Special Issue

Reflection on the Contribution of

CODESRIA Second Executive Secretary

Numéro spécial

Réflexion sur la contribution du

Deuxième Secrétaire exécutif du CODESRIA

PROF. ABDALLA BUJRA
(1938–2025)

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Prof. ABDALLA BUJRA, (1938–2025)
CODESRIA's Towering Pillar

Godwin R. Murunga

Executive Secretary
CODESRIA

CODESRIA is fifty-two years old. Although it was formally established in 1973, its ideational origins date back to a conference held in Bellagio, Italy in 1964 on 'Economic Research in Africa'. Among the ten directors of African-based research institutes invited, only two were African: Professor Adebola Onitiri from the Nigerian Institute of Economic and Social Research at the University of Ibadan (Nigeria), and Professor Omer Osman, then dean of the Faculty of Economics and Social Studies at the University of Khartoum (Sudan). The rest were either French or British. The stark underrepresentation of African directors at the Bellagio conference served as a catalyst for a series of meetings by African scholars in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which came to be abbreviated as CODESRIA (Conference of Directors of Economics and Social Research Institutes in Africa).[1]

CODESRIA grew beyond meetings to not only acquire a recognisable name and institutional strength in the 1970s and 1980s but also earn legitimacy among African academics and policy actors. Many of these contributed in their own ways to strengthening CODESRIA's intellectual agenda and cementing the value of its knowledge to shaping policy process across the continent. Throughout its history, CODESRIA has been led by academics who served in policy circles, including Justinian F. Rweyemamu (CODESRIA's president from 1979 to1981),[2] and Samir Amin, and the Council has played a significant role in policy debates that have shaped Africa's history.

Less well-known, yet profoundly impactful in shaping the intellectual trajectories of the Council and policy processes of several institutions, was Professor Abdalla Bujra. Bujra, as he was known in the community, passed on at home in Malindi, Kenya on 8 January 2025. His relative obscurity was not because his contributions were not of the magnitude of his peers but rather because of his self-effacing character, as both Mahmood Mamdani and Peter Anyang' Nyong'o note in this special issue. Bujra was one of the last remaining founding members of CODESRIA. He served as the second Executive Secretary of CODESRIA from 1975 to 1985. Prior to this, he had worked alongside the founding Executive Secretary, Prof. Samir Amin, to birth the CODESRIA we know today and put in place some of the institutional mechanisms that still define the Council. It was Samir Amin, Adebola Onitiri and Abdalla Bujra who organised the first General Assembly of CODESRIA in 1973 to formalise the organization. The firm establishment of the institutional framework of CODESRIA, and its emergence as a formidable organisation representing Africa and showcasing the best of its work in the social sciences, germinated and took root under Bujra's leadership.

During his tenure, he spearheaded and worried about growing the organisation based on a principle of institutional autonomy in a context where CODESRIA depended on external funding partners. Mahmood Mamdani recounts this role in his homage to Bujra, featured in this issue. It is a principle the Council has embraced throughout its history. Indeed, it was Bujra's pioneering thinking on institutional autonomy that inspired subsequent Executive Secretaries of the Council, under the guidance of respective Executive Committees, to prioritise this approach as the cornerstone of its engagement with those who support the Council.

As a result, CODESRIA has developed structures that define its independent intellectual agenda and can seek support based on this agenda. This autonomy explains why the Council, periodically, has turned away generous funding opportunities whenever potential partners define, in advance, the agenda they intend to fund.

In addition to prioritising institutional autonomy, Bujra significantly contributed to expanding the intellectual agenda of the Council. Under his leadership, more than fifty academic conferences, seminars and workshops were organised across the continent. The details of some of these events are documented in the *CODESRIA Bulletin,* which originally began as the Council's newsletter, *Africana,* before it evolved into its current format. A sample of the critical thematic issues the Council addressed during his tenure include industrialisation, rural development, economic integration, technology, population and democracy.

As the intellectual community was mobilised, the Council became interested in conceptualising the social sciences in Africa with an eye to presenting a critique of their Eurocentric foundations. One of the issues of *Africana* (Vol. I, No. 3, 1980) documents this shift with a series of working papers, including that of Claude Ake on the 'Social Sciences in Nigeria' and a joint paper by Bujra and Mkandawire on the 'Evolution of the Social Sciences in Africa: Problems and Prospects'.

The shift in interest towards understanding the evolution and role of the social sciences was in response to the increased mobilisation of the African social science community – an effort that Bujra actively led. This mobilisation was not only about expansion but also about entrenching the community within a diverse yet pan-African framework. To achieve this, the Council had begun to mobilise different working groups, a process that eventually led, in the 1980s, to the formation of research groups. These were variously named National Working Groups, Multi-National Working Groups or even Comparative Research Networks. By the 1990s, the vibrancy of CODESRIA as a community, which Mshai Mwangola writes about in her tribute here, was due in part to groundwork laid during Bujra's tenure.

Among Bujra's notable achievements was the launch of *Africa Development*, CODESRIA's premier social science journal that is publishing its fiftieth volume this year. He also oversaw the publication of numerous influential books and scholarly works. Coupled with this was a deliberate attempt to deal with the historic frag-

mentation of African social science communities along narrow national, regional and even linguistic lines. CODESRIA introduced a multilingual publishing approach by publishing articles with translations in at least two languages spoken widely within Africa's intellectual communities. Translations from English to French and vice versa became common for CODESRIA publications and in meetings CODESRIA organised.

In this issue of the Bulletin, we republish the Editorial Bujra wrote for the inaugural issue of *Africa Development*. In it, he reviewed the growing literature on the study of the continent, highlighting gaps and numerous weakness that left an intellectual space for *Africa Development* to fill. He justified the need for the Council to focus on the problem of underdevelopment, arguing that existing studies were not illuminating on the fundamental nature of the development process. For him, the ultimate objective was 'to provide an opportunity for African scholars to contribute to the general development of the continent through vigorous discussion of existing development strategies, problems and alternatives'. The key purpose of the journal, Bujra wrote, is to draw attention to the neglected areas of research in Africa and

> to provide a forum for African (and non-African) scholars to debate on important issues as well as to make known the findings of their researches. In this way, we hope to encourage more relevant and policy-oriented research within an African perspective. The ultimate objective is to provide an opportunity for African scholars to contribute to the general development of the continent through vigorous discussion of existing development strategies, problems and alternatives. I am an optimist and therefore am sure that this challenge will be taken up by African social scientists.

The journal has lived up to the reputation Bujra envisioned. In recognition of his contributions, the Council honoured him in 1992 with the CODESRIA Distinguished African Social Scientist Award for Institution Building, alongside other luminaries, Govan Mbeki and Prof. Samir Amin. This accolade is a testament of the monumental impact of his leadership and his enduring contributions to African institutions.

By the time Bujra left the service of CODESRIA in 1985, the image of CODESRIA as a pan-African organisation that represented the best of Africa's intellectual contributions in the social sciences and humanities had taken shape. By establishing this sound basis for institutional practices, Bujra and the colleagues he worked with ensured that African engagement with

global discourses shifted away from the colonial pedigree they had largely been based on to a less racist and more political economy-driven orientation. In this special issue of the Bulletin, Michael Chege provides some useful insights into Bujra's contributions to a range of debates that left indelible marks in academia and the policy world. These included numerous engagements driven by a South–South perspective, with inspiration from and collaboration with organisations like CLACSO, embedded in many of the activities the Council convened.

Following his tenure at CODESRIA, Bujra played vital roles as a consultant for African institutions such as UNECA. As many authors in this bulletin point out, Mshai Mwangola and Leonard Mureithi in particular, he also founded the Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF) and helped drive policy initiatives that anticipated the future and infused a prospective attitude to policy-making. At DPMF, where he mentored the next generation of scholars with whom he co-edited several publications, Bujra crowned a career of excellence and dedicated service to African scholarship. A distinguished sociologist, Bujra published extensively on governance and development in Africa. Among his notable works are *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town* (1971),[3] *Africa and the Future* (1995)*, Leadership, Civil Society and Democratisation in Eastern and Southern Africa (*2002, two volumes),[4] *Perspectives on the OAU/AU and Conflict Management in Africa* (2004)[5] and *Democratic Transition In Kenya: The Struggle From Liberal To Social Democracy* (2005).[6]

The CODESRIA community has lost a firm pillar around which our work was built, organised, executed and given historical legitimacy. But Bujra's dedication, vision and leadership continue to inspire us. This special issue of the Bulletin is meant to memorialise him and keep the record of his work alive. It joins other bulletins that CODESRIA has used as a platform to keep the memory of our founders alive. They include *CODESRIA Bulletin,* Nos 3/4, 2018, dedicated to Samir Amin and *CODESRIA Bulletin,* Nos 3/4, 2020, dedicated to Thandika Mkandawire*.

Notes

1. The original meaning of CODESRIA was the Conference of Directors of Economics and Social Research Institutes in Africa. As CODESRIA's agenda evolved, it retained the acronym while redefining its full name, first as the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa, and finally to its current iteration: the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. See the piece in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/codesriabulletin/article/view/338/342.

2. Served as Permanent Secretary of Tanzania's Planning Ministry (1975) and later as President Julius Nyerere's Personal Assistant (Economic Affairs).

3. Abdalla Bujra, 1971, *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4. Abdalla Bujra and Said Adejumobi, eds. 2002, *Leadership, Civil Society and Democratisation in Eastern and Southern Africa : Case Studies from Eastern Africa (2 vols.), Nairobi and Addis Ababa: Development Policy Management Forum.*

5. Abdalla Bujra and Hussein Solomon (eds), *Perspectives on the OAU/AU and Conflict Management in Africa, Oxford: African Books Collective Ltd.*

6. Abdalla Bujra, ed. 2005, *Democratic Transition In Kenya : The Struggle From Liberal To Social Democracy, Nairobi: African Centre for Economic Growth.*

ABDALLA
BUJRA

SURROUNDED BY
HIS FAMILY

Professeur ABDALLA BUJRA, (1938–2025)
Le pilier gigantesque du CODESRIA

Godwin R. Murunga

Secrétaire exécutif
CODESRIA

Le CODESRIA a cinquante-deux ans. Officiellement créé en 1973, ses origines remontent, cependant, à une conférence tenue en 1964, à Bellagio (Italie), sur le thème « La recherche économique en Afrique ». Des dix directeurs d'instituts africains de recherche invités, seuls deux étaient africains : le professeur Adebola Onitiri, de l'Institut nigérian de recherche économique et sociale de l'Université d'Ibadan (Nigéria), et le professeur Omer Osman, alors doyen de la Faculté d'économie et d'études sociales de l'Université de Khartoum (Soudan). Les autres étaient français ou britanniques. À la fin des années 1960 et au début des années 1970, la criante sous-représentation des directeurs africains à la conférence de Bellagio a été le catalyseur d'une série de réunions de chercheurs africains. Ces rencontres ont été rebaptisées CODESRIA *(Conférence des directeurs d'instituts de recherche économique et sociale en Afrique)*[1].

Dans les années 1970 et 1980, le CODESRIA s'est développé par delà ces réunions et acquis une renommée, une force institutionnelle et une légitimité auprès des universitaires et des acteurs politiques africains, dont beaucoup ont contribué, chacun à sa manière, au renforcement de son programme intellectuel, consolidé la valeur de ses connaissances et façonné les processus politiques sur le continent. Tout au long de son histoire, le CODESRIA a été dirigé par des universitaires qui ont œuvré dans les milieux politiques, notamment Justinian F. Rweyemamu (président du CODESRIA de 1979 à 1981)[2] et Samir Amin, le Conseil jouant un important rôle dans les débats politiques qui ont façonné l'histoire de l'Afrique.

Moins connu, le professeur Bujra pourtant a eu une profonde influence sur les trajectoires intellectuelles du Conseil et les processus politiques de plusieurs institutions. Qu'il soit relativement méconnu ne signifie pas que ses contributions n'étaient pas à la hauteur de celles de ses pairs, mais témoigne plutôt de sa discrétion, comme le soulignent Mahmood Mamdani et Peter Anyang' Nyong'o dans ce numéro spécial. Bujra était l'un des derniers membres fondateurs du CODESRIA encore en vie. De 1975 à 1985, il en fut le deuxième Secrétaire exécutif. Auparavant, il avait travaillé aux côtés du Secrétaire exécutif et fondateur, le professeur Samir Amin, pour donner naissance au CODESRIA tel que nous le connaissons aujourd'hui et mettre en place des mécanismes institutionnels qui définissent encore le Conseil. Ce sont Samir Amin, Adebola Onitiri et Abdalla Bujra qui, en 1973, ont organisé la première Assemblée générale du CODESRIA, formalisant ainsi l'institution. L'établissement du cadre institutionnel du CODESRIA et son émergence en tant qu'organisation de premier plan représentant l'Afrique et la mise en valeur du meilleur de ses travaux en sciences sociales ont germé et pris racine sous la direction de Bujra.

Au cours de son mandat, il a piloté et veillé au développement de l'organisation en se fondant sur le principe d'autonomie institutionnelle, dans un contexte où le CODESRIA dépendait de partenaires financiers extérieurs. Mahmood Mamdani relate ce rôle dans son hommage à Bujra, publié dans ce numéro.

Tout au long de son histoire, c'est un principe appliqué par le Conseil. En effet, la réflexion pionnière de Bujra sur l'autonomie institutionnelle a inspiré les Secrétaires exécutifs suivants, sous la direction de leurs Comités exécutifs respectifs, à privilégier cette approche comme pierre angulaire de leur engagement auprès de ceux qui soutiennent le Conseil. De ce fait, le CODESRIA a développé des structures lui permettant, de manière indépendante, de définir son programme intellectuel et de rechercher des soutiens en fonction de ce programme. Cette autonomie explique pourquoi le Conseil a régulièrement refusé de généreuses opportunités de financement lorsque de potentiels partenaires définissaient, à l'avance, le programme qu'ils entendaient financer.

Outre la priorité accordée à l'autonomie institutionnelle, Bujra a, de manière significative, contribué à l'élargissement du programme intellectuel du Conseil. Sous sa direction, plus de 50 conférences, séminaires et ateliers universitaires ont été organisés sur tout le continent. Les détails de certains de ces événements sont consignés dans le *Bulletin du CODESRIA,* d'abord appelé *Africana*, avant d'évoluer vers son format actuel. Pendant son mandat, le Conseil a, entre autres questions thématiques cruciales, abordé l'industrialisation, le développement rural, l'intégration économique, la technologie, la population et la démocratie. À mesure que la communauté intellectuelle se mobilisait, le Conseil s'est porté sur la conceptualisation des sciences sociales en Afrique, avec pour objectif de critiquer leurs fondements eurocentriques. L'un des numéros d'*Africana*, vol. I, n° 3, paru en 1980, documente cette évolution à travers une série de documents de travail, dont celui de Claude Ake sur *Social Sciences in Nigeria* et un article conjoint par Bujra et Mkandawire sur *Evolution of the Social Sciences in Africa: Problems and Prospects.*

Ce changement pour la compréhension de l'évolution et du rôle des sciences sociales répondait à la mobilisation croissante de la communauté africaine des sciences sociales, une action activement menée par Bujra. Cette mobilisation visait à non seulement élargir la communauté, mais également à l'ancrer dans un cadre diversifié et panafricain. Pour y parvenir, le Conseil a mobilisé différents groupes de travail, un processus qui, dans les années 1980, a conduit à la formation de groupes de recherche, appelés groupes nationaux de travail, groupes multinationaux de travail, ou encore réseaux de recherche comparative. Dans les années 1990, le dynamisme de la communauté du CODESRIA, évoqué par Mshai Mwangola dans son hommage ici, était en partie dû au travail préparatoire effectué sous la direction de Bujra.

Parmi les réalisations notables de Bujra figure le lancement d'*Afrique & Développement*, la principale revue de sciences sociales du CODESRIA, qui publie son 50e volume, cette année. Il a également supervisé la publication de nombreux et influents ouvrages et travaux universitaires. Il s'y ajoute une volonté délibérée de remédier à la fragmentation historique des communautés africaines de sciences sociales selon des clivages restrictifs aux motivations nationales, régionales et même linguistiques. Le CODESRIA a initié une approche éditoriale multilingue en publiant des articles traduits dans au moins deux langues largement répandues au sein des communautés intellectuelles africaines. Les traductions de l'anglais vers le français et vice versa sont devenues courantes pour les publications du CODESRIA et lors des réunions organisées par le CODESRIA.

Dans ce numéro du *Bulletin*, nous republions l'éditorial de Bujra pour le premier numéro d'*Afrique & Développement*. Il y passe en revue la littérature de plus en plus fournie sur le continent, soulignant les lacunes et les nombreuses faiblesses qui, pour *Afrique & Développement,* constituent un vide intellectuel à combler. Il justifie la nécessité pour le Conseil de se focaliser sur le problème du sous-développement, arguant que les études existantes n'éclairent pas suffisamment la nature fondamentale du processus de développement. Pour lui, l'objectif ultime est de « donner aux chercheurs africains l'opportunité de contribuer au développement général du continent par une discussion approfondie des stratégies, des problèmes et des alternatives de développement existants ». L'objectif principal de la revue, écrit Bujra, est de porter l'attention sur les domaines de recherche négligés en Afrique et de

> « fournir aux chercheurs africains (et non africains) un forum pour débattre de questions importantes et faire connaître les résultats de leurs recherches. Nous espérons ainsi encourager des recherches plus pertinentes et axées sur les politiques, et dans une perspective africaine. L'objectif ultime est de donner aux chercheurs africains l'occasion de contribuer au développement général du continent par une discussion approfondie des stratégies, des problèmes et des alternatives de développement existants. Je suis optimiste et donc convaincu que ce défi sera relevé par les chercheurs en sciences sociales africains. »

La revue a été à la hauteur de la réputation imaginée par Bujra. En reconnaissance de ses contributions, en 1992, le Conseil lui a décerné le Prix du CODESRIA pour le renforcement institutionnel, aux côtés d'autres personnalités telles que Govan Mbeki et le professeur Samir Amin. Cette distinction témoigne du considérable impact de son leadership et de sa contribution durable aux institutions africaines.

Lorsqu'il a quitté le CODESRIA en 1985, l'image du CODESRIA, organisation panafricaine représentative du meilleur des contributions intellectuelles africaines en sciences sociales et humaines, était forgée. En établissant cette base solide pour les pratiques institutionnelles, Bujra et ses collègues ont veillé que l'engagement africain dans les discours mondiaux s'éloigne du pedigree colonial sur lequel il était

largement fondé pour adopter une orientation moins raciste et davantage axée sur l'économie politique. Dans ce numéro spécial du *Bulletin*, Michael Chege offre un éclairage précieux sur les contributions de Bujra aux débats qui ont laissé des traces indélébiles dans le monde universitaire et politique. Bien sûr, elles incluent les nombreux engagements portés par une perspective Sud-Sud, l'inspiration et la collaboration avec des organisations comme CLACSO, intégrées à de nombreuses activités organisées par le Conseil.

Après son mandat au CODESRIA, Bujra a joué un rôle essentiel en tant que consultant auprès d'institutions africaines telles que la CEA. Comme le soulignent de nombreux auteurs de ce numéro du *Bulletin*, notamment Mshai Mwangola et Leonard Mureithi, Bujra a également fondé Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF) et contribué à l'élaboration d'initiatives politiques avangardistes et insufflé une posture prospective à l'élaboration de politiques. Au DPMF, où il a encadré la nouvelle génération de chercheurs avec qui il a coédité plusieurs publications, Bujra a couronné une carrière d'excellence et de dévouement au service de la recherche africaine. Sociologue distingué, Bujra a publié de nombreux ouvrages sur la gouvernance et le développement en Afrique. Parmi les plus notables, citons : *The Politics of Stratification in a South Arabian Town* (1971)[3], *Africa and the Future* (1995), *Leadership, Civil Society and Democratization in Eastern and Southern Africa* (2002, deux volumes),[4] *Perspectives on the OAU/AU and Conflict Management in Africa* (2004),[5] et *Kenya's Democratic Transition : The Struggle from Liberal to Social Democracy* (2005).[6]

Nous, communauté du CODESRIA, avons perdu un solide pilier sur lequel notre travail a été construit, organisé, exécuté et a acquis une légitimité historique. Son dévouement, sa vision et son leadership continuent de nous inspirer. Ce numéro spécial du *Bulletin* lui rend hommage et perpétue la mémoire de son œuvre.

Il rejoint d'autres numéros du *Bulletin du CODESRIA* qui ont servi de plateformes pour perpétuer la mémoire de nos fondateurs. Il s'agit notamment du *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, n° 3/4, 2018, consacré à Samir Amin et du *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, n° 3/4, 2020, consacré à Thandika Mkandawire.

