exemple, mauvaise qualité des documents justificatifs et absence de documents justificatifs. En dehors des imperfections et des erreurs, pas de soupçon de fraude. […] Compte tenu du manque de connaissance du CODESRIA du système Lucie et du manque de documents justificatifs, nous ne disposons pas d'informations suffisantes pour conclure si des irrégularités ont eu lieu ou non. Même si nous recevions des informations supplémentaires de Lucie, il est douteux qu'EY soit en mesure de tirer des conclusions précises sur les activités de la période 2014–2016.

Lucie est le système comptable que le Conseil a utilisé jusqu'en 2017. Cependant, le système est devenu obsolète et sa capacité à contenir des données comptables était limitée. Le logiciel a été remplacé en 2018 mais bien sécurisé dans les serveurs du Conseil et ne peut être récupéré que sur autorisation écrite. Le processus d'audit a pris fin le 23 juin 2022, lorsque le Sida a officiellement notifié au CODESRIA ses décisions suite à l'audit. Par la suite, le Sida a également adressé une lettre au Président du Conseil, datée du 2 juillet 2022, d'où est extraite la citation ci-dessus. Il a été convenu lors de cette réunion avec le Sida, et repris dans la lettre au Président, de clore les enquêtes et de travailler à la revitalisation des contrôles internes au CODESRIA et au renforcement des capacités du Conseil. En outre, une a été faite pour reprendre les négociations avec le Sida sur deux projets qui avaient été suspendus : le projet sur le Sahel et le projet Promouvoir la démocratie. Il a été demandé au CODESRIA d'élaborer un plan d'action qui spécifie les réformes nécessaires et une feuille de route pour leur réalisation. C'est sur la base de ce plan d'action que le Sida a l'intention de procéder à une évaluation du Conseil afin de préparer l'ouverture d'une conversation sur un éventuel financement pour le nouveau cycle de planification stratégique 2023–2027. Ce plan d'action a été élaboré depuis et révisé, et sa mise en œuvre a récemment commencé. Entre-temps, étant donné que le Conseil fonctionne avec une extension sans coût en 2022, des négociations ont été entamées pour une extension avec frais qui permettrait au Conseil de reprendre une série de questions gelés en 2021.

Au cours de la période d'audit, la programmation du Conseil s'est arrêtée pour trois raisons principales. La première est la suspension du versement des fonds à compter d'avril 2021. Cela a entraîné un gel complet du versement des fonds au Conseil, sauf en cas d'urgence. Il convient de rappeler que le Sida était le seul partenaire qui fournissait un financement de base au CODESRIA dans le cycle de planification stratégique 2017–2021. En effet, le dernier rapport d'évaluation du Conseil a noté, comme mentionné ci-dessus, que le Sida a fourni 63 pour cent du financement du CODESRIA au cours du cycle. Avec l'audit en cours et la suspension des décaissements, les principaux programmes du Conseil se sont inévitablement arrêtés.

La deuxième raison est l'incertitude que le processus d'audit a générée. Dans la mesure où les décaissements ne pouvaient être déclenchés qu'en cas urgence, la planification financière était impossible puisque les décaissements étaient conditionnels et donc imprévisibles. Cela n'a pas permis au Conseil d'exécuter efficacement son plan de travail 2021. De nombreuses activités ont été reportées pour cette raison, notamment la 16e Assemblée générale du CODESRIA initialement prévue pour décembre 2021 et le processus de planification stratégique.

Troisièmement, l'audit a également empêché le Conseil de collecter des fonds auprès d'autres partenaires, dont certains ont choisi de reporter les négociations jusqu'à la fin du processus de Sida. Cela n'a fait qu'aggraver la santé financière du Conseil et a sérieusement compromis son fonctionnement. Heureusement, le Conseil dispose d'autres partenaires financiers dont les ressources complètent judicieusement le soutien de Sida. Les activités limitées que le Conseil a pu mener au cours de l'audit qui s'est déroulé pendant un an et demi, ont été puisées dans les ressources de ces partenaires financiers. Le Conseil a tenté d'étendre ses activités de mobilisation de ressources et a pu entamer des discussions avec trois partenaires potentiels. Cependant, l'un d'entre eux était dans un processus de réforme interne complet et n'était pas en mesure de conclure un nouvel accord pendant cette période. Un des nouveaux partenaires a décidé de faire preuve de diligence raisonnable avant de conclure un quelconque accord. Comme indiqué ci-dessus, celui-ci a également reporté les négociations jusqu'à la fin du processus de Sida. Ils ont expliqué que l'audit était la clé de leur prise de décision. Ainsi, lorsqu'ils ont décidé de suivre le processus d'audit, en attendant ses résultats avant de prendre une décision, le CODESRIA a compris. Mais au final, les retards ont persisté pendant près d'un an. Le dernier partenaire financier potentiel examine actuellement la proposition du CODESRIA pour un financement éventuel à partir de 2023.

Bien que le Conseil ait traversé cette expérience difficile, l'engagement du personnel du Secrétariat et la créativité qu'il a apportée à son travail ont permis au Conseil de rester visible et actif. Le Conseil a pu conclure les contrats de recherche 2017–2021 dans le cadre de l'Initiative de recherche sur la construction du sens (MRI) dans les délais prévus. La plupart des travaux ont été publiés ou devraient l'être prochainement. Compte tenu de la rapidité du traitement des articles des revues, par exemple, le Conseil a créé un espace sur le site web pour y déposer les articles prêts qui attendent d'être attribués au volume d'une revue. Le programme formation, bourses et subventions a pu assurer la transition des instituts et des activités connexes vers des plateformes virtuelles et organiser virtuellement depuis 2021, les Instituts sur le genre, sur la gouvernance démocratique et d'été. Cette transition a commencé en partie comme une réponse aux restrictions imposées par la pandémie, mais s'est rapidement ajustée pour faire face aux contraintes de ressources existantes à cette période.

Le Conseil a profité des restrictions imposées par la pandémie pour se concentrer sur la revitalisation des publications du CODESRIA. Ce programme avait un sérieux stock en souffrance, les publications avaient été retardées, et il existait une incapacité générale à communiquer efficacement avec les membres de la communauté intéressés par les publications du CODESRIA. En mars 2020, une stratégie a été lancée pour résorber le retard, améliorer la qualité et insuffler efficacité et cohérence dans le travail du programme. Le processus d'évaluation par les pairs a été revu et amélioré, le traitement des dossiers et l'archivage ont été renforcés, tandis que la diffusion et la communication ont bénéficié d'une nouvelle attention. Le Conseil a également renforcé et professionnalisé le processus de production des manuscrits. Cela a permis de rattraper le retard de nos principales revues et de les mettre à jour. Nous sommes particulièrement fiers de notre *Afrique et Développement*, qui est entièrement à jour. Comme l'a affirmé Suleiman Adebowale, ancien Managing Editor, il y a vingt ans (et cela reste vrai aujourd'hui), « *Afrique et Développement*, une seule des revues du CODESRIA, a publié plus d'auteurs africains que l'ensemble des trois revues non africaines combinées » lors de ses études.

Le Conseil a mis en place un nouveau site web, créé plusieurs plateformes pour la soumission et le traitement des manuscrits, la demande d'adhésion et une librairie en ligne. Les manuscrits du CODESRIA sont désormais soumis, traités et archivés en ligne. Le nouveau site web est devenu un canal par lequel le CODESRIA est facilement accessible. Il existe une communication active à travers le site web et d'autres plateformes de médias sociaux avec une équipe dédiée qui veille à ce que les membres restent constamment informés. Ayant résolu la question de la rapidité, de la régularité et de la qualité des publications, cela a permis de créer suffisamment de contenu pertinent à partager avec la communauté. Ainsi, les membres sont régulièrement informés des nouvelles publications ou des publications à venir. La rapidité, la cohérence et l'efficacité de la production, de la diffusion et du processus de communication permettent de restaurer l'image de marque et la visibilité du Conseil.

Ces initiatives semblent avoir masqué les difficultés rencontrées par le Conseil depuis 2021 et les problèmes accumulés en 2016 qui ont hanté de manière persistante le cycle du programme 2017–2021. Au cours de l'année 2022, il y avait de nombreuses

plaintes, partagées publiquement, ont laissé entendre que le Conseil a intentionnellement refusé de soutenir différentes activités comme cela se faisait auparavant. D'autres ont réclamé, à tort et en sélectionnant ce qu'il faut retenir, que le Conseil a intentionnellement refusé de payer ce qu'il devait au personnel qui a quitté en 2016–2017. Dans la plupart de ces cas, ceux qui se sont plaints ont préféré individualiser la question tout en ignorant délibérément le contexte général dans lequel le Conseil fonctionne depuis 2017. En effet, certains de ceux qui se sont plaints ont une connaissance adéquate du contexte référencé ici. Le Secrétariat a communiqué directement avec eux et partagé des explications détaillées sur les défis qu'il a rencontrés tout en prenant des engagements mesurés quant au moment où il prévoit que ces défis seront résolus. Ce contexte a commencé par une multitude de défis d'audit hérités en 2017. Entre 2017 et 2022, le Conseil a subi un total combiné de quatorze évaluations, audits et enquêtes spéciales.

Le Secrétariat du CODESRIA s'est engagé à ne pas traiter les affaires administratives et celles sur la gestion du Conseil au niveau des plateformes de médias sociaux. Mais le silence du Secrétariat ne peut être considéré comme une confirmation de culpabilité. Avec la fin de l'audit de Sida, son verdict global positif et la réouverture des discussions de collaboration avec plusieurs partenaires financiers, le Conseil a été en mesure de reprendre son partenariat avec Sida et attiré Norad comme nouveau partenaire financier. Il a également entamé des discussions avec d'autres partenaires potentiels qui seront officiellement annoncés au moment opporturn, j'écris pour assurer aux membres que l'avenir du CODESRIA et de ses programmes reste positif. Le secrétariat du CODESRIA prévoit de rattraper le temps perdu, de lancer le nouveau plan stratégique et d'initier le cycle programmatique et convoquer la 16e Assemblée Générale qui l'accompagne une fois que les modalités d'un nouveau système d'appui auront été conclues.

Godwin R. Murunga
Secrétaire exécutif, CODESRIA

Africa Is on the Move*

History Imperialism Movements Revolutions Places: Africa

Vijay Prashad
Executive Director,
Tricontinental
Institute for Social Research

In 1975, Walter Rodney wrote, *Africa is on the move*. This line stays with me, digs deep into my sense of historical possibility. What did Rodney mean when he said that line, *Africa is on the move*?[1] In 1974, the previous year, the African national liberation movements defeated the Portuguese to win the freedom of Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe. Most of the countries in the African continent had won their freedom. South Africa, South-West Africa (or Namibia), Rhodesia (or Zimbabwe), as well as Djibouti, Seychelles, and Western Sahara remained in colonial hands. Even in these colonial zones—from South Africa to Namibia to Zimbabwe—the people were on the move, fighting with their bodies and their guns, with their poems and their murals. There was a refusal on the African continent to submit to the rule of the colonial master. Anti-colonialism was fierce across the continent, but there were already signs of ugliness.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first African south of the Sahara to take office and lead a people who wanted him to govern them, sniffed danger in the air from the very start. In 1958, a year after Ghana's independence, Nkrumah met a young man from Congo, Patrice Lumumba, and a highly respected intellectual from Martinique and Algeria, Frantz Fanon, at the All-African People's Conference, held in Accra. In them, Nkrumah saw the future. If Lumumba's movement succeeded in Congo, this strategically important country in Africa could provide the base for the freedom of the rest of the continent, and if Fanon's sharp wisdom about colonialism, violence and the pitfalls of national liberation could be digested, then nothing could stop Africa. Nkrumah cultivated Lumumba, helping his fledgling movement with material and ideological support, and then sent Ghanaian officials to assist Lumumba when he became the prime minister of the newly freed Congo in 1961. At the end of the All-African People's Conference, Fanon felt that all parts of the African continent would be free by 1960. There was bravery in this. 'Independence is never granted,' Lumumba told the *Chicago Daily News* in July 1960. 'We won our independence by our own blood and effort.'[2] Congo won its freedom as Fanon predicted, and Algeria won its independence in 1962, a fight in which Fanon participated actively, affirming his hopefulness. These were not just the words of Fanon and Lumumba, but ideas that had a mass character. In 1962, Maria Dulce Almada (also known as Dulce Almada Duarte) told the United Nations that 'the Cape Verdean people are more and more aware that the country's poverty is a myth'—they lived in a rich country whose social wealth was being leached by Portugal, and with the end of Portuguese rule the people would flourish.[3] When his guests left Accra, Nkrumah mused, 'The African Revolution has started in earnest.'[4] This is precisely the feeling that Rodney had eighteen years later, when he wrote, *Africa is on the move*.

In the intervening years, the reality of what Fanon called the 'granite block' set in.[5] This granite block was the rigid socioeconomic order that would concede a few things, but would refuse to alter its basic structure of domination over property and privilege. Lumumba's democratically elected government was overthrown by a Belgian-US-British-engineered coup, supported by sections of Congo's elite—it was intolerable to allow a sovereign nation to control the Shinkolobwe mine, where the United States procured the uranium to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Lumumba was then assassinated in 1961. 'Long live Congo! Long live Africa!', Lumumba wrote in his final letter to his wife Pauline.[6] *Africa is on the move*, he said. His mentor, Nkrumah, watched from Accra, desolate. There was nothing he could do. Four years later, the British ambassador to Ghana, A. W. Snelling, wrote, 'On the whole,

it is in the interest of Britain that Nkrumah should cease to rule Ghana.'[7] The United States had already set in motion plans to overthrow Nkrumah. They hated him for his defence of national liberation on the continent and felt aggrieved that his book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, was such an indictment of imperialism in Africa.[8] Robert Smith of the US State Department later said that the book (published in October 1965) was 'simply outrageous … We were blamed for everything in the world.' US aid to Ghana was cancelled as a consequence. The book, and Nkrumah's politics, would be his downfall. Smith revealed in 1989 that the book might 'have contributed in a material way to [Nkrumah's] overthrow shortly thereafter'.[9] In 1966, Nkrumah was ejected from power while he was on a trip to the People's Republic of China.

By 1966, the coups in Congo and Ghana prevented the left from retaining power. Other, lesser-known coups—against Louis Rwagasore of Burundi in 1961 and against Modibo Keita of Mali in 1967—also defined a continent of coups.[10] Many of them were undertaken by militaries on behalf of the imperialists. They were studied carefully by the South African Communist Ruth First, in her 1970 book, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'État*, which argued that these coups—now so familiar—occurred because the military was a holdover from the colonial period, other state institutions were weak, and radical forces were too fragmented to drive an agenda.[11] Colonialism had not produced the kind of liberal institutions that would have power over the military, and the postcolonial attack on the left disoriented the mass bases that might have prevented a military takeover. Mostly, the military entered after a whisper in their ear from a Western ambassador.

Nkrumah took refuge in Guinea, where in 1968 he wrote his account of the coup, called *Dark Days in Ghana*. 'Further examples of CIA activity and the work of other foreign intelligence organizations in Africa could be given. They would provide material for a book of their own.'[12] But even here, having been overthrown, clear-eyed about imperialism and in exile in Guinea, Nkrumah wrote, 'If for a while the imperialists appear to be gaining ground, we must not be discouraged. For time is on our side. The permanency of the masses is the deciding factor, and no power on earth can prevent its ultimate decisive effect on the revolutionary struggle.'[13] Six years later, after the Portuguese had been defeated in Africa, Rodney wrote, *Africa is on the move*. This is a paraphrase of the last paragraph in Nkrumah's *Dark Days in Africa*. Time is on our side. The permanency of the masses is the deciding factor.

In 1972, Rodney published *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, his best-known book.[14] He wrote it while teaching in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which had won its independence in December 1961.[15] In 1967, Tanzania took a left turn with the Arusha Declaration, in which Julius Nyerere and his party attempted to develop an African path to socialism.[16] In a text written for *Maji Maji* in 1971, Rodney participated in a debate with his Marxist comrades in Dar over the implications of the Arusha Declaration.[17] The essay was on the concept of disengagement from imperialism (what a decade later Samir Amin would call 'delinking').[18] Could a country such as Tanzania craft a path for itself outside the tentacles of imperialism? A fierce debate gripped its Marxists, and many of their contributions were later published in the second issue of *Tanzanian Studies*, edited by Issa Shivji.[19]

In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, published after this debate, Rodney showed the depth of colonial power on the African continent, how the economy in various regions of the continent had been designed to be totally subordinate to imperialism. It was a view shared by Nkrumah in his 1965 book, *Neo-Colonialism*, which defined many of the themes of Rodney's work. What is disengagement? It does not mean 'total isolation', Rodney wrote, 'but the reduction of economic dependency, elimination of surplus outflow, utilization of this surplus for construction of nationally integrated economies, equitable cooperation with friendly socialist countries and mobilization of the masses for rapid development and defense. Nationalization is one method of initiating this disengagement.' But nationalisation has its limits, since it does not automatically lead to the better management of the firm or use of the surplus. It is the peasantry who need to disengage from imperialism, Rodney wrote, since it is they who must lead—in the African context—and set the terms for the petty bourgeois intellectuals. 'The Revolution requires,' he argued, 'that the millions who have been gagged throughout history should speak and choose. It is the responsibility of the revolutionaries to find ways and means of indicating to peasants and workers the relevance of Socialist ideology and perceptions to the latter's day to day lives.'

Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is a book of great scholarship, but mainly of sublime intent. It took the complex history

of Africa and showed how the period of colonialism had disrupted Africa's development and left it in a situation of adversity. It showed, as well, how the people had fought off powerful forces as best as they could and how they found ways to survive the storm of colonialism. Then Rodney stopped. He could say no more. Rodney turned his book over to the Tanzanian Marxist, A. M. Babu, for the postscript. Babu was harsh. 'With very few exceptions,' Babu wrote, 'it is sad to have to admit that Africa is ill served by the current conglomeration of what passes for leaders throughout the continent.' And then: 'When Asia and Latin America produce giants, like Mao, Ho, and Che, who inspire and excite the imagination, not only of their compatriots within their borders, but of the rest of the world, including the developed world, Africa has produced only one Nyerere and maintained him in power, while we have murdered Lumumba and have locked up or exiled leaders like Ben Bella and Nkrumah in response to the wishes of the imperialists—our donors, our moneylenders, our patrons, our masters, our trading partners.'[20]

Movements produce leaders. Babu's words were not a judgement about individuals. They were an indictment of the depth of the movements, which had not seen deeply enough the problems facing the continent. Babu's grip on the realities was strong, but also hard to digest. Rodney said similar things about his native Caribbean.[21] He was not comfortable, perhaps, saying these things about Africa, about which he wrote and where he then lived.

The reality is that imperialism's tentacles had wound themselves tightly across the continent; it had reaped the benefits of colonial power over the economy without being troubled by the inconveniences of colonial political rule. It was this context that led to the suffocation of so many national liberation movements and so many postcolonial states. The malignancy is in the global system, not in the continent.

Imperialism Is an Ugly Force

Imperialism is an ugly force. At its heart is the desire for total control. There is the desire for political control, the denial of the right of people around the world to maintain their own sovereignty. There is the desire for control of access to economic resources, to make sure that only certain countries decide on behalf of corporations what should be done to our resources. There is the desire for control of our societies and cultures, colonising our minds and our aesthetics, our way of life and our way of thinking.

Imperialism is not a matter of the past. The habits and institutions of imperialism remain today, embedded in our social life. The illegal sanctions regime put in place by the United States against about thirty countries—including Cuba, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Iran—is an example of the habits of imperialism, of the arrogance to suffocate any process that is not dominated by the United States. There is a straight line that runs from the attempt to destroy the Haitian Revolution, beginning in 1804, to the attempt in our time to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. After the Haitian people shook off the institutions of colonialism and enslavement, France and the United States forced the Haitian people to pay USD 21 billion for liberating themselves; that is the attitude of imperialism. When the Haitian people tried to build some form of sovereignty, every time they raised their heads, they were crushed—by the invasion and occupation of US marines (1915–34), by the US-backed François and Jean-Claude Duvalier dictatorship (1957–90), and then by two US-sponsored coups (1991 and 2004). Haiti is a synecdoche for the long history of imperialism—one that exists in our time.

We know that imperialism is not a relic of the past but an essential part of the structure of our time, the tentacles of imperial thought strangling us alongside the imperialist system of capital accumulation on a global scale. The two—the cultural and the economic—exist in tandem, two snakes dancing around each other, two processes that feed off each other, economic exploitation reinforcing the ideas of cultural inferiority and the idea of cultural inferiority allowing firms to underpay workers in the global South.

Let us look at the structure of imperialism through the eyes of the Zambian children in the Copperbelt region of the country. In 2019, the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research spoke with Gyekye Tanoh, head of the political economy unit at the Third World Network—Africa, based in Accra, about resource sovereignty:

> Because Zambia is now utterly reliant on copper exports, the international copper price movements have a preponderant and distorting effect on the exchange rate of the Kwacha [Zambia's currency]. This distortion and the limited revenue from copper exports impacts the competitiveness and viability of other, non-copper exports as a result of the fluctuations of the Kwacha. The fluctuations also impact the social sector. A study done in 2018 showed that changes in the exchange rates oscillated between -11.1%

> to +13.4% in the period between 1997 and 2008. The loss of funds from donors to the Ministry of Health in Zambia amounted to US $13.4 million or $1.1 million per year. Because of the collapse of the Kwacha between 2015 and 2016, per capita health expenditure in Zambia fell from $44 (2015) to $23 (2016).[22]

Socialist Party of Zambia leader, Fred M'membe, told me in 2021 that poverty levels in the Copperbelt Province, the heart of Zambia's wealth, are very high. Strikingly, 60 per cent of children in this copper-rich area cannot read. 'Foreign multinational corporations have been the major beneficiaries,' M'membe explained. A cosy relationship with the Zambian elites enables these firms to pay low taxes and take their profits out of the country, as well as to use techniques such as outsourcing and subcontracting to skirt Zambia's labour laws. This industry 'still operates along colonial lines'. Indeed, in Phyllis Deane's *Colonial Social Accounting*, she showed that two-thirds of the profits were taken out of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia's name during colonial rule) to pay foreign shareholders, while two-thirds of the remainder went to European workers and the minuscule leftovers went to the vast majority, the African miners.[23] This kind of colonial accountancy continues through the practice of transfer mispricing.

The copper under the ground enters the cellphones of people around the world, close to six billion of them. The copper is held in your hand. It is part of your identity. You are shaped by copper wires everywhere. You are directly connected to that child in Zambia. The child is not outside you. The child is intimately linked to you by imperialist exploitation of the copper resources in Zambia. But you do not see it because you buy the phone from a shop. It comes wrapped in plastic and in a nice box. It does not say, *by the way, you are getting this phone at this relatively cheap price because a child in Zambia is illiterate*. I would like to go to an Apple store or some shop and put stickers on all the boxes saying 'this phone is cheap because a child in Zambia is illiterate'. You need to make the connection. The challenge in Zambia is internal to your social condition. Globalisation, therefore, is an objective fact. It is what makes internationalism necessary. You might not be doing anything to change the conditions of that child, which means that you are globalised but you are not an internationalist. That, for me, is objectionable. You cannot have globalisation, the copper from Zambia in your phone, and not be an internationalist, not stand in solidarity with the struggles of the people of Zambia.

There is no 'other' outside; we are related to one another by the social relations of production, but estranged from each other by ideologies of various kinds (including individualism and nationalism). In the opening section of *Capital*, Karl Marx's greatest work, he writes of the fetishism of commodities. In its mystification, the fetish can be seen as having a rational form all its own, whereas the people who interact with one another do so only through the fetish and not directly *with one another*. People in this form do not have an independent or interlaced consciousness; they are related through the thing, which is seen as an ideal, godlike power, acting under its own volition that subordinates humans. The thing moves, and you take instructions from it. This is the fetish character of the thing, which could be a doll or an idea. Marx said:

> 'Listen, what happens is that you and I, our social relations, are mediated through commodities or through money, which is merely a commodity, the embodiment of commodities.'

Our links to each other in a capitalist system are formed and mediated through commodities. It interrupts human interaction. There is a wall between us, the wall of the commodity form and the generalised form of the commodity, which is money.

In this way, what divides me from the Zambian child is this movement of copper: mined for low wages, driven to Durban's port, shipped to China, then put into an iPhone. It then comes out of the factory in Shenzhen packaged in Apple's design. Between the child in Zambia and the consumer are a series of transformations, a range of commodities added to each other—with such amazing names as indium and wolframite—and the accumulation of these commodities vanishes into the phone itself. The content of copper in the phone far outstrips that of any other metal. The raw copper becomes processed copper becomes copper wiring becomes highly sophisticated copper instruments. This is then inserted into an iPhone, which is then boxed up. By the time the consumer sees the phone, the child has disappeared. Zambia has disappeared, Chile has disappeared, Peru has disappeared. There is a fetish character that makes the people in Zambia—the child and the miner both—othered, separated from the consumer in the rest of the world. But they are of course linked intimately by the socialisation of labour, by the social relations underneath the surface.

The phone pings. There is a meme about hunger in Zambia. The consumer feels bad. *Let me donate some*

money because I do not know anything about Zambia. Zambians are othered from the consumer in other parts of the world. Their social existence is seen as separate. *Listen friends*, one wants to say, *nothing like that is going on*. The Zambian miner is intimately related to you because the miner's labour is inside your phone. When the consumer says, *I do not know anything about them*, it is true. But, nonetheless, Zambia remains intimately connected to the consumer's life through the mined copper. Zambia is not that far away from everywhere, nor are Zambians.

The wretched conditions of illiteracy are related to the fact that Apple both sells the phone at a reduced price and is still able to make an exorbitant profit. The iPhone retails at a ridiculously underpriced cost. If you calculate what an iPhone should cost if the wages paid along the commodity chain were at North Atlantic levels, each phone would cost nearly USD 30,000.[24] Who is paying for the phone to be discounted to around USD 699 or so? The balance is being paid by the community in the Copperbelt, who are being paid very low wages and where there is barely any support to maintain schools and medical centres. Their standard of living is artificially suppressed so that they can be adequately superexploited. Those wages stolen from them and the money stolen from the Zambian people through taxes become the discount for Apple's superprofits and the lower price for the phone. All of this vanishes from view because of the fetish character of our relations with each other, where commodities come between us. Because we are othered from other people, set in an artificial remove from them, we see their sufferings and then say, *Oh, I should donate something*. Donations and charity are not bad, but they reinforce the fetish character of our relations, and they demean people since we do not see them. Donations do not change the conditions of the world. Nor do empty words of critique for othering or words of solidarity. Material support is needed. We need to support the efforts of the miners to build their unions, support the Socialist Party of Zambia as it builds the power of the people against the system. The only real decolonisation is anti-imperialism and anticapitalism. You cannot decolonise your mind unless you also decolonise the conditions of social production that reinforce the colonial mentality.

