

## Amilcar Cabral and the Pan-African Project

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I would like to thank President Pedro Pires and the Amilcar Cabral Foundation for inviting me to this Forum. This is the third time I have come to Praia for another scholarly forum on the exemplary life and work of Amilcar Cabral, following the international symposia of 1983 and 2004. Building on my contribution to the second symposium, which is in line with one of this forum's objectives to discuss 'the thought of Amilcar Cabral in the contemporary perspective', my paper will focus on the lessons we can draw from Cabral's revolutionary thought for the successful implementation of the African national project. As one of the leading figures of African nationalism and the national liberation struggle, Cabral was committed to the large consensus that emerged on the eve of decolonization that the total emancipation of Africa from both colonialism and neocolonialism required the implementation of a national project of democracy and development through self-determination politically, self-reliance economically, and pan-African solidarity. Since this developmental vision is best achieved through continental or regional integration, I prefer to call it 'the pan-African project'. For pan-Africanism in deeds and not in words is a *sine qua non* for the successful implementation of this project.

In the contemporary perspective, the three components of the pan-African project can be described as democratic governance, reconstruction and development, and pan-African solidarity, both within the continent and with the African diaspora worldwide. In his speeches and writings, as well as in his directives on the administration of the liberated areas of Guinea-Bissau, Cabral touched on all of these subjects with clarity and a rich array

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of ideas that are likely to be useful to the African continent today. Given the current challenges of nation building and state building in Africa, there is need to pay greater attention to Cabral's thought on these three topics. While looking at the lessons of Cabral's thought for the postcolonial state in Africa today, I hasten to add that I am not competent to address the question of why these lessons have not been effectively learned and put into practice in Guinea-Bissau.

### Democratic Governance

Elsewhere, I have defined democratic governance as 'the management of societal affairs in accordance with the universal principles of democracy as a system of rule that maximizes popular consent and participation, the legitimacy and accountability of rulers, and the responsiveness of the latter to the expressed interests and needs of the public'. These universal principles include the rule of law, popular legitimacy and participation, as well as the accountability and alternation of elected officials. There is also a direct link between democratic governance and the human rights-based approach to development, which is founded on the values, standards and principles enunciated in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and all other major international human rights instruments. In this regard, democratic governance implies the following:

- People's human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, and thus allowing them to live with dignity;
- People have a say in decisions that affect their lives, not only nationally through free, fair and transparent elections, but also through participation in local governance structures;
- People can hold decision makers accountable not only through regularly held elections but also in recall elections and peaceful protests;
- A vibrant civil society and a free, independent media, to provide alternative solutions to public issues;
- A system of checks and balances based on the separation of powers, with independent judicial and legislative branches of government;
- Effective civilian control of the military and other security forces;
- Women are equal partners with men in private and public spheres of life and decision-making;
- People are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attribute; and
- Economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs and aspirations, and mindful of the needs of future generations.

Nearly all of these principles and attributes of democratic governance are found in the various texts of Amilcar Cabral. These include his most famous texts such as 'The Weapon of Theory' and 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure of Guinea', the PAIGC programme, some party directives, interviews, and his New Year's message of 1973. The point of departure for Cabral's vision of a democratic developmental state in

postcolonial Africa is his total rejection of neocolonialism and the neocolonial state. In an informal talk with African Americans on 20 October 1972 in New York, Cabral had this to say on the state in Africa:

We are not interested in the preservation of any of the structures of the colonial state. It is our opinion that it is necessary to totally destroy, to break, to reduce to ash all aspects of the colonial state in our country in order to make everything possible for our people. ... Some independent African states preserved the structures of the colonial state. In some countries they only replaced a white man with a black man, but for the people it is the same. ... The nature of the state we have to create in our country is a very good question for it is a fundamental one. ... It is the most important problem in the liberation movement. The problem of the nature of the state created after independence is perhaps the secret of the failure of African independence.

This is the fundamental issue for postcolonial Africa with respect to democratic governance: whether the colonial state is destroyed or survives in a neocolonial garb under African rulers. For the colonial state was incompatible with democracy. Colonized peoples were subjects with obligations to their distant rulers in imperial capitals and their immediate European masters in the colony, and not citizens with human and democratic rights. In the Congo, the brutality and naked violence of the colonial state were captured under the term 'ButaMatari', which literally means 'the crusher of rocks'. This was the nickname given to Henry Morton Stanley, King Leopold's colonial agent, for the wanton brutality to which he subjected Africans to and the terror provoked by the dynamite he used to blow up mountains in building a road from Matadi near the Atlantic Ocean to Kinshasa. Eventually, the term became used to refer to the colonial state and Belgian colonial officers, and continues to be used today to refer to 'government'. As Crawford Young points out, although the term 'ButaMatari' was particular to the Belgian Congo, 'its evocative imagery can be projected onto the much larger domain' of the African colonial state.