Notes

1. À l'origine, le CODESRIA était la Conférence des directeurs d'instituts de recherche économique et sociale en Afrique. Au fil de l'évolution de son programme, le CODESRIA a conservé cet acronyme tout en redéfinissant son nom complet : d'abord Conseil pour le développement de la recherche économique et sociale en Afrique, puis Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique. Voir l'article dans le *Bulletin du CODESRIA* : https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/codesriabulletin/article/view/338/342

2. Il a été secrétaire permanent du ministère tanzanien de la Planification (1975) et plus tard assistant personnel du président Julius Nyerere (en charge des affaires économiques).

3. Abdalla Bujra, 1971, *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4. Abdalla Bujra et Said Adejumobi, eds. 2002, *Leadership, Civil Society and Democratisation in Eastern and Southern Africa : Case Studies from Eastern Africa* (2 vols.), Nairobi and Addis Ababa: Development Policy Management Forum.

5. Abdalla Bujra et Hussein Solomon (eds), *Perspectives on the OAU/AU and Conflict Management in Africa*, Oxford: African Books Collective Ltd.

6. Abdalla Bujra, ed. 2005, *Democratic Transition In Kenya : The Struggle From Liberal To Social Democracy*, Nairobi: African Centre for Economic Growth.
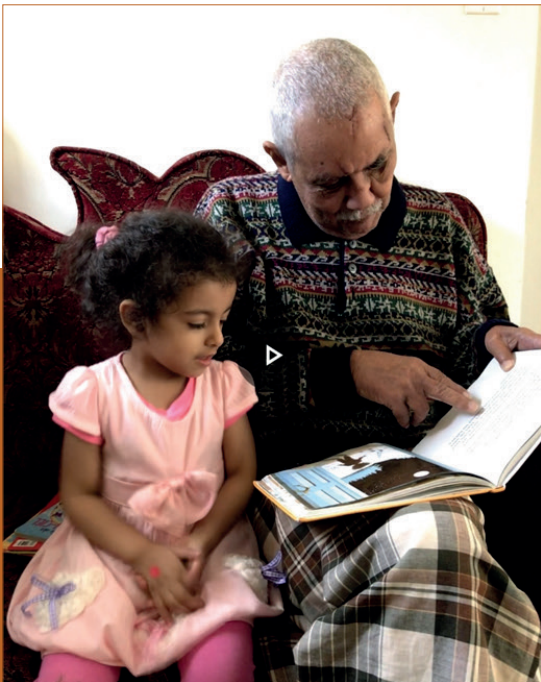
**ABDALLA
BUJRA**
WITH HIS
GRANDCHILDRED

Editorial

This is the first, and hopefully the only, editorial that will appear in this journal. However, since this is the first issue, a statement about the objectives of the journal and the sponsoring organization is both necessary and appropriate.

Abdallah S. Bujra
CODESRIA
Second Executive Secretary

Africa Development is a journal of the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Re- search in Africa (CODESRIA).[1] The main purpose of the journal is to provide a forum for African (and non-African) scholars to critically analyse the problems emanating from the continuous process of underdevelopment, past and present, taking place in Africa.

That underdevelopment of the African continent is a long-standing historical process that began *even before the advent of formal colonialism*, is now grudgingly accepted even by conservative scholars. The so-called Africanists had, until recently, presented us with a simplistic and factually incorrect view of the African past as being suspended in a 'traditional timelessness' where, since time immemorial, the varied social systems of African societies existed in a perfect, almost mechanical, harmony. At one point, European Africanists were arrogantly stating that African societies had no history (before colonization) because such societies did not possess a script with which to record events. (And in any case, since such societies were structurally harmonious and unchanging, i.e. not developing, there were no important events and processes worth recording! So even if some societies had an alphabet, this would have been used mainly to record marriage ceremonies, and to draw up genealogies!) This extreme, unscientific view has now of course been abandoned. It has been replaced by a more sophisticated school which holds that each African society in fact had its particular and glorious history. This

African history, however, consists of tribal migration, tribal warfare and the building up of political institutions, from kinship to kingship.

Tribal historians now abound in Africa, and needless to say the majority are Africans. This school of history is obviously an advance from the earlier ahistorical school. The historical process is immensely complex in any continent and there is an obvious need to record and explain past migrations as well as the evolution of political institutions. But this is only one aspect of Africa's historical development and, as some would argue, it is not the critical and fundamental aspect of Africa's history. Thus over-emphasis on tribal histories, however brilliant some of the individual studies may be, is a form of mystification and a diversion from the proper understanding of Africa's real history.

Path-breaking historical studies have recently been made and these are having a profound effect on our understanding of Africa's past. Removing such false and unscientific conceptual blinkers as 'traditional', 'unchanging', 'harmonious system', these studies have looked* at Africa's past in terms of technological and economic systems that were being developed in different areas; how such developments (or the lack of them) were affecting specific social formations, the creation of surplus, the emergence of internal trade and inter-African (long distance) trade, and so on. In other words, Africa, like any other continent, was undergoing a process of technological, economic and social development, within specific historical epochs. Some have indeed persuasively argued that Africa's own indigenous independent technological and economic development was destroyed and distorted some centuries ago by the intervention of Europe in Africa. This intervention in the name of 'trade' and over a period of

some two or three centuries, laid the groundwork for the formal colonization of Africa by European powers.

Research on Africa's past is now being conducted by both the 'tribal history' school and, if I may call it this, the 'mode of production' school. Research findings by either school which are capable of giving us a better understanding of the process of development and underdevelopment of Africa in the past will be welcomed. It is indeed part of CODESRIA's objectives to encourage such research. We would, however, insist that authors who submit papers to this journal clearly state their assumptions or theoretical framework of reference.

If it is necessary and useful to research the pre-colonial past of Africa in order to have a proper historical perspective of the process of development and underdevelopment, it is in our opinion even more essential to carry out detailed research of Africa's immediate colonial past. Indeed the immediate colonial past is encapsulated in the present – this is often referred to as the colonial heritage – and any meaningful understanding of the present so-called development problems must therefore relate to this immediate past.

The literature on the colonial period (by both Africans and non-Africans) is considerable and often brilliant in its ethnographic details. It is however not too harsh a judgement to say that most of the literature tells us more about the writers than the fundamental nature of the colonial reality (with of course a few noble exceptions). A careful examination of the writings of anthropologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, and so on, shows that they are all operating within the ubiquitous school of functionalism. Partly because of this and partly because of the researchers' ideological position, most of the literature carefully avoids the fundamental issues of colonial oppression and exploitation, and the resultant economic and social structures that were being deliberately developed by the colonial powers in the colonies. As a result, a number of so-called theories were propounded. The anthropologists and sociologists propounded a series of 'theories' known as 'culture contact', 'social change', 'modernization'. Some of the writing belonging to these schools had interesting insights and considerable detail on the 'borrowing' by Africans of the European's material culture, on the changing kinship and kingship rules of various African societies, on how successfully or unsuccessfully the emerging African élite was modelling itself on its metropolitan counterpart, etc. The assumption behind the stories was that what was happening in Africa was good, and in its own African way this was progress and social development. The economists also told a similar rosy story using, as they say, 'hard facts'. Metropolitan powers had invested considerable capital in the colonies - in laying down physical infra-structure, in starting industries, in opening up plantations and cash crop farming by Africans - all this investment, so it was argued, was economic development and for the benefit of the Africans! Most of the social scientists however, failed to point out the three fundamental aspects of the colonial situation, namely the distorted nature of the colonial economy, the considerable return to the metropolitan power from its so-called 'investment', and the concomitant distorted social structure that was being deliberately created by the colonial state. Thus, the 'social change-modernization' literature on African societies which is still predominant even today (the 'culture contact' school, originating from the US became dysfunctional and was dropped towards the end of the colonial period), was basically diversionary and performed the function of mystification. Such literature had very little scientific value in terms of explaining the fundamental process of underdevelopment that has taken place in Africa during the first half of this century.

And what of the last fifteen years since independence? African studies programmes have mush- roomed during the 1960s in North America and Europe. In Africa itself, institutes of African studies and of development studies also sprang up all over the place. Research projects, carried out by individuals or by teams originating from North America and Europe or from within Africa itself, have vastly increased in number. All conceivable aspects of African societies – 'traditional' and 'modern' – are being studied. Research projects on topics as varied as the 'role of witchcraft as an obstacle to economic development', 'traditional beliefs and family size', 'strategies for industrial development' or 'the role of foreign capital in economic development', are now being churned out in large numbers from African universities themselves as well as from outside. As a result, the quantity of the so-called 'development' literature on Africa has, over the past fifteen years, vastly increased. The sheer volume of literature, however, has not proved to be any more enlightening on the fundamental nature of the development process since the 1960s.

Considerations of space do not allow us to make more than a cursory examination of the epistemology of that literature. Nevertheless, a few very brief comments

must be made even at the risk of oversimplification. The quality of some of that literature has been very low even when measured by the minimal standard of 'information gathering'. On the other hand, part of it has been good in terms of the insight it has given us on micro details of the social life of particular groups. On the whole, however, there have been very few intelligent analyses of the basic nature of the economic structures of African countries, and very little on the determining role of the international context in African economies. There is hardly any information and no research on the critical area of owner- ship of economic undertakings (in industry, commerce and agriculture) and of real estate; no re- search showing the continuity of the colonial economies to the post-independence neo-colonial societies. Indeed one of the most notable gaps in the so-called development literature has been the lack of research on the social and class structure of African countries. The class structure that was being deliberately created during the colonial period, its continuation, expansion and consolidation over the past fifteen years, has not been researched into and examined scientifically. The omissions in this literature clearly indicate the political nature of the research organizations and the researchers themselves. There are, of course, striking exceptions to this characterization. There have been some African and non-African scholars who have consistently and often brilliantly drawn attention to the basic and central issues concerning Africa's development processes. However, these exceptions prove the rule. Indeed the literature from these exceptional researchers has often been very difficult to come by and was rarely available in African universities, libraries or bookshops.

If we are to understand the process of Africa's development, there are a number of important areas which need thorough and scientific analysis. Firstly, Africa's position in the international economic order and more particularly, a deeper analysis of a specific country's external economic relations and their implications in the development process. All the general issues discussed in terms of the international level – raw materials, transfer of technology, etc. – need to be studied and related to the contexts of specific countries. Secondly, strategies for development vary and the differences are always related to the overall social system. In a recent speech[2] President Nyerere of Tanzania, pointed out that African countries are faced with *only two* alternative paths of development; that of capitalist or of socialist development. Though Nyerere's preference is for the socialist path, he correctly points out

that the objectives, strategies and the problems to be encountered will depend very much on which path is chosen by a given country. The contrast of strategies and so-called implementation problems is very sharp between African countries developing within a capitalist or socialist framework. The specificity of each type of development within the African context must be studied thoroughly in all its ramifications and in all sectors of society. For example, little scientific study has been made of the objectives, strategies and problems of rural development in, say, Guinea compared with those of Ivory Coast. Thirdly, it is now absolutely necessary to carry out a serious analysis of the class structure and its dynamics in African countries. This is not to minimize the contribution of recent debate on the theoretical aspects of classes in Africa. It is simply to say that focusing on definitional problems of classes misses the main point of relating so-called development to the class structure (however 'embryonic' or 'proto' the classes may be). It also misses the even more important issue of class alliances internally and externally, as well as the mechanism whereby such alliances are maintained, and the mechanism for controlling the 'commanding institutions' in society through state machinery. All these are aspects of the social structures of African societies, whatever the label of the social system - socialist or capitalist. At present, there is very little serious research on these aspects of African societies. We hope more will be forthcoming.

The list of important but neglected areas of research in Africa is long. The main purpose of this journal is to draw attention to this and to provide a forum for African (and non-African) scholars to debate on important issues as well as to make known the findings of their researches. In this way, we hope to encourage more relevant and policy-oriented research within an African perspective. The ultimate objective is to provide an opportunity for African scholars to contribute to the general development of the continent through vigorous discussion of existing development strategies, problems and alternatives. I am an optimist and therefore am sure that this challenge will be taken up by African social scientists.

The fourth meeting of UNCTAD will take place in Africa (Nairobi, Kenya) in May 1976. At that meeting the problems of the present international economic order will be discussed in detail and measures for changing it to a new order, an order that will help Third World countries to develop, will also be discussed and hopefully adopted. Because the first issue of *Africa Development* is coming out in May [1976], we thought it

appropriate to focus on the problem of the new international economic order and Africa's role within it. We hope that future issues of the journal will focus on other equally important themes relating to Africa's development. In this issue we also have articles on Eastern and Southern Africa discussing the findings of specific research projects. These are good examples of the kind of scientific article based on solid research that we look forward to publishing. Another and equally important aspect of the journal is that of information on African research institutes.

In this issue we have a description of the history and aims of two important institutes, one Francophone and one Anglophone, from West and East Africa respectively. In this way we hope to bridge, in however small a way, the linguistic and regional gaps in our continent even if it is only at the level of information. Thus, we hope other research institutes will respond and send us articles of a similar nature. We hope in the near future to publish this journal in both English and French. We have started with one language because our resources are at the moment limited. Nevertheless, we accept articles in both languages.

Notes

1. CODESRIA activities are described in its brochure, Basic Information, which is available on request. For more information, please write to: Executive Secretary, CODESRIA, B.P. 3304, Dakar, Senegal

2. J.K. Nyerere, 'The Rational Choice', in *Freedom and Development*, O.U.P., Dar es Salaam, 1973, pp. 379-390.

Abdalla Bujra's tribute published in *Africana*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1980 upon receiving the news of the murder of Walter Rodney, his former colleague at the University of Dar es Salaam

WALTER RODNEY

Walter Rodney, was a distinguished widely respected and well-known scholar. He was also a member of the Editorial Board of *AFRICA DEVELOPMENT*. His murder schocked not only his personal friends, but also all the people who read and appreciated his writtings. *AFRICANA NEWSLETTER* is publishing three documents relating to the murder of Walter Rodney (a) A letter of appeal from Mrs. Patricia Rodney requesting people to send her, Walter's unpublished writings and speeches for the proposed Rodney Library. (b) A letter, signed by many African Caribbean Scholars in Nigeria, to the Secretary General of the O.A.U. on the murder of Walter Rodney. (c) A resolution unanimously passed by an international conference organized by CODESRIA in December 1981 in Dakar.

Justinean Rweyemamu and I were personal friends of Walter Rodney when we worked together, for a number of years, at the University of Dar-es-Salaam we are writing a brief appreciation on Walter Rodney which will be published in the next issue of *AFRICANA NEWS LETTER*. Brief statements from friends and colleagues concerning Walter's life and work will be wellcomed and maybe taken into account in the writing of the appreciation.

Abdalla S. BUJRA,
Editor, Africa Development,
Executive Secretary of CODESRIA,
B.P. 3304, Dakar/SENEGAL.

Tributes to ABDALLA BUJRA //
Hommage à ABDALLA BUJRA

Condoléances à la famille de BUJRA et au CODESRIA

Toutes mes condoléances à la famille de
l'illustre disparu et également au CODESRIA.
Il est un des grands batisseurs du CODESRIA.
Que les jeunes chercheurs se souviennent
de lui. Tout comme Samir Amin, Thandika
et bien tant d' autres.
Tu n'as pas vecu inutilement sur cette terre.
Reposes en paix !

**Professeur Taladidia Thiombiano,
Ancien président du CODESRIA**

Condolences to BUJRA's Family and to CODESRIA

My condolences to the family of
the distinguished deceased and also to CODESRIA.
He was one of the great builders of CODESRIA.
May young researchers remember him.
Like Samir Amin, Thandika
and many others.
You did not live a useless life on this earth.
Rest in peace!

**Professor Taladidia Thiombiano,
Former President of CODESRIA**

PROFESSOR ABDALLA SAID BUJRA, (1938–2025)
A Pioneer Pan-African Scholar,
an Institution-Builder and Man of Conscience

Michael Chege*

University of Nairobi,
Kenya

Professor Abdalla Said Bujra, the Kenyan scholar who passed away on 8 January in Malindi, leaves behind an internationally recognised contribution to the social science disciplines in Africa, his published body of work ranging from social anthropology to an informed history of Eastern Africa's coast, from the problems of underdevelopment and neocolonialism in Africa to social democracy and governance reforms in contemporary Africa. He was actively involved in the founding and management of Africa's leading social and economic research centre – the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal – in the 1970s, as well as the Development Policy Management Forum (DPFM) in Addis Ababa and Nairobi, in the 1990s. He taught at universities in Kenya, Tanzania, Germany and the US, and is widely published. But unlike the windbags and self-appointed 'professors' who now saturate the social media and the press, Bujra shunned publicity and was modest to a fault. As a result, many Kenyans may not have heard of him, let alone met him outside his small circle of serious scholars and committed policy analysts.

Bujra was born in Lamu in 1938 and went to schools in Mombasa up to form four. He then proceeded to Huddersfield Polytechnic in England in 1957 for his 'A' levels, in the trail of the distinguished pan-African scholar, Ali Mazrui, who had gone there in 1955 and years later wrote about his experi-

ence there. After Bujra completed his undergraduate education and a doctorate in social anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, he took up a lectureship in Sociology at University College, Nairobi (as it was then) in 1968, becoming the first Kenyan to teach in the department. But under the Jomo Kenyatta government, the window of academic freedom started to close and in short order he transferred to the Sociology Department at University College, Dar es Salaam, attracted there by the congenial and more vibrant academic left-wing environment there than in Kenya. The much-respected South African scholar, Archie Mafeje, who was to become a leading participant in CODESRIA's activities, was then head of the department.

The state of the development policy debate at the University of Dar es Salaam at the time, widely available in print, has been recounted most recently from an eye-witness position by Professor Issa Shivji, Saida Yahya-Othman and Ng'wanza Kamata in Volume 3 of their opus, *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere.*[1] Bujra was witness to all of it and was inclined to quote from it many years later, while discussing failures in democracy and development in contemporary Africa. Though largely sympathetic to socialist-inclined policies, Bujra remained independent in his convictions in an increasingly partisan intellectual environment.

In 1974, he moved to Dakar to take up the new position of Executive Secretary of CODESRIA. He was to remain there for a decade. Working alongside Samir Amin and Thandika Mkandawire, he built the

Council from scratch into a formidable network of research groups, training workshops, conferences, journals and publications that define the institution's core structure even today. In 1992, CODESRIA honoured him with its highest award – Distinguished African Social Scientist.

In the 1990s, Bujra went to Addis Ababa to launch a policy research and training centre – the Development Policy and Management Forum (DPFM) – domiciled at the UNECA, to provide an alternative to the scorched-earth market liberalisation agenda then being pursued by the IMF and the World Bank. At that time, many governments and political parties in Europe that were committed to a social democracy agenda – as opposed to the market fundamentalism of the Reagan and Thatcher governments that informed the 'Washington Consensus' of the Bretton Woods institutions – became outwardly critical of what the Bank and the Fund were proposing for Africa under the rubric of 'structural adjustment'. The DPFM took the middle position – market economies with social welfare benefits for all – as found in the Scandinavian economies and the Netherlands. Indeed, Bujra's 2005 edited book on democratic transition in Kenya advocated 'a struggle from liberal to social democracy', not the hard-left Maoism of some of his old Dar colleagues. All the while, Bujra still found time to serve as chairperson or board member in many institutions: The Katiba Institute in Kenya, the African Centre for Economic Growth, the African Union Eminent Persons Group on the Rwanda Genocide, the UNDP Africa Futures Project, and many others.

In the final years of his life, Bujra returned to the subject of the multiple heredities of peoples of the East African coast, a theme found in the novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah, the recipient of the 2021 Nobel Prize for Literature, which celebrate the medley of African, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures on the East African coast. Indeed, Bujra's doctorate was a splendid ethnography of the Huridah community (part of the Hadhramut people) in Yemen, with members in Kenya. While based at the Institute of Cultural Heritage at Morogoro University he was taken ill and briefly hospitalised in Mombasa in late 2024. Early this year he passed away at his home in Malindi – still working on the subject, still reminding his visitors of the vitality of personal integrity and fairness to all, which is the life that he had lived. On both the local and pan-African scale, Professor Abdalla Said Bujra has left a legacy that will be hard to match in a world in which the post-1945 architecture of interstate relations is crumbling under assault by the US government. But his life shows us that notwithstanding international adversities, an African intellectual project like CODESRIA can still continue into maturity and benefit generations of African scholars.

Note

1. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2022.

* **Professor Michael Chege** is a research affiliate of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi. He has known and worked with Professor Bujra in many capacities over the years.

A Tribute to
ABDALLA BUJRA

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o*

Kisumu, Kenya

The loss of Abdalla Bujra has not been easy to accept. His exuberance. His snap questions so sharp. His quiet sense of humour that was always followed by an infectious laugh.