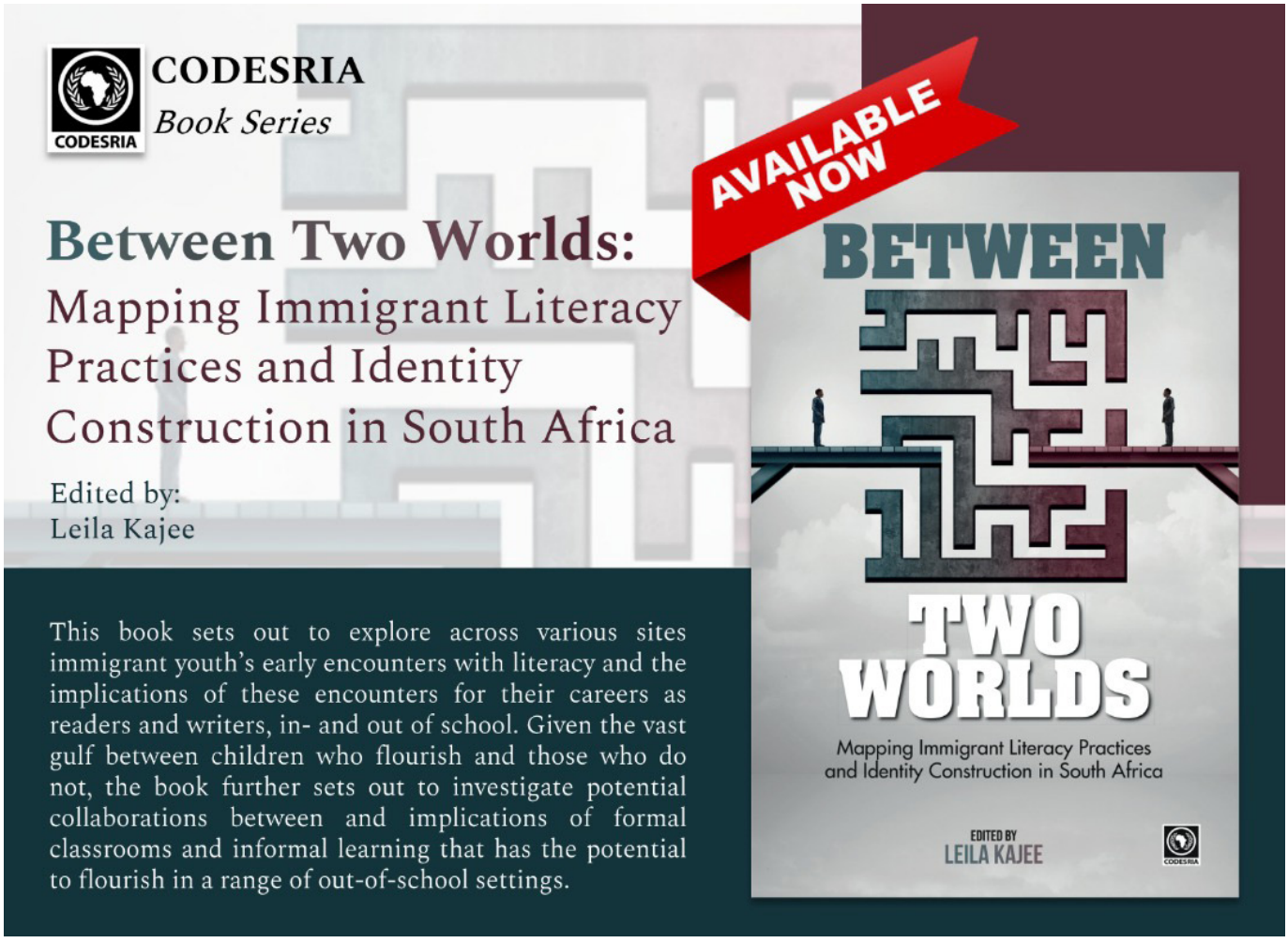
On 23 September 1960, the Soviet Union put forward a resolution for immediate decolonisation. This resolution was opposed by the entire Western bloc, led by the United States. A few months later, forty-three countries from Africa and Asia affirmed the Bandung principles and put forward their own resolution. Eventually, on 14 December, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution, *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*. This was the resolution originally put forward by the Soviet Union, then reshaped by African and Asian states. Eighty-nine countries—including the Soviet Union—voted for it, no one voted against it, but nine countries abstained: Australia, Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain, the Dominican Republic, the Union of South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The United States stood with the old colonial powers and South Africa against a statement that read: 'The process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible.' This statement is key to our thought—the process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible. Or, in Rodney's terms, *Africa is on the move*.

Notes

* First published on 01 May 2022 through the link https://monthlyreview.org/2022/05/01/africa-is-on-the-move/
This article is adapted from his 26 March 2022 speech to the Walter Rodney Foundation on the fiftieth an-niversary of How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. The lecture was also delivered in part at the Havana Bien-nale.

1. Robert Hill, *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990), 50.
2. Patrice Lumumba, *The Truth About the Monstrous Crime of the Colonialists* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 57.
3. Maria Dulce Almada, 'Cape Verde: Slaves, Poverty and Aridity', in Aquino de Bragança and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds, *The African Liberation Reader*, vol. 2. (London: Zed, 1982), 30.
4. Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2021), 50.
5. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963), 109.
6. Williams, *White Malice*, 375.
7. Williams, *White Malice*, 491.
8. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965).
9. Williams, *White Malice*, 495.
10. Ludo De Witte, *Moord in Burundi: België en de liquidatie van premier Louis Rwangasore* (Antwerp: EPO, 2021); Bintou Sanankoua, *La chute de Modibo Keïta* (Paris: Editions Chaka, 1990).
11. Ruth First, *The Barrel of the Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'État* (London: Allen Lane, 1970). *In Political Order in Changing Societies*, Samuel Huntington made the case for 'military modernization', namely

that in former colonial countries it was only the military that could advance modernisation and, in that case, the United States should not oppose military dictatorships. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).
12. Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968), 50.
13. Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana,* 159.
14. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1972).
15. Karim Hirji, *The Enduring Relevance of Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Wakefield: Daraja Press, 2017).
16. Issa Shivji, Saida Yahya-Othman and Ng'wanza Kamata, *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere*, vol. 3 (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2020), chapter 8.
17. Walter Rodney, 'Some Implications of the Question of Disengagement from Imperialism', *Maji Maji* 1 (1971).
18. Samir Amin, 'A Note on the Concept of Delinking', *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center) X, no. 3 (1987).
19. Issa Shivji, *The Silent Class Struggle* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1973).
20. Babu, postscript to *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 287.
21. Walter Rodney, 'People's Power, No Dictator', *Working People's Alliance* (Georgetown), 1979.
22. Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *Resource Sovereignty: The Agenda for Africa's Exit from the State of Plunder,* dossier no. 16 (2019): 13. For more details on the copper industry in Zambia, see Neo Simutanyi, *Copper Mining in Zambia: The Developmental Legacy of Privatisation* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2008).
23. Phyllis Deane, *Colonial Social Accounting* (Cambridge: National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 1953).
24. Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *The Rate of Exploitation: The Case of the iPhone*, September 22, 2019.



We are excited to announce the formal release of the book: Nous sommes heureux d'annoncer la sortie officielle du livre :

Between Two Worlds: Mapping Immigrant Literacy Practices and Identity Construction in South Africa"
Edited by Leila Kajee

Order a copy here – and explore other interesting titles → – https://bit.ly/3xZFS7W – ← Commandez une copie ici et explorez d'autres livres intéressants

On the Russia–Ukraine War

European War and Global South Perspectives

If the greatest trick the devil pulled was convincing the world he does not exist, then the proudest achievement of Western imperialism is the delusion that we have moved beyond racism, that we are in a post-racist society.

(Kehinde Andrews 2021:xxvii)

Therefore, it is submitted that African nations will absorb international shocks based on their relationships with specific circumstances.

(Toyin Falola 2022:18)

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni*
University of Bayreuth
Germany

Introduction

The global South perspectives on the Russia–Ukraine War reflect the multiplexity of the power dynamics, complex state affiliations and important transactional engagements of states within today's internationalism. Simplistic attempts to divide the contemporary world into autocracies on the one side and democracies on the other are not helpful in the current global circumstances. The dichotomous Cold War ideological thinking is no longer adequate for understanding the current hetararchies of power, multiplexities of affiliations and complex transactional relations of states.

The global South perspectives and responses to the Russia–Ukraine War are not only complex but are informed by equally complex histories, memories, current realities as well as strategic, tactical and transactional calculations that determine alliance formations and voting patterns at the United Nations General Assembly. A regional sampling, which considers the complexities, multiplexities and divisions among the constitutive members of the regions of the global South, is examined here as it affords a mapping of common patterns of response and perspective from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. It also offers a reading of issues at stake in the global South's interpretation of contemporary internationalism. What is emerging is that states across the regions of the global South 'are hedging their belts between Russia and the US-led Western camp, playing on time to better evaluate the impacts of the war and ease the restraints it is imposing on the fragile economies and social fabrics of the region' (Hamzawy *et al*. 2022:1). This is expected from a world that is still trying to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Russia–Ukraine War at the Present Conjuncture

If the Euro-North-American-centric neoliberal international order failed its test in the Middle East, its burial will be in Eurasia. The Russia–Ukraine War, which broke out on 24 February 2022, is a signal of the violent end of the Euro-North-American-centric neoliberal international order. This should not be mistaken for an end of the capitalist world system. What is imbricated in this war is the forces of rewesternisation on the one hand and of dewesternisation on the other hand (the stormtroopers of which are the E7 — the emerging seven, constituting China, India, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Indonesia and Turkey), which are forcing global history to take a corner (Mahbubani 2018:7). At the centre of rewesternisation and dewesternisation is a struggle over the control of the colonial matrix of power and the possibilities of a shift of capital from the Atlantic circuit to a Sinocentric circuit. Kishore Mahbubani (2018:3) captured this reality in these words:

'In the early twenty-first century, history turned a corner, perhaps the most significant corner humanity has ever turned — yet the West refuses to accept or adapt to this new historical era.'

The refusal of the West to adapt to a world it can no longer dominate is signified by such initiatives as the new law that the United States 117th Congress 2nd Session deliberated on 28 April 2022, which seeks to counter what they termed 'the malign influence and activities of the Russian Federation and its proxies in Africa' (Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act, 28 April 2022). In this thinking, the US behaves as though the whole world is its province, and that Russia–Africa relations have to be assessed and controlled from Washington. What is even more worrying is the open expression of the US's strategy to manipulate African governments and their people into dissociating from Russia, including using what is called 'aid assistance' (see Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act, 28 April 2022). All these are signs that rewesternisation is in trouble and that the Russia–Ukraine War is being used to advance it.

Unlike other wars, such as the Gulf War before it and the ongoing war in Syria, the Russia–Ukraine War has attracted widespread media coverage and numerous opinion pieces, perhaps because it is taking place in Europe, which has been self-representing as a zone of peace and bastion of rational disputation. What is beyond dispute is that every shift in global order since the dawn of Euromodernity has been accompanied by conflicts, violence and wars. Even when the modern world rebooted itself, shifting from empires to modern nation-states, conflicts, violence and wars became its signature. The Cold War coloniality, from 1945 to 1989, was never cold outside Europe and North America. It was characterised by what became known as 'proxy wars'.

With regard to the Cold War, Mahmood Mamdani (2004:254) posited that small states were faced with the reality of seeking protection from 'one or another international bully', yet others who were imbued with the Bandung spirit 'tried to pioneer an alternative international order, one dedicated to two goals: to hold every bully accountable to minimal norms and guarantee a share of justice to every historical victim'. The outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine War in February 2022 has presented the smaller states (a majority in the global South) with a new situation where such decisions have to be made again, albeit under different international circumstances characterised by multiplexities of affiliations and hetarachies of power criss-crossing the invented divide of autocracies and democracies.

Even what became known as the post-Cold War dispensation, celebrated as the age of triumphalism of liberal democracy, human rights and the rule of markets, witnessed the outbreak of what the United States leadership labelled the 'Global War on Terror' (GWT). The 9/11 incident became its immediate cause. The noble United Nations notion of the 'Right-to-Protect' (R2P) was skyjacked by the US and imbricated in its imperial 'preventive wars' strategy. In the process, blood continued to flow from conflicts and wars that were justified as protecting the people, such as those in Iraq and Libya.

What must be underscored is that whenever the modern world system finds itself besieged by revolutionary antisystemic forces, it responds either by violently crushing them or by accommodating them into the very system these forces seek to destroy. Accommodating revolutionary antisystemic forces has always involved the rise of a new global order, which functions to give the system a new lease of life. This happened after 1945, when the modern world system was besieged by anticolonial forces (some revolutionary and others reformist). A new global order emerged, which used the United Nations (UN) to invite every newly born nation-state into the system they had sought to destroy. Consequently, the so-called 'post-colonial' states in Latin America, Caribbean, Asia and Africa occupied the lowest echelons of the modern world system, without any veto power.

What is becoming obvious is that a shift from one global order to another is a strategy to preserve the modern world system rather than change the system itself. For example, what Carl Schmitt termed the 'second nomos' of the earth, which emerged in the fifteenth century with the rise of Europe and North America, has survived the decolonisation of the twentieth century. The physical empire mutated into the cognitive empire. Direct colonialism morphed into neocolonialism. Ex-colonies became spheres of influence. Ex-empires could not let go. Robert Gildea (2019) introduced the concept of 'empires of the mind' and explained how they constructed a 'global financial republic' which used debt as a control mechanism.

Currently, the neoliberal international order has fallen into its deepest crisis. It is besieged by systemic, ecological, epistemic and ideological crises. The combination of the global financial

crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the rise of right-wing politics, and the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine War are signatures of an interregnum. The United States of America (USA) and its European partners in the European Union (EU) are busy trying to patch up the Euro-North-American-centric modern world system through what Walter Mignolo (2021) termed 'rewesternisation'. Invocations of notions of 'the free world' of democracies on the one hand, and autocracies on the other hand, are part of propping up the neoliberal international order. Russia is identified as a spoiler together with China. They are the face of what is known as 'dewesternisation' and the possibilities of multipolarity (Mignolo 2021). The Russia–Ukraine War is at the centre of the contending forces of 'rewesternisation' and 'dewesternisation'.

Because the modern world has undergone increased global human entanglements and the ever-evolving global capitalist economic system has used capital to link every economy to it, the Russia–Ukraine War is impacting every country. The Russian Federation is a great power with widespread connections to the rest of the world, and its military invasion of a small power like the Ukraine ignites fear among smaller states of a return of empire. This fear is even more meaningful for the Eastern European republics, most of which emerged from the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Soviet Union was an empire that used Cold War coloniality to spread and maintain control over Eastern Europe and beyond. Read from this perspective, Eastern European decolonisation can be best named 'de-Cold War', to borrow a concept from Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010).

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine has set in motion numerous debates about the state of multilateralism, rule-based neoliberal internationalism, the fate of self-determination and the territorial integrity of small states, and even the future of the United States leadership of the modern world. How appropriate is it to name it the Russia–Ukraine War? Is this is not another complex imperialist war, taking place at a time when the neoliberal international order is in crisis? Imperialist wars always turn out to be world wars even if they start as inter-state wars caused by a collapse in bilateral relations. Behind what appears to be a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, there is the deep involvement of the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA).

Already it has happened that those people who have been designated and classified as Black have been caught in between, betwixt and indeed in the middle of the war. This emerged poignantly during the evacuation of refugees. Train stations in Ukraine and on the borders of Eastern Europe became sites of racism as Africans in particular were barred from boarding trains and crossing borders to safety. This racist phenomenon emerged within a context not only of war but also of animated debates on the subjects of 'antiblackness' and global Black Lives Matter movements.

At another level, the refugee crisis provoked by the war revealed how Ukrainians running away from the war zone were openly welcomed in Europe, compared to Syrians and others escaping war zones outside Europe. The hypocrisy of those states that claim to be democracies and paragons of human rights protections has been laid bare in their differential treatment of refugees. What has also added to the complexity of the war are claims of the Russian invasion amounting to a Holocaust by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine and the justification of the invasion by President Vladimir Putin of Russia as an operation aimed at de-Nazification. My interest in this piece is global South perspectives of the war.

Reading the Russia–Ukraine War from the Global South

In *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (2007), Vijay Prashad not only explained that the global South is not a place but a project and meticulously documented how the global South has been at the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle, going as far back as the Haitian Revolution. It was also the global South that was consistently critical of the post-1945 international order. What the global South put on the global table were three major issues: 'political independence, non-violent international relations, and the cultivation of the United Nations as the principle for planetary justice' (Prashad 2007:11). It was the global South that introduced what Prashad (2007:12) termed 'internationalist nationalism', expressed by the Bandung spirit and tricontinentalism. The 'against war' positionality of the global South came from the experience of a people who had walked under the shadows of death many times, beginning with their enslavement, subjection to genocides, and subjection to colonialism right up to neocolonialism and underdevelopment.

Therefore, reading the war from the global South makes a strong case to revisit not only the question of how internationalism itself is constituted by coloniality but also the futility of the paradigm of war as a solution to modern problems.

In his *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World* (2021), Kehinde Andrews delved into the depth of the violence of Euromodernity as he demolished the 'self-congratulatory myth' that the rise of the West was due to three great endogenous revolutions: science (the Renaissance and Enlightenment), industry (the Industrial Revolution), and politics (the French and American revolutions). In this foundation myth, war and violence are not even mentioned as constitutive of the rise of the West. Andrews (2021:xiii) highlighted how racism, enslavement, genocides, epistemicides, colonialism, racial capitalism and heteronormative-patriarchal sexism were the foundation of the West. To explain the return of imperialism and imperialist wars, Andrews introduced the concept of 'colonial nostalgia' and 'empire 2.0' as informing Trumpism ('Make America Great Again') and Putinism (Make Russia Great Again) (Andrews 2021:xviii).

The Russia–Ukraine War has provoked a number of questions about global, regional and national politics in a world characterised by increased global human entanglements on the one side, and, on the other side, an internationalism constituted by multiplexities and heterarchies of power that defy binary thinking. The question of how to make sense of the global South's perspectives on the Russia–Ukraine War lies at the centre of rethinking internationalism itself, because it was from the global South that calls for a new egalitarian and racism-free internationalism were made. Adom Getachew, in *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (2019), revealed that African, African-American and Caribbean anticolonial nationalists were concerned not only about nation-building but also responded to the experience of racialised sovereign inequality by directly challenging international racial hierarchies of power while making a strong case for alternative visions of the world. The Russia–Ukraine War has ignited complex questions of hierarchies of power, anti-imperialism, neutrality and non-alignment, arising not only from the way the states of the global South have responded to the apportionment of blame for the war but also how great powers treat smaller states.

These questions of caution, non-alignment, neutrality and anti-imperialism are reflected in the voting patterns of states from the global South in the United Nations General Assembly vis-à-vis punishments to be imposed on Russia. The USA and the EU have openly singled out Russia as the aggressor that has to be isolated, sanctioned and punished. However, so far, the USA and the EU have not yet managed to pull the rest of the world onto their side. The phenomenon of abstentions on resolutions aimed at punishing Russia as an aggressor has characterised the voting patterns of a majority of the states from the global South. For example, the voting patterns on the resolution to suspend Russia from the United Nations Council on Human Rights delivered fifty-eight abstentions (mainly from the global South), ninety-three votes in favour (mainly from Europe), and twenty-four against.

What does this mean? At one level, does this reflect the incoherence of the current neoliberal internationalism against all efforts of the USA to rally behind it what it considers to be democracies? In his speech delivered on 26 March 2022 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw in Poland, US President Joe Biden defined the Russia–Ukraine War as 'a battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rules-based order and one governed by brute force'. In terms of the resolution of the Russia–Ukraine War, Biden revealed the broader US imperial design of initiating regime change in Moscow. 'For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power,' he urged, in reference to Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

Currently, the US is actively trying to rally behind it what it conceives as democracies, but there are also stark signs and realities of a deeper and complex fragmentation of the existing internationalism. It is not easy to simply draw a line between the allies of the US and its foes aligned with Russia. Complexity and entanglement are the signatures of the current internationalism. The imperial US strategy of regime change has not been successful in other parts of the world — it has left political turmoil and humanitarian disasters in its trail. One can refer to Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. One can also aver that if implemented in Eurasia, chaos will reign in that region. The other baffling tendency is how the USA and the EU seem to prefer arming Ukraine to seeking peaceful means of resolving war. The voices urging mediation seem to be coming from the global South. South Africa offered to mediate and refused to take sides. The Arab League also offered to mediate. Turkey has hosted one of the meetings. Israel has also indicated its availability to mediate. Below is a broad overview of complex global South perspectives and responses to the Russia–Ukraine War.

The Middle East Region

Since the end of the Cold War, the Middle East region has been a theatre of wars, in which the great powers have been and are heavily embroiled. The long-standing and ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict reflects clearly the question of Zionist coloniality, which is sanitised by a neoliberal internationalism that is itself not decoupled from coloniality. Russia and the US have been heavily involved in the Syrian crisis. In Iraq, the site of the Gulf War in which regime change was implemented, hell was let loose and more violence and wars ensued after the Anglo-American military invasion and the killing of Sadam Hussein. At the same time the Middle East is not yet free from what Edward Said (1978) named as Orientalism, which has mutated into what is known as Islamophobia. Samuel P. Huntington (1996)'s thesis of 'the clash of civilisations' was conceived in relation to Islamic civilisation clashing with the West. Mahmood Mamdani (2004)'s notion of 'good Muslim, bad Muslim' emerged within a context in which he was making sense of Islamophobia and what the USA declared the 'war on terror', following the 9/11 attacks.

The Middle East is a very complex region with equally complex politics of affiliations and difference. What seems to be determining the perspectives from the Middle East are history, memory, interests and considerations of the preservation of sovereignty. History and memory relate the legacies and realities of great power interventions as well as the treatment of refugees from the Middle East in Europe. Neither the Israel–Palestinine conflict nor the war in Syria have attracted as much attention from the world as the Russia–Ukraine War, nor have their refugees received the same welcome compared to the Ukrainian refugees. This raises the question of the hypocrisy of the so-called free world and its racial profiling of people from the Middle East. However, the rich Arab countries themselves have not expressed any enthusiasm to welcome Syrian refugees either, an indication the failure of the strong pan-Arabism that the Arab League has been trying to forge.

All these factors have shaped perspectives of the Middle East on the Russia–Ukraine War. While there is a view that the war is a European one, there is also a realisation that it is a European crisis with implications for the Middle East. The Middle East, like other regions of the world, is entangled in particular ways with both Russia and the USA in many domains. Russia is a major exporter of food to the Middle East, particularly wheat. For the Middle East to quickly sign or vote for the sanctioning of Russia will definitely affect food imports from Russia to the region. Thus, just like Europe, which is dependent on oil and natural gas from Russia, the Middle East is cautious not to harm its imports from Russia.

While the dominant position of most Arab States at the United Nations General Assembly was to condemn the Russian invasion (thirteen voted in favour, one against, four abstained and one did not vote during the first UN resolution on Russia immediately after its invasion of the Ukraine), there is a cautionary tone that cuts across the region. There are also mixed reactions informed by such observations as why the Israeli occupation of and war on Palestine has not elicited the same international condemnation. Abstention can be interpreted as a preference for neutrality or non-alignment in a region where war has had long-lasting negative effects. Pinar Tank (2022:1) has described the regional perspectives and responses from the Middle East as 'instrumental, fluid, and fleeting'. The Middle East is a major source of oil and there is a possibility that if Russia is successfully sanctioned, Europe and the USA will turn to it for alternative supplies.

For illustrations of complexity in affiliations and alliances in the Middle East region, it is important to reflect on a few countries. Syria, for example, voted in support of Russia because Russia has been the key supporter and protector of the Assad regime since 2015. For Russia, Syria is a strategic partner that enables it to maintain its base in Tartus, giving it access to the Mediterranean. This is even more important now that, under pressure from NATO and the EU (Tank 2022), Turkey has closed the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to the passage of Russian warships. Turkey is a member of NATO but it has offered itself as mediator in the Russia–Ukraine War — for example, the 10 March 2022 meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, took place in Turkey. Partly this is because, in the Syrian war, Turkey needs Russian support in keeping Syrian Kurds in check (Tank 2022). But at the same time, Turkey is under pressure from the USA to take sides and even send missiles to Ukraine.

Israel is another country that reveals the complexities of multiple affiliations. It has taken a very cautious position on the Russia–Ukraine War. There is a Jewish population in both Russia and Ukraine. The President of Ukraine

is a Jew. Zelenskyy has already tried to bring Israel to the side of Ukraine by likening the Russian invasion to the Holocaust. But it is hard for Israel to climb the high moral ground and condemn the Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine when it is also advocating for the annexation of the occupied West Bank. At the same time, Israel is a strong partner of the USA in the Middle East. Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has enjoyed the protection of the USA, which has not been forceful in condemning Zionist coloniality and its violent responses to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

Then there are the Gulf States, comprising Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The strategy of the Gulf States has been to diversify their partners and affiliations, and as a result they have close relations with Russia and have chosen to be neutral vis-à-vis the Russia–Ukraine War. This position puts the US and EU plans to seek oil from suppliers other than Russia in question, as the Gulf States seem not to be persuaded and have stuck with previous OPEC+ agreements that entail lifting oil prices. Saudi Arabia has very strong ties with Russia including agreements on military cooperation. A plus for Moscow is that through its support for Syria's Bashar Al-Assad, it has gained favour for standing by and protecting its partners — unlike the USA, which always pushes its former allies under the bus if circumstances change.

Then there is the Russia–Iran relationship. Russia had been serving as a key intermediary between Washington and Tehran regarding Iran's nuclear deal. But now that it is the most sanctioned nation after its invasion of Ukraine, this might have consequences for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA) that it was mediating. A possibility is that Europe and the USA will lift the embargo against Iran's oil as they seek new supplies of this resource. Under the embargo, Iran has been dependent on Russia for technology. Sanctions against Russia might bring the two countries even closer and make them more dependent on each other. Russia does not fear a nuclear armed Iran as much as the USA does.

The African Region

Africa was the last part of the world to experience late colonialism. Consequently, its decolonisation became a twentieth-century phenomenon. The two superpowers — the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the USA — were deeply involved in the decolonisation and postcolonial dynamics in Africa for their various imperial designs. Geographically, the African region is distant from the theatre of the Russia–Ukraine War. Organisationally, it is still seen as divided into North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Black consciousness and Pan-Africanism have not yet succeeded in uniting the continent. Africa remains a divided region in many ways and the African Union (AU) has not been successful in rallying a common African position on the Russia–Ukraine War. At the same time, African leaders have been consistent in their defence of territorial sovereignty to the extent that they maintain inherited colonial boundaries and insist on their inviolability.

It was the Congo Crisis of 1960, which resulted in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, that revealed in stark terms the consequences of great power machinations in postcolonial Africa. Lumumba was a committed nationalist who in his independence speech promised to take the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on an independent national and pan-African trajectory. However, Belgium, the exiting colonial power, was not committed to letting go of the resource-rich DRC. The same was true of the other great powers. Consequently, the DRC became the site of the first neocolonial war involving the great powers in Africa. Lumumba was a friend of Kwame Nkrumah. What happened to Lumumba and the DRC prompted Nkrumah to research and explain neocolonialism and its dangers. The result was the book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965). Barely a year after this publication, Nkrumah suffered a CIA-sponsored military coup in 1966. It was such experiences that combined to reinforce a general anti-imperialist position in Africa and sustain the rhetoric of Pan-Africanism.