By its nature and functions, the colonial state was a *butamatari* state. Political

repression was its underlying basis, as it operated through force and authoritarianism. As such, it was indeed organized or 'naked violence', as memorably defined by Frantz Fanon. Moreover, according to Jean Suret-Canale, total despotism was the organizational model of the colonial state at each territorial level of administration: the centre, the region or province, the district, and the lowest European-administered administrative unit. Likewise, Ruth First reminds us that the colonial state was 'military in conception and organization', and describes its essentially bureaucratic character as follows:

The colonial bureaucracy ruled; as Louis XIV had proclaimed of himself, it was the state: though with this difference, that the administrator-kings of the colonial services were not even of the country; and for all their insistence that they were motivated not by political but by administrative needs, it was the needs and the politics of the metropolis which almost exclusively determined the fate of the colonial subject.

These authoritarian, bureaucratic, despotic and violent features of the colonial state, whose methods of rule consist of intimidation and repression by the bureaucracy, the military and the police are not compatible with democratic governance. For Cabral, decolonization must imply rupture with the colonial past. There must be a change in the form of state, from a despotic to a more democratic system of governance based on leaders who are elected and accountable to their citizens. Thus, looking at Guinea-Bissau with most of its territory under PAIGC control in 1972, Cabral sees it as being 'comparable to an independent state, part of whose national territory, notably the urban centers, is occupied by foreign military forces'. Consequently, with the liberated areas as a prefiguration of Cabral's model of a postcolonial state, free and democratic elections were held in a two-phased process by which citizens elected representatives to the regional councils (CRs), and the latter were to elect representatives to the People's National Assembly (ANP) as the supreme organ of popular sovereignty. Consistent with parliamentary democracy, the ANP 'was created on the basic principle according to which power comes from the people and must serve the people'.

Even before the fundamental law of Guinea-Bissau was adopted, the PAIGC programme had already spelled out the key aspects of the democratic system to be established. It consisted of a republican, democratic and secular government; the organization of power based on free and general elections; and the total transformation of the inherited colonial administration into democratic structures for national and local administration. In liberated areas, village councils were already the embodiment of the practice of decentralization, with increased participation by women and young people (as each council consisted of three men and two women), and people having a say in decisions that affected their lives. Such a system of local administration was more consistent with Cabral's notion of 'cooperative democracy' than a system based on opportunism, clientelism, promotion of primordial ties, telling lies, etc., as in many African countries today. Cooperative democracy is also more conducive to institution building, greater freedom of expression, people's power and excellence, than local governance systems based on authoritarianism and corruption. At the national level, Cabral insisted on civilian control over the military, a very important issue in view of the fact that militarism does flare up from time to time around the continent.

### Reconstruction and Development

In the economic field, as in politics, Cabral's starting point was the same: 'Destroy the economy of the enemy and build our own economy.' This was one of the eight directives on theoretical and practical guidance that the PAIGC secretary-general sent to his party cadres in 1965 on the implementation of the decisions of the First Party Conference held at Cassaca in February 1964. This sixth directive is the one that contains one of the best known and most profound passages from Cabral's writings:

Always remember that the people do not struggle for ideas, for things in the heads of individuals. The people struggle and accept sacrifices demanded by the struggle, but in order to gain material advantages, to be able to live a better life in peace, to see their lives progress and to ensure their children's future. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, working for peace and

progress – independence – all these are empty words without meaning for the people, unless they are translated into a real improvement in standards of living. It is useless to liberate an area, if the people of that area are left without the basic necessities of life.

I have heard in my own country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and there are testimonies from elsewhere in Africa, of old people asking intellectuals when this ‘independence of yours’ is going to end, so they could go back to the political order, economic stability, and social benefits of the 1950s. While this might be a minority position, it is nevertheless a strong indictment of the failure of the postcolonial state to provide at the very minimum the basic necessities of life; maternities, health centres and schools with adequate equipment, furniture and supplies; and good roads and transportation facilities to make it easier for peasant farmers to bring their produce to urban markets. At the same time, these social and economic benefits of the last major decade of colonialism in Africa were not sustainable, particularly in urban areas, to which millions of people who had been denied access to them by colonial-era influx control measures moved in search of a better life. Since the raw material-based and export-oriented colonial economy was not established to serve the interests of African workers and peasants, the only way to meet the basic needs of ordinary Africans and satisfy the interests of their youth for greater integration in the modern world is to heed Cabral’s call by destroying it and reducing it to ashes.