Though we had crossed paths at the University of Nairobi in 1970, I got to know Abdalla much better in Dakar in 1975. I had gone to the UN Institute for Development and Economic Planning (IDEP) as a research fellow. My thesis was a study of the 'Political ecomony of coffee production in Ivory Coast'.

Samir Amin was the director of IDEP then, and had done extensive research on agrarian issues in West Africa. He had also published the book L'Afrique de l'Ouest bloquée (translated as Neo-colonialism in West Africa'). I intended to learn from him during my stay at IDEP, which I did.

In the meantime, I met Abdalla and Thandika Mkandawire, who were nursing the birth of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) literally 'on the ribs of IDEP'! I say so because their offices were tucked somewhere downstairs to the left of the IDEP building, literally 'struggling to be noticed'.

Since both Abdalla and Thandika were immersed in research on agrarian issues, I found their company indispensable. They were both very helpful to me in the work I was doing, especially on the problematic that I had framed in terms of the 'articulation of modes of production'.

In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, large-scale French coffee farmers introduced capitalist agriculture by depriving peasants of their land and turning them into 'farm hands' who lived in their own homes. This is what Samir Amin called 'a proletariat working at home'.

Abdalla Bujra, in his anthropological thesis, 'The politics of stratifications: A study of political change in a South Arabian town', analysed this 'articulation of modes of production' and how it manifests itself in social struggles and political change in peasant and poor urban communities.

According to Bujra and Mkandawire, the study of African politics had been too 'party-centric', 'independence-centric' and 'political power-centric'. There was inordinate attention paid to 'nationalism' and the elites who led whole nations to independence and captured political power. Granted, this was in and of itself a story worth telling, but what about the people who were involved in the struggles? Who were they and what were their interests in supporting nationalism and the struggle for independence? When we go further and accuse the elites, newly in power after independence, of having 'betrayed the people', what does this really mean? What evidence do we have to make this judgement?

The search for the answer to these questions led to Thandika and Abdalla urging me to put together a group of African scholars for a research project on 'popular struggles for democracy in Africa'. Our book by the same title covered such struggles in Uganda, Congo, Zaire, South Africa, Ghana, Liberia and Kenya, and was published by Third World Forum in 1987.

Abdalla Bujra and Thandika Mkandawire need to be credited for laying the solid framework within which CODESRIA has continued, under Godwin Murunga, to develop social sciences in Africa, by mobilising the African social science community to undertake fundamental policy-oriented research from a perspective that is relevant to the demands of the African people.

The question 'Whither Africa?' cannot be answered adequately without developing this knowledge. Nor is this kind of knowledge closed in an intellectual way that cannot open itself to further inquiry. Social, political and economic changes will always open doors to new questions which, by themselves, require looking into new theoretical constructs. That, indeed, is how knowledge grows and why there is the need for an unorthodox dialogue in the social sciences based on sound social theory. Bujra always emphasised this point.

*   **Peter Anyang' Nyong'o** is the Governor of Kisumu County, Kisumu, Kenya.

Homage to
ABDALLA BUJRA

Mahmood Mamdani*

Columbia University, USA/
Makerere University, Uganda

I first met Abdalla in 1973 at the University of Dar es Salaam, where he was professor of Sociology, and then at the CODESRIA headquarters in Dakar, when he had become its new Executive Secretary following Samir Amin. Abdalla was a kind and modest man. His scholarship was outstanding. His main book focused on the Hadhramaut of South Yemen and the diaspora they spawned from the East African coast to Indonesia.

Abdalla was a conscientious and hardworking Executive Secretary whose first thought was how to make sure that CODESRIA would survive lean times. His solution was frugality, to save money to build an endowment, beginning by levying a financial charge on all external funding received by the organisation. The matter came to a head after CODESRIA applied for the next round of funds. When donors carried out an audit, they discovered a pool of unspent money. Their first impulse was to claim that this was evidence of corruption. But the charge would not stick because everyone knew Abdalla to be scrupulously honest. When asked, Abdalla said the money was saved with an eye on how CODESRIA could survive rainy days in the future. The donors demanded that the organisation be put under receivership, which would allow them to appoint a new management. In response, Abdalla turned to the membership for ideas on how to save the organisation's independence.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion at the next General Assembly. The loudest voice came from the progressive section of the membership. We argued that since CODESRIA was a membership-based organisation, it was the obligation and prerogative of the membership to forge a response in a crisis situation. It should not be turned by donors into an opportunity to take over the organisation. Faced with overwhelming opposition, the donors agreed to allow the newly elected Executive Committee to salvage the organisation.

I was elected to the new Executive Committee. Along with new members, including our Chair, Claude Ake, we began a protracted discussion with Abdalla Bujra and the lead donors, one that ultimately led to a way forward. It was also a pioneering lesson in self-reliance. When we faced the next institutional crisis, which was more than twenty years later (when I was president of the organisation), we were able to draw inspiration from the 1970s when, along with Abdalla Bujra, we began building the foundation for self-sustainability. It is a fitting tribute to Abdalla Bujra that we acknowledge him today as the pioneering builder of CODESRIA and the architect of its institutional autonomy, which has now lasted over half a century.

25 March 2025

* **Mahmood Mamdani** is the Herbert Lehman Professor of Government in the Anthropology Department at Columbia University, USA, former President of CODESRIA 1998-2002.

ABDALLA BUJRA:
A Life of Unparalleled Service

Adebayo O. Olukoshi*

Johannesburg, South Africa

It was late 2023 when, after several weeks of consultation among colleagues in Dakar, Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Johannesburg, a group of us decided to pay a visit to the second Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, Professor Abdalla Bujra, in his retirement home in Malindi, Kenya. It is difficult to say exactly what it was that brought about the meeting of minds across the continent, that a visit to him was not only long overdue but had become an urgent imperative. My guess, though, is that among us – mentees, younger colleagues, friends and admirers – there was a shared feeling that, several years after his retirement, there was a very good case for going to Malindi to spend a day with him and reminiscing about the times we had spent together under his guidance and leadership. I am glad the trip to Malindi took place, and I am grateful to have been part of the mission. As it would turn out, it was the last time we would see him.

At the time my generation of social scientists became active in CODESRIA activities, Abdalla Bujra had completed his mandate as right-hand associate of Samir Amin and second Executive Secretary of the Council. However, well before we got to meet him in person, his impact and legacy were very strongly imprinted on the programmes, publications and administration of the organisation. The responsibility from very early in the history of the Council of establishing its core institutional foundations fell on Bujra and the team of pioneering staff and volunteers he assembled. Listening to him tell the story of the early years of CODESRIA left no doubt about the admixture of pains, uncertainties, triumphs, pleasures and sacrifices that characterised those pioneering years. Out of that host of experiences emanated one of the cardinal principles that have underpinned CODESRIA from generation to generation, and one which Bujra reiterated to us at every opportunity: CODESRIA is a labour of love. And all through his life, even decades after he left the direct management of the Council, Bujra's constant and abiding love for the Council and its mission never flagged.

I first had the privilege of meeting Bujra in person in Addis Ababa in 1989 at a meeting he convened through the DPMF, the development management forum he had founded and which was embedded within the headquarters buildings of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). It marked the beginning of a long and much-cherished association. Amidst the intellectual conversations and exchanges he shared with us, no meeting with him ever ended without an invitation to his home for a sumptuous dinner.

Bujra, a scholar and an administrator, was also above all a kind gentleman with great humanitarian principles. His sense of humour, perhaps unknown to most, was very lively. But amidst the jokes he shared with friends and associates there were also key messages that he provided us as guides for our work. He will be sorely missed. We are comforted by the fact that he left a beautiful legacy that will serve successive generations of Africans for years to come. May he find well-earned eternal rest.

* **Professor Adebayo Olukoshi** is Distiguished Professor, Wits School Governance, University of the Witwastersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa and Chair of the CODESRIA Scientific Committee.

ABDALLA BUJRA's
Legacy in Building the CODESRIA Community

Mshaï Mwangola*

Nairobi, Kenya

When the final night falls on us
as it fell upon our parents,
we shall retire to our modest home
earth-sure, secure
that we have done our duty
by our people;
we met the challenge of history
and were not afraid.[1]

With hindsight, from the vantage point of more than half a century on, it is easy to take for granted the legacy that Prof. Abdalla Bujra bestowed on us as a Council, as a continent and as a community of intellectuals stretching far beyond this continent. For us at CODESRIA, he was one of the (almost mythical at this point) founders, synonymous with the seminal decade of our establishment. His visionary foresight and painstaking labour laid the groundwork for the community we know today. Reflecting on the rich treasure trove of historical reminiscences of CODESRIA's past, delivered during the 50th anniversary celebrations in 2023, I am struck by the immensity and daring of the challenge that he willingly embraced at the behest of Prof. Samir Amin, working closely with colleagues such as Prof. Thandika Mkandawire to build the institution that today is one of the most vibrant and robust African epistemological communities. There is enduring sadness that, with his departure, the Council has closed a chapter in laying to rest the last of the indomitable core crew that

worked tirelessly to nurture it into being. However, that grief is tempered with the knowledge of the precious-beyond-words legacy bequeathed to us as a responsibility to hold in trust and pass on to those who will follow.

What an exciting decade that must have been, as Amin, Bujra and Mkandawire set in place the foundation for the Council! The story has been told often enough: of how Samir Amin – then director of the United Nations Institute for Development and Economic Planning (UN-IDEP) based in Dakar – became persuaded of the imperative to set up, in 1973, what Peter Anyang' Nyong'o has described as 'something authentic and African, from its very foundation, for the African social science community to feel at home with and where they could do their own original thinking and research'.[2] For about two years, Amin juggled his responsibilities at UN-IDEP and those at the fledgling organisation, before relinquishing the reins and bulk of the administrative burden to Bujra, who stepped into the role of Executive Secretary, a position he then held for a decade before passing the baton in turn to Mkandawire.

It was during Bujra's tenure (1975–1985) that CODESRIA developed its distinct characteristics and become a fixture of the African intellectual landscape through an innovative programme of activities that continues to flourish today. At the heart of it was a rich diversity of gatherings: conferences, workshops and seminars designed to meet the different needs of the various constituencies of the African social science community. Each of these was convened around one of the priority concerns of the African social science intelligentsia, attracting a committed core of individuals who gradually evolved into a vibrant epistemic community that fiercely guarded, to borrow a phrase from Elisio Macamo, 'the freedom to differ'.[3] This phrase not only translated into a robust defence of African intellectual work against a then-prevalent norm within the Western(ised) academy that considered African academics and the African academy as a whole as intellectually inferior. It also manifested in vigorous and vibrant internal debates and discourses, many of which have become seminal interventions in African intellectual history. It is another mark of the foresight of the founders that this period, under Bujra, also saw the establishment of what has become a formidable archive of publications that is undisputably today a wellspring of African intellectual thought, including the flagship journal, *Africa Development*, which marks its own golden jubilee anniversary this year.

Clarity of purpose with regard to the mission of the Council, an unapologetic embrace of Pan-Africanism, and the manifest commitment of that seminal team to African intellectuals and intellectual entities contributed to the making of a vital sanctuary that few could have foreseen at its establishment would play such a critical role in the lives of so many African thinkers. I am especially struck that, while juggling the copious responsibilities that came with establishing a pathbreaking continental institution, the team still prioritised the nurturing of community, turning CODESRIA into a 'home-away-from-home' and family for African intellectuals in crisis or need. This has been the case especially for those in political exile or facing life- or career-threatening opposition because of their work, who could rely on this family for support and community. Although we formally date the beginnings of CODESRIA's engagement with academic freedom as a structured programme to November 1990, it was during Bujra's tenure that the principles that saw the Council extend much-needed solidarity to multiple African intellectuals over the years were firmly laid down. It was during his tenure, as well, that CODESRIA institutionalised the practice of Pan Africanism as a core component of all its programming, to such an extent that it has since become second nature for the institution. Bujra's understanding of the importance of building networks of researchers within national boundaries, and of nurturing these communities across the continent, continues to guide the Council's approach to its work to this day.

My own engagement with Prof. Bujra came long after he had left the staff of the Council. I met him at the 30th anniversary celebrations in 2003. What I do remember from that gathering was that sense of community: the warm camaraderie and comradeship extended by even its most senior members towards awestruck early-career scholars like me, who were thrilled to listen to, let alone meet, storied names like his. He extended to me an invitation to visit his Development Policy Management Forum offices in Nairobi, an offer I indeed took up, becoming a frequent visitor on my return to Kenya after graduate school. It is only recently, though, that I have begun to get an inkling of the size of the community of fellow mentees that he somehow managed to find time for in one way or another. This was not just in Nairobi but in every place he had sojourned to in his illustrious career.

In retrospect, witnessing his commitment to institution-building and creating spaces for African intellectuals to do their work and find support has helped me appreciate CODESRIA's strong motivation to nurturing and sustaining community, a critical asset that has kept the Council alive through the many seasons it has been through. Over time, he also nurtured my growing interest in the *longue-durée* history and present-day implications of East Africa's engagement with the Ziwa Kuu (Indian Ocean) Maritime Zone, a research interest that became one of his consuming passions towards the end of his long and distinguished career. It was only after a visit to his ancestral home in Lamu that I also learned of his dedicated commitment to the priorities and concerns of the local community, manifest in his incisive interventions, alongside other activists, mobilising against the proposed development of a new seaport that threatened the cultural heritage of his home island.

Abdalla Bujra has now departed from among us, joining his 'co-conspirators' Samir Amin, Thandika Mkandawire and a heart-breakingly large number of the indomitable seminal cohort of CODESRIA militants. Still, we can be grateful for the gifts he has left us: a growing and diverse portfolio of programmes that continue in this twenty-first century to further the original vision of an authentically African intellectual community; an uncompromising set of principles and priorities that serve as the guiding star for the Council's engagements with the world; and a passionate and unequivocal community who understand the privilege and responsibility that has been passed on to us to hand over to the next generation. In return, we can only commit to emulate the example of our founders, such as Bujra, so that the same may be said of us, when our own time comes:

> … we have done our duty
> by our people
> we met the challenge of history
> and were not afraid.

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ABDALLA S. BUJRA, and Futures Studies in Africa: A Noticer's Environmental Scanning

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Introduction

Environmental scanning is looking around to see what there might be in a certain field. It is *purposive gallivanting*, exploration or strollogy, 'taking reflective walks'.[1] It is analogous to an unbiased but anticipative fishing expedition. In this particular case, it is finding out through biographical tracking and literature survey whether Abdalla Bujra (1938–2025) interfaced with the discipline of futures studies, and if so, how and with what effect. 'Futures studies is an art and a science with a strong emphasis on imagination and creativity in creating different possible futures'.[2]

As part of this exploration, this paper historicises such findings, contextualises and looks at their wider implications in the realm of pedagogy. Our maintained hypothesis is Heraclitus's concept of *panta rei* ('everything flows'),[3] that futures studies is a work in progress.[4] So, as William Shakespeare reminds us, 'all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances. And one man in his time plays many parts'.[5] One such part played by Abdalla Bujra was to serve at the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) African Futures (AF) regional project, based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, during its first part

(1992–1997) of the two-phase duration. His tenure there as expert in sociology and human resources development ran for three years, from the project's beginning to 1995, as part of a regional team to champion long-term strategic thinking and planning in African countries. This project has been described as the embodiment of an unprecedented effort at 'escaping the futures of the past'.[6]

Getting Acquainted

Though I worked as a Junior Research Fellow (JRF) at the University of Nairobi from 1972 to 1973, I do not remember meeting Dr Bujra before he left the university in 1973. I guess I was too busy doing the fieldwork for my PhD. But I got to meet and know him reasonably well in 1995 when he came to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to set up the Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF) hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to deal with the governance and political economy dimensions of Africa's development. By coincidence, I happened to serve as Development Policy

Expert and founding Team Leader of the Policy Analysis Support Unit (PASU) of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, today's AU) from that year. In fact, it was Abdalla Bujra who encouraged me to apply to join the second phase of the AF project as a policy and issues analyst. I ended up relocating to Abidjan in 1998 for a three-year tour of duty.

That is how I came to be acquainted first-hand with the pioneering work of Bujra and his co-team and what they had to deal with: the chores and challenges of starting a new institution, and carrying out its mandate to help African countries overcome the then-prevalent short-termism and crisis management promoted by the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) of the Bretton Woods institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). To achieve this mandate, AF needed to focus on conceptualisation, develop relevant methodologies and devise real-world practical applications and ways and means of implementing them. To do this, working manuals were produced with technical assistance from the United Nations University Millennium project (UNUMP) led by Jerome Glenn.[7] The manuals covered how to 'construct scenarios … formulate strategies … and implement participatory futures studies'.[8]

From the word go, the AF team conceived widely participatory national long-term perspective studies (NLTPS) exercises to promote a sense of liberation, supplant the erstwhile top-down *dirigisme* impasse, and serve as a guide to activities by various actors. Development management was to involve not just government bureaucracy but also an empowered public, the private sector and civil society, as agents of self-determination – thus promoting development effectiveness.

African Futures Methodology

For the methodology, AF produced a framework[9] to guide this interactive process, the essence of which was to colonise the future by providing answers to the following questions:

1. What are the long-term aspirations and goals of the society?
2. What are the characteristics of the society and the issues facing it that could affect the ability of the country to create the desired future?
3. What are the alternative future scenarios?
4. Given the scenarios identified above, what should be the vision of the society?
5. What are the strategic issues and challenges that must be confronted if the society is to achieve its vision?
6. What are the appropriate development strategies for the nation and how should they be put in place?

In seeking to answer these questions, the NLTPS process was to proceed in five broad interactive phases:[10]

1. Issues identification
2. Basic studies
3. Scenario construction
4. Strategy formulation; and
5. Development planning.

In its ideal form, the NLTPS is a people-centred learning process working towards a shared national vision. It is collective intelligence – thinking together across demographics – on optionality, arrived at by consensus through dialogue, and should prove to be, *ipso facto*, reasonably implementable. Meaningful stakeholder engagement induces ownership of the resultant programme of action, boosts legitimacy, promotes commitment and develops an accommodating 'state of mind'.[11] These are forms of social capital, stances and attitudes that smoothly turn the probable into actual reification, thus giving sustainability a fighting chance.

Between 1993 and 1998, AF assisted teams in fourteen African countries to undertake NLTPS utilising this framework:

1. Côte d'Ivoire (1993–1995);
2. Swaziland (1993–1997);
3. Mauritius (1994–1996);
4. Guinea-Bissau (1994–1996);
5. Malawi (1996–1998);
6. Zimbabwe (1996–1998); and
7. Madagascar (1997–1998).

Others at various phases of NLTPS were

1. Burkina Faso,
2. Cape Verde,
3. Congo,
4. Gabon,
5. Mali,
6. São Tomé and Principe,
7. Seychelles,
8. Tanzania,
9. Uganda, and
10. Zambia.

Some, like Congo, were at the stage of requesting assistance; and a few onboarded ones suffered discontinuity.[12]

By the time Abdalla Bujra left AF in 1995, only two countries had done their NLTPS, namely Côte d'Ivoire and Swaziland (Eswatini). But he was part and parcel of the people who lay the foundation of AF and tested its methodology on the ground. In what could pass as his valedictory testament, he observed that 'there is no shortage of long term plans, strategies and programmes. African capacity to prepare for the future is available and adequate. What is required is visionary leadership and resolve!'.[13] Many political scientists would call such hesitancy by leaders to do the needful, 'lack of political will'.[14]

Times are Changing

Locating Abdalla Bujra in the historical context of the development of futures studies reveals an interesting state of play. Our innate human characteristics include wonder and curiosity about what the future holds. To satisfy them, we have applied many tools to make sense of the future. A stylised timeline[15] of such tools could run from oracles, shamanism and mysticism to Nostradamus's prophecies and Thomas More's utopia, George Wells's time machine and Friedrich Hegel's dialectics, Soviet planning and RAND,[16] the Club of Rome's limits to growth, and integral futures and anticipatory systems. These tools have moved roughly from being oral to being increasingly written and 'scientifically' quantitative, and then cautiously and systematically explorative. Bujra came in during the liminality between the discrediting of (usually linear) trend projection and extrapolation, as if the past were the sole driver of the future, and the debut of the framing of alternative futures scenarios – which occurred roughly between 1990 and 2000.

In a dynamic *mutatis mutandis* world characterised by vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA), *ceteris paribus* analysis of past or historic experience cannot serve much as *magistra vitae* (life's teacher). Futures is a plurality, not determinate; not a destiny, but prospective possibilities to be probed, mapped and proactively anticipated; not predictable and, least of all, cannot be foretold or prophesied. Neither value-free nor neutral, the future can be shaped by what is done in the present, though not necessarily an extended present. Abdalla Bujra played his part in the wave of the emergence of new approaches to futures studies, research, foresight and operationalisation.