On 28 February 2022, the African Union issued a statement condemning the reported ill-treatment of Africans trying to leave Ukraine. However, when it came to the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on Russia, African states voted as sovereign individual states rather than as a collective. The continental and regional institutions have been rendered useless by the diverging views among African leaders on the Russia–Ukraine War. A further complication is that African countries such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria have strong links with the Middle East.

Just like other regions of the global South, history, memory, realist calculations and other factors determine African perspectives on the

Russia–Ukraine War. During the first General Assembly Resolution on Russia, this is how Africa voted: twenty-eight in favour, twenty-six abstained, and one voted with Russia. Debates followed on why Africa voted the way it did so as to arrive at an understanding of the African perspective on the Russia–Ukraine War. The explanations ranged from the historical legacies of solidarity between the Soviet Union and African countries during their anti-colonial/anti-imperialist struggles, to Russia's current influence on Africa and an Africa that chooses to stick to its tradition of non-alignment. Russia has prominent influence in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Guinea and Mali, where it seems a more preferable partner than France. Through its Wagner Group, Russia has extended its influence to Mozambique, which is battling Islamist insurgents. In the Sahel region, the military leaders who have come to power in recent military coups seem to be inviting Russia to help them tackle jihadists.

The twenty-eight African countries that voted in favour of sanctions against Russia included mainly those that have close ties with the United States of America: Botswana, Benin, Cape Verde, Comoros, DRC, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tomé and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Zambia. Botswana hosts a US military base. The criteria of democracies on the one hand and autocracies on the other hand cannot easily explain the voting pattern, even if some analysts attempted to argue that those African countries that abstained could be categorised as authoritarian or hybrid regimes. Namibia, South Africa and Senegal abstained but they do not qualify as authoritarian regimes by African standards. They have a functioning democracy — albeit with its own problems, like all other democracies across the world.

Nigeria and South Africa voted differently — Nigeria in favour, South Africa abstaining. These are two powerful African states. Nigeria had 5,000 students studying in the Ukraine and has strong economic relations with that country. Nigeria therefore voted against Russia but explained its position as being in accordance with the United Nations Charter and in defence of international law. Some analysts pointed out that Nigeria could have taken a position of neutrality because it also imports a lot from Russia and its position could backfire.

South Africa, since the time of the Nelson Mandela presidency, has maintained a position that no one can choose its allies and enemies, except itself. This emerged when Mandela was put under pressure by the United States of America to cut ties with Cuba and Libya. Mandela's response was emphatic — South Africa knew its friends, particularly those that had supported its anti-apartheid struggle wholeheartedly.

While circumstances have changed, South Africa has abstained three times since 2 March 2022 from resolutions in the United National General Assembly that were critical of Russia. The Minister of International Relations, Naledi Pandor, and the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, explained that their position was not an endorsement of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Rather, they preferred to give diplomacy a chance and not take positions that would contribute to the escalation of the war. For example, Minister Pandor argued that the suspension of Russia from the United Nations Council on Human Rights would place it outside international bodies, which would give it an opportunity to escape accountability.

There are also very complex histories and realities behind South Africa's perspective on the Russia–Ukraine War. South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and many other African countries, like Angola and Mozambique, were supported ideologically and materially by the Soviet Union during their wars of liberation. At that time, Ukraine was a republic under the Soviet system and also contributed to the anticolonial and anti-apartheid struggles. This complicates the basis for choosing a position, for South Africa in particular. The second reality is that South Africa is a member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which is the forefront of what is termed dewesternisation. But being a regional hegemon, both Russia and the United States of America want South Africa in their corner. Hence, Biden has been putting pressure on South Africa to take a position against Russia.

In North Africa, Egypt's response and perspective on the Russia–Ukraine War is determined by two major factors. The first is economic. Egypt is the world's top importer of wheat (85%) from Russia and Ukraine. Therefore, any sanctions imposed on Russia and any disruption of wheat production in Ukraine will have direct implications for food security in Egypt. The second factor is the long-standing relations between Egypt and Russia, going as far back as the 1950s (Soviet Union times). Russia supported the construction of the Aswan High Dam in 1964. Currently, Russia

is assisting the building of a nuclear plant in El Dabaa in Egypt and Russian companies are active as investors. A Russian Industrial Zone in the Suez Canal Economic Zone is under construction. On top of this, tourism in Egypt is boosted by tourists from both Russia and Ukraine. All these considerations make Egypt very cautious in its response to the Russia–Ukraine War. Egypt is very clear that sanctions imposed on Russia will affect it heavily as is the devaluation of the Russian ruble.

Despite its close ties with Russia, Egypt has also strategic partnerships with the USA and the EU. Consequently, a few hours after voting at the UN General Assembly in favour of condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Egypt issued a statement highlighting the need to pay attention to Russia's legitimate national security concerns. It also criticised the sanctioning of Russia. Egypt's actions demonstrate a country that it is walking a tight rope between Russia and the West.

As with other regions of the world, Africa needs to consider economic realities, in the form of its imports of wheat, soya bean, barley, sunflower oil and arms from Russia and Ukraine. These factors contribute to Africa taking a neutral and non-aligned position. Africa has multiple external partners across the so-called free world and autocratic world. Countries like Zimbabwe that are under EU and USA sanctions were bound not to support those against Russia. This is another complexity. It would seem for now that non-alignment is the best position for Africa in a world where Cold War fault lines appear to be re-emerging on a global scale.

The Asian Region

Asia, too, is a highly complex region with several sub-regions, such as Southeast Africa, Central Asia, Western Asia, Asia Pacific and Eurasia. Southeast Asia comprises Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste (East Timor) and Vietnam. These countries, except East Timor, are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In Southeast Asia, nation-building continues to be a challenge, such as in Indonesia. The construct 'Asia Pacific' emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, pushed by countries such as the United States, Japan and Australia, and tended to be used to legitimate United States intervention in East Asian affairs. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) of 1989 was one attempt to concretise the construct. It is basically a description of East Asia and the Western powers of the Pacific: United States of America, Australia and Southeast Asia. Then there is Northeast Asia, covering China (including Hong Kong), Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Russia and Mongolia. India is another big piece and power of Asia (McDougall 2016). These geopolitical constructions reflect the complexity of politics and impinge on how Asia as a region exhibits a multiplexity of perspectives vis-à-vis the Russia–Ukraine War. At the centre of Asia is China, which has risen to be a great power and is poised to lead a Sinocentric international world order.

One important point about East Asia, according to Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010: 118), is that it is not yet in a post-Cold War era. Korea is still divided. Taiwan is a garrison state. Japan–Russia relations are still characterised by tensions. Sino-American relations have been improving but are not stable. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are allies of the USA. Sino–Russia relations have improved compared to during the Sino-Soviet disputes. Chen (2010:119) concluded that 'These are undeniable markers of the continuation and extension of the cold war.' So far, China has not been vocal against the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. Russia and China belong to BRICS.

Shivshankar Menon, a former diplomat who served as National Security Adviser to Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, from 2010 to 2014, posited five arguments about Asia with regard to the Russia–Ukraine War. The first is that 'the future global order will be decided not by wars in Europe but by the contest in Asia, on which events in Ukraine have limited bearing'. The second is that 'Europe is a sideshow to the main theatre of geopolitical drama: Asia'. The third is that 'the centre of gravity of the world economy has moved from the Atlantic to east of the Urals'. The fourth is that 'multiple affiliations and partnerships is the norm in Asia, and it will complicate any Western framing of a larger confrontation with the autocracies of China and Russia'. The final point is that Asia's perspective is determined by a sense 'of its own difference — its focus on stability, trade, and the bottom line that has served Asian countries so well in the last 40 years'. Menon expressed these opinions in *Foreign Affairs*, 4 April 2022.

Perhaps the example of India helps in demonstrating the complexity if not multiplexity of affiliations and how they are enmeshed in the Russia–Ukraine War. India is a major power in Asia but has close

relations with both Russia and the United States of America. But when India began nuclear tests, the USA criticised it and even imposed sanctions. Russia stood by India. It was Russia and France rather than the USA that gave India nuclear reactors. India is also linked with Israel. Israel and the USA supply India with armaments. In the middle of all these complex affiliations, India pursues what has come to be known as 'strategic autonomy'. This is a realist position in world affairs. To the USA, India is part of the democratic free world and a partner of choice, but at the United Nations General Assembly on 2 March 2022, India abstained from the resolution that demanded that Russia withdraw from Ukraine. India is also not in favour of sanctions being imposed on Russia. Only three Asian countries — Japan, Singapore and South Korea — have joined the USA and EU agenda of sanctioning Russia. There is also a clear message from the Prime Minister of Pakistan, who has taken a clear position that Asians are not slaves of the USA, signalling their non-alignment position.

The Latin American Region

Latin America is the region closest to the USA. Greg Gandin (2006) depicted it as the 'empire's workshop' to highlight how US imperialism formulated, worked out and tested its imperialist strategies and tactics in Latin America before deploying them around the world. Indeed, the USA has since its emergence as a nation-state-cum-empire claimed Latin America as its sphere of influence. Basically, Latin America 'has played an indispensable role in the rise of the United States to global power', in the first instance (Grandin 2006:1). The USA is made of Latin America. In the second instance, Latin America 'has long served as a workshop of empire, the place where the United States elaborated tactics of extraterritorial administration and acquired its conception as an empire like no other before it' (Grandin 2006:2). In the third instance:

> The region provided a school where foreign policy officials and intellectuals could learn to apply what political scientists like to call 'soft power' — that is, the spread of America's authority through non-military means, through commerce, cultural exchanges, and multilateral cooperation' (Grandin 2006:3).

But it was also through the hard power of military interventions and sponsorship of military coups as well as regime changes in Latin America. The USA has never been a good neighbour, and like all other great powers and empires, it has yet to learn good neighbourliness. Consequently, it has committed so many crimes in the Latin American region, ranging from sponsoring regime change to maintaining colonialism, in countries like Puerto Rico. Therefore, the Latin America perspective on the Russia–Ukraine War is informed by long histories and memories going as far back as the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors.

Latin America is also the centre of counter-hegemonic revolutions, from the Haitian Revolution right up to the Bolivarian Revolution. Ideationally, Latin America has offered such schools of thought as Dependency, in the 1970s, and today the coloniality/decoloniality theory, all of which are critical of American and European imperialism and colonialism. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 is being used to compare Russia's claim that a NATO- and EU-aligned Ukraine is a threat to its security with how the USA responded to the Soviet Union's attempt to arm Cuba on its border.

However, the Latin American perspective — as in other regions — is not homogenous. There is Cuba, an active member and leader of both the Non-Alignment Movement and the Tricontinental Conference, with a long history of resistance to American imperialism and colonialism. Together with countries like Venezuela, Nicaragua and others, it is vehemently opposed to anything to do with the USA and has maintained close ties with Russia. But there are also big countries like Brazil and Mexico, considered to be democracies, which have refused to participate in sanctions against Russia. They have been joined by El Salvador in taking the route of abstention at the United Nations General Assembly on resolutions against Russia.

The USA strategy is to mobilise what it calls the 'free world' against Russia while at the same time trying to divide even those states that have stood with Russia. In pursuit of this strategy, the USA is trying frantically to cause a split between Russia and China and destroy the Sino-Russia alliance symbolised by BRICS. The President of the United States, Joe Biden, has also revealed a sub-text in that country's strategy. to engineer regime change in Moscow. The raft of sanctions imposed on Russia might be part of a plan to cause shortages and suffocate the Russian economy so that in the end the people of Russia rise against its government. The second emerging point is that even though there is increasing talk about the return of the Cold War or the emergence of a new Cold War, the realities on the ground are too complex to be reduced to any binary. Affiliations, partnerships and solidarities cut across any fantasy of a democratic

and autocratic dichotomy. While the competition is not between Russia and the USA but between USA and China, the revival of Russia and its attempts to move to the East rather than to the West has to be contained in the US's strategic calculations. The USA calculation was that after the end of the Cold War a pliable Russia would be invited into the EU, NATO and other Euro-North-American-dominated multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The question of national self-determination within internationalism and its future if Russia emerges victorious in the Russia–Ukraine War touches the hearts of smaller states more. Smaller republics and occupied territories like Palestine, Tibet, Kashmir, Taiwan, the Sahrawi Republic and others, which are neighbours to great powers like Israel, China and India for instance, live in fear of invasion and annexation. What is also important is the return of such concepts as non-alignment, neutrality and anti-imperialism and what they mean in the present conjuncture. How adequate, for instance, is the concept of non-alignment in a context where there is only one superpower? Do these concepts of neutrality, non-alignment and anti-imperialism help sufficiently in understanding the current behaviour and response of the global South to the Russia–Ukraine War? So far abstention is linked with non-alignment and neutrality. Does it really indicate neutrality? Abstention is neither yes nor no.

How the countries of the global South react to the use of sanctions and their legitimacy in international politics is informed by the fact that this has been a strategy used by great powers against smaller states of the global South. The fact that it has been the smaller and weaker states of the global South that have been victims of sanctions accounts for their ambivalence. Then there is the reality that imposing sanctions on Russia directly affects food security in many countries of the global South. The sanctions even seem to be negatively affecting Europe and the United States, which rely on Russia's oil and gas. All these issues indicate the complexity of the present conjuncture as well as the crisis of internationalism exposed by the Russia–Ukraine War. There is no doubt that if the Russia–Ukraine War drags on, the perspectives of the global South and responses will become even more complex. What is even more worrying is how Europe and the United States are invested in aggravating the Russia–Ukraine War through supplies of arms and personnel. One wonders whether war can be used to end war?

* Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South and Vice-Dean for Research in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, University of Bayreuth, Germany

References

Andrews, K., 2021, *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World,* London: Allen Lane.

Falola, T., 2022, Economic Impacts of the War on Ukraine on Africa: A Country-by-Country Analysis, *NaijaTimes*. Available: https://www.naijatimes.ng/the-war-in-ukraine-and-impacts-on-africa/ (accessed 29 April 2022).

Chen, K-H., 2010, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialisation*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Getachew, A., 2019, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Gildea, R., 2019, *Empires of the Mind: The Colonial Past and the Politics of the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grandin, G., 2006, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of New Imperialism,* New York: Henry Holt and Company, LCC.

Hamzawy, A., Sadjadpor, K., Miller, A. D., Wehrey, F., Hassam, Z., Farouk, Y., Khaddour, K., Yerkes, S., Coskun, A., Yahya, M. and Muasher, M., 2022, What the Russian War in Ukraine Means for the Middle East, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 March. Available at https://caregieendowment.org/2022/03/24/what-russian-war-in-ukrai (accessed 29 April 2022).

Mahbubani, K., 2018, *Has the West Lost It? A Provocation*, London: Allen Lane.

Huntington, S. P., 1996, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.

Mamdani, M., 2004, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*, New York: Patheon Books.

McDougall, D., 2016, *Asia Pacific in World Politics*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Mignolo, W. D., 2021, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Nkrumah, K., 1965, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, New York: International Publishers.

Prashad, V., 2007, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*, New York and London: The New Press.

Tank, P., 2022, Transactional Engagements: Middle Eastern Responses to the Ukrainian War, Available at https://blogs.prio.org/2022/03/trnscational-engagements-middle-east... (accessed 29 April 2022).

Said, E. S., 1978, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin Books.

Putin's Ukraine Aggression

Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui

Africana Studies Program
Cornell University
Ithaca, USA

Introduction

The following are five internally coherent and chronologically arranged essays on Russia's aggression against Ukraine, an aggression that was, as we know, on the directive of Vladmir Putin, President of the Russian Federation. This action has brought about many questions to do with the international order and its regime of laws, morals and ethics. Some discussions have been more enlightening than others. As I listened to the news, I grew increasingly uneasy about the looming instrumentalisation of international morality and humanitarianism to partisan ends. This fear shaped my initial reactions to the conflict and some of my responses to it.

These views are mine and therefore personal. They do not reflect the views or positions of any institutions, persons or entities with which I am associated professionally. (Note: PLEASE take the comments in the spirit in which they are offered as the situation on the ground is changing daily, if not hourly. This fluidity guarantees more essays.)

The series of essays began with my attempt to answer a nagging question at the onset of the Russian invasion, when commentators in the Western media objected to Africa's alleged mutism. They saw in this silence an unexplainable and perplexing ambivalence. Many wondered aloud what had happened to Africa's attachment to the preservation of borders, even those inherited from colonial rule. The response to Africa's supposed mutism is the very first essay: 'Putin's Ukraine Adventure: How Should an African Respond?'.

Then came the scale of the bombardment of Ukrainian cities, which was described—mostly in the US and Europe—as extraordinary. This assertion, obviously false, was the basis of many insinuations about the post-World War II international order, and merited reflection. The second essay is an attempt at a partial reply. It is titled: 'Guernica Looking on: The Shifting Moralities of Sovereignty and War'. This essay was not intended to banalise the scale of Russia's bombings of Ukraine's cities. It was to point out the increasing banalisation of violence through modern techniques and technologies of warfare. My intention was therefore to speak to the genealogy of the shifting moralities of war, to which many of Russia's Western critics have contributed.

Then came the arguments that Putin was wrong on substance in his interpretation of the 'not-one-inch' proposition—to some, a plea—that Mikhail Gorbachev purportedly made to George H. W. Bush at the moment of German unification. The debate is whether Bush pledged that the US and other NATO members would agree to stay clear of the Russian border in their military advances. The discussions seemed to me to be tone-deaf to both history and the postcolonial hermeneutics of peace. Hence the title of Essay 3: 'Inch By Inch Towards Perdition: Distrust and Misapprehension in International Relations'.

Another moment in the discussions of the nature of Russia's action led my mind into a spin. I was not debating whether Russia's actions constituted crimes of war but whether Ukraine deserved its fate. The short answer is no. But there was another answer lurking behind the obvious that needs elucidation. My musings led me to the nature of post-Soviet peace as illustrative of a tradition of Western peacemaking that sacrifices others to non-existence. They are reflected in Essay 4: 'Ukraine's Nakba Moment: Nations, Historical Claims and Political Violence'.

The final essay is the answer that Ouezzin Coulibaly, a postwar African intellectual and member of the French National Assembly, might have given to those who seem to think that the peace of the victor, this time under the aegis of NATO, is necessarily the best. This final essay is called: 'For The Love Of Humanity: Judgements, Predicates and their Authorisations'.

Please allow that the present essays reflect reactions in real time and that some of the propositions advanced here are subject to further elaborations.

I welcome comments, counter-arguments and rejoinders.

Putin's Ukraine Adventure: How Should an African Respond?

At the UN Security Council meeting on the impending Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Kenyan ambassador, Martin Kimani, made a very compelling point against the war. He warned against the temptation to redraw boundaries based on the misguided, if illegal, idea of 'historical justice'. He was countering Putin's claim that Ukraine was once integral to Russia's identity, culture and territory. He did not even have to speak about the veracity, or lack thereof, of the claims themselves. Mr Kimani was merely pointing out the obvious: that the world cannot afford the constant redrawing of boundaries. It is no surprise, therefore, that Western critics have praised the speech as an exemplary moral position.

Critics have gone further, by depicting the speech as a model for all of Africa and Africans, implying a questionable mutism on the occasion of votes that followed. Critics have noted that the majority of African officials and intellectuals who otherwise would oppose the very idea of changing borders are mysteriously silent on the Russian invasion. An online editorial by the Voice of America put it bluntly in a headline: 'Africa Opposes Border Aggression but Unlikely to Condemn Russia'.[1] The BBC's 'Focus on Africa' made a subtler point. It simply asked Africans, directly, how they should respond to the Ukrainian crisis.[2] Radio France International and many other media outlets joined the chorus of disapproval of the presumed African mutism.

I thought to place Africa's purported reticence in a larger context. The central argument is that if the concepts and practices of the international community and international society are to be given sense, states and citizens everywhere must be willing to denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But this is not all. They must be willing to do so on the basis of the juridical and moral principles of the international system of norms and rules by which we all profess to abide but which many are yet to agree to—for instance, that aggression is a crime; that imperialism is immoral; that 'territorial aggrandisement', in the language of the Atlantic Charter, is contrary to international peace and a violation of it; and that the principle of equal justice compels every single state, all nations and political and moral entities, to accept the notion of universal jurisdiction for the sort of crimes that Russia was about to commit. The last principle was incorporated partially in the Rome Statute, and its supporters around the world logically and morally understood it as meaning that transgressors of the stipulations of the Rome treaty would be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Today, many Africans hold, correctly, that the universal expectation created by the institution of the ICC was universal justice. To many, universal justice was not predicated on actuality or practicality. It was predicated on a commitment to universal socialisation, with the knowledge and experience that moral and political entities could be socialised in the ways of peace and towards peace. This why the intervention of Martin Kimani, Kenya's ambassador to the United Nations, mattered. He was merely stipulating the longstanding African prohibition, first given in the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity, that the world has no (peaceful) alternative but to respect borders—that is, unless they can be changed through the mutual agreement of the involved parties. To Africans, the idea was that, although colonial borders were injurious and impractical, prudence dictated Pan-African approaches to altering them, in the common interest. I doubt, however, that Mr Kimani was speaking to Africans alone. Quite the contrary. He was speaking to an extant international morality that Russia is not alone in violating. He was therefore speaking a larger truth than singling out Russia, although Russia is today its transgressor.

The larger wisdom of Kimani's argument is not what Western media—and others as well—wished to hear and to ponder. They did not seem to hear references to the threat of global over-militarisation, leading to not-so-dormant imperial impulses by over-armed states. The media had prescribed that the urgency of the moment was to identify who stood with Ukraine and against the Russians. In this context, subtleties, including those in Kimani's speech, were lost. But those subtle gentle reminders of what ought to be the foundations of international relations matter. Thankfully, even while decrying African mutism, the Voice of America (VoA) and other Western media noted accurately that majorities in Africa disagreed with Russia's use of force. This means that Africans are in synch with the world on the crucial matters of international law and morality.

Why then the so-called African mutism? The principal reason given by Western media is mistaken: that, in the words of VoA, 'the continent's governments are aware of Russia's power on the world stage'.[3] This is far from the truth. Africa's 'silence' has little to do with either an affirmation of Putin's misadventure or a lack of sympathy toward Ukrainians. In actuality, Africa has held back on account of the very consistency on

crucial questions of international law and morality that it is now denounced of betraying through silence. Put differently, Africa is called on to express itself on international relations only if and when its penchant for consistency and bluntness supports Western positions and interests. Otherwise, Africa's views, however coherent, are disregarded and the persons and entities pronouncing them presented as a nuisance.

If pressed, I suspect that the vast majority of African jurists would categorically deplore Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an abomination and a crime. The crime would be the crime of aggression—the one crime that Western powers and Russia agreed to exclude from the initial list of punishable crimes in the Rome Statute that created the International Criminal Court. Weren't Africans among those who fiercely advocated that the crime of aggression be added to the Rome Statute? This inclusion finally happened in Kampala on the twentieth anniversary of the treaty, in 2010.[4] Even so, barely forty states have ratified the Kampala Amendments. And the US and Russia have yet to sign the actual treaty, let alone the Kampala Amendments. To be sure, the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan began before the 2010 amendments that made aggression a war crime. Yet, aggression was already prohibited under centuries-long conventions as well as the UN Charter.

Likewise, the Russian occupation of Ukrainian territories is a categorical violation of the peace. Like the crime of aggression itself, this violation of the peace is not a subjective matter. It is not a crime because it happened in Europe that it should matter. It is a crime because of its manifestation as a fact and the consequences of that fact. Africans are clear about the objective nature of the Russian intervention of Ukraine and its prior occupation of Ukrainian territories. Africa has long held the same view of events in the Chagos Islands, where Britain expelled native populations to give way to Diego Garcia, a US naval base. It has held the same judgement on Israel's occupation and continuing expulsion of Palestinians, which began in 1948 and accelerated after 1967, leading to the rampant expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands. It also held the same position with regard to the now-overturned occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. I could go on.

The problem for Africa is not its lack of consistency. It is that this consistency and the expressions of it land African nations in trouble. At the first World Conference Against Racism in Durban, legitimate African arguments against Israel's occupation of Palestine were lumped together with antisemitism by delegations from the US, Canada, Australia and others, all but foreclosing discussions of the occupation of Palestine. Few could bring themselves to appreciate the consistency of the African position with that continent's traditions, which began with the 1963 Charter of the Organisation of African Unity prohibition against alterations of internationally recognised borders. This is clearly and indisputably the case in Palestine, with Israel's occupation and constant grabbing of Palestinian land. I am mindful that Africans themselves have made derogations of this principle, in cases involving Eritrea and South Sudan. But the principle remains. It is this principle of the inviolability of borders that guided African states in severing ties with Israel upon its occupation of the Sinai, an African territory, after the 1973 war. This consistency in the observance of the norms of international law brought scorn on Africa in the Western and Israeli media, where it was filed as hostility to Israel (mostly in the West) or antisemitic (principally by Israel and its most ardent backers in the West).

When listening to news reports about Africa and Africans in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, I wonder at times. I am baffled by the general ignorance of Africa's embrace, evolution and practices of international norms. The fact is that Africa and Africans in the main stand apart in their support for international law and morality. This is, after all, the continent from which human beings were taken away as chattel; whose borders were set arbitrarily in a European capital; whose anticolonialists were near-uniformly branded as terrorists; whose right to self-determination was subverted, from Algeria to South Africa; and where the practice of military coups was introduced by others in an initial attempt to keep the former colonies under control, beginning with Congo. It is also the continent with the most signatories of the Rome Statute. The people of this continent, but not necessarily its would-be potentates, have had the longest consistent yearning for a rules-based international order. They have also advocated that these rules be deliberated on democratically in legitimately subscribed universal forums. This yearning has been frequently punctured by the cynicism of the powerful.

Like the rest of attuned elites and publicists around the world, Africans too know the stakes of what is at play in Ukraine: the viability of a rules-based international order, predicated on mutually agreed conventions, that binds us all as international obligations. I understood Mr Kimani to also mean that the actions of all states, including would-be

hegemons, should be open to international scrutiny. I am sure that he would want consistency. You could see on his face that he was in no mood to be a mere pawn to be used and manipulated. His intervention also ran contrary to longstanding perceptions, also present in the media today, that international morality is to be adjudicated by the few.

I doubt that, in condemning Russia's behaviour, Mr Kimani was subscribing to the implied notion today that Russia's Ukraine aggression singularly endangers international peace and existence. Perhaps the media should follow up with Mr Kimani and ask if he thinks other actors are and continue to be in violation of the central principles and norms of international law and morality. The media should ask him if he thinks that, based on its declarations and actions today, the West should henceforth endorse sanctions in all instances of territorial expansion and illegal occupation. They should ask Kimani whether he thinks that a principle is emerging on the appropriateness of political and economic boycotts in instances of illegal displacements and transfers of populations; that cultural boycott is a legitimate way to show disapproval of state transgressions of other peoples' rights; that disinvestment and economic sanctions are proper responses to criminal actions by any states. Let's see if they praise him afterwards as morally consistent and righteous, if he says yes.