For Cabral, liberation from colonial domination is meaningful only when it goes beyond the political realm to involve the development of ‘production, education, health facilities and trade’. With respect to property rights, four types of property were to be recognized: personal, private, co-operative, and state. Priority was to be given to the development, modernization and transformation of agriculture, with a view to ensuring prosperity and preventing agricultural crises, drought and famine. Here again, as in the political sphere, the liberated areas were to serve as a prefiguration of the postcolonial state. There, and later on in the postcolonial state, the ruling party was to focus on the following tasks:

[D]evelop agricultural production both by extending the cultivated areas

and by improving farming methods, with more care in farming and by increasing the range of crops. Pay special attention to the development of food crops (rice, maize, manioc, potato, beans, vegetables, bananas, cashew nut, oranges and other fruit trees). Pay special attention to the care of cattle and breeding livestock (pigs, chickens, sheep, etc.) to cattle fodder and to the preservation of grazing land. Demand an effective control over fires, to avoid the destruction of our forest and bush. Employ all spare time of the armed forces with help to farmers, above all at harvest time. ... Help the smiths to carry on developing their skill, notably in the making and repair of farm tools. Intensify the production of coconut, palm oil and other oils, the manufacture of ‘home made soap’ and all the other products of use to the population and traditionally made in our country. Make preparations to bring back into operation soon the saw-mills abandoned by the settlers. Develop exchange (mutual aid) between families in one village and between villages. Establish collective farming areas for some crops such as the banana, pineapple and fruit trees. Form through experience and whenever conditions are favourable simple co-operatives for farm production. Hand over properties (orchards, cattle) abandoned by their owners to a local committee to use and manage them.

The transformative agenda of reconstruction and development outlined here is ambitious but doable. It is consistent with the view of Africa’s most prominent economist, Samir Amin, that the continent cannot develop without an industrialization strategy based on the modernization of agriculture and the production of capital goods in Africa. The greatest challenge for African countries is to be able to conceive and execute development strategies that are likely to satisfy the deepest aspirations of the popular masses for economic development and material prosperity. The question that Cabral raises is a simple one. Are African leaders going to make common cause with their people by opting for those policies likely to meet the latter’s needs, or are they going to side with the international bourgeoisie and accept the antisocial development strategies and policies imposed by the IMF and the World Bank? Beyond the choice of economic policy by African governments, there is even a more

fundamental question that Cabral has raised, i.e., can an independent state based on the same system of economic exploitation as the colonial state satisfy the needs of African workers and peasants? Since the answer to this question is obviously negative, the reality is that the African postcolonial state has a choice to make between the interests of its own people and the constraints of the world system. This is why Cabral calls on African revolutionaries to destroy the colonial economy and build a new and more people-friendly economy.

That reconstruction and development are yet to take place in much of postcolonial Africa is an indication of the fact that most of our leaders have refused to follow the revolutionary path advocated by Fanon by opting for the easier road of enrichment within neocolonial structures. The major consequences of this option include the emergence of an African oligarchy whose main aim to use state power as a means of personal enrichment, the deepening of underdevelopment in most of our countries, and the impoverishment of the popular masses. Instead of establishing democratic developmental states, we are faced with the political economies of plunder, a subject on which Mbaya Kankwenda has published an excellent analysis with respect to the DRC.

### **Pan-African Solidarity**

As the third component of the pan-African project, pan-African solidarity is indispensable for the practice of democratic governance as well as the successful implementation of reconstruction and development. At the memorial service for Kwame Nkrumah on 13 May 1972 in Conakry, Cabral on behalf of the African liberation movements renewed their ‘pledge to the total liberation of Africa and the progress of African peoples’. This commitment to African liberation and solidarity with African peoples was grounded less on racial considerations than on moral and legal principles of international solidarity. For example, in the informal talk with African Americans cited above, Cabral made it clear that while he was happy to be with his brothers and sisters of African descent anywhere in the world, he would have much preferred being with people who were both brothers/sisters and comrades. The lessons he had learned from the Congo and Ghana, where Patrice Lumumba and Nkrumah were betrayed by

their own Congolese and Ghanaian brothers, respectively, were too bitter to forget.