To popularise and widen the scope of strategic thinking and long-term planning, Addalla Bujra convened in Addis Ababa a regional conference of senior policymakers and managers, in June 2003, to sensitise them about futures and foresight methodology, and to chart out its applicability in various spheres of engagement.[17] He invited me to contribute a paper[18] for this purpose, after having left AF when I was the focal point on regional Africa's Long Term Perspective Studies (ALTPS). In that paper, I used a 360-degree approach of hindsight, insight and foresight – a scheme of reflection involving retrospection and actionable prospectives in contemplating regional economic blocs. For Abdalla Bujra, once a futurist, always a futurist – and an intentional one at that.

Capacity Development

Much as one is inclined to agree with Bujra's 1995 assertion that Africa has adequate capacity to prepare for the future,[19] this cannot be so definitive. For example, AF itself experienced the phenomenon of delays and even discontinuity with many NLTPS outfits.[20] Again, one must decry inadequate intellectual grounding in futures studies and research. Almost a quarter of a century after Bujra made his statement, it was found that foresight maturity was mostly ad hoc and there was poor awareness of it with little discernible expertise – even in simple forecasting techniques, to say nothing of the more advanced conjecture in causal-layered deep-dive.[21]

To address this futures preparedness deficit and to ensure the necessary capacity for long-term thinking, ongoing, sustained, embedded and institutionalised appropriate educational programmes are required in schools and universities to 'aid in the development of an interpretive community'.[22] Unfortunately, futures literacy and formal futures education are rare in African terrain. Only two institutions on the continent offer futures and foresight degrees and short courses, namely Stellenbosch University in South Africa and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Morocco. Other programmes are initiatives at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology and the University of Nairobi, both in Kenya.

I have a feeling that Addalla Bujra would have smiled with approval at this development but, just as Oliver Twist pleaded, suffering from hunger pangs, would say 'I want some more'[23] – of course expecting a positive response, not the backlash meted on Oliver Twist by the powers-that-be. He would second the motion by Mahdi El-mandjra that 'students in African universities should be exposed to the methods of future studies and encouraged to write theses in these fields'.[24] After all, UNESCO is emphatic that futures literacy, futures studies and strategic foresight are overarching skills essential in navigating the complexities of the 21st century;[25] and that foresight education is the antidote for the nowism virus,[26] an exclusively short-term operational orientation at the neglect of long-term transformative strategies. Indeed, futures studies has to perforce deal with the issue of integrating the different horizons[27] of development, since the future is an ambient emergence from the present. That development, being a long-term objective, requires the implementation of a series of immediate, short-term and medium-term action plans.

A Legacy of Bujra's Life

Abdalla Bujra left remarkable steps on the sands of time. This we document through *historia* – 'inquiry, narrative, account'.[28] An enduring source puts it well: 'Dr. Bujra's legacy continues to inspire scholars and policymakers across the continent'.[29] In death, he rests; but, given another life, chances are that he would choose the same path he lived on earth. Fare thee well.

Conclusion

Abdalla Bujra was deeply involved in the conceptualisation and execution of futures studies as a team member of the AF project. Similarly, DPMF – the outfit he founded – was overseeing development policy implementation with a futurist's eye.

This paper uses environmental scanning method to investigate Abdalla Bujra's footprint in the futures field. In the course of doing so, gaps in skills and quantity of human resources deployed in futures work were identified. Consequently, it is proposed that futures studies and research be mainstreamed in the education system to augment the supply of strategic thinkers and human resource for-

mation in this area and generally promote what I would call futures intelligence quotient (FIQ), a measure of futures consciousness and agency – that is, people's ability to think and act futuristically. This would be the enabling environment for better-informed strategic long-term development management in all humanity's domains – be they economic, social, political, environmental, cultural or technological (ESPECT) – and at whatever scale: from the personal to the galactic, and other arenas in-between. Contrary to a popular saying, even the sky is *not* a limit.

Disclosures and Acknowledgements

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ABDALLA
BUJRA

AND BELOVED ONES

Other Interventions // *Autres interventions*

Why France Can't Be Nigeria's Strategic Partner

February 2025

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I've seen and listened to many responses – some direct, others indirect – to my article[1] on the problems of Nigeria's foreign policy, which looked at Nigeria's assigned role in BRICS as a 'partner member' and its new-found love of France. That article has been widely circulated on Facebook and WhatsApp as well as in a number of online Nigerian newspapers, including *Premium Times*, *Daily Trust* and *Intervention*. It portrays Nigeria's decision to join BRICS as a partner member as an indication of its declining role in world affairs and its pursuit of a transactional approach in the conduct of its foreign policy. It also questions Nigeria's full embrace of France (a historical rival) as a regional partner at a time when hatred for French neocolonial policies in Francophone Africa is at an all-time high.

Two articles, one by Muhammad Al-Ghazali (in *Daily Trust*)[2] and another by Toba Alabi (in *Future World*),[3] a professor of political science and defence studies at the Nigerian Defence Academy, fully supported my arguments. Bolaji Akinyemi, the doyen of Nigerian foreign policy, also questioned Nigeria's partner member status in BRICS in an interview he gave on *Channels* TV on Trump's inaugural lecture.[4]

However, Mukhtar Imam,[5] a professor of international relations and diplomacy at Al-Muhibbah Open University in Abuja, disagreed with me. He raised several points, many of them muddled and superficial or not thought through. The crucial point I take from his intervention is that, in a rapidly changing world, Nigeria should weigh its options carefully before fully committing itself to global power blocs. And, given Nigeria's weak economy, a pragmatic approach that would enable the country to attract trade and investments would be most appropriate for Nigeria's foreign policy.

Nigeria's foreign minister, Yusuf Tuggar – though not directly responding to my article – has also emphasised Nigeria's overlapping interests and need for pragmatism in pursuing the country's economic and strategic interests, in his article on *Premium Times*[6] and in an interview he gave to Bloomberg at Davos in January 2025. He referenced Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy and affirmed that Nigeria's size gave it the added responsibility to be the regional power or hegemon in West Africa.

In the Davos interview, Tuggar also questioned the media's critical responses to Nigeria's partner member status in BRICS. He affirmed, in his article and the interview, that the foreign policy doctrine of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, or Nigeria, is 'strategic autonomy', which, he proffered, abhors the presence of foreign military forces in West Africa. This doctrine seems to convey a shift towards a transactional approach to foreign policy, in the sense of giving Nigeria the freedom to transact deals with countries around the world. He did not, however, define what exactly 'strategic autonomy' means. Autonomy from what or from whom? What Nigeria does in practice may provide clues. In 2023, just after taking office, Tuggar announced a 4D foreign policy doctrine (**d**emocracy, **d**evelopment **d**emography and **d**iaspora), which he christened the '4D Tinubu Doctrine' on foreign policy. This doctrine has generated wide-ranging critical reviews by foreign policy experts and pundits, many pointing out its lack of clarity on how the four Ds will impact Nigeria's conduct of foreign policy.

The four Ds do look more like topics than a doctrine. How, for instance, can Nigeria defend or support democracy in its foreign policy when it suffers from a huge democracy deficit at home? Its party system is broken, or antidemocratic; it cannot consistently organise credible, free and fair elections; and citizens are arrested and detained for libel for criticising well-connected and influential people. Indeed, Nigeria scores poorly or below average in most global indexes that track democracy and governance. Femi Mimiko, a professor of political science at the Obafemi Awolowo University, notes that the 4Ds are 'rather too fluid in conception, too broad in scope, and too woolly in objective'.[7] Regardless, the idea of pragmatism, or working with all major powers and blocs in a transactional way, seems to define Tuggar's and Tinubu's approach to foreign policy. I've watched a few interviews on Nigerian television in which the issue of pragmatism has been raised to justify the partner member role granted to Nigeria in BRICS and deepening relations with France.

In this article, I want to demonstrate why France cannot be a strategic partner for Nigeria and the dangers of pursuing a transactional foreign policy that is devoid of a strategic anchor. I will first show why pragmatism is a meaningless concept in the study of international politics, then provide, in two sections, a historical overview of Nigeria's foreign policy and France's Africa policy. Subsequent sections explain why Nigeria's relations with France are bound to be conflictual and discuss Nigeria's dysfunctional and transactional domestic politics and the dangers of transactionalism in the conduct of foreign policy.

All states are pragmatic in foreign policy

Pragmatism doesn't really tell us what a state's foreign or strategic policy is because all states are pragmatic. The first thing one learns in the study of global politics or strategic studies is that ideology, which is the opposite of pragmatism, plays little or no role in the foreign-policy calculations of states. The world system is largely anarchical. In other words, it has no central government, even though it has created a global institution, the UN, which tries to play that role, and there are norms, treaties and laws that seek to regulate the behaviour of states in the international system. The values or ideologies that inform domestic state practices may be useless in an environment where states are trying to survive and defend or advance their interests globally. States may profess or uphold certain values, norms or ideologies, but these are rarely the prism through which they interpret, or behave, in the world, especially if they are seen as an obstacle to the realisation of their core objectives.

Look at the examples of the US and the Soviet Union, arch rivals with diametrically opposed values, systems of government and ideologies. During the Cold War, both countries worked with and supported regimes that did not share their ideological beliefs in their struggle for dominance in the world. At the end of the Cold War, the US and its Western allies projected an ideology of liberal internationalism (the spread of democracy, human rights and markets on a world scale), when the US became dominant in what came to be called a unipolar world. It did this because it had no credible opposition and could do as it pleased in the world.

That period of hegemony has now ended. However, copious studies show that even in the heydays of that policy, the West's support for global democracy was selective. And in the current period, the West cannot uphold even the central feature of its ideology on markets and capitalism – the free global movement of goods and capital – as the US slams tariffs on China's, Mexico's and Canada's exports and imposes restrictions on the sale of advanced semiconductor chips to China. The strategic policy that informs the protectionist behaviour towards China is containment – to prevent China from dominating the world. This is unvarnished great power politics, not ideological rivalry.

The same can be said for the Soviet Union and China, with their ideologically driven communist systems of government. Regarding the Soviet Union, apart from its expansionist activities in Eastern Europe, when it played an active role in building communism in those countries, Soviet foreign policy in the wider world was not revolutionary. Indeed, even Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe could be seen as a strategic move to provide a buffer between itself and the more powerful western European and US alliance, NATO, which was steadfast in trying to contain or destroy its communist system.

The Soviets were interested in defending the communism they had built in their own country by cultivating friends overseas, irrespective of their ideological inclinations. Their foreign policy was pragmatic within the context of protecting Soviet communism and challenging Western global hegemony. There were no Soviet revolutionaries or ideologues running around the world spreading socialism or communism. The

Soviets supported left-leaning states that were opposed to Western hegemony as well as conservative or neutral states that were open to doing business with them. Soviet embassies were not filled with revolutionaries but had spies, just as the US and other major powers did, who helped to provide intelligence and enhance the power of the Soviet Union globally.

Let me give two examples that I witnessed when I taught in Nigeria in the 1980s. Under the leadership of Bolaji Akinyemi, the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) held a roundtable discussion on Soviet–Nigeria relations and Akinyemi invited me to prepare a lead paper on the Soviet Union's economic relations with Africa. I gave it my all. I thought I was fair to the Soviet economic system and its trade relations, even though I raised some critical issues. However, the Soviet representatives at the meeting were unhappy with the paper. During the evening cocktail before the roundtable, two members of the Soviet embassy pulled me aside and took me to the back of the room. They strongly protested about what I had written, asked me what I wanted, and told me to withdraw the paper. I responded that what they demanded wouldn't be done and that if they had any issues with the paper, they should raise them at the roundtable.

The following day, my paper was the first to be tabled for discussion. The Soviet ambassador and a large contingent of Soviet officials were in the meeting. I recall that my presentation was methodical and forceful because I had prepared well after my encounter with the Soviet officials the previous evening. When the chair asked for comments, the Soviet ambassador

remarked only that the paper was full of factual errors but could not highlight any, and asked the NIIA to schedule another roundtable to which he would invite scholars from the Soviet Union to challenge what I had written. I was left with the impression that the Soviet embassy had spies masquerading as policy professionals.

My next encounter with Soviet officials in Nigeria was during the Marx and Africa conference at the Ahmadu Bello University in 1983. I was a member of the steering committee. On the eve of the conference, we were approached by two officials from the Soviet embassy in Lagos, who asked us to give them the list of participants for the conference. We politely told them that it was not our policy to provide lists of participants to individuals who were not members of our group. We thought we would see them at the conference the following day, but they left the campus after we rejected their request. They were not interested in the ideas that were going to be discussed at the conference. They wanted only the list of participants for their political work.

What all this suggests is that, by necessity, all states behave pragmatically in the world system in their struggle to survive or be influential and powerful. Big states, or those with great power ambitions, seek hegemony in their own regions and try to prevent other powerful states with great power ambitions from becoming hegemonic at the global level. Small states with no great power ambitions tread cautiously by not offending the great powers or seek protection from one of the great powers by becoming vassal states. Power and interests – not pragmatism, which every state

practises – are a powerful prism through which to understand the foreign and strategic policies of states.

John Measheimer, the leading realist scholar in international relations, describes in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*[8] how before the US became a superpower it first became a regional power or hegemon in the Western hemisphere. It did this by expelling all European imperial powers (British, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Dutch) and imposing the Monroe Doctrine on them – signalling clearly that the Western hemisphere was the US's backyard or sphere of influence and it would go to war to defend it. This was why John Kennedy used the strategic policy of madness (what Thomas Schelling[9] called 'the rational use of irrationality') to eject the Soviet Union's nuclear missiles from Cuba in 1962, threatening to uproot them even if his actions led to a nuclear war with the Soviet Union in which both states would perish. The key point in all of this, as Measheimer points out, is that big powers always try to protect their immediate region by becoming the regional hegemon.

Nigeria's foreign and strategic policy

By virtue of the size of its population and economy, vis-à-vis other African countries, Nigeria has historically seen itself as the Giant of Africa. It has, over many decades, developed strategies and policies that seek to enhance its ambition to become a regional power and an important state in the world system. However, the crafting of Nigeria's strategic policy of greatness lagged its actual practice of projecting regional power status.

The oil boom of the early 1970s ignited confidence among policymakers that Nigeria was destined for greatness. There was a range of big and well-funded policy initiatives on, among other projects, industrialisation, economic indigenisation, large-scale agricultural development and promotion of national unity schemes, such as the National Youth Service Corps. It is not surprising that Phillip Asiodu, one of the Super Permanent Secretaries at the time, described the raft of big policy initiatives that Nigeria embarked upon in the 1970s as 'The Nigerian Revolution'.[10]

The oil boom was a shot in the arm for Nigerian leaders to forcefully project an Africa-centred policy, starting with Murtala Mohammed when he seized power in 1975 from Yakubu Gowon and decided to strongly support the liberation movements in southern Africa. Mohammed openly denounced US president Gerald Ford's policies on Angola, resisted his pressures, and unequivocally threw Nigeria's support behind the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which was waging an armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Nigeria was even made a frontline state in the fight against apartheid and Portuguese colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique, despite being thousands of kilometres away.

In 1976, during the regime of Olusegun Obasanjo, Murtala Mohammed's successor, Nigeria established a Southern Africa Relief Fund, which attracted donations not only from the government but also from citizens. It has been reported that Nigerian civil servants contributed 2 per cent of their salaries to that fund.[11] Nigeria also issued more than 300 passports to black South Africans to enable them to travel abroad. Nomfundo Ngwenya, writing on the online platform of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) in 2010, reported that Nigeria had spent an estimated USD 61 billion in supporting the frontline states by the end of apartheid in 1994.[12]

It should be noted that anti-imperialist and anti-apartheid sentiments were strong in Nigeria even during the leadership of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1960–1966), who was generally regarded as conservative. His decision to sign the infamous Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement in 1960, just after independence, generated strong popular protests that led to its abrogation in 1962.[13] However, Balewa adopted an uncompromising position on the question of apartheid and African liberation. The Sharpeville Massacre of sixty-nine black people in South Africa, in the same year that Nigeria gained independence, may have radicalised him on the issue of apartheid. Balewa lobbied for South Africa's expulsion from the Commonwealth and provided annual financial assistance of USD 5 million to the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC).[14]

Prior to the Mohammed and Obasanjo regimes' pro-active Africa-wide initiatives, Yakubu Gowon had taken the crucial step of pushing for the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 through his able minister of economic development and post-war reconstruction, Adebayo Adedeji, whom Francophone West African policymakers referred to as 'le Père de la CEDEAO' (the Father of ECOWAS).[15] The ECOWAS project was launched to support Nigeria's industrialisation, advance its influence in West Africa and wean the Francophone African states from France, which had supported the breakup of Nigeria during the civil war of the 1960s. Gowon was smart in choosing a Francophone African leader, Gnassingbé Eyadema of Togo, as a partner in launching the project. Even though Nigeria accounts for half of the population of West Africa (English-speaking West Africa accounts for about 60 per cent) and more than 60 per cent of its GDP (before the devaluation of the naira in 2023–2024), nine of the sixteen states in West Africa are Francophone. The Francophone states also account for about 90 per cent of the region's land mass. It was important, therefore, that Nigeria worked with a Francophone country to advance its regional integration project.

By the end of the 1970s, the broad outline of Nigeria's foreign and strategic policy had clearly emerged in the practical field of interstate relations. The logic of that activist foreign policy was primarily that Nigeria must project its power in its immediate environment or become the regional hegemon in West Africa, while acting as the voice of Africa within Africa and the world at large. It was Ibrahim Gambari,[16] the foreign minister of the regime of Muhammadu Buhari between 1984 and 1985, who translated this evolving practice into a theoretical or strategic scheme by situating Nigeria's foreign policy within a framework of what he called 'three concentric circles'. The first circle was the homeland, or Nigeria; the second was West Africa; and the third was wider Africa.

Prior to his job as foreign minister, Gambari had played a lead role

in establishing an international studies programme at the Ahmadu Bello University, which made the study of French or Arabic compulsory for students who enrolled in the programme. Study tours to Francophone countries, such as Togo, were organised to get students to understand the Francophone West African world. I joined that programme in its first year in 1980, the year that I was recruited into the university and oversaw the courses dealing with international political economy.

When Bolaji Akinyemi[17] took over the reins of the ministry of foreign affairs during the early years of Ibrahim Babangida's regime (1985–1987), the understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy in terms of the three concentric circles was well established. Akinyemi tried to project Nigeria's power a step further. Trained as a realist at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and at the University of Oxford, he had a vision of Nigeria as a great power and seemed determined to push it. As director general of the NIIA, during the radicalisation of Nigeria's foreign policy under Murtala Mohammed, he organised a major conference of Nigerian scholars in 1976 to discuss Nigeria's place in the world.

Confident that Nigeria was already a regional West African power and a force to be reckoned with in Africa, when Akinyemi became foreign minister in 1985 he sought to project Nigeria's power further by advocating a 'concert of global medium powers', which included countries as diverse as Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela, Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe. This resulted in The Lagos Forum in 1987, a conference of medium powers drawn from across four major regions of the world.

During Akinyemi's tenure, he also launched the Nigerian Technical Aid Corps to provide African, Caribbean and Pacific countries with technical support in various fields, including education, medicine, engineering, agriculture, technology, law, architecture and artisanship. Nigeria's Africa-centred activist foreign policy earned it a de facto permanent seat on the African Union's Peace and Security Council, which was established in 2004. With Egypt, it is the only African country that has been elected five times as a non-permanent member on the UN Security Council.

Nigeria's projection of big-power status, or regional hegemony, came to a head in the 1990s, during the regime of Ibrahim Babangida when, through an ECOWAS military force (which become known as ECOMOG), he sent Nigerian troops to Liberia to pacify the warring factions in that country's civil war.[18] ECOMOG's operations were expanded in Liberia and extended to Sierra Leone during the brutal dictatorship of Sani Abacha to prevent those countries from sliding into protracted anarchy. Those interventions were a burden on the Nigerian treasury but they underscored Nigeria's big-power status in the region and provided the internationally despised Abacha regime with a bargaining chip in dealing with the West and its criticism of his regime. They also set the stage for a radical transformation of ECOWAS, from an organisation that was concerned only with economic integration into one that also prioritises regional peace and security.

The outcomes of most of these initiatives were far less impressive than expected. I raise them to demonstrate the vision that earlier thinkers and actors in the foreign policy field had for Nigeria's significance in Africa and the world and for the need to act strategically when conducting foreign policy. There is a fairly broad consensus among observers of Nigeria's foreign policy that over the past fifteen or so years Nigeria has lost its mojo in African and wider world politics.[19] This has been traced to its economic difficulties, long-running multiple insecurities, troubled or dysfunctional domestic politics, widespread mistrust of the federal state, and election of leaders with limited interest in, or knowledge about, foreign policy. A state of inertia or lack of strategic direction has set in as the country grapples with its internal problems.