I am actually not sure what Mr Kimani would say. Nor do I personally speak for Africa's governments and peoples. But I know what my answers would be. That they would be mischaracterised to malign me and shut me up is the reason for my own mutism. That mutism does not mean an absence of rage at Russia or a lack of sympathy for Ukrainians.

Guernica Looking on: The Shifting Moralities of Sovereignty and War

There are few memorials of total war and its absurdities more devastating than Pablo Picasso's 1937 oil painting on canvas known as *Guernica*, which has long been hailed by art critics around the world as the most moving and powerful antiwar painting in history. But Guernica was not merely a painting. It was an actual place, a city, assaulted by Nazi planes during the Spanish Civil War, which led to the destruction of three-quarters of its edifices. In the process, hundreds of civilians lost their lives and thousands more lay wounded. The painting was meant to memorialise this destruction. It was meant to serve as a warning of the consequences of war, particularly wars on populated areas. For these reasons, *Guernica* was exhibited in the halls of international organisations and museums throughout the world as an expression of a universal sentiment.

The lesson of Guernica was not that it was forgotten during World War II but that it was concretised in horrifying fashion. The Nazis attacked London, Paris and St Petersburg without regard to life, life forms or their foundations. They also committed horrendous crimes on the outskirts of cities, which became crematoria, during their so-called final solution—the Holocaust. The Nazis were not alone in exacting appalling violence on real and supposed 'enemy cities'. One by one the Nazis, Fascists, Communists and Western allies not only bombarded cities, they also took irreversible steps towards making total wars the only possible future wars. Specifically, Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among others, did not just fall victim to the spirit of vengeance and expediency. They were displays of the willingness to use the deadliest of weapons. The Soviet Union committed similar acts both during the war and after—for instance, in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968).

These tactics were also used against colonial entities that sought self-determination. In Algeria, Vietnam and elsewhere, the anti-decolonisation forces of the West went to extremes to impose their will upon others under different but no less illegitimate guises. France massacred thousands of Algerians in a single day, also VE Day, in the towns of Sétif and Guelma, to bring home the point that postwar freedom was an exclusive Western good. Similarly, the US used all manner of weapons on Vietnam, including napalm, to lay waste to an entire country. Other Western allied nations acted in like fashion elsewhere. For instance, Winston Churchill authorised brutal assaults on freedom-seeking, antifascist Greek partisans.

The Soviet Union and Western allies intermittently set up war crimes tribunals (in Nuremberg and Tokyo) that took stock of the horrors of urban warfare and crimes against populations by German and Japanese armies. The trials of Nuremberg (1945–46) and Tokyo (1946–48) provided a background to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. They resulted in four treaties and three additional protocols, each dedicated to establishing international legal standards to humanise war by prohibiting conduct contrary to its humanitarian proclamations. For a while, the Geneva Conventions remained as signposts to the allowable and the disallowed during wartime. It was admitted, for instance, that the cost of war should be borne by combatants, to the extent that was possible. The moral predicate of this disposition was that comba-

tants make the explicit wager of equal chance of killing and being killed. Civilians do not enter such an understanding, especially when they are inoffensive—the old, the young, nurses and doctors and teachers and preachers and others in the exercise of professions unrelated to warfare. Wounded soldiers and combatants too fell under the category of 'inoffensive'. Places of worship, schools, hospitals and refuges from war were to be exempted from military assaults.

This all changed when armies and their commanders began to advance the idea that intelligent weapons—including human-manipulated drones and self-propelled autonomous robots—could be safely used in cities and other populated areas. The idea was that these weapons, including but not limited to electronically fitted weapons, could be delivered by self-guided missiles and drones. The new technologies changed how war was fought but not who was to be fought. Once again, the technologies mostly fell into the hands of the former colonial powers, and the metaphorical 'darker people' remained at the receiving end. Users and protagonists embraced the new technologies on the presumption that intelligent weapons systems could be depended upon to hit targets with precision (for instance military installations and command centres) without much damage to surrounding populated areas.

The 2003 US 'Operation Shock and Awe' and Israel's 2008 'Operation Cast Lead' proved the absurdities of the premise of precision targeting in urban operations. They proved that intelligent weapons were not always smart. The technology often failed or the weapons were directed by military personnel with faulty information (also intelligence). Further, intelligent weapons alone seldom accomplished military objectives. They were often used to pave the way for urban warfare that raised further ethical questions—among them, the pursuit of combatants, militias and other non-uniformed fighters who were embedded among civilian populations. As multiple interventions in Gaza and elsewhere have shown, aerial and ground actions to prepare for the control and policing of urban areas have added to the further destruction of dwellings, schools, hospitals and other edifices, commercial and otherwise.

The introduction of intelligent weapons eroded the moral and ethical underpinnings of the Geneva Conventions. The former has done the same for our sensibilities, leading to the latter. Few among the possessor-countries feared that these weapons would be used in those parts of the world inhabited by allies and symbolically marked as zones of peace in Western imaginaries. The weapons, their systems of deployment and mechanisms of use are intended to discipline potential rule-breakers and insubordinates. In practice, the identities of the latter are known in advance, by implication or anticipation. Until the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the allowable zones of intervention were invariably regions, races and subject populations in the former colonies. As a result, the debates about whether to allow, or not, these new weapons systems remained anchored in their utility for those using them: no draft, conscription, dead soldiers or political risks at home. These are not the only benefits. For battlefield commanders, these weapons have also lifted worries about placing soldiers where they could potentially commit war crimes. This is one of the lessons of the use of unmanned drones manipulated from afar by faceless soldiers in the comfort of air-conditioned bunkers, seated behind computers. These new soldiers are unlikely to be identified by victims and even less likely to be surrendered to any courts.

The advent and use of intelligent weapons has muddied prior moral certainties about intention and consequences. The norms of the Geneva Conventions and others were intended for soldiers in direct physical or visual contact with their victims. Soldiers were primed to be discerning when defining targets. Thus, international conventions provided clear guidance on legal and illegal targets. On the basis of the latter, soldiers and conscripts were also to discern legitimate from illegitimate commands given to them by their superiors on targeting. Today, few of the terms of the postwar conventions on war apply. The emerging regime of smart weapons poses questions to which definite answers are yet to be provided by bellicists. For instance, are battlefield errors admissible when the targeting presumes precision killing? When precision killing fails, do we then invoke the Geneva Convention prohibitions against deliberately targeting civilians and schools and places of worship, etc.? What of the complaints by victims and survivors? Are they correct in thinking that attacks against them are always intended because of the programming involved in the targeting and the human and material intelligence involved in the decision to fire? Are the Geneva Conventions applicable then? Is the defence of a mistake allowable in the instances above when the very prohibitions being skirted were predicated on the uncertainties of urban warfare or war on cities and population centres?

The immediate consequence of the present regime of warfare has been to dispense with the sensibilities, values, norms and potential jud-

gements prescribed by Guernica. The dissipation of prior concerns, of moral and ethical principles pertaining to total war, is disquieting enough in itself. The real casualty of the banalisation of Guernica as a symbol has been the ability of majorities in countries that possess intelligent weapons systems to appreciate the disquiet of others. The underlying inability to perceive the complex emotional and psychic reactions of potential victims has meant the debasing or reduction of moral and ethical debates about the functions, utilities and instrumentalities of the weapons themselves in the pursuit of security. The bodies and spaces to be secured are seldom in doubt: Europe and the West and their citizens, mostly white subjects imbued with the exclusive entitlement to their expected or anticipated 'way of life'. Guernica interferes with the underlying desire because its pursuit means privation and violence on others.

The road leading from Guernica to our present condition passed through the endorsement by citizens of militarised states (or those constitutively and infrastructurally suited to produce intelligent weapons) of militarism: the disposition of applying military means to political ends. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has merely shown how much closer militarisation and militarism bring all of us closer to the abyss.

The recklessness and brutality shown by Russia must be confronted and condemned. Russia's actions raise a number of issues. The first is the permissibility of one country to use coercive violence to compel another towards a desired choice. This act alone should not be permitted to stand, because it chooses militarism where diplomacy and other means of persuasion would have been preferable—and perhaps would have worked. The transgression of Russia is its warfighting strategy. Reminiscent again of Guernica, the strategy includes urban warfare, which goes hand in hand with the deliberate targeting of civilians and their assets and livelihood: infrastructures and resources that sustain life and are unrelated to war.

Russia's actions are only indices or indicators of the problem. In the present situation, paradoxically, Russia and its principal antagonists and detractors seem to be acting in tandem to advance militarism as both policy and strategy. In this regard, the duplicitousness of Putin is easy to counter as he and his allies have relied on total lies and fabrications—whether it be about the intentions of Ukrainian officials, their conduct or the actual urgency of the war. Objectively, nothing that Ukraine did justified the urgency of or amounted to a cause for war. The lies told by Putin have been beyond fantastic, most notably the twin arguments of ridding Ukraine of fascism and preventing genocide in Ukrainian regions presently under Russian control. For the sheer brazenness of the lies, Putin and his ruling elites have failed to conscript majorities to his side.

NATO members, too, are not letting the crisis go to waste. To be sure, there are marked differences in democratic decision-making processes between liberal and republican cultures, which have significant implications in wartime, domestically and abroad. Yet, the contrast between the two systems of government does not erase their conjoined responsibility in promoting militarisation and advancing militarism. To Putin's full lies, Western powers have nonetheless produced and advanced half-truths. These half-truths, historical and ontological, are neither necessary nor pertinent to the judgement that one must entertain in the face of a moral and international legal transgression such as Russia's invasion. Yet, they have become metaphors and tropes that guide both the reporting and judgement of the events. They do not just attempt to compel us to feel certain ways about the aggression, which are totally normal under any form of judgement. They are also intended to give form to faulty representations of Russia's antagonists as innocent and progressive.

The first category of half-truths pertains to the history of modern times. The current renditions are predicated on the central idea of the contrast between goodness and righteousness, on the one side, and wickedness and evil on the other. In this contrast, the righteous among nations are either responsive to or are appreciative of sovereignty, the right to self-determination and the rule of law. The non-righteous are contemptuous of the same. The fact is that this distinction and its derivative moral claims, either on behalf of or against any modern hegemonic power, does not hold: all of the present hegemons, no matter the ideology and degrees of learnedness, came into prominence by dictating to, as well as taking from, others under the pain of violence, including wars. It was not long ago that the so-called liberal democracies divested themselves of the remnants of empire and colonialism only to retain zones of influences under different guises. In the US, these guises extend from the Monroe Doctrine in the so-called Western hemisphere, to the containment of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, to the Reagan doctrine of wars of regime change in the developing world, to today's antiterrorism doctrines. NATO played a crucial role in the later developments in maintaining Western influence, including supporting

wars of aggression and occupation, around the world. This history belies the feigned innocence of Russia's accusation of attempted containment by extending NATO to the borders of Russia proper.

Secondly, the West's denunciation of Russia is also intended to conscript world opinion into envisioning or entertaining the idea of lasting peace and security with NATO as its primary instrument. Thus, the rightful condemnation of Russia is now necessarily linked to the rectitude of the extension of NATO membership to Ukraine. It does not matter much that such an act would place NATO on the borders of Russia. Nor does it matter that Ukraine's membership, itself an act of sovereignty and self-determination, would be an effective expansion of NATO that would give strategic advantages to Ukraine, Europe and the West to the detriment of Russia. The irony is that the same powers that are correctly brandishing the right to sovereignty and self-determination with respect to any country's right to security also denied Cuba's right to choose its means of national security, leading to the so-called Cuban Missile Crisis. They are actively doing the same within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which will effectively deny the right of Iran to determine for itself the means to self-defence. Guided by a similar sensibility, Israel and its backers have come to the determination that any Palestinian state would be demilitarised. Etcetera. It is not hard to notice that, for the West and NATO, the arbiters of sovereignty, self-determination and their prohibitions against aggression and occupation continue to be geography, race, culture, religion and the markers of difference. International rights and morality are neither absolute nor binding on all.

In conclusion, the aesthetics of Guernica have fallen by the wayside in favour of a new aesthetic of discriminatory regimes of morality, ethics and law. We have come full circle to the time before Guernica—both the event and the sensibility generated by the artwork. As before Guernica, we are once again led to believe that some states may legitimately determine the means of their own defence as sovereign acts and enter any alliances as an act of self-determination on the basis of region, culture, race and the political grace of the powerful. Others may not do so without permission or supervision regardless of their own contexts and needs, according to the new aesthetics and related truisms and commonsense. It does not matter so much that they have not committed any international legal infractions or transgressions. It matters that the hegemons proclaim their attempts at sovereignty and self-determination to be contrary to international order as defined by the hegemons. This is all happening outside of the strictures of international law and its universal norms of morality and ethics.

Putin's lies and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have only exposed the dangers of dispensing with the sensibility that moved Picasso to bequeath a painting to the world as a warning against the tendencies in modern warfare to attack population centres, civilian institutions and other infrastructures of life. The temptation against which Picasso warned was in full display during the attacks on the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol. Those attacks mirror others in other countries, by their states or those presumptively in charge of them: Jaffna, Gaza, Kabul, Bagdad, Sana'a, Aleppo, and countless more.

Inch By Inch Towards Perdition: Distrust and Misapprehension in International Relations

Inches are all it takes sometimes to either make or break international society and its norms. Of course, I do not mean a physical inch. I speak metaphorically. An inch is a metaphor about degrees of variation from an established line, a norm or an expectation. One uses the metaphor in circumstances where change occurs gradually and not by leaps and bounds (another metaphor). It is ironic, in a tragic sort of way, that we find ourselves once again, at the moment of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, caught up in a debate about the significance, meaning, applicability and implication of one inch.

The veracity of the promise of not going an inch further has come into focus in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine. So too has the meaning of what that might have meant in the tug of war between Russia and NATO. At the heart of the debate—and Russia's invasion of Ukraine—is whether there existed a 1990 pledge by the US (and, by extension, NATO) to not extend NATO beyond Germany. In their ultimate inclination to be literal and textual, Western officialdom and historians have strenuously referred to the content of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, signed in September 1990 by East Germany, West Germany, the USSR, the United States, France and the United Kingdom. This is the treaty that paved the way to 'German reunification' upon the collapse of the East German state. Most Russian officials and those sympathetic to Russia's interpretation of the events that led to the treaty—by whom I do not mean supporters of the present

war—insist that President George H. W. Bush 'acknowledged', or at least 'understood', that Mikhail Gorbachev expected, as part of his willingness to sign the treaty, that the US and Europe would not move an inch beyond the former East Germany in extending membership to NATO. Putin personally goes further in asserting that there was a Western promise that 'NATO would not move an inch to the East', once the treaty was finalised. US officials counter today that 'a ban' on expansion was never fully obtained.[5] There is a general admission that former 'Secretary of State [James] Baker, in a speculative way in an early stage of negotiations, says to Gorbachev, "How about this idea: How about you let your half of Germany go and we agree to move that one piece forward?"'[6] All contend nonetheless that Putin cannot permanently ban Ukraine from joining NATO.

There are two issues here, of which I wish to discuss only one. The first nearly does not need any discussion. There is no inherent good in the Russian war on Ukraine, no matter the argument. This is categorical. Less categorical but no less significant is whether there is inherent good in stressing the letter of a treaty over what the signatories, on all sides, might have had in mind. Put another way, this is the difference between, on the one hand, the text of a treaty—any treaty—and, on the other, reservations that signatories may have as well as understandings and interpretations of contexts and meanings. In this latter context, the question I wish to ask is whether it is prudent and, normatively speaking, advisable to inculcate a culture in which treaty implementations are stripped of their contexts of informal reservations, sensibilities and understandings. More broadly, what would be the fate of international society, order, norms and legality when the language of treaties is stripped from its historical context for particular advantages?

It might be worth considering the last question in our postwar postcolonial context. It would strike any postcolonial student of international law that Russia is making an admittedly imperial claim. This claim is to be rejected. But the assertions of historians and others about the legal or political signification of the 'not-an-inch' aphorism, however accurate, are normatively unsettling to the postcolonial sensibility. There are moral, ethical and historical questions at stake here, all of which have implications for the future of international society and norms. The first question, moral, is the advisability of victors, of say the Cold War, to seek maximalist advantages based simply on their own self-interest and nothing else. Students of international society might at minimum disagree. The other question is ethical. This is whether the consequences of maximalist claims for the defeated, or weak, should be considered for a greater good. These questions lie beyond textual interpretations of any agreements. They pertain to an intangible yet valuable commodity in international relations—trust, and therefore, the ability to see value in entering treaties whose texts might not cover that which might come to harm one or any of the signatories.

Born under the shadow of Western imperialism, postcolonial authors would argue that the road to their own oppression and exploitation was paved with broken treaties. Speeches and positions by King Philip, Sitting Bull, Tecumseh and other native leaders in the American New World stand as a warning of the future dangers of the casualness with which the militarily powerful and politically ill-willed break treaties and dispense with their 'words or commitment'. Indeed, the former colonial provinces of Europe and the West are littered with broken treaties and unkept promises by imperial and colonial powers. Native Americans and Africans still bemoan the days when the newcomers, to whom the 'natives' initially extended hospitality and treaties of friendship, so wilfully reneged on the spirits of the related agreements as the 'natives' understood them. The expectations of the latter were simply dismissed when the said commitments stood in the way of proclaimed interests. Thus, trust and language became casualties of the encounters between Europeans and others.

In the former colonies, therefore, the idea that Gorbachev made the 'not-an-inch' supposition is not surprising. Russia was in the weaker position. But the idea that it does not matter that Gorbachev expected the West to honour it as a sign of peace reawakens memories of unfortunate times: when desiring powers discounted expectations underlying prior negotiations simply because they became inconvenient. The underlying fear has been magnified recently by the willingness of Western powers to also act in excess of authorisations contained in formal agreements when convenient—as happened with UN Resolution 1973 regarding Libya. This resolution instituted a no-fly zone that quickly served as cover for orchestrating the overthrow of Gaddafi. The result is that many Africans are now unsure whether treaties and formal agreements should be strictly enforced according to their languages, and nothing else, including the understandings and spirit that set agreements into motion in the first

place. It seems today that even that determination is a matter of convenience for hegemonic powers. This much has been implied by the African diplomats who abstained rather than supported the UN resolution condemning Russia.

The practices and sensibilities around international accords are not without consequences for international society, order and norms. Any consequences and their effects do not happen suddenly, nor do the impressions of such vanish with the initial transgressions. This is to say that the nature of international society and norms is altered positively, or otherwise, through small steps, or one event at a time—by inches, if you wish. It is by inches, thus, that communities, laws and norms are fortified or weakened. Inches also count for the ability to forge and maintain common languages, cultures and sensibilities. In truth, international relations depend on a game of repeating processes, utterances and actions woven together like language itself. Each iteration of the game—speech acts, political actions, geopolitical claims—either reinforces by approximation or weakens by derogation the prior applications of the language (in this instance, of politics and relations). Approximations, or fidelity to the rules, procedures and norms, reinforce the game on which depends the viability of an orderly international society and system. The solution or resolution of the problems arising from the applications of the norms sets the template for future applications, whether identical or approximate. Iterations thus amplify or weaken the norms and values embedded in the game. Derogations, on the other hand, even if through small or incremental steps, undermine the game, language and society.

In other words, the ability to articulate values and norms as well as to communicate meanings depends on the significations that are attached to agreements at the moment of the application of these agreements. This is why repetition through utterances and actions retains pedagogic and didactic value in diplomacy. Norms as a language begin to fall apart when unbridgeable gaps appear between the language represented by treaties, norms and sensibilities and its application as a justification of action through interpretation. One should worry, therefore, that language, values and sensibilities are undercut. All norms and processes lose all meaning when this happens. The consequences, although not always immediately apparent, are nonetheless palpable over time. Each exception to expectation and/or each derogation of the procedures opens up the possibility for other derogations, some worse than others. Perversely, derogations clarify or further specify international norms, rules, procedures and their ends, but not always as intended or anticipated by the transgressors. Repeated violations, derogations and exemptions to treaties subvert the spirit of international normativity and, therefore, weaken the supposed or implied values of rules, procedures and their ends.

There is hence a distinction to be made in language, as in treaties, between positive and negative iterations. In the first, the parties strive, inch by inch, to move towards a broader collective understanding of rules, norms, procedures and their ends. This occurs through predictable and shared interpretations during each iteration. In contrast, negative iterations create a monotonous loop of derogations, or steps away from the intention of the game. The inhered centrifugal movement ultimately defeats the purpose of the game itself, which is different from whether the game is won or lost by one party or another. This is why the road to perdition is paved by small steps: inch by inch, derogation by derogation. It is how the parties to treaties, members of the international community, sharers of a common language, begin unwittingly or not to undermine the language or the game itself, leading to its collapse or disappearance.

Russia has made a huge leap with regard to the above. The flagrant violation of the rights of Ukraine, both as a people and state, has jolted vast majorities into realisations long pushed into the farthest recesses of consciousness: the dangers of power politics, the refusal to abide by rules followed by most, and nuclear weapons. Who would disagree that Ukraine may by self-determination enter into any agreement of its choosing and as a sovereign state elect how it seeks to defend itself? The answer may seem obvious, but it is not—as I show below.

There is also a danger in the positions currently held by so-called Western powers, officialdom, historians and others. This is the tendency of Western powers to press their advantage over Russia when the latter is at its weakest. Further, these powers are either unconcerned or uncaring that they are at this moment pressing all of us, inch by inch, small prevarication by small prevarication, into conscription towards another equally grave danger: the loss of language, trust and the ability to relate. Specifically, they profess adherence to legality while acting contrary to it in other contexts. In fact, they have adjusted the implication of self-determination and sovereignty for other countries—for instance, Iran and Libya—for conduct that is not limited to them: aggression and support for groups engaging in non-normative behaviour.

This is why, while condemning Russia and supporting Ukraine at the moment, one should be cautious to not be conscripted into a historical enterprise whose purpose has the potential to subvert international relations. NATO is an instrument of war with specific purposes and geopolitical predicates. Its history and trajectory, also matters of fact, suggest that Russia is not necessarily merely paranoid about the consequences of NATO enlargement to its borders. Again, Russia's reaction to NATO's 'provocations' cannot stand the test of legitimacy if this means destroying another country. But none of us should be swayed into thinking that NATO's expansion has no consequences for Russia and the rest of the planet. It is a question to be debated, and not by NATO members alone if they are to conscript the rest of us.

Ukraine's Nakba Moment: Nations, Historical Claims and Political Violence

The conduct of Russia in its war in Ukraine is the result of broader shifts within the international system towards militarism, or a reliance on military solutions, which is itself a consequence of militarisation: the harnessing of moral, material and symbolic capacities of state and society towards military priorities. This is the effect of shifting sensibilities away from the cautions and prohibitions against total war and to weapons that do greater harm beyond military objectives in the embrace of extreme warfare. These developments have sealed the fate of most postwar international conventions on war and the mitigation of its effects, from the Geneva Conventions to laws against chemical and biological weapons to the very spirit of nuclear non-proliferation.

This war also shows that current forms of warfare exceed prior languages and modes of cognition with respect to the facts of war. To date, there is only the designation of 'crimes against humanity' and 'crimes of war' for some of Russia's actions in Ukraine. But the crime against Ukraine has an unmistakeable international dimension that must be specified. It lies in the very nature of the language, mechanisms and implementation of peace in the postwar era that is so widespread that it deserves its own specificity. Specifically, from Palestine to Ukraine, a consortium of Western nations, acting in the name of the collective, has subordinated the fate of vulnerable populations to a chessgame of power politics that produces for those people the sort of negative peace that Immanuel Kant referred to as the Perpetual Peace of the graveyard. I say 'sort of perpetual peace of the graveyard' because Kant was referring to a peace likely to produce a 'world dictatorship'. There is a dimension to this kind of negative peace that Kant perhaps did not foresee, which is that, in our time, 'global players' would entice political entities into forms of peace that sealed their legal, civil or physical fate—or all of these at once.

I call the new kind of 'peace of the graveyard' Nakba. I call it Nakba not as provocation but as a descriptive language of a phenomenon not yet specified but that needs specification. Raphael Lemkin had it right when, at the end of World War II, he implored nation-states and their jurists, ethicists and others to find a proper label, to put a name to, acts that had transpired through the war. Collectively, these acts were the Holocaust. Lemkin was inspired by this actual case, the particulars of which he described meticulously.[7] The extermination of a people, Lemkin correctly perceived, takes multiple steps. As it related to his case, Lemkin identified 'crimes of barbary', 'crimes of vandals' and catastrophes that so disrupt life as to make it unliveable. He later grouped these actions together and called the associated ideologies, mechanisms and effects 'genocide'.[8]

Lemkin was correct that one of the means to prevent another event remotely close to the Holocaust from happening again was to give it a descriptive name. In this light, it is not enough to roundly condemn Russia, as vast majorities have done. In truth, the road leading to Russia's assault on Ukraine lies in a number of steps, all of which connect to the kind of peace of the graveyard that peacemakers have so frequently implemented lately. The first step on the road to this peace is to render vulnerable a political entity that was once secure in its social order, institutions, culture and norms and values. Ukraine, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, emerged as a viable independent state with the means to defend itself, including nuclear weapons. Then came the concerns from both Russia, which claimed ownership of the warheads as the successor to the Soviet Union, and NATO, concerned about the status of military forces in Europe. Together, they enjoined Ukraine to return the weapons to Russia, which it did. Beginning in the 1990s, Ukraine returned all Soviet nuclear warheads to Russia, with some assurances for its security.[9] In 1994, Ukraine became a non-nuclear-weapon state and, as such, adhered to the 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These and related actions occurred under the auspices of the international community[10] and were sanctioned by the Lisbon Protocol of 1992.

In the end, Ukraine was left with no nuclear weapons or related infrastructure. At the time, a number of the mediators and some Ukrainians were apprehensive about the associated deals. But there was no forethought given to the future. Then came step two, Russia's claims of unbroken historical, cultural and religious ties to Ukraine as the partial justification for occupation and interdiction of Ukraine's independent foreign policy. These too have a ring of familiarity around the world where irredentist claims justify the expropriation of others. These claims are linked to demands that are equally parochial. This is to say that the underlying claims of exclusive belonging are based on theological, ideological, cultural, linguistic and political predicates. This is why the demands of, say, Russian sovereignty over part of Ukraine are parochial in themselves. They are based on claims that can be verified and sustained only within a framework that is neither universal nor open to debate, at least as Russia would have it.

Third, the conduct of the war too is familiar, sadly so. Russia, having already occupied parts of Ukraine, has attempted to change the demography, political order and economic relations and systems of the renegade regions under its control. It now wants to create more such Russia-dependent regions in a move that would break up Ukraine and make it a non-viable sovereign state. The related move to integrate Ukrainian regions into Russia has had the effect of causing a mass exodus by self-determining Ukrainians unwilling to accept Russian sovereignty. Finally, both those leaving and recalcitrant Remainers have faced state-sponsored violence and dispossession by Russian-dependent political authorities and organisations. There is a general recognition of what 'Russia's success' in Ukraine would do to that country and Europe.