Cabral did not live long enough to see the Organization of African Unity (OAU) amend its policy of non-interference in the international affairs of member states through the creation in 1993 of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Through this mechanism, and its successor, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), Africa is no longer reluctant to send peacekeeping missions to countries having internal conflicts. There is no doubt that Cabral would have supported this development, both in the name of pan-Africanism and in respect of international legal instruments such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and UN resolutions. In a declaration of 12 December 1962 to the Fourth Commission of the UN General Assembly, he made an eloquent presentation of the liberation struggle in Africa as a contribution to the implementation of the UN resolution on decolonization, in which colonialism is depicted as an international crime:

When in Elizabethville or in the Congo bush a soldier of Indian, Ethiopian or other nationality falls under the fire of the enemy, he is one more victim who has given his life for the cause of the UN. ... When in our country a comrade dies under police torture, is assassinated in prison, is burned alive or falls under the bullets of Portuguese guns, for which cause is he giving his life? ... For us, the only difference between the Indian soldier, the Italian pilot or the Swedish administrator who dies in the

Congo and our comrade who dies in Guinea or the Cabo Verde islands is that by acting in our country for the same ideal we are simply anonymous soldiers for the UN.

Today, AU electoral observer missions, expert review teams for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), disaster assistance teams, and peacekeeping missions are all indispensable measures of pan-African and international solidarity for peace and security in the continent. They help promote democratic governance and help promote enabling conditions for reconstruction and development, particularly in countries emerging from crises or armed conflicts. In the face of externally-sponsored terrorism and balkanization as in Mali and in Eastern Congo, capacity development of regional security mechanisms is all the more urgent, given the weaknesses of national armies to cope with well-armed militia groups. Arms trafficking; trafficking in narcotics; poaching of elephants, rhinoceroses and rare animals; illegal mining and trade in precious metals and ores; and the growing threat to forests, fisheries and farming land are among issues for which solutions must be found regionally and continentally.

Finally, some forty years since Cabral held a meeting with 120 people representing a wide range of African American organizations and after the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1974 and the Seventh Pan-African Congress in Kampala in 1994, the recognition of the African diaspora as a sixth region of the AU is a step in the right direction in connecting the struggles of Africans and peoples of African descent all over the

world. Although the exact manner in which the diaspora will participate in AU activities remains to be clarified, what is encouraging is the recognition of the potential benefits that this connection may have for both Africa and its diaspora.

## Conclusion

Forty years after his odious assassination, Amilcar Cabral's brilliant thought remains relevant for contemporary Africa, and will continue to inspire African revolutionaries throughout the twenty-first century. This paper is a modest attempt to show its relevance with respect to the pan-African project and its key components today, namely, democratic governance, reconstruction and development, and pan-African solidarity. Over fifty years of African independence have demonstrated the correctness of his call to African patriots to destroy the colonially-inherited structures of the state and the economy in order to create new and more people-friendly structures of what is currently known as the democratic developmental state. His leadership within the African liberation movements, his close association with Kwame Nkrumah during their Conakry years, and his overall advocacy of pan-African and international solidarity of progressive forces, clearly demonstrate his conviction that such solidarity is essential for the success of democracy and development in Africa. Cabral's place in the pantheon of the world's revolutionary leaders of the twentieth century is well established.

\* Paper presented at the Amilcar Cabral Scientific Forum Organized by the Amilcar Cabral Foundation held in Praia, Cape Verde, 19-20 January 2013.

## L'Encre des savants : réflexions sur la philosophie en Afrique Souleymane Bachir Diagne

Présence africaine – CODESRIA, 124 p. ISBN : 978-2-86978-584-7

Partant de ce fait que la philosophie africaine connaît aujourd'hui un important développement et fait l'objet de nombreuses publications, l'auteur examine le champ de question et l'espace de débat que constitue l'activité philosophique en Afrique pour présenter ici à la fois un « précis » de cette activité et un exposé de ses propres réflexions sur les thèmes les plus importants autour desquels elle s'organise. L'on peut considérer en effet, constate-t-il, que pour l'essentiel quatre grandes questions constituent les enjeux majeurs de la réflexion philosophique africaine : premièrement celle de l'ontologie en relation avec les religions et l'esthétique, deuxièmement celle du temps – plus particulièrement de l'avenir et de la prospective –, troisièmement celle de l'oralité et des implications de sa transcription/traduction, quatrièmement enfin celle, politique, des socialismes. Ces grandes questions posent aussi celle, fondamentale, et qui les traverse, des langues et de la traduction.