France's Africa policy

Much has been written on France's Africa policy, which, especially in recent times, focuses on the neocolonial relations it established with its ex-colonies in the domains of economy, defence, bureaucracy and culture. France's economic relations with its ex-colonies are governed by a monetary regime that initially tied the currencies of those countries (the CFA francs issued by the West and Central Francophone African central banks)[20] to the French franc and subsequently to the euro. The Franco-African monetary regime also required the banks of the two currency blocs to deposit their reserves in the French treasury, and for a very long time a French government representative sat on the boards of those banks.[21] These arrangements allowed France to maintain a firm grip on the economies of the Francophone African countries

and dominate their external trade and investment relations. France also controlled their defence policies by establishing military bases in key countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon and Djibouti. In addition, many French citizens work in those countries' bureaucracies and France extensively lobbies for their elites to secure important positions in international organisations. The term *Françafrique* has been used to describe this neocolonial relationship[22] that has allowed France to meddle in the internal politics of Francophone African countries. Abdurrahim Siradag[23] has estimated that between 1960 and 2013 France intervened militarily in Francophone African countries twenty five times to defend beleaguered governments it favoured or get rid of those it disliked. Francophone African leaders buy security protection from French governments. Robert Bourgi,[24] a confidant of many Francophone African leaders, with strong links to the French political establishment, recently revealed in his memoir, '*They Know I Know Everything': My Life in The Eye of Relationship Between France and Africa*, that African leaders contribute financially to French political parties during French elections.

An additional factor in French power and influence is the global spread of the French language. Francophone Africa is the only region in the world where the French language is still growing. As literacy levels increase in Africa, so the use of colonial languages expands. English, French and Portuguese have been adopted as official languages, even though African languages serve as lingua franca in most

countries. It is reckoned that more than 300 million people in Africa speak French, at various levels of fluency, representing 67 per cent of the French-speaking population in the world. In other words, four and a half times more people speak French in Africa than in France.

What has often been ignored or underreported in discussions on French neocolonialism in Africa is the strategic value of France's close ties with its ex-colonies and why France goes to great lengths to defend those ties. The strategic objective of those economic, military and cultural ties is to embed French power in Africa and signal to the world that it is still a great power. In terms of economic importance, Nigeria offers more opportunities to France than do its Francophone West African countries, whose combined wealth (or GDP) is much less than Nigeria's. This is why Nigeria is France's largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa. However, from a strategic point of view, France cannot pivot to Nigeria to enhance its power in the world system. It faces far stronger competitors in that country than in Francophone West Africa, and it cannot craft in Nigeria the kinds of neocolonial relations it has established in Francophone Africa.

To understand the logic behind France's neocolonial designs in Africa, one must highlight France's declining status in the world system and its long-running obsession with global great-power status.[25] Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, France was the preeminent power in Europe and French was the language of the educated classes, royal courts and diplomacy. French power reached its peak in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

(roughly 1794–1815) when, under Napoleon, it controlled much of northern Europe. After Napoleon's defeat in 1815 and France's humiliating defeat by Germany under Bismarck in 1870,[26] French power began to decline.

But more important for our analysis was Nazi Germany's comprehensive defeat of France in the Second World War, when the French army spectacularly collapsed without putting up a fight and allowed Hitler to set up a puppet regime in Vichy to govern France. Charles de Gaulle did establish a resistance government in exile – first in London and later in Algiers – and joined the Allied Powers to reclaim France and defeat Germany. But the collapse of France shocked the Allied Powers. France was not invited to the talks that led to the creation of the United Nations. In the eyes of the US, Britain, the Soviet Union and China – the four countries that participated in the deliberations – France had lost its status as a great power when it was occupied by Germany.[27] Therefore, it didn't deserve to be at the talks. However, Winston Churchill convinced the US president, Franklin Roosevelt, to offer France a seat on the proposed Security Council of the UN on the strength of its historical status as a great power and its big global empire, much of it in Africa.

De Gaulle and the French elite felt deeply hurt by France's decline and treatment by the victorious great powers. For much of his rule, De Gaulle was obsessed with restoring France as a great power in the comity of nations. He loathed the special relationship between the UK and the US and held steadfastly onto France's colonies or devised neocolonial arrangements with them to keep them in France's orbit.

He also worked hard to rebuild French power within Europe by partnering with Germany to create the European Economic Community (EEC, the present-day European Union, or EU), which he felt would enhance French power and serve as a counterweight to US power and the US–UK special relationship.

Twice, De Gaulle vetoed Britain's attempt to join the EEC (in 1963 and 1967) on the grounds that the UK was not European enough. He pulled France out of the military wing of NATO in 1966 and developed France's own nuclear deterrence. Moreover, fearing a collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system, which was based on a gold–dollar fixed rate of exchange, he tried to protect France's dollar reserves and undermine the dollar's role as a global currency between 1963 and 1966 by converting many of France's dollar holdings into gold. According to Jan Nieuwenhuijs,[28] forty-four boat trips and 129 flights were made to transport 3,313 tonnes of gold reserves from the US to France. Despite these initiatives, France could not become the hegemon in the EEC because Germany's economy was bigger and more productive than France's, and the EEC couldn't displace or challenge US global hegemony.

The inevitability of conflict or rivalry between France and Nigeria

The two sections above lay the groundwork for understanding how Nigeria and France perceive themselves as great powers. Nigeria's power resources are much smaller than France's. Nigeria therefore does not aspire to be a global power. But given the size of its population and economy in comparison with other African countries, it clearly aspires to be, and sees itself as, a regional power in West Africa and a top-rank power in wider Africa, where it is challenged by South Africa and, to some extent, Egypt.

Nigeria's strategic policy in the West African region can be described as expansionist. Even though it accounts for half of the population and wealth of the region, its influence in territorial terms tends to be limited to less than 10 per cent of the region's land mass. It must expand its territorial reach if its claim to regional leadership is to be taken seriously. It is important to state that this expansionist policy is not based on aggression or territorial claims. It is pursued instead through the medium of regional integration in ECOWAS. As the biggest economy in the region, faster regional integration expands Nigeria's economic and political influence within the Francophone states. Nigeria has supplemented the ECOWAS integration approach with bilateral assistance, such as supplying electricity to Niger and oil price discounts to a number of countries during crises.

France's global power status depends on its ability to project power globally. Its ex-colonies, most of which are in Africa, play a crucial role in helping it to do so. Three-fifths of France's ex-colonies in Africa are in West Africa, which makes it an important region for France in projecting its image as a global power. This means that France seeks to be both a global power and a regional power in West Africa. Success in the latter feeds its ambitions in the former. However, it must contend with Nigeria, which is much bigger in population and economic terms than all the nine Francophone West African countries combined and has the added advantage of geographical propinquity that France lacks.

Therefore, the strategic policy of France in West Africa is containment – to prevent Nigeria from extending its reach and influence within the Francophone countries. This policy involves undermining initiatives to deepen economic integration in ECOWAS, which would bolster Nigeria's power within the region; supporting attempts to fragment or break up Nigeria, as it did in the civil war of the 1960s; and preventing Nigeria from playing a lead role in settling conflicts in Francophone African countries. In December 2019, following growing opposition to the monetary arrangements that underpinned the CFA franc in West Africa, and amid fears that the proposed ECOWAS eco would end the CFA franc as a currency and French economic influence in the region, Emmanuel Macron of France and Alhasan Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire hurriedly announced new rules for the monetary system and renamed the CFA franc the eco. This was a clear challenge to ECOWAS and made it difficult for it to forge ahead with its own currency plan. Nigeria could not mount an effective campaign against the appropriation of the eco name by Ouatarra and Macron because it could not meet the convergence principles that member states had agreed on as necessary for the introduction of the eco. As the largest economy in the region, Nigeria has been unable to pursue fiscal discipline, despite the existence of a Fiscal Responsbility Law and a Fiscal Responsibility Commission established in 2007, just after the massive debt relief by the Paris

Club of creditors. Muhammadu Buhari's government announced in 2020 that Nigeria was not ready for the implementation of the eco, which was set to take off that year.

France outmanoeuvred Nigeria in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis of 2010–2011, when it sent troops to topple the recalcitrant regime of Laurent Gbagbo. It did so again in the Sahel, especially in Mali, when it launched Operation Serval in 2012 to bolster the Malian regime and prevent Islamist forces from overrunning the capital. Emboldened by this success, France launched Operation Berkhané in 2014 as a counterterrorism force for the Sahel and pressured five French-speaking Sahel states – Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Mauritania – to form the G5 and partner with France to combat terrorism in the region. The EU also became involved in the project under its Common Security and Defence Policy and established a Regional Coordination and Advisory Cell in Mauritania. The US backed these moves by building a drone base in the south of Niger.

Nigeria, the assumed regional hegemon, was excluded from the G5 and the overall French and EU-led strategy of combating terrorism in the region – an outcome which Tuggar, Nigeria's foreign minister, bemoaned in his 2024 *Premium Times*[29] article. The European countries were given the freedom to cut anti-immigration deals with some of the G5 states which, as Tuggar starkly observed in his article, violated the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of people in the region. However, Nigeria did nothing to check it. But then the entire France-led Western security strategy in the Sahel was upended in 2022 and 2023 when Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso

asked France, the US and the EU to close their military bases and end their activities in the region.

The question may be asked why France decided to support Nigeria when it threatened to lead an ECOWAS invasion of Niger in 2023 if it had always tried to keep Nigeria out of the security affairs of the Francophone states. France did so because it had lost its influence among the Nigerien armed forces and public at large, and the specific aim of the Nigeria-led ECOWAS intervention force was to restore to power in Niger a pliant French ally, Mohammed Bazoum. France might have calculated that the ECOWAS force would withdraw after Bazoum's restoration and that Niger would return to the status quo ante, or business as usual, with France once again in charge.

So, what we see when we take a cold hard look at Nigeria's relations with France in West Africa is a clash of two strategies: Nigerian expansionism, through ECOWAS, to wean Francophone West Africa off France, and French containment of Nigeria in the subregion. From a hard-nosed realist perspective, if I were sitting at the Élysée Palace in Paris, I would be very happy with the decision by Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to exit ECOWAS since the strategic goal of France has always been to stall, weaken or dismantle that organisation, which it believes primarily promotes Nigeria's power in France's assumed sphere of influence. As a French strategist, I would also be happy that the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) countries are in a conflicted relationship with Nigeria, France's greatest competitor in the region. The last thing that France wants is for those countries to pivot towards Nigeria at a time when French influence in the region is in crisis.

I would like to throw in another strategic insight: the diplomatic love affair between Tinubu and Macron may have been orchestrated by Macron to drive a wedge between Nigeria and the AES countries at a time when France's influence in the region was diminishing. The lavish treatment Tinubu was accorded by Macron during his official visit to Paris in November 2024, at which a French band even played P-Square's popular Afrobeats song, 'Taste the Money' (which has the outrageously materialistic and crass line 'Je m'appelle chop money'), underscores the lengths to which Macron went to flatter Tinubu. Many Nigerians wondered how a song with such undignified lyrics could have been played for a visiting Nigerian president if France saw Nigeria as a serious country and partner. The French may have been exploiting the unserious part of the Nigerian power elite. Following the visit, Nigeria's Finance Minister, Wale Edun, announced that Nigeria had secured a EUR 300 million development partnership agreement with France, which would boost key sectors of the Nigerian economy, including healthcare, transportation and renewable energy.[30]

France fears Nigeria more than Russia, which has jumped in to provide military support to the AES countries. Russia lacks the regional network and soft power to dominate those countries in the long run, and there is still a good amount of French power in those countries, which could be activated when Russia's relations with them sour. Economic and cultural ties take time to adjust to new power dynamics, despite the rhetoric by the military leaders of the AES countries of a complete break with France. France, thus,

is playing the long game, which requires tying Nigeria's hands and preventing it from embracing its natural neighbours and advancing its strategic interests in the region.

Dysfunctional and transactional domestic politics

What comes out of this discussion is the inevitability of conflict or rivalry between France and Nigeria as each tries to be the hegemon in the West African subregion. This conflict can be checked or diffused only if Nigeria becomes so distracted and weakened that it stops seeing itself, or acting as, a subregional power. Alternatively, France must come to the realisation that it is no longer a global power, should align its foreign policy ambitions with its actual status as a highly degraded former imperial power, and start behaving like Spain, Portugal, Italy and Türkiye, which were powerful imperial powers in centuries past but no longer aspire to be world powers.

Nigeria's domestic economic troubles, political inertia and current behaviour at the global level suggest that it is more likely to cave than France. I would like to suggest that the glorification of pragmatism in Nigeria's foreign policy, discussed in the first part of this article, may reflect a loss of focus or drift in how Nigeria's policymakers perceive its role and project it in the world.

A retired Nigerian ambassador responded to my first article by drawing attention to the problems that Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has faced in the last two or more decades: poor funding, long delays in the appointment of ambassadors, low morale, tardy responses to global events, and lack of a clear policy direction.

That ambassador believes that most of Nigeria's big foreign policy initiatives were undertaken during the period of military rule, not during the Fourth Republic of so-called democratic governance. Many of these points rhyme with those raised in a recent brief by the Crisis Group on Nigeria's declining role in world affairs, although the Crisis Group dates the beginning of the rot to the period after Obasanjo's government of 1999–2007.[31] I don't wish to get into these issues since I have not studied the internal workings of the foreign ministry.

However, it would be surprising if the foreign ministry were insulted by the complaints of many scholars, pundits and ordinary Nigerians about the dysfunction of Nigerian politics, its high levels of corruption and multiple insecurities. At the heart of this dysfunction is the way politics has been purged of values and policy direction or ideology and reduced to mere transactions for self-enrichment. Jibrin Ibrahim, a former director of the Centre for Democracy and Development, captures this sad situation in his book chapter, 'Democratic regression, political parties, and the negation of the popularity principle',[32] and more recently in a *Premium Times* article,[33] in which he laments the degeneration of Nigeria's party system. Large-scale cross-carpeting is rife, with opposition party members moving to the governing party for material returns after every election; powerful figures act as godfathers in political parties and engage in wheeling and dealing during party primaries to rig elections in favour of their candidates; and legislators are accused of extracting payments from heads of agencies before the approval of their budgets.

Nigeria clearly lost its bearings when it was egged on by two of France's client leaders in Africa, Alhassan Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire and Macky Sall of Senegal, to wage war against a neighbour with whom it shares a more than 1,608-kilometre border and close cultural ties, under the pretext that it was trying to restore democracy in that country. That threat, which eventually fizzled out, was a strategic policy blunder of historic significance. It is likely to have far-reaching effects on Nigeria's leadership role in the subregion.

What made the decision even more ludicrous was that Ouattara and Sall are no democrats – Ouattara changed his country's Constitution to run for a third term as president and is reported to be considering a fourth term; and Sall gave up on his aggressive quest for a third term in office only when he was confronted by sustained mass protests. Tinubu's electoral victory in 2023 was also questionable. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Result Viewing Portal (IRev), which the chief electoral officer, Mahmood Yakubu, promised would transmit the presidential results in real time, failed to function. Many INEC officials claimed they had forgotten their passwords or could not upload the results in real time.[34] Indeed, Tinubu's victory was seriously being contested in court when he made the decision to get ECOWAS to invade Niger.

The argument has been made about Nigeria's overlapping interests and need to be pragmatic in dealing not only with France but also with global economic blocs or formations, such as BRICS. It is important to note that of the ten full or permanent members of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China,

South Africa, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran and Ethiopia), only Ethiopia, and Iran and Russia, both of which are under stiff US sanctions, have lower volumes of trade and investments with the US than Nigeria. The others trade heavily with the US – far more than Nigeria, which is timid in asking for full membership, preferring to play a waiting game in the name of pragmatism.

Indeed, close US allies, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which have high levels of trade and investments with the US, are not constrained by their overlapping interests in deciding to seek and obtain full membership of BRICS. It should be noted that, among other objectives, BRICS aims to counter the weaponisation of the dollar, in which the US and its Western allies freeze the foreign exchange reserves of countries with which they strongly disagree. Although most of the BRICS countries have economic relationships with the US and the rest of the world, they believe that it is in their strategic interest to find ways of financing their trade relations without being overly exposed to the US dollar. They're still pragmatic in nurturing their trade relations but have adopted the strategic or long-term view that dependence on the US is bad for their economic development.

The pitfalls of transactional foreign policy

I would like to address two big problems associated with transactional foreign policy, a concept that has gained importance in recent years in the study of global politics. Galib Bashirov,[35] in his article 'The Rise of Transactionalism in International Relations', defines transactionalism as

a foreign policy approach that favours bilateral to multilateral relations, focuses on short-term wins rather than longer-term strategic foresight, adheres to a zero-sum worldview where all gains are relative and reciprocity is absent, rejects value-based policymaking, and does not follow a grand strategy.

Even though Bashirov's article focuses on Türkiye, it is the US's Donald Trump that has been more closely identified with transactionalism as he seeks to upend alliances and treaties by insisting on short-term wins for the US in his dealings with friendly countries and enemies. If we remove the reference to multilateralism, which small states fully embrace to maximise returns in global institutions they contribute very little to financially, almost by definition the foreign policies of small or inconsequential states tend to be transactional. Such states want to get along with all big powers to squeeze out whatever trade, investment and aid benefits they can from the global system. As we have also observed, such states may decide to become vassal states of one big global power if they believe that shopping around is likely to yield fewer returns than picking one powerful patron. During the Cold War, for instance, South Korea and Taiwan were vassal states of the US, which protected them from Communist North Korea and China and facilitated their transformation into industrial states.

Most small countries in the world prefer a 'neutral, shop-around approach' to vassalship. For example, especially in recent times, the foreign policy of my own country, Sierra Leone, is heavily transactional as it tries to stay in the good books of

most big powers and blocs in its search for aid and investments. This transactional approach even means repudiating longstanding African Union policy positions, such as declaring its intention to open an embassy in Jerusalem (before Israel's genocidal carnage in Gaza) and its controversial decision to recognise Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara as demanded by Morocco and the US. It is important to note that only six countries (the US, Guatemala, Paraguay, Honduras, Kosovo and Papua New Guinea) have embassies in Jerusalem. And it was at the 1980 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, that the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) first gained majority recognition by African states, even though the chair of the conference, Siera Leone's Siaka Stevens, who supported the SADR, decided to postpone the decision on its membership of the OAU.[36] The SADR was admitted into the OAU in 1982 and currently enjoys the support of most members of the organisation, including big or influential powers, such as Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya. Meanwhile, Sierra Leone also has good relations with China, Türkiye, Russia, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, apart from its long-established relations with the EU and UK.

Since small inconsequential states lack ambitions to be great powers, they treat the world system as a marketplace that does not require values, strategic goals or principles to transact business in. So, one of the pitfalls of transactionalism in foreign policy for states that harbour regional power ambitions is the high risk that they will be reduced to small states – big in size and resources but small on the

world stage. It is important to stress that size on its own is not sufficient for a state to enjoy the status of a big or regional power. Adekeye Adebajo,[37] in his edited book with Abdul Raufu Mustapha, once described Nigeria, in discussing its foreign policy, as 'a giant with clay feet' or Jonathan Swift's Gulliver who was overwhelmed by Lilliputians. Population wise, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is more than seven times the size of Rwanda and has about five times its GDP, but political dysfunction in the DRC has allowed Rwanda to turn eastern DRC into its playground. Based on recent international reports, the Rwandan government, acting through its M23 militia, is stoking instability and insecurity in that region without an effective response from Kinshasa.

The second problem with a transactional approach to foreign policy is that it may be exposed to high levels of corruption and illicit activities, especially if these activities already exist in their countries. The foreign policy practitioners of transactional states may engage in deals that primarily serve their own rather than the national interest; and even when projects may be good for their country, their costs may be inflated through bribes paid to state officials who are responsible for sealing the deals.

A more worrying problem is illicit transactions – such as drug and human trafficking, as well as money laundering. Two diplomatic scandals have unfolded in Sierra Leone over the past month, in which high-level state officials have been implicated in trafficking cocaine. The first is the interception in Guinea of a diplomatic vehicle owned by the Sierra Leonean ambassador to Guinea, which was carrying seven suitcases of cocaine;[38] the second involves the sighting in Sierra Leone of Europe's most wanted drug criminal, Jos Leijdekkers, who has been sentenced to a prison term of twenty-four years in the Netherlands for trafficking seven tonnes of cocaine to Europe.[39] He was videoed sitting with the president's daughter (who is believed to be romantically linked with him) two rows behind the president at a church service in the president's hometown, and at a farm in the same town participating with the president, his daughter and villagers in rice harvesting.

Conclusion

Nigeria's foreign policy seems to have become more transactional than strategic in recent years. This has been justified by some scholars and pundits as pragmatism, which they argue is necessary in a complex and changing world. We have shown that pragmatism is a poor guide for understanding the foreign policies of states, since all states act pragmatically in the world system.