The events taking place in Ukraine are all too familiar to the vast majorities of the initiated not hung up on European difference. This is why the fate of Ukrainians at the moment, the causes of it and the conduct of the war and underlying claims all point to beginnings. To Nakba. Nakba is the Palestinian term for a national tragedy, catastrophe or disaster, depending on the translation or context. It refers to their own existential condition. It is a condition born of several elements. The first is the political vulnerability of a people to the ambition of another more powerful people. The second element is international complicity in that vulnerability. The third element, located in time, is implementation. This element has many components, which extend from war to expulsion to expropriation. The last element is the absence of recourse despite the availability, in similar contexts, of processes, procedures and languages for justice. In this sense, Nakba is injustice against the background of available solutions, none of which apply because of international dynamics beyond the reach of the victimised.

Unlike wars, civil or otherwise, the central feature of Nakba is that most of its victims heard of the justifications and underlying claims only when the tragedy was underway. This is not to say that the victims were unaware of the aggressor party. Often, both sides to a tragedy share a past but their memories of it differ drastically. It is to say that one party decides to dispense with the status quo, unbeknown to the other. In the case of Palestine, Palestinians had no connection to the persecution of Jews in Europe that led Theodor Herzl and other Zionists to plan a 'return to the homeland'. Nor were Palestinians associated with the goals of return. Instead, the forms and feasibility of return were negotiated outside of Palestine in such places as the United Kingdom. It was there that the Balfour Declaration gave an imperial caution to the return, leading to the 1948 partition of the land. It is in this sense that Nakba is first and foremost a product of the international system. In Palestine, the project of return was predicated on imperial games of indulgences and discriminations in which one party was given authorisation and the other an injunction to comply. Similarly, Ukraine was made to comply with the terms of legal and political arrangements that preceded its coming into existence. NATO and the USSR compelled Ukraine to meet the terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and post-Cold War security and armament regimes in Europe, presumably in the interest of international order and stability. Today, we find that none of those actions taken by Ukraine, particularly denuclearisation, have protected it from harm.

This was also the scenario in Palestine upon the 1948 partition and the 1967 war. Palestinians were constantly presented with agreements, mediations and security formulas by an international community committed to the establishment of a Jewish state but never to the protection of Palestinians against the repercussions of the concessions they were asked to make. Quite the contrary. The more spectacular the compromises, the more tenuous their position and the more Israel exploited their vulnerabilities without any consequences. It is a matter of fact that not a single country that has enjoined Palestinians to enter into peace talks

or agreements has yet to find an offence against Palestinian interest that was so egregious that it had to be reversed. Not one. Not even the two Oslo Accords and memoranda such as the one obtained at the Wye River meetings. Instead, Palestinians were conscripted to assist Israel in policing itself, ironically securing the very occupation that undermined the possibility of a Palestinian state. Again, the international origin of Nakba is not merely something that the Palestinians have experienced. The inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago also found out in the 1960s that their lives could be upended by 'international agreements' to which they were not a party. Their Nakba began when they were forcibly removed from their homeland and deported to Mauritius and other nearby island nations to give way to Diego Garcia, a US naval base.

Nakba originates in unjust 'international settlements' that appease specific political subjects at the expense of others for reasons that have little to do with conduct by the latter. Paradoxically, the settlements that lead to Nakba are nearly always predicated on considerations outside of the stipulated foundation of the present international order. For the post-World War II order, the basic principles of the emergent system stipulated by the Atlantic Charter, the UN Charter and subsequent conventions contained prohibitions against territorial aggrandisement, colonialism and coercive settlement of disputes, all of which are associated with Nakba.

The third condition of Nakba, also a paradox, is that it occurs because of subjective claims that are not verifiable or are so only if one set of claims by the contending parties is privileged over another set. The underlying adjudication must also be subjective. Consistently, the claims, counter-claims and contentions that led to the Palestinian Nakba—of God's intentions, Chosenness, memories and their implications—are not matters that anyone can objectively adjudicate within the strictures of the secular terms of the international system and its legal and moral regimes. It is Ukraine's fortune, therefore, that—except for Russian nationalists and irredentists—few in Russia itself and the world over have given in to the argument that the world should abide by Russia's accounts of its imperial ties to Ukraine, its own memories of such a past and the resulting affective attachments.

If there is a silver lining to the Russian war in Ukraine, it is that the world is learning the dangers of indulging imperial desires, irredentist claims and their pre-modern modes of identification. Whether in Kosovo, Chagos, the Kachin state of Myanmar, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, or elsewhere, there persists the tendency to found sovereign claim on imperial, national, ethnic and religious identities and associated memories, which leads to self-justified schemes of rectification, restoration and reparation. Russia's conduct is proving that its underlying ambitions are outside the bounds of international law and our present modes of adjudication. For these reasons, we are compelled to stick to secular methods of conflict resolution and mediation. This is why, in condemning the Russian war on Ukraine, we should collectively remember Nakba, both as a reminder of what has been and a warning of what might come when peace inherently condemns some to perpetual graves so that the chosen ones may perpetually have exclusive possession of rights, immunities and privileges denied to others.

For The Love Of Humanity: Judgements, Predicates and their Authorisations

The post-World War II era has not had a shortage of moments when it needed to revisit the crucial question of the survivability of the human species. The Russian war against Ukraine is once again a reminder that the world needs an international system capable of generating order and community and, with it, universal values, norms and institutions and practices. The spectacle of Russia's aggression and the inability of Ukraine to prevent it are reminders of the inadequacies of the international order and its moral and legal regimes. Specifically, it shows the limits of the institutions and practices of sovereignty, self-determination, justice, equality of rights and obligations.

This case has been made very eloquently by President Volodymyr Zelensky. In his address to the UN Security Council on 5 April 2022, Zelensky made a number of inescapably good points about the Council's rules of procedure, particularly the persistence of conflicts of interest presented by the permanent members who are the cause of conflict. By all accounts, the Ukrainian president rose to the occasion. David Smith is correct when, writing for *The Washington Post*, he declared that one of the most poignant moments of Zelensky's speech was the following set of rhetorical questions: 'Where is the security that the security council needs to guarantee? It's not there, although there is a security council. So where is the peace? Where are those guarantees that the United Nations needs to guarantee?'[11] Quoting David Axelrod, former advisor to President Barak Obama, Smith subscribed to the notion that there are no more superlatives left to describe the power

of Zelensky's prose, foresight and courage 'in the midst of unthinkable horror and evil. His words land with such force!'[12] Correspondingly, the reactions to the Russian aggression have been encouraging, particularly with regard to the empathy and gestures of solidarity shown to Ukraine and Ukrainians. So too has the denunciation of Putin's Ukrainian adventure.

The torrent of empathy, support and solidarity to the Ukrainian cause also has a darker side. It carries the pretence that Russia's aggression represents the first time the right to self-determination has been so brazenly suppressed through violent warfare. It also pretends that Zelensky is making exceptional new points about international security that, in their times, others—Algerians, Palestinians, Sahrawis, Tibetans, Chagossians, Iraqis, Afghans, Yemenis, Namibians, Kurds and many more—failed to make. In fact, their leaders variously stated what Zelensky did, some more eloquent than others in their lamentations. The fact that these voices were not heard is in itself a feature of the international system. It follows that the reality of wilful selective hearing is one of the reasons that many wonder today if we are once again being conscripted into the unknown. This is what happened, for instance, when the US decided to expel Saddam's troops from Kuwait in the 1991 Operation Desert Storm. Then, Western governments and the media gave voice to the injustice of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, leading George H. W. Bush to declare a New World Order,[13] an era in which the US and NATO would concretise their commitment to defend international law and protect the right of peoples to self-determination. It wasn't before long that the so-called coalition of the willing ceded to like coalitions under US command, with NATO as their instrument, for dubious interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. Biden has now reprised the term in the context of the consensus shown among NATO members in their reactions to Russia's war.[14] The end of this order remains to be seen.

The ultimate motivations and objectives of those wars are now a matter of historical record. I wish merely to stress that the expressions of moral outrage at Russia's conduct can be and are opening a door leading to a Manichean world. This is a world of good and evil in which the evil is more easily identified than the good. The foundation of the new world is laid by forces that are instrumentalising outrage without any clarity of the world into which they wish to conscript the rest, or the 'international community'. At the heart of this conscription is the expectation, overt or covert, that all observers—except those laying the foundation of the new order—surrender their critical faculties.

Specifically, since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have been led to believe that the lies, misinformation and propaganda emanate from one side—Russia's, of course. By implication, a tenuous one at that, we must accept that all Western and NATO proclamations are true. We must accept or imagine that they cohere with some fundamental goodness. There is in this world no room for suspicion about any gaps between power and public and private moralities; no harm done by accepting Western and NATO hegemony through its expansion; and no need to deplore inconsistencies in the application of international law that reveal their own symbolic worlds of patterns and practices. Who would or could doubt that the political, cultural, economic and military strengths of the West and NATO serve the collective interest—indeed, a universal value. The naysayers. They must be Russian stooges, paranoids or naïve idealists with no grip on reality.

In the remaining sections of this essay, I wish to stress that questions pertaining to the nature, organisation and form of collective security are not new. They have been frequent topics since the official end of the Second World War, VE Day. I say 'official end' because it was on that Victory in Europe Day, on 8 May 1945, that France indicated that the new security order did not apply to the colonised in Algeria. Rather, France's murder of Muslim worshippers in Sétif and Guelma showed that the rebirth of defeated France, through the Marshall Plan and other security arrangements, meant the restoration of La Grandeur Française, a French greatness associated with its status as an imperial power.[15] Similar incidents occurred throughout the colonial world, too numerous to cite here, in which British, French, Portuguese, Dutch, US and other colonial powers conflated international security with Western domination, including the survival of colonial rule.

It is against the backdrop of the French massacres in Algeria and elsewhere that Ouezzin Coulibaly made his incisive comments about the entry of France into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on 26 July 1949.[16] Coulibaly was an elected member of the French National Assembly at the time. He had been elected as a representative of the colonies from the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) and as such was appointed to the Commission on National Defence in 1947. It was in this capacity that

Coulibaly was called upon to comment on the entry of France into NATO. The gist of his speech was proclaimed in the magazine, *Nouvelle A.E.F*, at the time an organ of the RDA, by the headline: 'The peoples of Africa will never feel bound by acts that are contrary to the interests of their evolution'.[17]

One matter that bothered Coulibaly was the deployment, and implications thereof, of West African soldiers who had completed their tour of duty during World War II. He was specifically troubled that the government of France had taken the unilateral decision, without consultation with Parliament, to deploy these troops to Indochina. Coulibaly had related questions of democracy, consent and security when he took to the floor of the National Assembly to speak about the purpose of NATO.[18] He had many questions, many of them simple. One salient one was, why did the world need a security organisation with global reach that was not subordinate to the UN Security Council? He also wondered why membership was not offered to all countries as the Bretton Woods institutions did, with all their imperfections.

Coulibaly's views on NATO were as general as they were specific. For instance, he wondered who would ensure that NATO, in exercising the global power of intervention that it gave itself, would ensure that it remained within the stricture of article 1 of the treaty. This was the clause that NATO states would 'refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations'. On this matter, there is no need to elaborate. Speaking of colonial legislators asked to support NATO, he also wondered about the implication for the colonised of the clause of article 2, that NATO states 'will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them'. Coulibaly was moved in his criticism by metropolitan legislators who implied that the coming alliance among colonial powers was mean to strengthen Western civilisation. In fact, they explicitly referred to the clause in Parliament as the 'strengthening of western civilisation' clause. For this reason, Coulibaly asked his metropolitan colleagues what he, as a colonial subject, was to make of the disposition in article 5, that treaty signatories 'will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area'.

This clause, now commonly referred as the 'an attack on one is an attack on all' clause, was further specified in article 6. This article says that, 'for the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France (2), on the territory of or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer'. It was not paranoia, given what transpired during the Algerian war and in Portugal's colonial possessions in Africa, that a reading of articles 5 and 6 together meant that the commitment to strengthen 'the internal security of member states' was at the time a commitment to maintain colonial rule in some regions of the world. There was no mistaking this point when attack on 'the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties' by anticolonial forces in North Africa, the Mediterranean and elsewhere could be construed as an attack on a NATO installation. Fascist Portugal exploited this language to great effect; so too did the US when it initiated steps leading to its war on Vietnam not long after the Vietcong defeated French colonial troops in Diem Bien Phu.

The questions Coulibaly raised were not as antiquated as they might have seemed. Argentina would find out later, in 1982, that the North Atlantic Treaty superseded any compact in the Western hemisphere that did not violate the expectation of the Monroe Doctrine in the eyes of US policymakers. That year, during the Guerra de Las Malvinas, or Falklands War, Ronald Reagan and his advisors concluded that US neutrality in regard to the respective claims by Argentina and the UK did not prevent the US from agreeing 'to lend Britain an aircraft carrier [to Britain in its] campaign to retake the Falkland Islands from Argentina if the Royal Navy lost either of its two carriers'.[19] Yet, for his supposed impertinence, Coulibaly's parliamentary metropolitan colleagues asked that his parliamentary immunities be lifted so that they could prosecute (in actuality, persecute) him for violation of, among other things, his oath to protect and defend French national security.

Coulibaly was not anti-French or anti-NATO per se, he would insist multiple times. He was guided by the desire for universal citizenship, democracy and self-determination, all of which seemed in doubt under NATO. He understood all of these concerns to flow from the 1942 Atlantic Charter and the 1945 UN Charter, which he contrasted with the language and dispositions of the 1949 North Atlantic Charter. There

are a number of questions that are both implicit and explicit in Coulibaly's criticisms that deserve attention, whether one agrees with him or not. These concern tensions between power politics and international morality in 'international security'; the congruence of the practices of war and peace with the tenets of universal justice, equality and citizenship; whether there is inherent greater good in placing universal trust and faith in the (formerly imperial) West; whether postcolonial, weaker and defeated entities could hope to find security in the schemes developed by NATO; etc.

These are not impertinent questions. We hope today that Russia fails in its objectives in Ukraine. Would you entertain the same thought and spend the same energy on Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen? We rightly bemoan Russia's aggression and attempted dismemberment of Ukraine. Would our critical faculties also lead us to think of the occupied Palestinian territories? We speak of the horrors of displacement. Is this the season to speak of Chagossians, Rohingyas, Sahraouis, etc.? We speak of Russia's disinformation, rightly. Will we commit then to truth and precision in language in our categorisation of international offences without partiality to alliances, religions, regions and races? Are all forms of territorial aggrandisement, conquest, colonisation and discrimination now illegal? We are frustrated that Russia is able to use its veto to block international actions on its illegal activities in Ukraine. Are we now going to revisit the procedures of the UN Security Council with regard to conflicts of interest, ethics and the double veto beyond the present war? Are militarism and militarisation once again up for serious discussion? Nuclear weapons?

Coulibaly had broader objectives and a more comprehensive approach to global security than has been stipulated thus far by Zelensky. Again, this is not to diminish the poignancy and power of Zelensky's antiwar prose. It is to say that the same questions have been raised by countless others, mostly from the global South, for a more fundamental rethinking of international security. Their pleas have not been heard because of subjective regimes of empathy and sympathies; morality and derived affectations; law, legality and legitimacy; and, more broadly, privileges and immunities, as well as obligations and responsibilities attendant to power and circumstances. These subjective regimes are oriented unidirectionally towards the West, Europe and white Christians. They disfavour 'darker people', the formerly colonised and those with the misfortune of running foul of Western allies.

The absence of consensus on global security, together with the uneven application of international law, is among the causes of the breakdown of the international system and the regimes that give it effect. The absence of interest in as well as commitment to impartiality in judgement is another dimension of the breakdown. It would appear that all entities of the international order have at some point expressed disappointment in the partialities, duplicities and inconsistencies with which self-appointed guardians of the peace or would-be peacemakers have used the available instruments and mechanisms of peace; that they have deliberately on occasion refused to align conduct with the universal values and norms that they profess. To counter the related base tendency to instrumentalise existing rules, norms and values, these must be revisited with respect to language, the predicates of actions and international morality. The guardians of peace must commit to consensus, global democracy and pluralism as core values of global governance as well as the eradication of the means and practices that risk endangering international existence. For the love of humanity!

Notes

1. Voice of America, 24 February 2022, Africa Opposes Border Aggression but Unlikely to Condemn Russia. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-opposes-border-aggression-but-unlikely-to-condemn-russia-/6457310.html
2. British Broadcasting Corporation, 25 February 2022, Ukraine: How should Africa respond? https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w172xwpfhds8rst
3. Voice of America, Africa Opposes Border Aggression, op. cit.
4. United Nations Treaty Collection, Amendments on the crime of aggression to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-10-b&chapter=18&clang=_en
5. Becky Sullivan, Explaining NATO and Ukraine: How a 30-year-old debate still drives Putin today, *NPR, 29 January 2022.* https://wamu.org/story/22/01/29/explaining-nato-and-ukraine-how-a-30-year-old-debate-still-drives-putin-today/
6. See, for instance, Joshua Yaffa, The Historical Dispute Behind Russia's Threat to Invade Ukraine, *The New Yorker, 25 January 2022.* https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-historical-dispute-behind-russias-threat-to-invade-ukraine
7. Raphaël Lemkin, Les actes constituant un danger general (interétatique) considerés comme délits des droit des gens, http://

www.preventgenocide.org/fr/lemkin/madrid1933.htm

8. Ibid.
9. Ukraine, Nuclear Weapons, and Security Assurances at a Glance, February 2022, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Ukraine-Nuclear-Weapons
10. The United States and United Kingdom too signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances on 5 December 1994.
11. David Smith, 'Where is the security?' Zelenskiy tells home truths to UN security council, *The Guardian, 5 April 2022.* https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/05/volodymyr-zelenskiy-un-security-council-sketch
12. Ibid.
13. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., What New World Order? *Foreign Affairs, Spring 1992* https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1992-03-01/what-new-world-order
14. Remarks by President Biden Before Business Roundtable's CEO Quarterly Meeting, 21 March 2022. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-business-roundtables-ceo-quarterly-meeting/
15. Jules Ferry, 1885, Les fondements de la politique coloniale (28 juillet 1885) https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/histoire/grands-discours-parlementaires/jules-ferry-28-juillet-1885
16. République Française, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, No.85, Année 1949, Mercredi 27 Juillet 1949, pp. 38–42.
17. Ouezzin Coulibaly, discours à l'Assemblée Nationale, Les peoples d'Afrique ne se sentiront jamais liés par des actes contraires aux intérêts de leur évolution, *A.E.F. NOUVELLE*, Juillet–Aout 1949 (Séance du 26 Juillet 1949)
18. Ibid.
19. Michael Getler, U.S. Aid to Britain In Falklands War Is Detailed, *Washington Post, 7 March 1984.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/03/07/us-aid-to-britain-in-falklands-war-is-detailed/6e50e92e-3f4b-4768-97fb-57b5593994e6/

Invalidating African Studies?

(In)Validating Crises in African Studies: Certain Reflections on Disciplinary Stagnancy

K. René Odanga
Department of African Studies,
Howard University,
Washington D.C.

We are forced to deal with the words of that Franco-German singular genius, the author, missionary, musician, philanthropist, philosopher and physician, Dr Albert Schweitzer. 'The African is indeed my brother, but he is my junior brother by several centuries.'[1] In 1931, he wrote his autobiography, *Out of My Life and Thought*, detailing his work in Africa as a medical missionary. Naturally, the book was an instant bestseller. And why would it not be? After all, in it he described how during his military service in his younger years, Jesus Christ—the very son of the Christian God—called him to 'heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.'[2] (It should be noted that he chanced upon this verse while reading the Bible in Greek, for he was a linguist too!) And what had he received? Degrees from the Kaiser Wilhelm University of Strasbourg in Theology, Philology, and the Theory of Music. Afterwards, he would also receive a medical degree specialising in tropical medicine and surgery. A few years later, with his new bride in tow, he sailed off on Good Friday to what is present-day Gabon to open a hospital, where he was the paternalistic doctor. His wife would be the nurse as soon as she figured out the pesky art of how much anaesthesia to administer to his patients, which she eventually did (for whatever one says of the Schweitzer family, they were nothing if not autodidacts).

When not treating Africans in Lambaréné of maladies that Howard Markel calls 'horrific and deadly'—chief among them being leprosy, just as in the Bible whence he received his commission—Schweitzer was to be found carrying out exegeses of Pauline theology or writing on the religious thought of Immanuel Kant, for which he received a doctorate from the Sorbonne. Alternatively, he was designing and playing pipe organs and pianos and contributing to music theory, specialising in the repertoire of Johann Sebastian Bach: in fact, one of the world's foremost conductors of the compositions of Bach, Hans Münch (no, not the Nazi doctor, another one), studied under Schweitzer. Or he was touring the world in the company of Albert Einstein (and playing the violin with him), Otto Hahn and Bertrand Russell, all of them presenting lectures on the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the atom bomb to tune the scarred consciences of those who after World War II deplored the events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His philosophy was built on and named, 'Reverence for Life.'[3] For his troubles, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. Albert Schweitzer—that polymath, a true scholarly genius and earnest humanist. Let us find another word he offered about the Africans to whom he devoted so much of his life. Speaking of the orange trees planted in his hospital at Lambaréné, he said, 'I let the Africans pick all the fruit they want. You see, the Good Lord has protected the trees. He made the Africans too lazy to pick them bare.'[4]

The hospital he built in Gabon (with his own hands) and where he died, is named *L'Hôpital Albert Schweitzer* and is regarded by some as a pilgrimage site.[5]

Whatever debates surround and pierce the field of African Studies, its history, methodology, epistemology, theory, economic viability within the academy and praxis, political or sociocultural utility, even disciplinarity, they all percolate around the same matter, the subject of study—the African. And while many scholars grapple with the question of the origin, scope, and methodology of the field, whether they know it or not, the question they are engaging with, is the African themself. Even the various epochs into which African Studies is periodised by scholars represent not just the ongoing politico-academic contexts and discourses of

the day but, more significantly, the place of Africans and the evolution of the outlook towards them by the world: where 'the world' subsumes both the non-African academic and the African academic, the latter of whom is carrying out an exercise of self-study and reflection—whether they like it or not.

As a student in African Studies, I have had the vantage to observe the field for myself in especial contexts over the past two years and to interrogate those contexts and the discipline as it relates to its ostensible subject: the African—myself. I have noted that African Studies is characterised as being in 'perpetual crises' pegged to the dominant discourses of the day. In fact, a not insignificant part of instruction at the graduate level entails training on how to navigate such 'crises.' My own qualifying examination, for instance, featured a mandatory long essay on the need for decolonial methodology in African Studies. This observation is in no way revelational; it is an open secret. And writing on the matter within the discipline has so proliferated that it has become a genre unto itself.[6] My concern, however, is that the process by which students and early career scholars are brought to this realisation constitutes an institutionalised form of scholastic hazing, which I will come back to later. My reflection on the discipline, its current state and possible future, arises from my time at Howard University's Center and Department of African Studies and my interactions with colleagues at other institutions and fora.

I want to choose my words carefully for the profit of clarity. For I have looked upon the scene and seen what I have seen. *There is no crisis in African Studies*. There never has been. There are no debates. No discourses. There is only white supremacist power maintaining its grip as a system and as the main arbiter of the African people and, by the transitive effect, the African reality. And as many well-meaning individuals and organisations fight to dislodge this power from its erstwhile throne, it reasserts itself through any number of wiles, generating and perpetuating ostensible crises.[7] The scholarly reflex to this has been to 'debate', 'interrogate', 'discourse' and 'scholarly dialogue' in a supposed search for solutions. This debate must now be rejected, the interrogation must be dispensed with, no such discourse should occur and all calls for dialogue must cease. For in truth, the germ of such dialogue, certainly what is at the heart of the question that would guide such discourse, is the most profane intellectual quibble with which humanity has ever been assaulted: the equality of the African. And that is assuming that what is to take place is by any definition of the term a 'dialogue'.

We shall return to the missioniser Schweitzer in due course, since for his (ir)relevance to be made manifest it is useful to present the operational structures that privilege labours such as his. While the man may not have considered himself an Africanist, surely there can be no doubt that he was preoccupied with the study of Africa. I am saying that were he miraculously alive today he would have had no challenge gaining affiliation to some organisation involved in the discipline; it would not be out of place to find him presented as keynote speaker for some African Studies association or other. Do I traffic in hypotheticals? Your indulgence.

I

And so there I was a few months ago, thoroughly horrified as I stared at an invitation to a webinar titled '*Rethinking African Agency in Africa-China Relations*', received from any one of the numerous listservs to which I am subscribed. But the horror had arrived upon me slowly, as if it were some sort of realisation that dawned in its own time: the result of a subconscious connection of dots. I had begun to observe a pattern in the themes of fora that analysed African politics comparatively with any other country or region, particularly China. Comparative study routinely pitted Africa—a continent with fifty-four countries and upwards of a billion people of variegated cultures, thrust across disparate geographical zones and politico-economic realities—against a singular actor: 'China-Africa, Brazil-Africa, India-Africa,' *et cetera*. Even the concepts 'US-Africa', 'UK-Africa', 'EU-Africa' startle, save for an appreciation of the regions' imperialist projects that prefer a monolith. And despite the general unseriousness that characteristically accompanies analyses of Sino-African relations, the source of my apprehension lay elsewhere.[8] It has become inevitable to see discussions redefining, searching for, or 'rethinking' African agency proliferate. *Agency* … that notion so ordinarily a capacity of humanness, that individuals can act and through these actions shape their realities. Not for Africans though, not for them and not for their governments, not for their diasporas either. African agency is a thing not taken for granted. It must be searched for then discovered; debated, defined, redefined, then rethought; edited and reviewed; in a way not done for any other peoples. And this has become a whole field of study! I am unable to see how all the pundits involved in this exercise have not yet conceived that the discussion they are engaged

in is a question on whether the African is human at all. *Agency*. I would very well like to see that word expunged from all scholarly conversation until such time as it is not taken as a trait yet unfound in the African. Remarkably, while conversations on Africa question 'agency'—or the lack thereof—the comparative actor is granted such aspects as power, interests, agenda and so on. 'African Agency in the Face of Chinese Power' was the title of another such webinar.

II

Some certain scholar recently landed in a pot whose roiling waters he himself had brought to boil for the purpose. When the furore broke, my immediate impulse was to ignore it hoping it was rightful comeuppance for a series of deliberate decisions taken by an individual in a position of power, as one makes one's bed and so on. Then an intriguing thing began to occur before our very eyes, as outcries of support for said scholar from every corner of the world began to make themselves heard with striking resonance! It was harrowing. Watching university administrators, departmental heads, professors, supposed leading minds and thinkers, et cetera, trusted with nurturing and protecting students in such very universities, trip over themselves in the rush to defend one charged with endangering, to the vilest degree, those in their care.[9] It was obscene. Even before the fallout that will undoubtedly come and as many walk back their support and others doggedly maintain it, the spectacle offers the opportunity to reflect on certain realities brought out into the open. Of the rot it unveiled in ivory (and crimson) towers, much of it was known anyway, and power protecting power is academe's modus operandi writ large. I shall stick to the tangential since the direct are matters that one hopes will be resolved in other quarters.

The fealty displayed brought into sharp relief the massive meshwork that certain academics have created and control for their own means, thereby revealing their capacity to reproduce themselves throughout the fields they inhabit. Some colleagues, in lamenting his lot, showed their hand by witnessing that, 'for five decades [he had] trained and advised hundreds of Ph.D. students of diverse backgrounds, who have subsequently become leaders in universities across the world.'[10] Elsewhere, he would be described as, 'a renowned scholar and a gatekeeper in his field ...' and 'one of the world's leading experts on Africa and the Global South.'[11] This liberal employ of superlatives did not concern me. I have no precise problem with institutional grandstanding—in fact, I intend to do some of my own shortly! I was more concerned with what it meant for the fields he inhabited that a potential shake-up in halls of power produced such a visceral reaction among the who's who in academia. A statement was being made here that everything was fine and should be left as it was: a demand for stasis. If we accept that certain academics recreate their fields in their own image and likeness—and we must accept it since they admitted as much—then we must wonder as loudly as we can, what those disciplines look like and whether we are comfortable with that image; more importantly, why we would be comfortable with it.

As the debacle continued, conversation quickly degenerated into whether our 'leading expert on Africa and the Global South' here could still be assigned as reading in classes. Some were conflicted to no end, and soon, hackneyed aphorisms about separating artists from their art (hence scholars from their scholarship) were polished and resubmitted for our collective edification. It was here that I had to confront a fundamental reality in my case: I had never heard of this man before this point. Two years into a graduate programme in African Studies at a university with a lengthy history of engaging 'Africa and the Global South', and he had never come up even in passing conversation until he burst upon the scene under questionable circumstances. And if insistence on his pre-eminence should have caused me to doubt the rigour of the department in which I was enrolled, that would have been uncalled for. You see, Howard University, being a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), maintains a different definition, persuasion, and tradition of 'expertise' on 'the Global South' in general and on Africa in particular. I contend here that the *expertise* that was so matter-of-factly imputed on this scholar was not necessarily a factor of the quality of his work—nor am I making a summary review of his work. I am zeroing in on the practice, so ordinarily an aspect of academia, that situates the 'expert' in certain towers. That practice is not a mistake. It is the result of a conscious, calculated, systemised, decades-long heist within the Western academy to privilege scholarship on Africa by Euro-Americans over that by Africans and African-descended scholars. The relegation of the role of HBCUs and African universities in the race for knowledge on Africa to trivia, is an ongoing project in African Studies; and the subsequent perpetuation of a canon that should not be displaced is an operationalisation of that system.

Some trivia. By 1940, the Department of History at Howard University taught Ancient African Civilisations, Cultures and History, as the brainchild of William Leo Hansberry. Faculty within the university constituted, among others, the likes of Alain Locke, E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, Rayford Logan, Merze Tate, and the later prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Eric Williams, fresh from doctoral study in London and preparing the publication of his seminal work, *Capitalism and Slavery*. There were frequent campus cameos by W.E.B. Du Bois. Hansberry would mentor a young Ghanaian student from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania—another HBCU—and an athletic Nigerian on Howard University's swim team: Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Over the years, the campus remained a crucial site of organisation, first on Ethiopia's war against Italian aggression and later the anti-apartheid movement.[12] In 1959, a near-independent Kenya's Tom Mboya made the university one of the first stops on his tour of the USA, where he was fêted with an honorary Doctor of Laws.[13] And the United States Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall, a graduate of both Howard and Lincoln, greatly assisted in the writing of Kenya's independence Constitution.[14] (Meanwhile, a top-ranked African History programme in the USA has the following as its blurb: 'African history is a new and dynamic field dating back to the 1960s. It was linked to the decolonization of Africa and the need for new national states to have a usable past.'[15] Whatever we are to do with the labours of Hansberry et al., we are not told. And if I were to bring up my grandfather born well before then, or his grandfather before him, and the histories they inhabited and made 'usable', I would complicate the matter even more and risk being christened the biased scholar incapable of objectivity. In this making of an African tabula rasa, this foul resurrection of Trevor-Roper, we are shown that white academia would rather plumb the depths of epistemicide than acknowledge the presence and value of Black scholarship.)

Today, Howard University's campus continues as a hub of research and training on Africa, maintaining a programme that enrols the largest number of African language students in the United States, instructing seven widely spoken languages.[16] Faculty with research interests on Africa are found in virtually every department plus a dedicated Department of African Studies. An anecdote. At a planning meeting for one of the many Africa-focused events that the Center for African Studies partners with organisations around Washington DC to host, it was suggested that panellists be sourced from Howard University faculty. One of the partners remarked bemusedly, 'Oh, I didn't know Howard did Africa like that!' Of course.

III

I have mentioned a canon. Let me pursue it a bit further. After all, the matter has taken up some space lately in the academy generally and in African Studies particularly. At the recently concluded African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA2022) Conference in Cape Town, South Africa, the matter of subverting the colonial archive was front and centre in many sessions. I presented on a panel titled 'Decolonising African Knowledges' and attended around three sessions throughout the five-day conference on some form of 'decolonising' or other. Unfortunately, I could not identify with most of the crises that were under consideration given that I did not inhabit them. I have come to find these cyclical conversations on 'decentring whiteness' by theorising Blackness around whiteness and raising sterile questions on the horizon of liberation emblematic of an academic middle class that 'speaks as if its identity or the crisis of its own identity is that of society as a whole.'[17] What is more, these unmoored conversations take place totally divorced from the long, rich histories of liberational praxis that African and African descended peoples have laboured for through time, so that they are always starting from scratch in a race for decolonial 'originality'. I was unable to contend, for instance, with the matter of racist and paternalistic scholarship on Africa since my programme and advisers had not subjected me to such. I can hear it in my mind's ear already, someone saying that this is a call for intellectual coddling. Far from it! It cannot be overstated that the decision to refuse to consistently platform infantilising scholarship on Africa is an intellectual act of resistance. The everlasting debate on what we are to do with Bruhl, Conrad, Hegel, Leakey, Livingstone, Lugard and so on, in truth, perpetuates them and the system that rewards them. This constant contest is the continuation of a structure of white supremacy that has kept serious Africans and African Studies scholars explaining and re-explaining themselves for far too long at the expense of valuable work. We are losing ground.

'Who one reads,' is as much a political question as it is an intellectual one—it always has been. 'Who one is *expected* to read,' even more so. I have recoiled in the past when colleagues enrolled in peer programmes shared with me their syllabus reading lists and on them

was nothing but Naipaul, Conrad, Blixen and Huxley with token appearances by Achebe, Adichie and La Guma. I am not interested in the prose expertise of Naipaul. In fact, I am positively exhausted of hearing about it. To decide that his is an epitome of African literature—or 'literature on Africa'—is a deliberate political choice. (On a similar note, it has become a matter of impish humour to discuss with my classmates and some professors the otherwise well-received works of scholars like Bayart and Ellis. We find them funny, in a dangerous sort of way.) But I want to ask what happens in the mind of the African student who is sat in a classroom and caused to analyse, discuss, debate Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* on its merits as a masterful work of literature, as my colleague was caused to do and like many after him will be. The affliction is ongoing, we remain surrounded. I want to know what is done to the mind of the African scholars who are expected to engage with and respond to the most pedestrian of publications masquerading as scholarship with measured critique and debate, to pen rebuttals when the pivot on which such scholarship turns remains the sly questioning of the African's humanity. Debates on 'decolonisation' in African Studies, couched in 'good faith', have become this: white scholars testing how much they can get away with and African scholars begging to be taken seriously. Such debate should cease. And what is with this insistence that we must engage with the conversation anyway?

It is the misrepresentation of Euro-America's monologue as dialogue. For it is difficult to show that Euro-American scholarship on Africa ever intended to speak with Africans about their Africa. Worse, that Africa should ever talk back.[18] This monologue has been cunningly disguised as a 'crisis'. So now, we have been turned into perennial faultfinders, perpetual nit-pickers and, in some instances, ingrate interlopers. Before we can embark on our own work, we are inundated by that of others which purports to speak with even clearer voice. And we must 'debate' them. We must go through their profitless product with a fine-tooth comb, a process deliberately designed and ingeniously engineered to break both our picks and our backs, but disingenuously disguised as 'scholarly discourse'. Ridiculous.

Additionally, we are first forced to admit to the genius of paternalistic scholars. Whatever one may think of Schweitzer or Naipaul, or that academic in hot water, or any number of frontiering ethnographers or historians and so on, first, we must admit to and ingratiate ourselves with their genius: genius as a qualifier to indispensability. Rarely is the danger of their scholarship ever accepted as grounds for disqualification in being the arbiter of African life. Let us return to our good saint and medic Schweitzer, who viewed Africans as primitive children, who 'scarcely ever talked with an adult African on adult terms.'[19] Has much of his image changed in view of his racist attitudes? I would say certainly not. After all, one most recent appraisal of his life is only able to call him 'a figure of controversy and embarrassment' even as he stood in the way of African decolonisation efforts. And did we not see attitudes similar to his bring about great suffering? (The British colonial administration in Kenya from 1952 to 1961 worked with an unceasing fidelity to pseudo-psychiatric reports by physicians who shared Schweitzer's outlook. In reading them, one clearly sees representations of Africans as Schweitzer's 'junior brothers', primitive children. During that ten-year State of Emergency, countless African lives were lost. Even though he may not have trained these charlatans, his views on the world stage certainly did not help matters! This is to say that his contemporaries, whether writing up quack psychological reports for colonial overseers in African dominions or establishing racist departments and associations of African Studies in North America, certainly found in Schweitzer no obstacle to their white supremacist projects.

How much of a visionary can one be if one cannot rise above the myopic racialism of the field they inhabit? Genius that cannot find its way around and against the obvious obstacles that litter the road. What a useless endowment!

Does it appear that with one broad stroke I am calling for the abrogation of many works and schools of thought that have formed common wisdom in the study of Africa? Well, that is so. We must admit that in the Africanist kingdom the emperor has been found on multiple occasions in various states of *déshabillé*.

> Therefore, comrade, you will hold as enemies—loftily, lucidly, consistently—not only sadistic governors and greedy bankers, not only prefects who torture and colonists who flog, not only corrupt, check-licking politicians and subservient judges, but likewise and for the same reason, venomous journalists, *goitrous academicians, wreathed in dollars and stupidity, ethnographers who go in for metaphysics*, presumptuous Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals born stinking out of the thigh of Nietzsche, the paternalists, the embrac-

> ers, the corrupters, the backslappers, the lovers of exoticism, the dividers, the agrarian sociologists, the hoodwinkers, the hoaxers, the hot-air artists, the humbugs and in general, all those who, performing their functions in the sordid division of labor for the defense of Western bourgeois society, try in diverse ways and by infamous diversions to split up the forces of Progress—even if it means denying the very possibility of Progress—all of them tools of capitalism, all of them, openly or secretly, supporters of plundering colonialism, all of them responsible, all hateful, all slave-traders, all henceforth answerable for the violence of revolutionary action.
>
> And sweep out all the obscurers, all the inventors of subterfuges, the charlatans and tricksters, the dealers in gobbledygook. And do not seek to know whether personally these gentlemen are in good or bad faith, whether personally they have good or bad intentions. Whether personally—that is, in the private conscience of Peter or Paul—they are or are not colonialists, because the essential thing is that their highly problematical subjective good faith is entirely irrelevant to the objective social implications of the evil work they perform as watchdogs of colonialism.

IV

There endures within academia a great delusion that any thought, no matter how dastardly, can be balanced out by savvy responses and critique. That academics fight using their pens, and that, indeed, the pen is mightier than most swords. Academic outlets hence (colleges, conferences, journals, publishers, scholar associations, scholars themselves, *et cetera*) have seized upon this delusion-turned-norm to platform the harm that is dreamed up and made real by certain researchers while themselves maintaining faux-neutrality in all matters. Unethical articles are to be published then responded to by ethical rejoinders, unsound racist arguments are to be countervailed by rational and reasonable riposte, works that trivialise and caricature African life … a most unappealing game of seesaw. All this is done in practice of academic freedom, the pursuit of building upon knowledge and that greatest hoax of all time, academic objectivity. This ruse, when applied in the study of Africa, takes on an even more egregious form.

It has refused to enter academia's mind that in Africa and the rest of the imperialised world the pen is not necessarily mightier than the sword; rather, the pen is the forerunner of the sword. I am not talking about that scalpel-wielding American evangelical, nor am I talking about any number of military men running roughshod all over the continent and leaving destruction in their wake (although of course the murderous missionary and the marauding militiaman can both be said to be involved in their own sort of study of Africa.) I am talking about the Pentecostesque revival of primitive practices of study that are reaffirming themselves in disciplinary interaction with Africa, where scholarly objectivity somehow translates to turning the African into an object.

A Better Last Word

Consider some article published by 'North America's leading forum for African Studies scholarship.' This paper, intending to advocate for the mainstreaming of a particular anthropological methodology in African Studies, brought great outcry from scholars in many fields. Certain anthropologists and historians themselves familiar with the esoteric vocabulary and praxis at play were scandalised and made their distaste known. Apparently, the paper had taken certain liberties that were bad practice and that, among other things, cast their profession in a bad light. I am not an anthropologist, so this did not concern me. And I am still persuaded that Anthropology—that most irretrievably colonial of disciplines, in view of its history in Africa—remains a disciplinary rubbish heap. A(n) (in)discipline which, with all the friction it insists on stirring with its interlocutors, may very well one day spark a fire that will reduce the whole enterprise to ashes. *Come, thou sacred flame!*

Instead, I allied myself with others who saw the provocation differently. The matter at hand was not that the paper was badly written, weak in its argument or factually dubious (it was); it was that the thing was dangerous. And that it should not have been platformed by a journal insistent on its centrality in the study of Africa, especially since said journal had, only two years before, been publicly self-flagellating in declarations of its intent to combat the history of white supremacy within its own ranks. We firmly believed that the article reduced the authors' interlocutors to native informants while claiming that it was in fact decolonising the discipline. This was evident in the paper itself and in the repertoire of one of its authors. We knew what we were looking at, as did many others.

We called on the journal to retract it. We insisted that the editorial board take a retroactive stand that it would not platform works that reduced the essence of African life. We appealed to the journal's own affiliation with an association that

had over the years been at the centre of the 'crises' in African Studies and that had also subjected African Studies scholars to rite after rite of contrition and promises to de-platform white supremacy and the privileges flowing thenceforth that valorised mediocre scholarship on Africa. Our call invited the journal to break with the academic delusion of opening up matters that should not be up for debate to the marketplace of argumentation in 'special editions' and 'responses'. We made plain that a retraction was the only way forward since we were 'not interested in having our humanity as scholars and research subjects debated.' And neither was this a fringe position, our letter was opened up to concerned publics for support and within a week garnered over a thousand signatures, predominantly from (early career) academics and graduate students from all over (not just Euro-America).

First, we were treated to incredulous prevarications designed to frustrate. Suddenly, we were in the presence of the artisanal, fastidious barber: splitter of hairs. Then, finally, the editorial board responded with all the unimpeachable wisdom of a colonial missionary school headmaster, insisting that not only was our outcry uncouth but it had also caused much grievance to the authors of one of the most offensive papers in recent memory to assault otherwise hapless audiences. Conflating our call for amends with threats of violence that they assured us had been levelled against the authors of the article, they insisted that our responsibility, instead, was to lead the charge in defending the authors from the unsubstantiated gathering mob. Here is this: people's feelings are not more important than the material inequalities and iniquities their tangible actions and skewed scholarship perpetrate against the imperialised of this earth.

Somewhere in that article, one author speaks of their elusive search for a space to discuss their experience of being a white scholar, 'an *umuzungu*', in Black Studies. Their area of study is Rwandans living in Canada. I have never been to Canada, and to Rwanda only once. I have lived in East Africa all my life save for two years spent studying in the United States. Perhaps Euro-Americans would take it from me with some authority that the word *mzungu* is not necessarily one they should want to embrace. But this is to digress. Was this paper really trying to present the idea that the only utility of Black intellectual production, of Black scholarship, of research, of presence, of community, of Black people, of Black life, is to convict the white investigator of their whiteness? How woefully boring! How unutterably uninteresting in every possible way! How most sufferingly shallow! Is this to occur still? And is it to be called a 'new form of writing?'

What, we must ask, is 'original' about exploitative, extractive Western scholarship on Africa? What is new, in any sense of the word, about parochial approaches to writing about Africa that valorise the heroic ambition of the 'scholar' while downplaying, yea even erasing, the life of Africans, relegating them to native informants? Is this not the most banal, boring, common, derivative, imitative, most readily available work? Surely this tradition dates back hundreds of years! Is any scholar who intends to peddle in such drivel really going to claim to be original or evocative? What avaricious new vistas of paternalism would they intend to chart then? We must forestall them! Here too is this, the Euro-American scholar of Africa 'must cultivate the habit of humility appropriate to his limited experience of the African world and purged of the superiority and arrogance which history so insidiously makes him heir to.'

And neither should we be deterred by podiums that consider the position that African life is no longer debatable 'ill advised'. Outlets that respond to a call for amends with such imperious finality as, 'We decline to do this. We cannot do this. We fail to see how…' must no longer be upheld as mediators of serious intellectual production on Africa and, by the transitive effect, African life. For long enough, we have remained at a point where we are repeatedly reminded that we must protect (obviously at great cost) the imaginary intellectual contributions of Euro-American scholars who, we are assured, will one day certainly come up with all sorts of wondrous panaceas for the 'African condition'. We are to protect their authority, their *expertise*, more than we are to safeguard the lives and dignities of existent, multiply silenced yet nonetheless present Africans from the harm that traipsing Western academics inflict in the name of evocative research. And the route to such heavenly harmony, we are again assured *ad nauseum*, is to ensure that we do not offend the sensibilities of these Global Northerners. The idea of a retracted article, therefore, rankles of censorship most foul, which must be guarded against with a zestful zealotry. But the marionetting of research subjects is something we must debate with great 'scholarly objectivity' like the social scientists we are supposed to be. We are in trouble.

Of course, the pointed meditation I am presenting is this, what liberation from under the millstone of regressive scholarship is there to be found in an organisation that has long obfuscated pathways to clearer scholarship on Africa? What does an organisation that even refuses to be provincialised within the study of Africa—subjecting scholars on the continent to the insane syllabic gymnastics of sounding out 'African Studies Association of Africa'—have to offer forward-looking individuals intent on engaging seriously with the continent and its peoples? Even in the naming there is a politic of centrality, an insistence that they retain the vantage as everyone else occupies a margin demarcated by a hyphen or preposition. You must then pardon the puzzled look on the face of the kindly consular officer at the South African embassy when I rattled off the purpose of my visit to Cape Town, 'I'm going to attend the African Studies Association of Africa Conference'. What an unwieldy sentence! And at its every utterance, we are to be reminded of our place.

Are we to be mediated by an organisation and its affiliates who insist that platforming, and defending full-throated, work that has been called out for its ridiculousness and dangerousness is a watershed moment for African scholars to contribute to commentary? A platform haughtily incapable of any degree of self-reflection to understand the milieu it engenders for those upcoming in the discipline and others valiantly soldiering on despite such conditions. A platform unwilling—and thus unable—to undertake any of the serious radical steps needed to alleviate said conditions. One that calls peeping voyeurism 'excellent'. Should we not be so wise as to understand that an association which has been at the centre, even instigator, of these so-called 'crises' can have no unique insights to offer on the work that lies before us? Come out of her, my people!

Notes

1. Achebe, C., 2009, 'Africa is People' and 'Africa's Tarnished Name', in *Africa's Tarnished Name,* New York: Penguin Random House. See also, Markel, H., 2016, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a renowned medical missionary with a complicated history, PBS, 14 January. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/dr-albert-schweitzer-a-renowned-medical-missionary-with-a-complicated-history.
2. *The Holy Bible, Authorized King James Version,* 2009, Zondervan. Matt. 10:8.
3. Markel, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a renowned medical missionary with a complicated history; Harris, R., 2016, Schweitzer and Africa, *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 59, No. 4, pp: 1107–1132.
4. Reuters, 1965, Albert Schweitzer, 90, Dies at His Hospital, *New York Times Archive,* 6 September. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0114.html
5. Achebe, *Africa's Tarnished Name;* See also, Marshall, K., 2011, Pilgrimage to Albert Schweitzer's Lambarene, *Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs,* 5 September. https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/pilgrimage-to-albert-schweitzer-s-lambarene and Wong, L. M., 2013, Albert Schweitzer Hospital celebrates its Centennial. *Lisa M. Wong M.D,* 25 July. http://www.drlisamwong.com/blog/albert-schweitzer-hospital-celebrates-its-centennial
6. This essay can itself be seen as patterned after Odugbemi, T., Orapeleng, R. and wa Kamonji, W, 2021, Searching For Africa In African Studies: An Open Letter To Teachers Of Africa. *Human Rights Pulse,* 11 June. https://www.humanrightspulse.com/mastercontentblog/searching-for-africa-in-african-studies-an-open-letter-to-teachers-of-africa; a similar form of writing is seen in the entirety of *Africa Today 44,* No. 2, April-June 1997; see also wa Ngũgĩ, M., 2021, White Privilege in African Studies: When You Are Done, Please Call Us, *brittle paper*, 28 January. https://brittlepaper.com/2021/01/white-privilege-in-african-studies-when-you-are-done-please-call-us/.
7. Reference to the white supremacist project in African Studies includes scholars, both Black and white, committed to the project; what wa Ngũgĩ calls "intellectual black face" in *White Privilege in African Studies.* The terms 'Euro-American', 'white', 'Global North' and 'Western' shall be used interchangeably.
8. Chan, S., 2013, 'The Middle Kingdom and the Dark Continent: An essay on China, Africa and many fault lines', in Chan, S., ed., *The Morality of China in Africa: The Middle Kingdom and the Dark Continent,* London and New York: Zed Books, pp. 3–43.
9. *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 2022, Open Letter Against Harvard's Treatment of John Comaroff, Chronicle, 3 February. https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/letters/open-letter-against-harvards-treatment-of-john-comaroff Accessed 1 June 2022.
10. *The Harvard Crimson*, 2022. Open Letter from Concerned Faculty: 38 Harvard Faculty Sign Open Letter Questioning Results of Misconduct Investigations into Prof. John Comaroff, *The Harvard Crimson*, 4 February. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/2/4/comaroff-sanctions-open-letter/ Accessed 1 June 2022.

11. *The Harvard Crimson,* 2022. Czerwienski et al. v. Harvard, *The Harvard Crimson,* 8 February. https://www.thecrimson.com/PDF/2022/2/9/Czerwienski-et-al-v-harvard-filing/ Accessed 1 June 2022.
12. Harris, J. E. and Zeghidour, S., 1993, Africa and its diaspora since 1935, in Mazrui, A. A. and Wondji, C. eds, *General History of Africa VIII: Africa Since 1935,* Oxford: Heinemann, Paris: UNESCO, and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 705–723; Howard University Center for African Studies, 2021, Re-Shaping a New US-Africa Policy and the Role of HBCUs. *Center for African Studies,* 20 February. https://cfas.howard.edu/articles/recording-symposium-re-shaping-new-us-africa-policy-and-role-hbcus; See also, Johnson, K., 2020, The Howard School of International Affairs, in Tella, O. and Motala, S., eds, *From Ivory Towers to Ebony Towers: Transforming Humanities Curricula in South Africa, Africa and African-American Studies,* Johannesburg: Jacana Media and Vitalis, R., 2015, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations.* Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2015.
13. Mboya, T., 1963, *Freedom and After.* Boston, MA and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.
14. Dudziak, M. L., 2008, *Exporting American Dreams: Thurgood Marshall's African Journey*. Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
15. University of Minnesota, 2022, African History, accessed 1 June 2022. https://cla.umn.edu/history/graduate/areas-study.
16. Howard University Center for African Studies, 2022, African Languages. 2 June. https://cfas.howard.edu/.
17. wa Thiong'o, N., 1982, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, p. 22.
18. Achebe, C., 2019, Impediments to Dialogue Between North and South, in Achebe, C., *Hopes and Impediments,* New York: Penguin Books, pp: 21-29.
19. Reuters, Albert Schweitzer, 90, Dies at His Hospital
20. Harris, Schweitzer and Africa, 1108.
21. Césaire, A., 1955, *Discourse on Colonialism.* Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 54–55.
22. Pronczuk, M. and Ryckewaert, K., 2022, A Racist Researcher, Exposed by a Mass Shooting, *New York Times,* 9 June. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/09/world/europe/michael-woodley-buffalo-shooting.html Accessed 13 June 2022.
23. Otaño-Gracia, N., 2022, A Critical Subjective Analysis of Objectivity. *The H-Net Book Channel,* 1 June 2022. https://networks.h-net.org/node/1883/discussions/10333626/critical-subjective-analysis-objectivity
24. Levy, A., 2020, A Missionary on Trial, *The New Yorker,* 6 April. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/13/a-missionary-on-trial; Starkey, J., 2021, SAFARI FIRE: Bungling British troops spark 10,000-acre wildfire on a nature reserve in Kenya home to elephants and lions. *The Sun,* 25 March. https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14459767/british-troops-spark-10000-acre-wildfire-reserve-kenya/ (accessed 12 June 2022).
25. Editors of the *African Studies Review,* 2022, A Statement from the Editors of the *African Studies Review,* edited by Benjamin N. Lawrance et al., African Studies Review, 31 May. https://www.facebook.com/AfricanStudiesReview/posts/2684287641703042?__cft__[0]=AZVzvGm6Cxil-4PaHq6tA5zVpolOzjKUJB-fRSEp4GDHUoS61zmCM-nOevrbqq8URRE6M0KnR9L-7Ri14ujtvOLU3vHvkf17HrB_wb5sufJ22lOAuuaXb6rX-DUCVysQyOQU36wFmy-t0AuWshLyTNfdQxbpp3o-HJKC4huOLKOXCdfq0hzych (accessed 12 June 2022).
26. Burke, T., 2022, Academia: Retract or Attack? 19 May. https://timothyburke.substack.com/p/academia-retract-or-attack?s=r Accessed 1 June 2022.
27. See Sarah Shulist's incisive reflection, On What Was Really Lost in the Fire, *Anthropology As…* 12 September. https://anthropologyas.wordpress.com/2018/09/12/on-what-was-really-lost-in-the-fire/ (accessed 6 July 2022).
28. Lawrance, B., Structural Racism, Whiteness, and the African Studies Review, *African Studies Review,* Vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 443–448.
29. Mohammed,W. et al., 2022, Open Letter to African Studies Review Journal Editorial Board: Call for Retraction of Article 'African Studies Keyword: Autoethnography', 16 May. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKo9OgNuU0DcYMBRbuTvv2wu-sJE3StYIIaFuclGJiDevx8g/viewform (accessed 10 June 2022).
30. wa Ngũgĩ, White Privilege in African Studies.
31. Flaherty, C., 2022, Retract or Attack? *Inside Higher Ed.* 24 May. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/05/24/black-scholars-demand-retraction-autoethnography-article
32. Editors of the *African Studies Review,* A Statement from the Editors of the *African Studies Review.*

33. Mara, K. and Thompson, K., 2022, African Studies Keyword: Autoethnography, *African Studies Review,* Vol. 65, No. 2, pp. 372–398. doi:10.1017/asr.2022.58. pp. 375-376.
34. *Ibid.,* pp. 372, 374, 378.
35. Achebe, C., 2005. 'Colonialist Criticism.' In *Debating the Canon: A Reader from Addison to Nafisi,* edited by Lee Morrissey, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 73-85. p. 75.
36. Editors of the *African Studies Review,* A Statement from the Editors of the *African Studies Review.*

'Crisis? What Crisis?' A Response to René Odanga's Missive on African Studies

'But if in fact there is a crisis, whose crisis is it and what is its trajectory?' –
Paul Tiyambe Zeleza[1]

Chambi Chachage
Institute of African Studies,
Carleton University,
Ottawa, Canada

Sometime in April over a decade ago the then President of South Africa popularised the rhetorical question: 'Crisis? What Crisis?'[2] In a tone of denialism, Thabo Mbeki dismissed the post-election crisis in Zimbabwe. Various media echoed it over and over again.[3]

K. René Odanga seems to ask such a question but regarding a field of study. In a well-received article published in the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, he contends: '*There is no crisis in African Studies*.'[4] Of course, he qualifies his controversial statement with a cautiously crafted preamble: 'I want to choose my words carefully for the profit of clarity. For I have looked upon the scene and seen what I have seen.'[5] He is also careful enough to clarify all this by way of contextualisation:

> There never has been. There are no debates. No discourses. There is only white supremacist power maintaining its grip as a system and as the main arbiter of the African people and, by the transitive effect, the African reality. And as many well-meaning individuals and organisations fight to dislodge this power from its erstwhile throne, it reasserts itself through any number of wiles, generating and perpetuating ostensible crises.[6]

Echoing Zeleza – the author of *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* and drafter of 'The Perpetual Solitudes and Crises of African Studies in the United States' – Odanga seems to both validate and invalidate the ongoing crises in this interdisciplinary field of study.[7] However, he goes a step further by dismissing, albeit sympathetically, voices of African scholars involved in decolonising African Studies. In such dialectics, African voices are subsumed if not muted:

> And what is with this insistence that we must engage with the conversation anyway? It is the misrepresentation of Euro-America's monologue as dialogue. For it is difficult to show that Euro-American scholarship on Africa ever intended to speak with Africans about their Africa. Worse, that Africa should ever talk back. This monologue has been cunningly disguised as a 'crisis'.[8]

Touché. Odanga captures a dialogue-cum-monologue. Echoing Toni Morrison,[9] he concludes:

> So now, we have been turned into perennial faultfinders, perpetual nitpickers and, in some instances, ingrate interlopers. Before we can embark on our own work, we are inundated by that of others which purports to speak with even clearer voice. And we must 'debate' them. We must go through their profitless product with a fine-tooth comb, a process deliberately designed and ingeniously engineered

> to break both our picks and our backs, but disingenuously disguised as 'scholarly discourse'. Ridiculous.[10]

Ouch! It is surely a Sisyphean task for African scholars to respond to the West's never-ending dismissing of 'the Rest'.[11] The burden is even heavier when this dismissal comes from those Oyekan Owomoyela decried way back in 1994: 'With Friends Like These … A Critique of Pervasive Anti-Africanisms in Current African Studies Epistemology and Methodology.'[12]

But this burden – indeed pain – that Odanga and his fellow signatories of a missive to African Studies Review (ASR) and African Studies Association (ASA) carry ought not make us lose sight of the other side of scholarship on Africa.[13] Whether it is called African Studies, Pan-African Studies, or any other iterative name, the study of Africa will continue to have a rich history beyond Africanist monologues.[14] What is vital is to ensure that such crises don't impede it.