Understanding the power resources of states, their geographical location and interests is crucial in the study of foreign policy. Nigeria and France historically have been locked in a power struggle for control of the West African region. As the largest and richest economy in the subregion, and especially after the oil boom of the early 1970s, Nigeria has pursued an expansionist foreign policy through the medium of ECOWAS to advance its development and wean the Francophone West African states off France. France's strategic interests in West Africa are tied to its higher strategic goal of remaining a global power. Since it is not located in the region, which would have allowed it to expand its influence as the richer and more powerful country, it practises a policy of containment against Nigeria to maintain its neocolonial hold on its ex-colonies.

Nigeria's internal political dysfunction, economic troubles and drift towards a transactional foreign policy have tilted the power balance in the region in favour of France. Nigeria has failed to exploit the recent military and diplomatic setbacks by France in the region, preferring instead to fully embrace France as a partner. France benefits from this rapprochement and the seeming breakup of ECOWAS. The breakup of ECOWAS prevents the AES countries, which are trying to move away from France, from pivoting to Nigeria.

As an aspiring regional power, Nigeria should be wary of two major pitfalls of transactionalism in foreign policy: a slide into the status of a small state and its treatment as such by the big powers; and the danger of transactionalism pushing the state to the seamy or illicit domains of international relations.

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Indigenous African Knowledge and the Challenge of Epistemic Translation

Prologue

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Allow me to start by recalling an encounter at another CODESRIA meeting in Dakar, in January 2013. In collaboration with Point Sud (Centre for Research on Local Knowledge), based in Bamako, Mali, CODESRIA had co-organised a conference, 'Africa N'ko: Debating the Colonial Library'. The conference had brought together some of Africa's finest intellectuals to consider the implications of what Congolese philosopher V.Y. Mudimbe designated a 'colonial library' on knowledge production and gnostic practices on and about Africa, as well as imagine the continent beyond the epistemic regions, structuring violence and contaminating vectors of this library.

Coinciding with the conference was Operation Serval, a French military intervention in Mali ostensibly to oust Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists who had seized control of the north of Mali and were pushing into the centre of the country. Like every other 'savage war for peace', Operation Serval was justified in the name of a higher ethical pur-

pose: namely, to prevent the Malian state from collapse and rescue it from the savagery of Islamists harkening to irrational and premodern beliefs. Among those attending the conference, however, the concerns were especially over the protection of historical and cultural artefacts – specifically, the manuscripts and knowledge troves of medieval West Africa housed in a library in Timbuktu, central Mali.

Indeed, Timbuktu had, under the kings of Mali and Songhai, flourished not only as an important trading post on the trans-Saharan caravan routes but also as a thriving commercial, cultural, and especially, educational centre in medieval West Africa. The Sankoré Mosque/ University, for example, attracted many famous scholars from the Islamic world from as far as Andalusia, Egypt and Syria. And this, in addition to a thriving book trade,

established the city as a renowned scholarly centre in the medieval and early modern world. Under the rule of Askia Muhammad the Great of Songhai (1493–1528), for example, the Sankoré University reached its apogee. Its archives are a significant historical and cultural monument and remain one of the most important sources for the reconstruction of West African history. And only a fraction of these invaluable documents has been translated and decoded. Obviously, the need to preserve and protect this archive is beyond debate, and in the context of a conference on the colonial library and its implications for knowledge cultivation practices in Africa, the concerns over the protection of the library of Timbuktu, which forms part of the Indigenous African archives, were well founded and justified.

However, there was a lack of care in the way those concerns were expressed. The Malian crisis to which the conference was responding was itself partially a blowback to the savage military intervention and destruction of Libya by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) two years prior. That

event, in which France played a central role, has continued to have catastrophic consequences beyond Libya, as we now know: NATO not only bombed Libya, overthrowing its government and destroying its vital infrastructure, but it also helped to destabilise the Sahel region by flooding it with arms that Islamist militants would use to further destabilise Mali and beyond. A decade later, this security crisis is still playing itself out in the Sahelian states that now constitute the Alliance des États du Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), in addition to Chad, Sudan, Nigeria, northern Cameroon and other areas.

One would think that a gathering of some of Africa's brightest minds at a meeting co-organised by the premier pan-African research institution on the continent would be alarmed not only by the destabilising effects of a rising Islamist militarism but also, and more importantly, by the banalisation of Western militarised interventionism on the continent. In the aftermath of NATO's misadventure in Libya and the catastrophic consequences it was having on Mali and the Sahel region, the expectation that a gathering of these scholars would at the very least adopt a critical stance and place what the French were doing in Mali and elsewhere in that region in a critical frame proved unfounded. The mood at the conference, in part because of concerns about the library of Timbuktu and its invaluable archives, was very fearful and this manifested in support for the French intervention, for which a statement to the effect was being drafted to be adopted by the conference. And the language used to justify this position was very similar to the tropes historically used to legitimate colonial interventions: it

was framed in terms of a stalwart external agency, the rational European altruistic actor, intervening to overcome the dark and irrational violence of the Islamists. The panic about the imminent destruction of the library of Timbuktu had made it almost impossible for us to see the historical parallels and the dangerous ground on which we were treading.

I was shocked beyond belief. Here was what was supposed to be an anticolonial moment or, at the very least, should have been a moment of sober reflection, not only on the archives of colonisation but also its historical and contemporary practices. Instead, the event was turning into a spectacle of hegemonic rearticulation reinscribing itself on the conceptualities of the very library it was supposed to be interrogating. And paradoxically it was reproducing and sanctioning the very modalities of practices archived by the library.

A statement calling on France and the international community to do everything possible to prevent the library of Timbuktu from destruction was eventually tabled for the conference to adopt. As the sole dissenting voice, I protested against this attempt to sanction the French intervention in the name of protecting the library of Timbuktu, drawing the attention of the conference to the historical parallels and implications and pleading for us to take a more critical stance. My position, which I stated forcefully, emerged from the fear that appealing to France to intervene to help save the library was naive and complicitous at best. It not only legitimated imperialist violence but also concealed or wrote over French complicity in the very violence it was now being asked to respond to. This, I argued, was tantamount to calling on the arsonist

to put out the fire they had started in the first place. And invoking a higher ethical imperative as the basis of French action, I argued, was serving once again as a mechanism for reinstantiating and reinforcing French neocolonial agendas and imperialistic vocations in the region. In the end, once it had been voiced, my position led to an uproar in the conference hall, igniting a debate that led many to reconsider and express their own uneasiness with lending their names to the statement.

I begin with this encounter to underscore the political and contested nature of notions such as 'Indigenous' and how the seemingly innocent call to protect it can serve as an alibi for oppressive power and imperialistic vocations. Indeed, the invocation of 'Indigenous', or whatever felicitous nomenclature or terminology is used to designate this category – the local, the subaltern, the autochthonous and so forth – is always under threat of appropriation. If not placed in a proper political context and critical frame, it can serve as a mechanism for the reproduction, legitimation and justification of imperial and oppressive power relations. As Sylvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) warns in another context, this uncritical invocation of the Indigenous can function as an instrument not only for entangling, hence neutralising, radical impulses for self-determination with oppressive power structures, but also for strategic appropriations, co-options, recuperations, neutralisations, silences, erasures, and invisibilisations. In other words, what is hailed as a site or instrument for imagining alternative futures and knowledge systems can become the object of political and intellectual fantasies that through ornamental and symbolic appropriation and co-options

theatricalise localised experiences or existences and entrap them in conquering systems.

The importance of this observation owes in part to the fact that we now live in an era that has been characterised as a 'decolonial turn', in which the invocation of the Indigenous, the local or subaltern, and the retrieval of their knowledge systems, cosmogonies and embodied histories, has become a prominent feature of conversations about epistemic decolonisation (or decoloniality) and the possibility of imagining worlds and knowledges otherwise. This idea, so widespread and prevalent in the discourses of our time, insists that the recuperation of the embodied histories and living knowledge traditions of Indigenous, local, or subalternised experiences is important for rethinking modernity and its cultural and epistemic traditions and configuring alternative knowledges and imagining alternative futures. Yet, the lack of care taken in invoking the Indigenous can not only lead to the kind of slippage referred to above but also risks turning it into an instrument for imperialistic agendas.

Indigenous and Alternative Knowledge in Africa

As has become fashionable, especially in decolonial and decolonisationist discourses, Indigenous knowledge designates systems of knowledge, practices and belief systems that are said to be endogenous to a particular local place and culture. It involves claims of the existence of an epistemic essence in local knowledge systems and the ways they comprehend the world; it is this constitutive difference that is said to make them radically different from Western knowledge systems. The idea is that every society or culture has knowledge systems that derive from their own specific local contexts and cultural milieus and that these systems capture the worldview, cognitive patterns and spirit of that culture. Grounded in the embodied histories and practices of autochthonous systems, these knowledges are said to reflect the unique cultural values, cosmographic beliefs and linguistic patterns of Indigenous societies.

As the vessel for a collective cultural and historical memory, Indigenous knowledge is said to function both as an explanatory system that allows for the formulation of a cultural worldview and as a monument of the traditions of a given community. As a gnostic and epistemic system, it witnesses to, accounts for, and textualises the experiences of a local culture and place and its accounting for the world, while correlating local customs with discursive practices that constitute them as knowledge systems. In this sense, Indigenous knowledge is endogenous and place-based. It emerges from within specific local cultural milieus as a living archival monument and historical derivation of a community transmitted over a long period of time from one generation to another. Colonial epistemic and representational schemas sought to radically suppress, discard, write over, and devalue these knowledge systems or violently incorporate them into their own conquering epistemes, as well as use them for instrumental purposes for serving colonising agendas. However, Indigenous knowledge systems continue to constitute significant ways of coming to terms with human existence.

Following the anticolonial struggles in the 1960s and proceeding well into the 1980s, and largely in response to the colonial denigration of African cultures and histories, the idea of decolonisation came to be conceived largely in terms of 'Africanisation', 'indigenisation' or 'endogenisation' (Mbembe 2021). In other words, decolonisation was linked inextricably to both the retrieval of African histories and the revival and celebration of the grounded normativity and embodied histories of autochthonous African cultural, cosmographic, and Indigenous systems for the regeneration of African societies. The focus was not only on a critique of colonial knowledge systems and their perverse ideological and representational schemas, as seen for example in colonial anthropological denigrations of African cultures and societies, and their adverse effects. It was also on the recuperation, reconstruction, and celebration of Indigenous African knowledges, which are said to reflect the unique cultural, ethnolinguistic, and cosmogonic beliefs and values of African societies. In disciplines such as history, anthropology, theology, philosophy, and literature, African intellectuals proposed strategies for critically challenging colonial discursive and representational denigration of African historicity, humanity, culture, and systems of thought. Moreover, they sought to rethink the disciplines for Africa and propose strategies for the continent's regeneration from an African situatedness that drew on Indigenous and alternative knowledges.

In *The Invention of Africa* (1988), a text that can be read as, among other things, a critical evaluation of these Africanisationist and decolonisationist attempts, V.Y. Mudimbe differentiates between the pre-independence and post-independence generations of African intellectuals. Whereas 'the preindependence generation of African intellectuals was mostly concerned with politi-

cal power and strategies for ideological succession', he writes, the post-independence generation, frustrated with these strategies, became more concerned with figuring out new ways of collectivising and democratising historical reason, Africanising knowledge, reformulating 'residual questions concerning ideological power and scientific orthodoxy' and affirming the African voice in spaces from which it had hitherto been excluded or radically silenced (Mudimbe 1988: 181). Writes Mudimbe:

> Since the 1960s, and more visibly since the 1970s and '80s, a new generation prefers to put forward the notion of *epistemological vigilance*. This generation seems much more concerned with strategies for mastering intellectual paradigms about "the path to Truth," with analysing the political dimensions of knowledge, and with procedures for establishing new rules in African Studies. (Mudimbe 1988: 36)

Cameroonian Jesuit priest and philosopher, Engelbert Mveng (1983), captured the mood of this period effectively and forcefully: 'If political sovereignty is necessary, the scientific sovereignty is perhaps more important in present-day Africa'. And in this preoccupation, he insists, many routes exist in the search for truth: 'The West agrees with us today that the way to Truth passes by numerous paths, other than Aristotelian Thomistic logic or Hegelian dialectic. But the social and human sciences themselves must be decolonised' (cited in Mudimbe 1988: 36). And one of these routes is through African Indigenous knowledge systems and strategies of Africanisation, rethinking the social sciences from an African standpoint, recuperating and reconstructing the African past and centring African cultures.

In a now canonical text, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) proposed a decolonisationist strategy that proceeded via the reclamation of linguistic sovereignty. Language, Ngũgĩ suggests, is not only a tool of cultural domination but also a tool for liberation, for it is a carrier of culture and thus embodies a people's identity, history, and worldview. Colonialism functioned simultaneously through the violent imposition of the hegemony of the language of European colonising powers and the radical disruption of the way Indigenous knowledge and values were transmitted, alienating them from their own cultures and forcing them to see themselves through the lens of the coloniser. Therefore, reclaiming the value of Indigenous languages and cultures is an integral part of decolonisation. This reclamation constitutes 'a liberating perspective' that would allow Africans to not only express themselves in their Indigenous languages but also 'see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe' (Ngũgĩ 1986: 87). It thus involves the project of 'recentring' African cultures and placing African languages at the centre of projects of African rejuvenation, pedagogical transformation, and imagining relations with the rest of the world. 'With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other' cultures or societies, Ngũgĩ contends, things will 'be seen from the African perspective'.

Three major tendencies can be identified in these decolonisationist quests. First, is the process of temporalising Africa as an object of knowledge in a retrospective and prospective parole, caught between an alienated present and an invented glorious past. The second regards the expression of African experiences, cultural systems, and embodied practices as concrete existential realities that can be accounted for by local knowledge systems, and the process of translating them into the language, conceptual categories and epistemic systems of the social and human disciplines. Finally, there is the fundamental question of how Africans can or should relate to and comment on their own beings and conditions without perceiving themselves as being imprisoned in bad faith (Mudimbe 2009).

These interventions constituted a reversal of colonial, anthropological or Christian missionary discourses on Africa and represented 'a break with the ideology inherent in the anthropologist's techniques of describing African Weltanschauungen' (Mudimbe 1988, 1991). However, they also paradoxically employed, functioned and actualised themselves and their credibility within the efficiency and the power of the very modern colonial epistemic systems through which Africa was invented and used to negate the pertinence of traditional beliefs and systems of thought, depending as it were, on 'Western methodological grids [as] a requirement for reading and revealing a deep philosophy through an analysis and an interpretation of linguistic structures or anthropological patterns' (Mudimbe 1988: 152). And this was not limited to gnostic attempts at accessing local knowledge systems but included the projects for African rejuvenation foregrounded by the liberation movements and post-independence governments. 'Despite the fact that the liberation movements opposed anthropology as a structural factor of colonisation, some pre- and post-independence African policies seem predicated upon the results of applied anthropology' (Mudimbe 1988: 184).

Indigenous Knowledge and the Decolonial Turn

Ngũgĩ's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) was one of the last major texts to explicitly think of decolonisation from the perspective of the grounded normativity of African situatedness before the decolonisationist projects were interrupted by the ideological shift that propelled the neoliberal ascendancy. Neoliberalism mounted an assault on the sovereignty of postcolonial African states, and with that the African university, through structural adjustment policies in the 1980s. These changes also coincided with the advent of postmodern and poststructuralist modes of inquiry and their scepticisms about the received traditions and categories of modern thought. In this political and ideological climate, the modular nation-state form was attacked and deconstructed, so was any stable conception of politics, identity, culture, knowledge and so forth. Amidst economic crisis and development failures, the unravelling of the postcolonial national state projects and neoliberal restructurings and assaults on the state, these decolonisationist quests were eclipsed or jettisoned while the radical emancipatory politics they championed came to be doubted. In their place emerged Afropessimism, postmodern and poststructuralist modes of inquiry, and specifically postcolonial theory, which came to champion these critiques in relation to the postcolonial state and the afterlives of colonialism in Africa and the global South more broadly.

In recent years, these decolonisationist sentiments have been re-energised by the emergence of what is now known as the 'decolonial turn', that is, the current theoretico-political environment in which the politics of decolonisation (rede-fined as decoloniality) has gained renewed attention. This moment has brought to African consciousness new reasons to propose strategies for rethinking the social and human disciplines for Africa and for African regeneration, based on the embodied histories and grounded normativity of African Indigenous systems. Emerging in the 1990s and consolidating around the Latin American coloniality/modernity research programme, the decolonial turn is said to be anchored on epistemic scepticism about the received Eurocentric accounts of modernity. Specifically, that coloniality, which is understood as the persistence of colonising structures and logics in postcolonial and contemporary social orders, in global and domestic power hierarchies, knowledge systems, gender norms, conceptions of being and so forth, remains a fundamental problem of modernity; hence the theoretical commitment to decolonisation (redefined as decoloniality) as an unfinished project (Quijano 2007; Lugones 2008; Maldonado-Torres 2011, 2007; Grosfuguel 2007).

The group of theorists associated with the decolonial turn had come to believe that despite years of, especially, postcolonial interventions, a new perspective was needed on modernity, its relationship with colonisation, its postcolonial afterlife and how to transcend its structuring matrices (Escobar 2007; Grosfuguel 2007). This belief was partly related to the seeming discomfort and sense of frustration with what had come to be seen as the Eurocentric limitations of the critiques of modernity instantiated by the textual turn. In particular, this unease was caused by what was perceived as the anti-emancipatory limitations of postcolonial theory and its relationship with poststructuralism, as well as with previous attempts at decolonisation.

Decolonial theorists claim that previous attempts at decolonisation were limited by their narrow focus on the anticolonial liberation movements and post-independence nation-building projects, and neglect for the epistemic question beyond the ideas of co-contamination with colonial discourse. Walter Mignolo, a leading decolonial theorist, insists that despite the 'enormous contribution of decolonisation (or independence) …, the limits of all these movements were those of not having found an opening and a freedom of another thinking: that is, of a decolonisation that would carry them … towards a world that would fit many worlds' (Mignolo 2011a: 50). In a similar vein, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022), perhaps the leading decolonial theorist in Africa, speaks of 'truncated African liberation projects' that resulted in 'problematic and fragile nation-building processes' on the continent, hence 'the myth of decolonisation' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022: 2).The fact that some of these states were under attack from the moment independence was proclaimed, as the example of Patrice Lumumba and Congo illustrate, seems to be lost in the fog of attempts at disparaging the significance of their contributions.

A number of quick points. First, the decolonial turn may be thought of as a *re-turn*, that is, as an attempt to return to or take up the unfinished or interrupted project of historical decolonisation, which is now reformulated mainly in terms of epistemology and relabelled 'decolonial'. Second, it can be read as a response to what had come to be characterised, rightfully or otherwise, as the anti-emancipatory limitations of the textual turn and, especially, postcolonial theory. Finally, it is primarily epistemic, that is, a quest to delink from the

logic of coloniality that they claim is sustained at the epistemic level. As a result, significant attention has been focused on the epistemic dimensions of coloniality and its co-imbrication with modernity. There is, decolonial theorists insist, a global epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western subjectivity, knowledge systems, beings and so forth over non-Western ones. More specifically, the West masks its own local and particularistic viewpoints as detached, ungrounded, superior, and universal, while representing non-Western knowledges and perspectives as particular, subordinate, less valuable and incapable of advancing universal and transcendental consciousness.

Decolonial thought, thus, seeks to challenge the dominance of Western geopolitics of knowledge by disarticulating the locus of enunciation from its modern colonial configurations and resignifying it through a curative, recuperative and restorative practice that grounds the geohistorical locations and biographic inscriptions of localised, Indigenous and subalternised experiences, voices, histories and knowledges (Mignolo 2000, 2011b). Decoloniality – that is, the epistemic condition of delinking from the 'colonial matrix of power' – is thus seen as a double preoccupation that must necessarily proceed in two interrelated stages. The first involves 'unveiling the regional foundations of [modernity's] universal claim to truth', decentring its locus of enunciations from its modern colonial configurations. The second, through a geohistoric location and biographic inscription, divests from coloniality and its matrices in order to reimagine modernity beyond its Eurocentric universalistic evocations (Mignolo 2011b: 116).

In Africa, despite the existence of a rich history and tradition of decolonisationist thought and praxis that in some sense provides inspiration for the Latin American iteration, it is some of these decolonial ideas and concepts that have been taken up to resurrect and provide the conceptual and theoretical anchor for decolonisationist projects on the continent in recent time. Even scholars such as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022), who have championed the cause of epistemic decolonisation in Africa, have had to partially mediate their thought through these projects. The result is that historical decolonisation on the continent is conflated with contemporary decoloniality without really specifying their differing epistemic, political, and ideological foundations and regions of emergence.