African scholars are bound by default to the study of Africa irrespective of whether they specialise in the social or natural sciences.[15] In whatever we do in our scholarship, Africa is implicated for better or worse.[16] We cannot wake up one morning like Emeritus Professor of Politics in the School of Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales Gavin Kitching did in 2000 and declare: 'In a word, I gave up African studies because I found it depressing.'[17]

You can run all you want to global health, medical humanities, or any other field of study that purports to be universal and critical but Africa and, by implication African Studies, will catch up with you there like your own shadow. That is how pervasive the African continent is to anyone who is born of it. Kwame Nkrumah was probably acutely aware of this when he declared: 'I am not African because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me.'[18]

What Odanga is wary of is something that has left many African scholars worn out. But it is a task that will continue as long as coloniality in all its virulent iterations negatively impacts everything African – people, scholarship, livelihood and so forth. Abiola Irele captured it like this:

> In its polemical stance, then, African discourse presents itself as a thorough-going deconstruction of the Western image of the Native, the Black, the African.[19]

Irele refers to this as a 'minority discourse.'[20] The people of Africa were well placed to develop this African discourse because of being represented as the 'absolute other'. Thus it 'marks the extreme position of dissent from the systematising, totalising thrust of the Western imperialist system.'[21] 'This dissent has force not only in its bearing upon the application of the Western conceptual system in its concrete effects to our historical situation,' he notes, 'but upon the structure and the universalist ambitions of the system itself.'[22]

Dissident responses, such as Odanga's and his cosignatories, one may add, are not mere monologues disguised as dialogues. Rather, they are diatribes infused with agency – the very African agency that Odanga wants expunged from 'all scholarly conversation until such time as it is not taken as a trait yet unfound in the African.'[23] Irele comes handy again about the imperativeness of our responding:

> A conditioning factor of African response has thus been, quite simply, an acute racial consciousness in direct reaction to the negativizing premises of Western racist ideology. Thus African discourse has been historically projected in an essentially adversarial posture and has thus assumed a polemical significance. In whatever accents African response has been given expression, whether in an openly combative form or a discreetly pathetic one – with gradations in between – the discursive project has taken the form of an ongoing, principled dispute with the West over the terms of African/Black existence and, ultimately, of being.[24]

Understandably, Odanga queries such a preoccupation even though he is invested in it too:

> Whatever debates surround and pierce the field of African Studies, its history, methodology, epistemology, theory, economic viability within the academy and praxis, political or sociocultural utility, even disciplinarity, they all percolate around the same matter, the subject of study – the African. And while many scholars grapple with the question of the origin, scope, and methodology of the field, whether they know it or not, the question they are engaging with, is the African themself. Even the various epochs into which African Studies is periodised by scholars represent not just the ongoing politico-academic contexts and discourses of the day but, more significantly, the place of Africans and the evolution of the outlook towards them by the world: where 'the world' subsumes both the non-African academic and the African academic,

> the latter of whom is carrying out an exercise of self-study and reflection – whether they like it or not.[25]

Counter discourses, however, will polemically attempt to put the African at the centre as long as racism and global apartheid marginalise Africans. Ideally, we should live in the world that Odanga envisages, one in which African humanity is not questioned or, in the parlance of Emmanuel Eze, has to be achieved.[26] A post-racial world in which African agency is taken for granted, by default, rather than as a thing that 'must be searched for then discovered; debated, defined, redefined, then rethought; edited and reviewed; in a way not done for any other peoples.'[27] Until then we will continue to address the question of the place of the African being.

Letting go is still a pipe dream. The West, even through seemingly benevolent white Africanists who pervade the field of African Studies, is guarding jealously the perks of a global racialist order. Delinking, in the parlance of Samir Amin, remains a farfetched solution for scholars in both African and Euro-American universities as academic institutions and disciplines across the 'West-Rest' divide are still more or less beholden to what V.Y. Mudimbe refers to as the 'Western epistemological order.'[28] And dialoguing, for the likes of Odanga, is monologuing.

Hence what is still needed is a sustained pushback against this system. 'In this sense,' Irele aptly sums up, 'the discourse of Africanism as elaborated by Black intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic must be seen as a reinscription of an antecedent Western monologue on Africa and the non-Western world, its displacement and transformation by a new, assertive self-expression on the part of a subjugated and previously voiceless humanity.'[29] Coming out of the Babylon system is as ontological as it is epistemological. Bob Marley saw it when he sang:

> We refuse to be
> What you wanted us to be
> We are what we are
> That's the way it's going to be.[30]

Notes

1. Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, 1997, 'The Pasts and Futures of African Studies and Area Studies', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 5. https://escholarship.org/content/qt2230b25k/qt2230b25k.pdf?t=mniolv. 15 August 2022.
2. The *Sydney Morning Herald,* April 13, 2008, 'Crisis? What crisis, says Mbeki on way to summit'. https://www.smh.com.au/world/crisis-what-crisis-says-mbeki-on-way-to-summit-20080413-gds9d2.html. 15 August 2022.
3. <?>. *Zimbabwe Independent,* April 16, 2008, 'Crisis? What Crisis?' https://allafrica.com/stories/200804180920.html; The Economist, April 17, 2008, 'Crisis? What Crisis?'. https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2008/04/17/crisis-what-crisis. 15 August 2022.
4. Odanga, K. René, 2022, '(In) Validating Crises in African Studies: Certain Reflections on Disciplinary Stagnancy', *CODESRIA Bulletin Online*, No. 12, p. 2. https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/codesriabulletin/article/view/2210/2163. 15 August 2022.
5. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 2.
6. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 2.
7. Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, 1997, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises,* Dakar: CODESRIA; Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, 1997, 'The Perpetual Solitudes and Crises of African Studies in the United States', *Africa Today*. Vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 193–210. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4187161. 15 August 2022.
8. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 5.
9. Espinoza, Jeanette C., 2022, 'Toni Morrison Was Right – The Very Serious Function of Racism is a Distraction', *An Injustice!*. https://aninjusticemag.com/toni-morrison-was-right-the-very-serious-function-of-racism-is-a-distraction-f39b0faa8fe2. 15 August 2022.
10. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 5.
11. Chachage, Chambi, 2019, 'From Ghettoizing to Gentrifying African Studies,' *Africa Blogging*, January 7, 2019. https://blogging.africa/general/from-ghettoizing-to-gentrifying-african-studies/. 15 August 2022.
12. Owomoyela, Oyekan, 1994, 'With Friends Like These … A Critique of Pervasive Anti-Africanisms in Current African Studies Epistemology and Methodology', *African Studies Review,* Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 77–101.
13. Flaherty, Colleen, 2022,'Retract or Attack?', *Inside Higher ED*, May 24, 2022. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/05/24/black-scholars-demand-retraction-autoethnography-article. 15 August 2022.; Mohammed, Wunpini; Kalinga, Chisomo; Odanga, K. René; Zelzer, Ruby; Ogunmodede, Chris Olaoluwa; Asani, Furaha and Agbakoba, Dr Ruth Ngozika, 2022, 'Open Letter to African Studies Review Journal Editorial Board: Call for Retraction of Article "African Studies Keyword: Autoethnography",' May 19, 2022. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKo9OgNuU0DcYMBRbuTvv2wu-sJE3StYIIaFuclGJiDevx8g/viewform. 15 August 2022.

14. Chachage, Chambi, 2007, 'Bringing African Studies Back to Africa: Beyond the "African-Africanist" Divides', Paper presented at the 2nd Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS) Conference on African Studies (ECAS) at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands (July 11–14, 2007). https://www.academia.edu/38044084/Bringing_African_Studies_Back_to_Africa_Chambi_Chachage_1_doc. 15 August 2022.
15. Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, ed., 2006, *The study of Africa Vol. 1: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters*, Dakar: CODESRIA; Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, ed., 2006, *The Study of Africa Volume 2: Global and Transnational Engagements,* African Books Collective, 2006; West, Michael O. and Martin, William G., 1997, 'A Future with a Past: Resurrecting the Study of Africa in the post-Africanist Era', *Africa Today,* Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 309–326; Martin, William G. and West, Michael Oliver, eds., 1999, *Out of one, many Africas: Reconstructing the study and meaning of Africa,* University of Illinois Press; Falola, Toyin, 2017, *Africanizing knowledge: African studies across the disciplines,* Routledge; Bates, Robert H., Mudimbe, V.Y. and O'Barr, Jean, eds., 1993, *Africa and the disciplines: The contributions of research in Africa to the social sciences and humanities*, University of Chicago Press.
16. Nwoye, Augustine, 2022, *African psychology: The emergence of a tradition*, Oxford University Press; Ratele, Kopano, 2019, *The World Looks Like This From Here: Thoughts on African Psychology,* Wits University Press; Mavhunga, Clapperton, 2017, *What do science, technology, and innovation mean from Africa?,* The MIT Press; Friederici, Nicolas, Michel Wahome, and Mark Graham, 2020, *Digital entrepreneurship in Africa: How a continent is escaping Silicon Valley's long shadow,* The MIT Press; Bangura, Abdul Karim, 2011, *African mathematics: From bones to computers,* University Press of America; Eglash, Ron, 1999, *African fractals: Modern computing and indigenous design,* Rutgers University Press; Musonda, Francis B., 1990, 'African archaeology: Looking forward', *African Archaeological Review,* Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 3–22.
17. Kitching, Gavin, 2000, 'Why I gave up African studies.' *Mots Pluriels*, Vol. 16, p. 24. https://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP1600gk.html. 15 August 2022; Routledge, 'Gavin Norman Kitching'. https://www.routledge.com/authors/i10561-gavin-kitching. 17 August 2022; Macamo, Elísio, 2021, 'Unmaking Africa – the Humanities and the Study of What?', *History of Humanities,* Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 381–395.
18. Arthur, Tori Omega, 2022, '"We Bring Home the Roots": Black Women Travel Influencers, Digital Culture Bearing, and African Internationalism in Instagram', *Social Media + Society* 8, No. 2., p. 7. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20563051221103843.
19. Irele, Abiola, 2001, *The African imagination: literature in Africa & the black diaspora*, Oxford University Press, p. 72.
20. Irele, *The African imagination*, p. 72.
21. Irele, *The African imagination*, p. 72.
22. Irele, *The African imagination*, p. 72.
23. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 3.
24. Irele, *The African imagination*, p. 69.
25. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 2.
26. Eze, Emmanuel C. 2013, *Achieving our humanity: The idea of the postracial future*, Routledge.
27. Odanga, '(In)Validating Crises in African Studies', p. 2.
28. Amin, Samir, 1990, *Delinking: Towards a polycentric world,* Zed Books; Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988, *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*, Indiana University Press, p. 10.
29. Irele, *The African imagination*, pp. 72–73.
30. 'Babylon System', YouTube video, 4:37, posted by 'Bob Marley', May 30, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzv1EI5gDnE. 15 August 2022; Bob Marley, Twitter post, August 2020, 12:00a.m., https://twitter.com/bobmarley/status/1292204002948591618?s=20&t=tm54kmLob-jqZIBOu9-JVg. 15 August 2022.

Post-continentalism: An Appreciative Response to René Odanga

David Mills
University of Oxford

René Odanga has sharp eyes and a coruscating pen. It is an indictment of African Studies that two years of participation and observation is enough to confirm the Emperor's continued state of undress. Odanga's passionate critique is fuelled by exhaustion and a deep sense of déjà-vu, along with occasional moments of horror and disbelief. There is much for students of global Africa to learn, and unlearn, from this piece and its heartfelt anger.

Odanga pithily distils what many scholars—of all shapes, colours, and disciplinary persuasions—will have felt this year about the institutional narcissism of Harvard faculty and an elite African Studies journal. Both have been exposed as propping up a global academic system that seems ever more hierarchical, geographically stratified and status-obsessed. Researchers on every continent find themselves caught in this intellectual spider's web, with its bibliometric logics, racial divides and recursive coloniality (Shahjahan and Edwards 2021).

But Odanga goes much, much further. His Swiftian denouncements of the relentless discourse of crisis, of cyclical conversations and institutional gatekeeping, are damning. The 'misrepresentation of Euro-America's monologue as dialogue' by African Studies is a damning indictment indeed. Odanga has little time for Anthropology: the most 'irretrievably colonial of disciplines … a rubbish heap'. He even mocks the possibility of an African 'African Studies'.

As Odanga acknowledges in his many valuable footnotes, much of this has been said before, loudly, and insistently. So why restate it again? Because the Emperor's experts seem to keep defending their opinions. Odanga devotes two paragraphs to Césaire's 1955 vivid denunciation of colonialism. Césaire damns not just the 'colonists who flog' but also the 'goitrous academics, wreathed in dollars and stupidity' and the 'ethnographers who go in for metaphysics'. Reflecting on the importance of this work, Kelley, suggests that Césaire's 'Discourse on Colonialism' is best understood as a 'declaration of war', as 'poetry and therefore revolt' (Kelley 2000: 28).

If Odanga is fomenting insurrection by tossing poetic Molotovs, it is because only polemic seems up to the challenge. How else to respond to the recursive, persistent institutional gatekeeping of academic knowledge production about and on Africa? There is a growing recognition that African academic journals and knowledge ecosystems are rendered structurally invisible to many Euro-American 'dialogues' (Harsh et al. 2021). The scholarly world's two main citation indexes (Scopus, owned by Elsevier, and Web of Science, owned by Clarivate) control the flow of academic legitimacy and reputation through their algorithms and data infrastructures. Their 'global' indexes deploy a raft of quality thresholds and selection procedures that discriminate against journals published in Africa. The measurement of academic credibility through citations entangles African researchers in an exhausting publication game defined by an impossibly narrow set of supposedly 'international' journals (Mills et al. forthcoming).

Rather than try to address the many different elements of Odanga's polemic, I want to focus on just one aspect: his reflections on the representation of 'African' agency within comparative studies of African politics. With colleagues, I have been studying the role of higher education scholarships and research collaborations in China's diplomatic overtures to African states. I was grateful to be provoked by Odanga's bemusement at the seemingly naive and—to his ears—dehumanising language of political sciences. He expresses his shock at receiving an invitation to a webinar talk on 'Rethinking African Agency in Africa–China Relations'. How is it that African agency cannot just be taken for granted, but instead needs to be 'discovered, debated, redefined, then rethought'? Is this not, Odanga reflects, 'really about whether the African is human at all'? I too admit to puzzlement at this assertion of 'agency'. For Odanga, it raises the corollary question: the possibility of no agency and thus the denial of subjectivity. He poses a stark question: What happened to our shared humanity? One might respond that this language of agency is itself a

response to scholarly analyses that depict African states and societies as trapped within, and defined by, structures and discourses not of their making. Perhaps the scholarly assertion of agency, however clumsy and seemingly obvious, is also an attempt at affirming humanity? When feminists foreground women's agency in their writing, they are championing a different way of seeing and inhabiting the world, not putting female agency and subjectivity into question.

Part of the problem may lie in disciplinary concepts such as 'soft-power' (Nye 1990). Joseph Nye's influential formulation focuses only on how states exert power over other states. African scholars, such as Lina Benabdallah, have nuanced this, showing how Chinese soft power can be relational and social, deployed within diplomatic fora and nurtured through personal engagements (2020). Benabdallah admits there is more to do in understanding how soft power is experienced, deployed and responded to by African actors. It is this commitment to foreground the bilateral and reciprocal aspects of 'soft power' that leads to seminars and webinars on 'African agency'. It feels unfair to suggest that those studying Chinese soft power in Africa are questioning the very nature of African humanity. Rather, they are seeking to rework a scholarly discourse that renders political agency a zero-sum game.

Odanga goes on to question the 'Africa+1' discourse within geopolitics, asking why a diverse continent of fifty-four countries and a billion-plus people gets juxtaposed against a single external actor, as in China–Africa, UK–Africa, US–Africa. Here it is helpful to read the analyses of scholars such as Folashadé Soulé-Kohndou (2021). She explains why, in the context of the new international scramble for political influence in Africa (and its mineral resources), the continent's political leaders are turning up to these 'Africa+1' platforms, such as with China and Russia. These have become the pivotal diplomatic spaces for both attracting potential foreign direct investment and achieving domestic policy goals. It is of course equally telling that no-one speaks about Chinese or Russian 'agency'. This is presumed and taken for granted. The challenge here is that the scholarly framing of 'agency' within comparative political studies and international relations is limiting and restrictive.

It may be that African leaders participating in 'Africa+1 summit diplomacy' have to bite their tongues about the highly unequal power dynamics that saturate these pageants. Diplomatic etiquette probably means ignoring any real or insinuated 'thingification', the subject of Césaire's contempt. The real-politik of '+1' summitry however points to the possibilities of what could be described as post-continentalism, new Cold-War realpolitik with emergent forms of expansive political solidarity that seek to re-imagine a Global Africa (Mazrui 1994). Geopolitical calculus is, admittedly, a long way from the Pan-African vision of Nkrumah, Fanon and Césaire. But Pan-Africanism was, and remains, about much more than state-centric political geography. Reflecting on Cesaire's intellectual and personal roots, Diawara (1988: 6) reminds us that his vision for 'Negritude was bigger even than Africa, that we were part of an international moment which held the promise of universal emancipation'. Odanga is still right to call out the risks that accompany scholarly discourse, including the demeaning geographical reduction of Africa, even as Africa+1 'post-continentalism' emerges as a political strategy to be deployed in bilateral diplomacy and financial negotiations. There is more to do in crafting an analytical language that evokes these new political geographies.

The representation of political agency is only one part of Odanga's larger critique, and there is much more in his piece to reflect on. By reminding us that words create worlds, Odanga helps to both dismantle the master's house, and craft a different discourse as we rebuild. For this we should be grateful.

References

Benabdallah, L., 2020, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Diawara, M., 1998, *In Search of Africa*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harsh, M., Bal, R., Weryha, A., Whatley, J., Onu, C. C. and Negro, L. M., 2021, Mapping computer science research in Africa: using academic networking sites for assessing research activity, *Scientometrics*, Vol. 126, pp. 305–34

Kelley, R.D.G. 2000,. Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism, in Césaire, A*Discourse on Colonialism* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Mazrui, A., 1994, "Global Africa: From Abolitionists To Reparationists", *African Studies Review* 37 (3), pp.1–18

Mills, D., Branford, A., Chatio, S., Tindana, P., Inouye, K., Robinson, N. and Kingori, P., 2022, *Who Counts? Ghanaian academic publishing and global science*. Cape Town: African Minds.

Nye, J., 1990, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*,. London, UK: Basic Books.

Shahjahan, R. A. and Edwards. K. T., 2021, Whiteness as futurity and globalization of higher education, *Higher Education*, Vol. 83, No. 2, pp. 1–18.

Soulé, F., 2020, 'Africa+1' summit diplomacy and the 'new scramble' narrative: Recentering African agency, *African Affairs*, Vol. 119, pp. 633–646.

2022 Thandika Mkandawire Memorial Lecture & Roundtable Panel Discussion

Theme: The Feasibility of the Developmental State Project in Africa

Monday October 10, 2022

12noon (CAT), 10am (GMT)

Register here - https://bit.ly/3L55sOd

This is a virtual event and will be translated in English and French

Theme of Memorial Lecture:
"Can Africa run? Industrialisation and development in Africa

Prof. Fiona Tregenna
Keynote Speaker

Professor Fiona Tregenna holds the DSI/NRF South African Research Chair in Industrial Development, heading this centre of research, training, and public engagement. She is also a Professor of Economics at the University of Johannesburg. Her research focuses on issues of structural change, industrialisation and deindustrialisation, and innovation and technological upgrading. She has published widely in leading journals, received awards and grants for her research, led large research projects, co-edited several books, and serves on the editorial boards of various international journals and book series. She sits on many panels, boards and councils, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Advisory Council advising on trade and industrial development across Africa, and advising South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on economic policy as a member of his Presidential Economic Advisory Council. Fiona has advised international organisations such as UNIDO, UNCTAD, the United Nations University and the ILO, and has contributed to a number of flagship United Nations reports. She has a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Cambridge.

Theme of Memorial Lecture:
"The 'Impossibility Argument' and the Developmental State in 21st Century Africa"

Dr Grieve Chelwa
Panelist

Dr Grieve Chelwa is a Zambian economist with research interests centring on African Development and Political Economy more broadly. He currently serves as the Director of Research at The Institute on Race, Power, and Political Economy at The New School. He's previously held academic positions at The University of Cape Town and at Harvard University, where he was the Inaugural Postdoctoral Fellow at The Center for African Studies. Dr Chelwa is a frequent commentator and blogger, and some of his writings and opinions have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, Business Day, BBC, Lusaka Times, Bloomberg, and Mail & Guardian, among others.

Theme of Memorial Lecture:
"What does the Ethiopian experiment of developmentalism mean for Mkandawire's model of an African Developmental State? Lessons and critical reflections"

Dr Eyob Balcha Gebremariam
Panelist

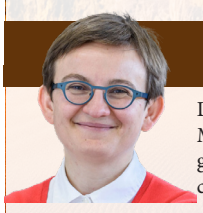
Dr Eyob Balcha Gebremariam is the recipient of the 2022 Thandika Mkandawire Prize for Outstanding Scholarship in African Political Economy and Economic Development. He is a Research Associate at the Perivoli Africa Research Centre, University of Bristol and an Adjunct Professor of African Studies at the Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, in Bologna, Italy. He received a doctoral degree in Development Policy and Management from the University of Manchester, UK. He taught African Political Economy and African Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science (2017-2021). He also held a Matasa Fellowship position at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK (2016/17). His research areas include African political economy, the politics of development, the politics of knowledge production in Africa (decolonial perspectives), young people's engagement in politics and youth (un)employment.

Theme of Memorial Lecture:
"Agriculture in Africa's Development Planning"

Prof Akua Opokua Britwum
Panelist

Akua Opokua Britwum is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation (CEGRAD) at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Her publications cover gender-based violence, gender and economic participation, trade union democracy, and labour force organisation in the informal economy.

Prof Daniela Gabor
Panelist



Daniela Gabor is a Professor of Economics and Macrofinance at UWE Bristol. She studies financial globalisation, money, and decarbonisation from a critical macrofinance perspective.

Theme of Memorial Lecture:
"Dreams of Green Hydrogen"

Dr Ndongo Samba Sylla
Panelist

Ndongo Samba Sylla is a Senegalese development economist. He works as a Senior Program and Research Manager at the West Africa Office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. He co-authored "Africa's Last Colonial Currency: the CFA Franc Story" (Pluto Press 2021)

On that 'Sub-Saharan Africa' Contraption

Whither 'Sub-Saharan Africa' Can We Use the Compass Instead?

Currently, there are few conversations about the term 'Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)' (L.T. 2019) and its continued use (Zeleza 2022; Daley and Murrey, 2022). An end to the use of this problematic term is long overdue, and African voices on this matter should be amplified. This contribution to the literature aims to offer a solid reference point to support discussions about the discontinued use of this virulent term due to its racialist origins and racist undertones (Adébísí 2016; Chachage 2020; Ekwe-Ekwe 2012; Zeleza 2010). Through the voices of several prominent Africans, we explore the term's invention, its scholarly (dis)advantages, and potential harm in its continued usage.

Keywords: Sub-Saharan Africa; SSA; terminology

Lusajo Kajula
Empathea Consulting,
Dar es Salaam,
Tanzania

Chambi Chachage
Institute of African Studies,
Carleton University,
Ottawa, Canada

The Invention of Sub-Saharan Africa ('SSA')

For non-historians, especially those who do not focus on African history, the term sub-Saharan Africa and its abbreviation SSA seem harmless. These terms are used persistently, particularly in such spheres such as public health, development work, academic engagements, and other areas of life that affect Africans (see Zeleza 2018; Welsh 1996; Adesina et al. 2013; Ngwa et al. 2022; Burchard 2022; Kabakama et al. 2022; and Kulu et al. 2022). 'SSA', as it is used officially, refers to the part of Africa south of the southern border of the Sahara Desert. Gloria Emeagwali, professor of History and African Studies at Central Connecticut State University puts it succinctly: 'It presents a covert line of demarcation between the damned and the not-so-damned in an equation that is actually racist' (Emeagwali, 15/07/2022, online interview). Vicensia Shule, a senior faculty member of the University of Dar es Salaam and adjunct professor at the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, suggests that SSA

> 'is used to categorise the continent, to exclude countries in the north for various reasons. South of the Sahara, to imply underdeveloped, to form classes and it comes with a negative connotation' (Shule, 18/07/2022, online interview).