Towards a Critique

The idea that the embodied histories and living knowledge traditions of Indigenous and subaltern existences and experiences are important for rethinking modernity, its cultural and epistemic traditions and material, political, and sociohistorical configurations is an important insight for rethinking the discursivity of the modern disciplines and imagining alternative futures. However, my interest is not in the truth value of the *prise de parole* of this claim. Nor is it in the demand for transforming existing epistemic structures and protocols and imagining the conditions of possibility of the pluralising effects of knowledge cultivation practices that place Indigenous and alternative knowledges at the centre of rethinking modernity and imagining alternative futures. We all agree today that modernity is highly political; that it was constituted through the projection of the Eu-

ropean cogito on the world as the locus of the universal; that through a systematic construction of a global political, social, economic and epistemic hierarchy the West placed itself above the non-West, which enabled the West to represent its experience and knowledge as the historical expression of the universal. Therefore, the necessity of provincialising and displacing 'the Western geopolitics of knowledge' and recentring alternative knowledge traditions as a means of building alternative futures is not in dispute.

My interest is in submitting the claim to close scrutiny to understand its implications for Africa. First is the condition of possibility of situating Indigenous knowledges in decolonisationist practices. For starters, in centring Indigenous knowledge, cultural texts and signifying practices in a restorative praxis, these systems must also be submitted to the external gaze of a conquering episteme that purports to represent them as 'decolonial' in order to validate its own praxis. In this way, these projects become captives of the linguistic and epistemic protocols of the modern disciplines and are actualised within the authority and historicity of the very systems they aim to challenge. The discursive fields of the modern disciplines have themselves been historically implicated in the politics of the production of colonial difference and its essentialist fetishes. The importance of this point resides precisely in the circularity of the epistemic dependence that it fashions. The emphasis on 'radical epistemic and ontological otherness' of the Indigenous thus foregrounds what Scott Michaelsen and Scott Cutler Shershow (2007) characterise as 'epistemological and political acadianism' (Michaelsen and Shershow

2007: 40), which through a politics of obversion yearns for the purity of the Indigenous subject or position that it valorises. This nostalgia for purity, a yearning for and faith in an 'unadulterated voice', recalls Rousseau's noble savage, imagined as 'pure' and undisturbed 'in the plenitude of its self-presence and self-possession' (Michaelsen and Shershow 2007: 43).

But if the *longue durée* of colonial modernity has constituted a matrix of power that structures contemporary social orders and power relations, and if in an imperialising period of over five hundred years everything has become co-entangled and co-contaminated, then how may we ascertain the purity of local cultures or the Indigenous or subaltern voice? How may we know exactly what in local cultures or Indigenous knowledge has been or has not been corrupted by the imprimatur of the colonial matrix of power? Put differently, how do we know that what is being valorised in local speech, Indigenous cultures, subaltern knowledge and so forth is not, in fact, the inventions, interpolations, or ventriloquisms of the very modern colonial matrix of power that is being contested? Indigeneity does not automatically make a subject inherently radical, neither is Indigenous knowledge automatically emancipatory in and of itself. As a palimpsestic inscription of modern colonialism, it may be tarred with the marks of colonial power and represent the deformities of its authority, identitarian effects and representational violence, which are almost always at risk of being re-implicated in local speech and action. Indigenous knowledge may also reproduce retrograde forms of cultural and identitarian essentialisms in its projects.

I would like to recall here Mahmood Mamdani's (1996) injunction about the political nature of notions such as 'tradition', 'custom', 'culture' or 'tribe', which are partially the invention of colonial modernity. The political modernity instituted by late colonialism in Africa, Mamdani tells us, was partly enunciated through the tribalisation of authority. By giving an authoritarian bent to 'tradition', colonialism systematically produced and distorted the 'tribal' and 'customary' as a site or mechanism of modern colonial power. Thus, the customary was and remains tarred by colonial palimpsestic inscriptions. This immediately recalls Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's, *The Invention of Tradition* (1992), as a telling illustration.

The issue here is not whether local customs or Indigenous knowledges and traditions exist; neither is it about whether Indigenous groups are capable of speech or action. It is about whether such speech, by virtue of being spoken from a certain location or by a certain body, specifically a body that has been tarred by colonial palimpsestic violence, can in and of itself be inherently emancipatory. In this regard, I want to refer to the menace of the contaminating violence of what Mudimbe calls the colonial library. As the archival and epistemic configuration of colonial knowledge regimes and representational schemas, it not only contributed to the invention of the very identities and subjectivities being fought over but also constituted a frame that foreclosed the possibility of coming innocently to these identities and subjectivities, and their conditions of existence. In other words, Indigenous subjectivities are not neutral categories but tarred by the palimpsestic violence of colonial power.

Almost always already implicated in the production of local histories, cultures, identities, speeches, and subjectivities, the authority of this library also tends to force subaltern, Indigenous, postcolonial subjects seeking to speak with their own voice to imitate or reproduce its preestablished discourse. Similarly, gnostic attempts at apprehending local experiences and retrieving local speeches and histories to refute, resist and transcend the corrupting vectors of the library and its epistemic and representational systems constantly risk reproducing or imitating the contaminating violence of an intransigent library that surreptitiously masks, insinuates, or reimplicates itself.

The recuperation of local texts and Indigenous knowledge for overcoming colonialist social formations and advancing a politics of liberation for African rejuvenation thus raises two important questions. The first relates to whether one can innocently retrieve local texts or Indigenous knowledges without recourse to an existing archive that threatens gnostic and decolonisationist practices with conceptual contamination. Is it possible (in part because of the contaminating effects of the colonial library) to reveal the past or local cultural and knowledge systems within the context of their own rationality without distorting their *chose du texte*? Since 'anthropologists perverted the cultures they had studied', Mudimbe writes, it would be 'naïve not to see the catastrophic effects of the anthropologist on the African traditions they have studied and modified in the name of disciplinary demands' (Mudimbe 2013: 399). This has continued to haunt the recuperative and gnostic practices that are often informed by cultural essentialisms or nativist fantasies.

The second question relates to whether the danger of epistemological slippage, when gnostic or scholarly attempts at refuting the discourses of the library run the risk of imitating or reproducing them in their frames, can be avoided and under what conditions. In other words, can the structuring violence of the library, which is a menace for attempts at retrieving Indigenous systems, be transcended and under what conditions? The failure to think through these questions or seriously attend to them in a satisfactory way can and is producing simplistic and insufficiently conceived conceptions of the condition of postcolonial existence, decolonial transcendence, subaltern resistance, local agency and conditions of converting Indigenous knowledges advanced in the name of a politics of alterity that is completely depoliticised and therefore neither radical nor transformative.

The Materiality Question

The focus on epistemology has also tended to ignore the material question of historical decolonisation. In fact, the exotic economy of autochthony and the politics of alterity it advances in the name of decoloniality is precisely what neoliberal capitalism needs and targets as key sites of its power and expansionist logics. Recalling Alain Badiou (2003), neoliberalism proliferates through the valorisation of difference, in the sense that identities that demand recognition through liberal multicultural politics of diversity become key sites for the production and universalisation of the logics of neoliberal capitalist expansion. As this drive articulates itself by targeting sites of difference, that is, seeking new particulars to which neoliberal universals might be exposed and which might be subsumed under its expansionist logics, so more combinations of territorialised cultural identities and differences allow neoliberal capitalism to proliferate.

It is therefore in the interest of neoliberal capitalism for political struggles about the historical and ongoing structural contradictions of colonial capitalist modernity and its exploitative practices to be framed not in terms of sovereignty or the material, but in cultural, epistemic and identitarian terms for these do not fundamentally challenge the ethos of its logic and practice. And decolonial theory, precisely because it has tended to occlude the materialist impulses of historical decolonisation, focusing instead on the epistemic, cultural, and identitarian, as if those political economy questions and the material conditions that gave rise to them have been exhausted, risks becoming an avenue for, or unwitting accomplice of, neoliberal traversals and universalising drives.

This risk raises the issue of materialism and how it is accounted for in decolonial theory. Let us consider this through the idea of 'delinking', which is posited as a strategy for decolonial transcendence. First proposed by Samir Amin (1985), delinking was grounded in the materiality of political economy and proposed to advance the Third World Marxist project as a strategy for escaping the structural conditions and exploitative relationship that constrains Southern development in a fundamentally unjust and unequal global capitalist world system that is characterised by exploitation and unequal exchange. However, as appropriated by decolonial theorists, specifically Walter Mignolo (2007) and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022) among others, delinking has been uprooted from its political economy groundings, emptied of its materialist content

and resignified as an epistemic strategy. The reason for this strategic appropriation and resignification, Mignolo tells us, is that Amin was Marxist. And as part of the Eurocentric archive of modernity, Marxism constrains or prevents the taking over of 'epistemic power'. Writes Mignolo:

> Samir Amin's version [of delinking] is formulated at the level of economic and political (state) delinking. Without an epistemic delinking it is difficult to really delink from the modern notion of Totality. In the case of Amin, he was still caught in the mirage of Marxism and, therefore, of modernity. Thus, his delinking was proposed at the level of the content rather than at the epistemic level that sustain the logic of coloniality. (Mignolo 2007: 502, n. 10)

This type of claim also organises Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2022: 7–9) reading of Amin. A number of issues arise from the above quote. First, the epistemic, according to Mignolo and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, is the key to unlocking the oppressive structures of colonial modernity and thus may be more important than the material or economic. Second, one gets the impression that Mignolo is claiming to be outside the 'mirage of modernity' and that epistemic activism can keep one out of it.

This is a vulgar *epistemism* that submits everything to the epistemic. By epistemism, I refer to the ideological belief in the primacy of epistemology and its construction as the primary factor or moving force of anticolonial liberation, individual autonomy and societal regeneration. And this is held to outstrip and organise all others. Epistemism is a major problem of decolonial thinking. By centring

the epistemic and positing a vision of politics grounded on it as the route to anticolonial liberation and transcendence, epistemism both fractures the mutually constituted oppressive structures of colonial modernity and problematically constructs a hierarchy that subsumes the material, political and economic under the epistemic (and with that the cultural, corporeal and identitarian insofar as decolonial epistemic activism proceeds through the body politics and geohistoric location of the decolonial subject) as if there are no material dimensions to the epistemic or cultural.

As Fanon warned us a long time ago, anticolonial liberation cannot be reduced to an autochthonous yearning for the revival of a cultural past. In the wake of Negritude and its desire to recuperate the glorious African past and culture, Fanon told us that he was not interested in the revival or exaltation of an African past and its glorious civilisations at the expense of the material present and its future. Speaking in this context, of his lack of desire to direct his energies to reviving an African cultural past at the expense of a suffocating present of colonial domination and a possible anticolonial future, he referred specifically to the people of Indochina and their anticolonial rising: 'It is not because the Indo-Chinese has discovered a culture of their own that they revolted. Quite simply this was because it became impossible for them to breathe' (Fanon [1967] 2008: 201).

One can extend the lessons of this injunction to contemporary China and claim that it is not because it has discovered some essential epistemic or cultural truths about its past that it has emerged as a major global power. Rather, it is because marshalling its productive and material forces allowed China to claim political and economic power in the world. Culture is important and is obviously implicated in the Chinese success story, but China is respected and feared primarily because of its economic and political might, not its cultural difference. By not taking the material seriously as a site for the working of political possibilities, and especially as an instrument of challenging colonial capitalist social formations, political hierarchies and global inequalities underpinned by the logics of coloniality, we miss one of the primary forces that informs and sustains the historical quest for decolonisation and subaltern struggles against exploitative forms of everyday power.

Amilcar Cabral's (1974) warning remains relevant and compelling: 'the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children' (Cabral 1974: 70). How this future is secured and guaranteed, what strategies are employed or adopted to bring it forth, is what is at stake in this cavalier dismissal of Marxism and its Third World iterations. One may be critical of Amin and raise questions about the condition of possibility of the politics of delinking. One can even question the way he frames it and the strictures within which this politics plays out. However, the idea that his Marxist leanings implicate him in the mirage of modernity and thus rob him of transformational potency, as if Mignolo or Ndlovu-Gatsheni are outside of it, is not valid. As a matter of fact, the same can be said of decolonial theory, which is also captive of the cultural politics of modernity and the linguistic, epistemic and discursive protocols of its knowledge systems.

The appropriation of the concept of delinking by Mignolo and other decolonial theorists, and its representation as an epistemological strategy disembedded from its materialist groundings and linkage to the historical struggles of Southern societies as they negotiate the precarity of colonial capitalist exploitation and dependency, as if the material questions have been exhausted or have resolved themselves, also inaugurates its own problems. Since 'the epistemic locations for delinking come from the emergence of the geo- and body-politics of knowledge' (Mignolo 2007), the materiality of political economy (as originally framed by Amin) gets replaced by the materiality of the corporeality of subalternised experiences, according to which delinking proceeds via the biographic inscriptions of the subject's location (i.e., 'the body politics of knowledge').

The Challenge of Translation

Let me now turn to the issue of how Indigenous knowledge is encountered and translated into the conceptual categories and epistemic systems of the modern disciplines, and the challenge this poses for decolonisationist strategies that rely on Indigenous knowledges and local texts for their own praxis. To recuperate Indigenous voices and experiences, local texts and idioms, silenced histories and (or) the practice of everyday life, and use them for decolonial praxis – that is, represent them as the foundation for new knowledge – they must first be converted within modern epistemic systems that are themselves vectors of modernity. Such

a process, however, is never able to unveil local realities within the contexts of their own rationalities. What it does instead is transmute them into the imprimatur of the intellectual fields and conceptual categories of the very modern systems being challenged.

These efforts to make the experiences intelligible and useful for disciplinary preoccupations are ultimately unable to escape the modernising gaze and discursivity of the modern disciplines and their fetishes. Neither can they escape the power of objectifying discourses that reconstruct them in the language and conceptual systems of disciplines which have themselves been complicit in the historical silences and foreclosures of these groups. Put differently, beneath the symbolic orders of the recuperative efforts of decolonial practices are the very modern epistemic systems and knowledge practices from which they cannot cut themselves off completely.

The method of accessing and translating Indigenous knowledge into the conceptual categories and epistemic systems of modern disciplines is anthropological; its epistemological locus is the ethnographic foundation and demands of colonial anthropology and its apprehension of local experiences. Constituting its own structural ambit of power, it raises questions about power, the positionality of the theorist, and the credibility of disciplinary procedures and formulations and the discourses they make possible, irrespective of the self-conscious definition of the theorists or the perspective they adopt or privilege. Such a practice does not and has never been able to resolve the validity problem regarding disciplinary constructions and gnostic practices. Nor does it

resolve the question of power and privilege. Ultimately, such a construction, whether based on the interpretation of ethnographic or archival material, or on theoretical speculations and abstractions, or I may add, even the body politics of knowledge *à la* decolonial theory, will always fall back on its own reconstructed logic that must, through the use of 'concepts and grids coming from outside the local language and place', reorganise and reformulate the material for its own purpose (Mudimbe 1991: 102).

In the end, 'a dialogical confrontation' will take place 'between the native original place that the concepts exceed and, on the other hand, the scientific space in which they valorise themselves'. This determines the extent of an appropriative violence and highlights the power relations within which such disciplinary procedures and interpretations are caught. On the one hand, local texts and idioms, Indigenous knowledge systems or subaltern speeches and experiences neither exist by, nor submit to, the logics of disciplinary procedures that they do not know or even care for. They become disciplinary knowledge only through the importation of foreign concepts and the imposition of a disciplinary will that must manage them as objects subjected to the curiosity, gaze, and authority of disciplinary procedures that colonise them within their own schemas while purporting to represent them as new knowledge. But in the attempt to institutionalise an interpretation for political or academic purposes, these local experiences and knowledge systems are removed from the contexts of their own rationality and reorganised, rearranged and re-presented as new knowledge according to the logics of conceptual

or analytical systems whose locus of emergence lies not in these local systems themselves but in systems that are the apparatus of the modern epistemes being challenged, and which ultimately distort their *chose du texte* (Mudimbe 1988, 1991).

Even border gnosis that results from delinking must transcend not only the modern colonial knowledge systems but also the local subalternised knowledges, and resignify them into a new locus of enunciation outside European and Indigenous cognitive patterns. The consequence is the removal of the local experiences, texts, cosmogonies and knowledges from the contexts of their own rationality and their subsumption under the rules of scientific procedures, disciplinary practices and epistemic and conceptual power of a conquering episteme. To generate or actualise an interpretation, decoloniality must not only mediate the tensions between local cultural realities, or texts that purport to interpret them, and their inscriptions in disciplinary discourses, which have their own rules and rationalities, but must also conceptually bridge and convert those realities/experiences 'with the "space" of scientific discourse' and concepts that come from outside the local place and language (Mudimbe 1991: 101).

It is this issue of 'conceptual bridging' or translation that constitutes a far greater challenge for decolonial recuperative attempts. This is because disciplinary descriptions or constructions are never simply a reproduction of the dialogic material but an elaborate system of reconstruction dependent on foreign concepts, languages, and procedures. This dialogic tension must be conceptually bridged to make the local texts and experience intel-

ligible for disciplinary procedures and discourses. In this attempt to conceptually bridge, however, a violence is done to the primordial text or speech. This is because disciplinary procedures, which are dependent on their own rationalities and reconstructed logics, entrap local speeches and experiences within their own discourses and purport to represent them as new knowledge or as instruments of decolonial praxis. It is partly for this reason that Mudimbe suggests that we treat every disciplinary construction with suspicion. What these issues highlight for me is the challenge of translating subaltern, Indigenous or local texts, knowledges, and experiences into the conceptual systems and categories of the social disciplines.

By translation, I do not refer simply to the practice of rendering a text intelligible from an original language of inscription or enunciation into another but to the politics of conceptual and epistemic bridging. Specifically, I refer to the practice, and its conditions of possibility, of converting a place, script, idiom, speech, reality, experience, knowledge system and so forth from the contexts of its rationality into the conceptual categories and epistemic systems of the modern disciplines. This politics, which seeks to transmute or transcend an original experience, text, speech or locality and encode it within the conceptual matrices of the modern disciplines, is one of the major ways that Indigenous knowledge is encountered and incorporated in decolonial praxis. It is partly through the politics of translation that decolonisation and decoloniality attempt to transcend coloniality and bring forth decolonial futures. Put differently, every form of decolonial praxis, beyond mere critique, must attempt to retrieve and translate local experiences and realities into the knowledge capitals of the modern disciplines.

But the politics of translation is a parallax. Rather than being a simple process of rendering a text, idiom or experience intelligible from one context to another, it constitutes its own structural ambits of power. This can be seen, for example, in the distance that separates the social scientist and the community that is the object of their gaze, irrespective of whether they originally come from that community or not. Despite protestations to the contrary, there are real power differentials and hierarchies between the two, in the way that, say, the author of a biography differs from the author of the life that is its object. As Talal Asad (1993) teaches us: a life or experience may produce a script, but ultimately it is the person with a claim to authorial authority who has the power to inscribe it, that is, authorise a particular kind of narrative about that life or experience. Even when both 'authors' are the same person, in the case of an autobiography, the basic structuration of this injunction is not impeached. It would still require an elaborate system of temporalising a life, choosing elements, reorganising and rearranging the way it is lived in order to produce a particular narrative or fit it into a particular analytical or narrativising grid.

Indeed, no matter how compelling, narratives are never the experiences or realities they are based on or purport to explain: they are always 'necessarily emplotted in a way in which life is not. Thus, they necessarily distort life whether or not the evidence upon which they are based could be proved correct' (Trouillot 1995: 6). That every narrative or disciplinary formulation and construction is arbitrary goes without saying. They basically are political and subjective attempts at imposing order on the disorderliness or messiness of phenomena. And they are dependent on the subjective will of the practitioner and on the constraints of the frames of discursivity and disciplinarity within which they operate. In other words, even when practitioners protest otherwise and claim that their work is informed by local experiences, histories, or knowledges, it is they who ultimately get to decide which of those experiences, knowledges, or histories are important for disciplinary purposes. It is they who get to conceptually organise and rearrange those histories and experiences into particular types of narratives in ways that are congruent with their own subjective will and with what is intelligible to the fidelity of 'scientific' practices.

In this process, a kind of violence is done to the original text which, as the prehistory or pre-text of the disciplinary exegesis it is used to fashion, is taken out of the context of its own rationality and submitted to the power of a conquering episteme that purports to represent it as new knowledge for whatever purpose. It is for this reason that every disciplinary formulation is conceptually different from the material on which it claims to be based; it is always metaphorically designating 'a new space' of iteration or new configuration. Put differently, the material being reconstructed may have come from any source – fieldwork, archival depositories, local cosmographical texts or even speculative abstraction or personal lived experiences – but it always must go through an elaborate process of rearrangement and reorganisation to generate a narrative and thus function as disciplinary knowledge.