For Jenerali Ulimwengu, a senior media personality who spent some time in Algeria as a Pan-African Youth Movement Tanzanian representative, the term can thus be understood:

> It's based on geography and the population. Those from the north, came from the Mediterranean as well as from an invasion from the Middle East. The area is inhabited by mostly Arabs and Tuareg, from the Sahel. Having travelled over the area, you see a mixture of races and ethnicities. There are also indications of a cultural mix. While those living on the south of the desert are mostly darker skinned (Ulimwengu, 28/07/2022, phone interview.).

Others suggest that 'sub' Sahara implies that those in the indicated area are less than or of a lower class. According to Shule (18/07/2022, online interview.), 'sub' means less than, below … and many associate sub-Saharan Africa with lower economic status. She asserts that 'poverty has an African face, illegal immigration (due to poverty) has an African face'. Her interpretation of 'sub-Saharan Africa' is closer to one of the definitions of 'sub' offered by a major American English dictionary: 'a) lower in importance or rank: lesser b) division or part of a subset'. While there are other definitions, this gives one food for thought (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.).

Paul Zeleza, has been publishing sustained historical critiques on defining Africa in terms of such demeaning demarcations.

> The conflation of Africa with 'sub-Saharan Africa,' 'Africa South of the Sahara' or 'Black Africa' so common in discourses about Africa, "ultimately offers us a racialized view of Africa, Africa as biology, as the "Black" continent (Zeleza 2006:15).

According to this author, the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), was one of the western intellectuals who were instrumental in this invention that has been carried on by his 'intellectual descendants' (Zeleza 2006:15). It was the influential Hegel who insisted that:

> Africa must be divided into three parts: one is that which lies south of the desert of Sahara—Africa proper—the Upland almost entirely unknown to us, with narrow coast-tracts along the sea; the second is that to the north of the desert—European Africa (if we may so call it)—a coastland; the third is the river region of the Nile, the only valley-land of Africa, and which is in connection with Asia (Táíwò 1998:7).

Over the years, the Hegelian trichotomy gave way to a dichotomy. Out of this genealogy, a prominent African philosopher, Olúfémi Táíwò also notes that

> all locutions concerning 'Africa South of the Sahara,' 'Sub-Saharan Africa,' 'Black Africa/ are, in their different ways, reflective of the Hegelian insistence that the areas so designated are 'Africa proper' that must be deemed of no interest to World History (Táíwò 2018:13).

Acutely cognisant of this racialist invention, the first president of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, cried:

> There is a tendency to divide Africa into fictitious zones north and south of the Sahara which emphasizes racial, religious and cultural differences (Nkrumah 1963:188).

He saw the Sahara as a bridge rather than a barrier. 'The Sahara no longer divides us; it unites us' became one of the slogans of the All African Peoples Conference that he convened in 1958, with half of the delegates coming from Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt, according to St Claire Drake (1964:40). Nkrumah would categorically state (Chachage 2010): 'To us, Africa with its islands is just one Africa. We reject the idea of any partition. From Tangier or Cairo in the North to Cape Town in the South, from Cape Guardafui in the East to Cape Verde Islands in the West, Africa is one and indivisible' (Nkrumah 1963:217).

It is unclear how serious those who invented the term sub-Saharan Africa thought about it. Did they seriously analyse what it meant or what it conveyed? While there is an implication of a clear demarcation between the countries north of the Sahara, namely Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia, the Sahel belt is often confused with the Sahara. The Sahel – "shore" – is a crossroad between the desert and the rest of the African continent (Walther and Retaillé 2010:3). As such, it is interconnected to the Sahara for they are 'indeed bound by an old spatial legacy in which trans-Saharan roads and sedentary settlements are organised, from North to South….' (Walther and Retaillé 2010:4).

However, the geography and biology of the continent reveal no clear demarcation between the Sahel belt and those south of the belt. Regarding geography, some countries have part of the Sahara desert partly within their borders. These include Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Senegal, Eritrea, and Sudan. Even Northern Nigeria falls within the Sahelian desert. As such, the 'Sub-Sahara question' is not only about physical geography but also about political geography. The division of Africa during colonial times led to territories that diverse ethnic groups inhabited. The colonialists carved most territories across Africa without following clear territorial limits (Welsh 1996; Chachage 2003). This resulted in fluid and fused boundaries, sometimes binding different ethnicities together while separating others of similar ethnicities. One example is how, throughout its late colonial history, the Western Sahara – the territory of the Sahrawi people – has been claimed by Spain, Morocco, and even Mauritania (Encyclopaedia Brittanica n.d.).

'Yes', notes Amy Niang (08/09/2022, pers. comm.), 'I'm explicit about the ahistorical nature of the division between north/ Sub-Saharan Africa and you can read this in most of my work on the Sahel'. Her work is particularly informative given that the Sahel, as Godwin Murunga, the Executive Secretary of Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) points out, has an element of its conceptualisation that is strictly a French colonial invention, 'yet, there is a conceptualisation of the Sahel as a zone of movement, dispersal, and adaptation'. (Murunga, 29/08/2022, pers. comm.). In one of her notable works aptly entitled *Stateness and Borderness in*

Mediation: Productions and Contestations of Space in the Sahel, Niang critically revisits the role of the then colonial administration in curtailing 'Sahelian-Saharan' mobility:

> The French strategy to dealing with the Tuareg in particular was to restrict their capacity to navigate the desert by attacking contingents of camels and caravans, poisoning wells, executing prisoners, confiscating land, and exiling dissidents. The French also tied alliances with sedentary groups (Tuareg and non-Tuareg) as well as nomadic groups as proxy agents. By and large, colonial production of space fits into a unidimensional and linear scheme of ordering; in other words, it was an approach meant to render productive, to exclude, to discipline subsistence economies to service centralized authority. Furthermore, the colonial encounter was foundational in the crystallization, the naturalization, and the inscription of ethnic identities in territorialized structures (Niang 2018:7).

When describing the invention of the term sub-Saharan Africa, Ulimwengu (28 July 2022, Phone interview.) suggests that one reality is that, when grabbing land, the colonial powers 'took no notice of indigenous people who were there' since 'for them, it was about pieces of land'. As a result, people of similar ethnic backgrounds live in different countries. These include the Mandingo (Mali, Guinea, Senegal, the Gambia, Ivory Coast and Guinea Bissau), the Maasai (Tanzania and Kenya), the Luo (Tanzania and Kenya), and the Yao (Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique), to name a few. The 'Toubou' or 'Tubu' are a Black African Saharan ethnic group inhabiting northern Chad, southern Libya, northeastern Niger and north-western Sudan (Atlas of Humanity n.d.). It is therefore wrong to imply that Black Africans only inhabit the territory south of the Sahara desert and the Sahel belt. One may be forgiven for thinking that Africa is divided between the northerners and the rest because of racist and economic ideas. According to Ulimwengu (28/07/2022, Phone interview) 'Northern Africans consider themselves to be "Less African" than the rest of the continent.' This, we contend, is partly due to the propagation of the term through colourism and racialism.

Emeagwali (15/07/22, online interview.) posits that the term provides 'justification and ratification of Ottoman Turkish, Arab and British empire building enterprises that incorporated North and Northeast Africa after the 7th century'. It is not surprising, we may add, the use of the term Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has gained currency alongside variations of Middle Eastern and African Studies (MEAS). Hence, evolution-wise, its connotation and covert nature alerts the reader to unpack. Without such a critical unpacking, we argue, scholarly communities, development workers, research institutions, funding agencies and other relevant entities are not aware of the issues raised by such a demarcation and will continue to produce and structure data and information using the SSA truncation. This will undermine the work of knowledge producers working on Africa and limit the understanding of their readers.

The Politics of Using the Term SSA

There are bound to be reasons for the continued use of the term SSA in different spheres. Several times, we have called out people[1] and spurred discussions on Twitter[2] after certain academic personalities tweeted something with 'Sub-Saharan Africa' as a title for a publication, event, or commentary.[3] Few are keen to learn, and most are defensive or even derogatory. Some use it 'deliberately' while others use it 'gullibly'.

Indeed, there are bound to be benefits in using the term, especially in development work and scholarship. Issa Shivji, Professor Emeritus at the University of Dar es Salaam, conjectures:

> It (SSA) probably started as a descriptive geographical term but evolved into a political term. I guess because it is politically convenient and useful to certain geo-political interests particularly to Western imperialism and its institutions. Discourses are not innocuous. They are terrains of contentious interests (Shivji, 02/08/2022, pers. comm.).

This conjecture is not too different from that of Shule, who laughed when asked about the politics of using SSA and suggested that 'it's blatantly obvious during calls for proposals to apply for funds for "Sub-Saharan Africa", then we feel blessed, but some countries like South Africa, do not like to be mixed with "Sub-Saharan" Africa due to their history with apartheid' (Shule, 18/07/22, online interview.). Her take is partly informed by years of research on neoliberalism and foreign aid complexity (Shule 2013). 'Most of the time', she further notes, 'the term is NOT used when we're winning marathons, the Nobel Peace prize (hurray to Wangari Maathai and Abdulrazak Gurnah) or when hosting the World Cup'. She also thinks that suggesting to donors that those in 'SSA' need help could be

'why donors are donating' (Shule, 18/07/22, online interview)

There are numerous examples of advertisements for scholarships and funding for those purported to be located in 'SSA'. For instance, Howard University's Center for African Studies tweeted: 'Apply for a Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS) internship! There are more than 500 options. Deadline: July 29. Example Internship: Research the history of U.S. relations with Sub-Saharan Africa'.[4] Similarly, Harvard University's departments have issued this call for applications: 'The Departments of History and African and African American Studies seek to appoint a tenure-track professor in the History of Modern Africa (focus on sub-Saharan Africa, field open)'.[5]" SciDev.Net SS Africa has even included the term in its name and invoked it in its advertisements: 'Join our team of regional editors and experts tomorrow for http://SciDev.Net's July readers' conference call. Theme: Cancer care in Sub-Saharan Africa'.[6] Brown University's Department of Africana Studies/Rites and Reason Theatre has attempted to repackage the term by inviting 'applications for a tenure-track position at the rank of Assistant Professor specializing in regions of Africa that are south of the Sahara'.[7]

These few examples show that even those who work in African Studies use the term SSA in their work.[8] Zeleza is somewhat sympathetic to Euro-American Africanists who use it while attempting to transcend its racialist undertones. However, he is wary of the framing limitations of such an attempt, given that it is limiting due to its racial legacy. 'To be sure', he notes, 'the language of race is now shunned by both Hegel's descendants and their adversaries, leaving the enduring abridged and racialized cartography of 'sub-Saharan Africa' to serve as proxy' (Zeleza 2006:16). His critique of African scholars is as systematically sympathetic as it is sarcastically scathing:

> The diminution and racialization of Africa is of course not confined to western scholars. Many African scholars, some of impeccable progressive credentials, also subscribe to it. Unlike Hegel, of course, many African scholars seek to invest, not divest, 'sub-Sahara' Africa with history and intellectual agency. But it is a limited maneuver for it reproduces Hegel's cultural mapping of Africa, in which 'Africa proper' excludes North Africa because of the region's purported extra-continental connections and Arabness, itself constructed in racialized terms despite the invocation of culture. The characterization of North Africa as exclusively Arab erases the history of the peoples and cultures that existed in the region long before the coming of the Arabs and Islam and the subsequent creation of complex creolized cultures (Zeleza 2006:16).

One wonders, why in some instances, one can differentiate between North Africa and South Asia but refer to sub-Saharan Africa instead of using similar geographical representations. A case in point is a tweet from leading scholar Alice Evans: 'IF you are interested in my hypothesis about why Sub-Saharan Africa was historically relatively gender equal, and what undermined matrilocality…'[9] Or this research question from the same scholar: 'How did Islam impact gender in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia?'[10] Elsewhere she rhetorically asks: 'Is 'Sub-Saharan Africa' a useful concept? Comparing regions, people say 'SSA is lagging behind', on gender. But this regional average obscures HUGE North-South variation, blinkering us to huge progress in Southern Africa [esp. on the matrilineal belt]'.[11] A textbook that one of us uses in teaching introductory classes on African Studies makes this poignant observation on the choice between the SSA term and other terms:

> ….. a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Africa requires a continental perspective inclusive of all five regions of the African continent. Specifically, one must focus on both North Africa, often referred to as Saharan Africa, as well as the four regions of Central, East, Southern, and West Africa, typically referred to as sub-Saharan Africa…Traditional studies of the African continent often focus exclusively on sub-Saharan Africa. This is due to the argument that several dimensions of contemporary North Africa, such as the greater influence of Arab culture and Islam, combine to make that region unique and, therefore, noncomparable to neighboring regions in the south… (Schraeder 2020:4)

The Myths about SSA

The continued use of the term is associated with some myths. These, Shivji notes, include believing that the Northern and other parts of Africa are divided by race. It is a myth because there are ethnic Black Africans in some north African countries such as Libya and Egypt. Shivji adds other myths: 'Another is that the Sahara is very difficult to cross therefore it cannot function as a means of communication. Third is that the division between the Arab North and the Black African South is immemorial' (Shivji, 02/08/2022, pers. comm.). For Emeagwali (15/07/22, online interview), the myth is that

using SSA is objective: 'The pretence is that it's a very neutral term'. However, it is a geopolitical social construction.

Another myth implies that northern Africa has a higher financial status than the rest of Africa. The World Bank tends to use SSA in most of its data on Africa, but identifies only one country in North Africa – Libya – is identified as being in the upper middle income category, together with these other African countries: Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa.[12] The World Bank classifies the remaining four North African countries – Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia – as lower middle income alongside the following in the 'rest of Africa': Angola, Benin, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.[13]

The Call to Debunk Mythical 'SSA'

The quest to debunk myths about SSA needs different approaches. Shivji offers this suggestion: "By constantly reminding ourselves and others through our writings and discourses that the term is harmful to our discourses and interests (Shivji, 02/08/2022, pers. comm.)'. While writing this article, it was refreshing to stumble on a tweet by Zubairu Wai, a professor of Political Science and Global Development Studies, that affirms the approach as follows: 'I have always maintained Sub-Saharan Africa is an extremely problematic Hegelian construct that comes with all racist assumptions, precisely why I don't ever use it in my writing'.[14] He was responding to a tweet by Jemima Pierre, a professor of anthropology called 'Meet the precursor to 'Sub-Saharan Africa''[15] who replied her support to his approach to the use of the term SSA.[16]

Shule also has a few suggestions: Using a Pan-African approach that is open resistance; running a global campaign to let the international community understand the consequences of continuing its use; and continuing doing the work in researching and dissemination, using various means (Shule, 18/7/22, online interview). While looking for interviewees for this article, we were asked what would be different from seminal literature, such as V.Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and Zeleza's *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (1997), which have aptly addressed the SSA question. As our engagement on social media and other platforms indicates, some, especially in medical and natural sciences or what is generally called science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), have never heard of critiques on the use of SSA in research. Our main aim is to magnify the voices in this debate that oppose the term and bring them to the attention of those who see no harm in continuing to use the term.

Some may hear, read about it, or be reminded about the negative connotation of using the term, but change takes time. However, continuing to use the term, which according to Emeagwali (15/07/22, online interview.), is 'inaccurate and misleading with racist undertones built into it', is ill-advised. It perpetuates flawed takes on Africa. Shivji elaborates on the flaws of continuing to use the term in our times:

> I think the term is most divisive and runs against the ethos of Pan-Africanism. It is a term which is insidious in that while it presents itself as a geographical term, it is politically loaded and carries with it racial connotations because apparently, the division is between the Arab North (of Sahara) and Black African (South of Sahara). In reality, this is not true because there are people of Arabic origin in countries South of Sahara as well as ethnic Black people in countries North of Sahara. In the pre-Vasco-da Gama period, Sahara was not a divide; rather it was a link and camel caravans travelled through Sahara between these two regions of Africa. I think Sahara is to Central and West Africa what the Indian Ocean is to Eastern Africa (Shivji, 02/08/2022, pers. comm.).

The African Union (AU) has not been very vocal about urging to discontinue the use of SSA because, according to Shule (18/07/22, online interview.), 'a lot of issues went into the transition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), into AU, several issues were changed. During OAU, the concept was to unite the continent. With the AU, the understanding was that the focus was more on building the economy after being united'. While some Pan-Africanists have lived through the struggle for independence or have been part of it, most of us born after independence do not have the experience of colonialism, and others may not have felt the direct brunt of racism. However, the majority would agree on the importance of an African Union devoid of racial undertones.

The Alternatives to 'SSA'

It is vital to develop regional names devoid of racial undertones, misleading economic connotations, or any kind of 'othering'. Some people who have stopped using the term SSA are already using other names

or are in the process of suggesting a better term to describe the space that is south of the northern African countries. However, even among the few prominent Africans interviewed for this piece, not all agree that we should have a new term. Ulimwengu (28/07/2022, phone interview.) pointed out that he did not see the need to stop using the term because, according to him, 'there are economic realities e.g. Eastern Congo considers itself closer to Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda etc.' He asserts it is the reality that most African countries, aside from the northern five, are in the low income category per World Bank classification[17] hence 'if the shoe fits, wear it'. It is curious to compare this current view with a view he expressed over a decade ago:

> If we could, as some have suggested, admit more states, we could have established the nucleus of a united state eventually to morph into a sub-Saharan United States of Africa. A dream, you will say, but not a pipe dream (Ulimwengu 2011).

However, the rest of those interviewed, some of whom have published writings on this issue, agree that the term SSA should no longer be used. There is a need to devise for an appropriate alternative term. Shivji (02/08/2022, pers. comm.) suggests: 'I just saw someone using "SSA" to mean South of Sahara Africa. While it is attractive as an alternative but the same abbreviation would not serve well the purpose of getting away from sub-Saharan Africa discourse. But then do we have to divide Africa in relation to the Sahara? Why not just North Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, East Africa South Africa – the terms used by I think AU". Shule, who has also worked at the AU, says that we should 'use Africa, or use the regional bodies to address the specific area you want to focus on'. She notes:

> People have stopped using it in institutions that are for Africa, by Africa. The African Union [AU] recognises Africa's regional bodies instead of one whole block that is south of the Sahara. Therefore the continent itself has focused on regional bodies. ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States], IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa …], EAC [East African Community], [Southern African Development Community] SADC, etc (Shule, 18/07/22, online interview).

Emeagwali is adamant that we should specify the location of the region that we are talking about geographically. She insists: 'Use the compass! It's easy to do so' (Emeagwali, 15/07/22, online interview). We concur with her. Indeed, why can't we use the compass and easily refer to different parts of Africa the same way areas on other continents are referred to?

Notes

1. https:// twitter.com/search?q =%40udadisi%20sub-saharan&src=typed_query.
2. https://twitter.com/search?q=%40udadisi%20ssa&src=typed_query&f=top.
3. https://twitter.com/search?q=%40udadisi%20%23SSA&src=typed_query&f=live.
4. https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1550165964469174272.
5. https://academicpositions.harvard.edu/postings/11513.
6. https://twitter.com/scidevnetssa?lang=en.
7. https://africana.brown.edu/news/2022-08-08/assistant-professor.
8. https://africana.brown.edu/news/2022-08-08/assistant-professor.
9. https://twitter.com/_alice_evans/status/1474079264567930886.
10. https://www.draliceevans.com/.
11. https://twitter.com/_alice_evans/status/1228943905082822657.
12. World Bank, "Upper middle income," https://data.worldbank.org/income-level/upper-middle-income.
13. World Bank, "Lower middle income," https://data.worldbank.org/income-level/lower-middle-income.
14. https://twitter.com/ZubaWai/status/1557034219615969284.
15. https://twitter.com/grosmorne29/status/1557032827970932737.
16. https://twitter.com/grosmorne29/status/1557035857965903874.
17. https://data.worldbank.org/? locations=XD-XT-XP-XN-XO-XM.

References

Adébísí, F.I. 2016, 'Stop Researching Sub-Saharan Africa', *African Skies,* Available online at https://folukeafrica.com/we-should-stop-researching-sub-saharan-africa/.

Adesina, A., Chumba, D., Nelson, A.M, Orem, J., Roberts, D.J., Wabinga, H., Wilson, M. and Rebbeck, T.R., 2013, 'Improvement of pathology in sub-Saharan Africa', *The Lancet Oncology*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. e152–7.

Atlas of Humanity, n.d., 'Toubou People, Chad', *Atlas of Humanity,* Available online at https://www.atlasofhumanity.org/toubou.

Burchard, S.M., 2022, 'Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa', in *Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa: Causes and Consequences*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Chachage, S.L.C., 2003, 'Citizenship and Partitioned People in East Africa: The Case of the Wamaasai', *Africa Development,* Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 53–96.

Chachage, C., 2010, 'More Than a Continent? Remapping Africa', *Pambazuka News,* 16 September, Available online at https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/more-continent-remapping-africa.

Daley, P.O., and Murrey, A., 2022, 'Defiant Scholarship: Dismantling Coloniality in Contemporary African Geographies', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geographies,* Vol. 43, pp. 159–76, Available online at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/sjtg.12422.

Drake, S-C., 1964, 'The Negro's Stake in Africa', *Negro Digest,* Vol. 13, No. 8.

Ekwe-Ekwe, H., 2012, 'What Exactly Does "Sub-Sahara Africa" Mean?', *Pambazuka News,* 18 January, Available online at https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/what-exactly-does-%E2%80%98sub-sahara-africa%E2%80%99-mean.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d., 'Western Sahara', Available online at https://www.britannica.com/place/Western-Sahara.

Kabakama, S., Konje, E.T., Dinga, J.N., Kishamawe, C., Morhason-Bello, I., Hayombe, P, Adeyemi, O. et al., 2022, 'Commentary on COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Sub-Saharan Africa' *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease*, Vol. 7, No. 7, Article 130, Available online at https://www.mdpi.com/2414-6366/7/7/130/pdf.

Kulu, E., Brafu-Insaidoo, W.G., Bondzie, E.A. and Peprah, J.A., 2022, 'Inefficiency and Gaps in Financial Stability in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Cogent Economics & Finance*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Article 2111056, Available online at https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2022.2111056.

L.T., 2019, 'What is sub-Saharan Africa?', *The Economist,* 7 March, Available online at https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2019/03/07/what-is-sub-saharan-africa.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d., 'sub', Available online at https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sub.

Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge,* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Ngwa, W., Addai, B.W., Adewole, I., Ainsworth, V., Alaro, J., Alatise, O.I, Ali, Z. et al., 2022, 'Cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Lancet Oncology Commission', *The Lancet Oncology*, Vol. 23, No. 6, available online at https://www.thelancet.com/commissions/cancer-in-sub-Saharan-Africa.

Niang, A., 2018, *Stateness and Borderness in Mediation: Productions and Contestations of Space in the Sahel,* Adaption und Kreativität in Afrika, the German Research Foundation Working Paper, No. 26.

Nkrumah, K., 1963, *Africa Must Unite,* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Available online at https://www.zolabantu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Africa-Must-Unite-Kwame-Nkrumah-1.pdf.

Schraeder, P.J., ed., 2020, *Understanding Contemporary Africa, 6th Edition.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Shule, V., 2013, Beyond Socialism: Tanzanian Theatre, Neoliberalism and Foreign Aid Complexity, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Mainz University, Available online at https://openscience.ub.uni-mainz.de/handle/20.500.12030/1763.

Táíwò, O., 1998, 'Exorcising Hegel's Ghost: Africa's Challenge to Philosophy', *African Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 1, Issue 4, Available online at https://asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/Vol-1-Issue-4-Taiwo.pdf.

Ulimwengu, J., 2011, 'New Momentum has Been Set, Mood is in Favour of EAC Federation, Seize it," *The East African,* 20 March, Available online at https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/oped/comment/new-momentum-has-been-set-mood-is-in-favour-of-eac-federation-seize-it-1302684.

Walther, O., and Retaillé, D., 2010, *Sahara or Sahel? The Fuzzy Geography of Terrorism in West Africa.* CEPS/INSTEAD Working Papers 2010-35, Available online at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1803996.

Welsh, D., 1996, 'Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa', *International Affairs,* Vol. 72, no. 3 (1996): 477–91.

Zeleza, P.T., 1997, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises,* Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

Zeleza, P.T., 2006, 'The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications', in O.F. Arasanyin and M.A. Pemberton, eds., *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics,* pp. 14–26.

Zeleza, P.T., 2010, 'Reconceptualizing African Diasporas: Notes from a Historian', *Transforming Anthropology,* Vol. 18, Issue 1, pp. 74–8, Available online at https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1548-7466.2010.01073.x.

Zeleza, P.T., 2018, 'Trump's Shithole Africa: The Homogenization and Dehumanization of a Continent', USIU-Africa, 13 January, Available online at https://medium.com/@USIUAfrica/trumps-shithole-africa-the-homogenization-and-dehumanization-of-a-continent-226213105e25.

Zeleza, P.T., 2022, 'Africa and Its Diasporas: From Pan-Africanism to Developmentalism to Transnationalism', The Elephant, 11 March, Available online at https://www.theelephant.info/long-reads/2022/03/11/africa-and-its-diasporas-from-pan-africanism-to-developmentalism-to-transnationalism/.

CODESRIA Bulletin

Publications Team

Ibrahim Oanda
Chifaou Amzat
Yves Eric Elouga
Diama Bèye
Sériane Camara
Awa Diouf
Modou Fall

For contibutions and enquiries, please write to:

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop X Canal IV
P.O. Box 3304, Dakar
CP 18524, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 825 98 22 / 23
Fax: +221 33 824 12 89

Email: publications@codesria.org
Web Site: www.codesria.org

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is an independent organisation whose principal objectives are to facilitate research, promote research-based publishing and create multiple forums for critical thinking and exchange of views among African researchers. All these are aimed at reducing the fragmentation of research in the continent through the creation of thematic research networks that cut across linguistic and regional boundaries.

CODESRIA publishes Africa Development, the longest standing Africa based social science journal; Afrika Zamani, a journal of history; the African Sociological Review; Africa Review of Books and the Journal of Higher Education in Africa. The Council also co-publishes Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue; and the Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. All CODESRIA publications are accessible online at www.codesria.org.

CODESRIA would like to express its gratitude to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Open Society Foundations (OSFs), Oumou Dilly Foundation, Ford Foundation and the Government of Senegal for supporting its research, training and publication programmes.

CODESRIA

Ce Bulletin est distribué gratuitement à tous les instituts et facultés de recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique et au-delà afin d'encourager la coopération en matière de recherche entre les chercheurs africains. Les personnes et institutions intéressées peuvent également s'inscrire sur la liste de diffusion du CODESRIA pour recevoir le Bulletin dès sa parution. Les contributions sur des questions théoriques et les rapports sur les conférences et séminaires sont également les bienvenus.