The point I am making is that translation and conceptual bridging are a ghost in the machine of the modern disciplines and thus a menace to attempts at retrieving local texts and Indigenous knowledge. Every disciplinary formulation, construction, or description is confronted by questions about power and the condition of conversion or conceptual bridging and its practical constraints, irrespective of what ethical or unethical intentions may animate its politics. Put differently, translating one space, text, knowledge, system, experience, culture, and idiom into another is always fraught. Attempts at converting Indigenous knowledges and local experiences for disciplinary praxis are challenged by questions about power and the condition of possibility of their conversion.

First, a translation is not an innocent act but also a will to power or domination, that is, an intellectual consciousness conveying an experience, text, idiom, and so on within specific disciplinary procedures and through an external relation. In other words, it is the violence that we do onto things: 'Someone,' Robert Young (2003) reminds us, 'is translating something or someone. Someone or something is being translated, being transformed from a subject to an object' (2003: 140). Second, a translation will always remain a translation. At once a moment and site of rupture, it is always, despite methodological or theoretical precautions, a recreation, an interpretation, an originary reconstruction that can never really reproduce or recreate the pre-text on which it claims to be based. Put differently, in disciplinary reconstructions, subaltern experiences, local texts, and knowledge systems are always the pre-texts for such constructions. Third, a dialogic tension will always exist between local texts and idioms and the way they are mediated, interpreted, or conceptually converted in disciplinary discourses and preoccupations.

Drawing attention to the difficulties that fraught gnostic attempts at rethinking Africa through the recuperation and centring of the Indigenous or local knowledge systems, cultural practices and identities is to caution against hasty and often superficial resolutions of the contradictions of colonial modernity and its cultural, identitarian and epistemic effects on African societies as well as against parochial commitments to essentialist visions of politics and postcolonial transcendence.

Conclusion

Clapperton Mavhunga (2017) has suggested that we take Africa seriously as a site of knowledge traditions and science, technology and innovation, and understand African histories, voices and existence not just as an empirical site for confirming our theories or cannon fodder for theory formation but as a legitimate world-historical region in its own rights. What if we took what Africans know seriously and imagined the world from the location of that knowledge tradition, he asks. What kind of knowledge practices would this require, but more importantly, what type of knowledges would this make possible? Here, Mavhunga is inviting us to take Indigenous knowledges in Africa seriously.

Paulin Hountondji (2009) has also suggested the need to ground our pedagogical and scientific activities in endogenous systems, from our African locations and situatedness: 'Our scientific activity', he writes, 'is extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose. The exclusive use of European languages as a means of scientific expression reinforces this alienation' (Hountondji 2009: 128). For this reason, suggests Hountondji, the 'final goal' should be 'an autonomous, self-reliant process of knowledge production' deeply rooted in the embodied histories and grounded normativity of African experiences and cultures, a 'capitalisation that enables us to answer our own questions and meet both the intellectual and the material needs of African societies' (Hountondji 2009: 128). This knowledge system must, however, Hountondji cautions, be 'grounded in a solid appropriation of the international intellectual legacy and deeply rooted in the African experience' from an African situatedness (Hountondji 2009: 129). What this means is that we must engage the world and 'formulate original "problematics," original sets of problems' from our African location but must be open to the idea of borrowing and incorporating a multiplicity of influences, ideas, knowledges, and not be limited by static conceptions and essentialist notions of indigeneity, culture, and knowledges.

Thinking Africa through the recuperation and centring of Indigenous or local knowledge systems requires an expansive strategy beyond parochial commitments to essentialist visions of knowledge production. What this means in essence, and to put it analogically in Mudimbean terms, is to 'invent' another future; a future that while grounded in African situatedness is not limited by a nativist commitment to primordial cultural essentialisms and static conceptions of identity and culture. Indigenous cultures are never static but dy-

namic, undergoing constant transformations and being constantly reimagined. While important for this politics of 'invention', retrieving Indigenous knowledges should involve what Mudimbe (1994) calls *reprendre*: to re-apprehend, recapture, resume, take back. It should be a recuperative process of 'taking up an interrupted tradition, not out of a desire for purity, which would testify only to the imaginations of dead ancestors, but in a way that reflects the conditions of today' (1994: 154).

In other words, any attempts at reimagining Africa via Indigenous knowledges, cultures and texts must also, as Mudimbe insists, involve 'a methodological assessment … beginning, in effect, with an evaluation of the tools, means and projects' that are being used, as well as inviting a 'pause, a meditation, a query on the meaning' of these preoccupations and what they mean and for what purpose (Mudimbe 1994: 154). We have to assess the very project, practice and meaning of recuperation, since much of what passes as radical critique of colonial modernity also functions within its historicity.

Let me end by referring, even if briefly, to the example of Fela Kuti, the Nigerian Afrobeat pioneer, and the lessons that his creative will teaches us about the possibility of alternative knowledges and futures in Africa. Fela named his music Afrobeat, though it is a fusion of diverse sounds and influences: Yoruba percussion, West African highlife, American jazz, funk and soul. While the music is intelligible to jazz and funk lovers, for example, it is not reducible to these genres of music, neither can it be confused with them. Fela proudly called his music Afrobeat (African beat) because he wanted

to stress the location and situatedness of its producer, as well as the way he imagined Africa, from where he viewed and made sense of the world. No one can listen to Fela's music and not understand he is African. Despite the diverse influences he blended to produce his sound, his African situatedness shines through. By choosing elements from different locations to incorporate in his world, he was able to interpret those sounds from his African location, producing timeless music that is as much 'authentically' African as say mbalax from Senegambia or rumba from the DRC.

Like Fela, African creativity needs not be constrained by autochthonous essentialisms and nativist yearnings for cultural purity; it can blend diverse influences while remaining distinctly African. With the grounded normativity and embodied experiences of African situatedness as our guide, we can adapt diverse knowledge systems to our unique conditions, integrating them with local traditions, interpreting them from an African perspective. The point I am making is that embracing a more flexible approach to Indigenous knowledge, recognising its dynamic and evolving nature, and integrating it with global knowledge traditions from our African situatedness is more useful than the rigid essentialisms that govern much talk about Indigenous knowledges in Africa.

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Announcements // *Annonces*

African Fellowships for Research in Indegenous and Alternative Knowledge (AFRIAK)

CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline: 15 May 2025

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is pleased to announce a call for proposals for a new research and fellowship programme, the **African Fellowships for Research in Indigenous and Alternative Knowledges (AFRIAK)**. This programme is offered with the support of the Mastercard Foundation as part of the Foundation's commitment to advance education and skills for young people in Africa, and in recognition of the contribution of the late Ghanaian intellectual, Dr Sulley Gariba, in advocating for the place of African knowledge in Research and Evaluation.

This programme seeks to implement an innovative approach to training a new generation of young people to design research projects and produce knowledge as a partnership between academic mentors on the one hand and bearers of Indigenous knowledge on the other. This approach will privilege local, Indigenous and endogenous knowledge as forms of knowledge or knowledge systems that are deeply embedded in communities and closely tied to their lived experiences. Although these forms of knowledge may be geographically proximate to the young people in Africa, they remain inaccessible to them partly because of the dominance of Western formats of learning in our school and university curriculum

and partly owing to the gerontocratic nature of our communities, where such knowledge is preserved for a few, predominantly male, knowledge-bearers. The AFRIAK approach is innovative because it redirects us to use what we have in our communities and invites us to appreciate the many ways in which *what we have* in our communities is used, preserved and disseminated.

At its core, AFRIAK is premised on the conviction that training a new cadre of young people with the skills to produce and apply knowledge derived from Indigenous and local realities will generate unique but useable data. This data, we believe, contains important knowledge that will support policy interventions aimed at creating fulfilling livelihoods for young people and Indigenous or local communities.

We acknowledge that the notion of 'Indigenous' is contested. Its colonial pedigree carries pejorative connotations. This research and fellowship programme seeks to critically examine and strip the term of its negative connotations, allowing for the full value of 'what we have' in our communities to be recognised and appreciated.

Previous research at CODESRIA, led by the Beninois philosopher, Paulin Hountondji, located the problematic use of the notion to its colonial heritage and persisting

scientific dependence in Africa today.[1] In colonised societies, 'Indigenous' was contrasted with 'exotic', implying that the former was native, traditional, primitive and resistant to change. Indigenous knowledge (IK) was thus framed as vernacular, uncivilised, deprived and superstitious. Hountondji analysed these forms of knowledge, noting that the persistence of the pejorative connotations made sense only in contexts of persisting extraversion of knowledge in Africa.[2] He preferred the notion of 'endogenous' to 'Indigenous' arguing that this reframing would recentre Africa in knowledge production. This programme, while acknowledging these debates and the historical baggage many terms carry, uses the notion of 'Indigenous knowledge' to refer to what is organic to society, to borrow Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual. It underscores the idea of 'using what we have', while recognising that what we have in society is not static nor does it exist in splendid isolation; rather, it evolves through continuous interaction with other knowledge systems.[3]

The AFRIAK research and fellowship project will involve three related activities. These are:

1. A research, training and mentorship fellowship programme for young people.
2. Policy convenings.
3. An alumni and community of practice in Indigenous and alternative knowledge network.

The three interrelated programme activities are designed to facilitate the attainment of the following outcomes:

a) Create opportunities and spaces for young researchers to engage in multidisciplinary knowledge production and apply it jointly with academics, activists, policy practitioners and IK- bearers and -keepers.

b) Facilitate collaborative research that will minimise the isolation of Indigenous knowledge-bearers/keepers/scholars from other knowledge-bearers or -keepers and help eliminate asymmetries and silos within knowledge production systems.

c) Expand opportunities to enhance the capacity of participants, especially those who have been historically or culturally marginalised, to acquire and inquire into knowledges embedded in communities.

d) Transform knowledge into action while enhancing its capacity to create dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for young people in several sectors, including the creative sector; agriculture and agri-foods systems; digital systems, and other industries; in curriculum development, pedagogy and learning; nutrition and climate health;

and in human, plant and animal health, among other sectors with pressing needs and opportunities in Africa.

e) Facilitate the emergence of a critical mass of young women researchers who will engage with and train future generations of IK research and practices, including embracing new technologies such as AI to mobilise and apply IK.

Overall, the project is expected to lead to the uptake and scaling of Indigenous and other forms of alternative knowledge as the basis for supporting dignified livelihood strategies for young people and communities, in key sectors including those highlighted above. Proposals submitted under this call should revolve around the following areas:

a) Indigenous knowledge and methods of knowing.

b) Indigenous medical science and practices.

c) Indigenous knowledge, the creative sector and systems of entrepreneurship.

d) Agriculture and agri-foods systems.

e) Mobilising digital systems for Indigenous knowledge in Africa.

f) Indigenous pedagogies and curriculum development.

g) Indigenous knowledge in social capital development.

h) Indigenous technologies and sustainable development.

i) Indigenous knowledge and climate change.

j) IK heritage in nutrition and climate health.

k) Indigenous languages and science.

l) Indigenous knowledge, religion and spirituality science.

m) Indigenous science and ecological sustainability.

Target for this call

This call targets young people aged 24 and 35 years, engaged in research and knowledge production activities that draw, or aspire to draw, on Indigenous or local knowledge perspectives. The targeted youth should be based in formal research and knowledge institutions or Indigenous knowledge research centres in Africa. Practitioners with formal education qualifications, who are engaged in activities that draw on the application of Indigenous or local knowledge perspectives, are also encouraged to apply. ***Up to 70 per cent of the young people to be selected for the fellowship will be young women.*** Applicants should highlight their research area/theme of interest, aligning with CODESRIA's priority areas identified above.

Structure and duration of fellowship

The fellowship includes induction, mid-term institute, fieldwork, dissemination activities and post-fellowship activities, where alumni will contribute to a community of practice in Indigenous and other knowledge systems. Fellows will be grouped into teams of seven, accompanied by two bearers of Indigenous or local knowledge and an academic mentor. Conceptualisation of the research, its execution, and dissemination approaches will be co-developed between the young fellows, academic mentors and bearers of Indigenous knowledge. The duration of the fellowship, including fieldwork and dissemination, will be seven months. Throughout the fellowship, research teams will receive mentorship and support from intellectual hubs, which will be identified and constituted by CODESRIA to enhance scholarly and community engagement.

Application modalities

Individual and group applications are welcome.

Individual applicants are required to submit the following:

1. A one-page CV that indicates, among other details, date of birth and current occupation or engagement and institutional affiliation.

2. A two-page concept note that identifies a topic; explains how that theme is aligned with a priority area that CODESRIA has itemised; provides a justification for the choice of theme and how compelling it is; and summarises the key steps the individual aims to go through to achieve the outcomes from the research and fellowship process.

3. A one-page reference letter from two referees familiar with the work of the applicant.

Group applicants (maximum of 7 persons) are required to submit the following:

1. A one-page CV for each of the group members to be submitted as one consolidated document. Each CV should indicate, among other details, date of birth and current occupation or engagement and institutional affiliation. **The Principal Investigator or Group Leader must be clearly identified at the top of the set of CVs.**

2. A two-page concept note that identifies a topic; explains how that theme is aligned with a priority area that CODESRIA has itemised; provides a justification for the choice of theme and how compelling it is; and summarises the key steps the group aims to go through to achieve the outcomes from the research and fellowship process.

3. Two letters of reference that specifically endorse the group, rather than individual members.

Applications should be submitted through the CODESRIA portal reserved for this fellowship, at https://submission.codesria.org/african-fellowships-for-research-in-indigenous-and-alternative-knowledges-afriak/

The deadline for applications is 15 May 2025.

Notes

1. Paulin Hountondji, 'Scientific Dependence in Africa Today', in *Research in African Literatures, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1990*.

2. Paulin Hountondji, 'Recherche et extraversion: éléments pour une sociologie de la science dans les pays de la périphérie', in *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4, 1990.

3. There are similar discussions along these lines led by Yuen Yuen Ang, the Alfred Chandler Chair Professor of Political Economy at Johns Hopkins University and author of the *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*.

Bourses pour la recherche
sur les savoirs indigènes et alterntifs en Afrique (AFRIAK)

APPEL A PROPOSITIONS

Date limite : 15 Mai 2025

Le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (Codesria) a le plaisir d'annoncer un appel à propositions pour un nouveau programme de recherche et de bourses, les bourses **africaines pour la recherche sur les savoirs indigènes et alternatifs (AFRIAK).** Ce programme est proposé avec le soutien de la Fondation Mastercard dans le cadre de l'engagement de la Fondation à promouvoir l'éducation et les compétences des jeunes en Afrique, et en reconnaissance de la contribution de l'intellectuel ghanéen Sulley Gariba, aujourd'hui décédé, à la valorisation des savoirs africains dans la recherche et l'évaluation.

Ce programme entend mettre en œuvre une approche novatrice visant à former une nouvelle génération de jeunes à la conception de projets de recherche et à la production de savoirs, et ce dans le cadre d'un partenariat entre des mentors universitaires d'une part et des détenteurs de savoirs indigène d'autre part. Cette approche privilégiera les savoirs locaux, indigènes et endogènes en tant que formes de connaissances ou systèmes de connaissances profondément ancrés dans les communautés et étroitement liés à leurs expériences vécues. Bien que ces formes de connaissances puissent être géographiquement proches des jeunes en Afrique, elles leur restent inaccessibles, notamment en raison de la prédominance des systèmes d'apprentissage occidentaux dans nos programmes scolaires et universitaires, et également en raison de la nature gérontocratique de nos communautés, où la préservation de ces savoirs est assurée pour quelques

détenteurs de savoir, principalement des hommes. L'approche AFRIAK est novatrice dans la mesure où elle nous redirige vers l'utilisation de ce que nous avons dans nos communautés et nous invite à apprécier les nombreuses façons dont *ce que nous avons* dans nos communautés est utilisé, préservé et diffusé.

À la base, AFRIAK a pour prémisse la conviction que la formation d'un nouveau groupe de jeunes ayant les compétences nécessaires pour produire et appliquer des connaissances issues des réalités indigènes et locales permettra de générer des données uniques, mais exploitables. De telles données contiennent, nous en sommes persuadés, des connaissances importantes qui soutiendront les interventions politiques ayant pour but de créer des moyens de subsistance épanouissants pour les jeunes et les communautés indigènes ou locales.

Il est indéniable que la notion d'« indigène » est contestée. Son pedigree colonial porte des connotations péjoratives. Ce programme de recherche et de bourses s'efforce de procéder à l'examen critique de ce terme et d'en détacher les connotations négatives, autorisant la pleine valeur de « ce que nous avons » dans nos communautés à être reconnue et appréciée.

Des recherches antérieures menées au Codesria, sous la direction du philosophe béninois Paulin Hountondji, ont rattaché l'usage problématique de cette notion à son origine coloniale et à la dépendance scientifique persistante de l'Afrique aujourd'hui[1]. Dans les sociétés colonisées, « indigène » entrait en contraste avec

«exotique», insinuant le caractère natif, traditionnel, primitif et résistant au changement du premier. Les savoirs indigènes (SI) étaient ainsi présentés comme vernaculaires, non civilisés, défavorisés et superstitieux. Hountondji a analysé ces formes de savoirs, en notant que la persistance des connotations péjoratives n'a de sens que dans des contextes d'extraversion persistante des savoirs en Afrique[2]. Il a préféré la notion d'«endogène» à celle d'«indigène», soutenant que ce recadrage allait recentrer l'Afrique dans la production des connaissances. Tout en reconnaissant ces débats et le bagage historique que de nombreux termes portent, ce programme utilise la notion de «savoir indigène» pour renvoyer à ce qui, pour reprendre le concept de l'intellectuel organique de Gramci, est organique à la société. Il met l'accent sur l'idée d'«utiliser ce que nous avons», tout en reconnaissant que ce que nous avons dans la société n'est pas statique et n'existe pas dans un splendide isolement ; cela évolue, au contraire, par une interaction continue avec d'autres systèmes de savoirs[3].

Le projet de recherche et de bourse du programme AFRIAK s'articulera autour de trois activités connexes. Il s'agit :

1. D'un programme de bourses de recherche, de formation et de mentorat pour les jeunes.
2. De rencontres pour discuter des politiques.
3. D'une communauté d'anciens membres et de praticiens dans le réseau des savoirs indigènes et alternatifs.

Les trois activités interdépendantes du programme sont définies de manière à faciliter la réalisation des objectifs suivants :

a) Créer des opportunités et des espaces permettant aux jeunes chercheurs de s'engager dans la production de connaissances multidisciplinaires et de les appliquer conjointement avec des universitaires, des activistes, des décideurs politiques et des détenteurs et gardiens de savoirs indigènes.

a) Faciliter la recherche collaborative qui contribuera à réduire l'isolement des détenteurs/gardiens/chercheurs de savoirs indigènes par rapport aux autres détenteurs/gardiens de savoirs et à éliminer les asymétries et les cloisonnements au sein des systèmes de production de savoirs.

b) Élargir les possibilités d'améliorer la capacité des participants, en particulier ceux qui sont historiquement/culturellement marginalisés, à acquérir et à rechercher des savoirs ancrés dans les communautés.

c) Transformer les connaissances en actions tout en renforçant sa capacité à créer des opportunités d'emploi dignes et épanouissantes pour les jeunes dans plusieurs secteurs, notamment le secteur créatif, l'agriculture et les systèmes agroalimentaires, les systèmes numériques, et d'autres industries, dans l'élaboration des programmes éducatifs, la pédagogie et l'apprentissage, la nutrition et la santé climatique, dans la santé humaine, végétale et animale, entre autres secteurs connaissant de pressants besoins et des opportunités en Afrique.

d) Faciliter l'émergence d'une masse critique de jeunes chercheuses qui s'engageront et formeront les générations futures de recherche et de pratiques en matière de savoirs traditionnels, notamment en adoptant de nouvelles technologies telles que l'IA pour mobiliser et appliquer ces savoirs.

Dans l'ensemble, le projet devrait aboutir à l'adoption et à la mise à l'échelle des savoirs indigènes et d'autres formes de savoirs alternatifs comme fondements de stratégies de subsistance dignes pour les jeunes et les communautés, dans des secteurs clés tels que ceux cités plus haut. Les propositions soumises dans le cadre de cet appel devraient porter sur les domaines suivants :

a) Savoirs et méthodes de connaissance indigènes

b) Sciences et pratiques médicales indigènes

c) Savoirs indigènes, secteur créatif et systèmes d'entrepreneuriat

d) Systèmes agricoles et agroalimentaires

e) Mobilisation des systèmes numériques pour les savoirs indigènes en Afrique

f) Pédagogies indigènes et élaboration de programmes scolaires

g) Savoirs indigènes dans le développement du capital social

h) Technologies indigènes et développement durable

i) Savoirs indigènes et changement climatique

j) Patrimoine de savoirs indigènes en matière de nutrition et de santé climatique

k) Langues et sciences indigènes

l) Savoirs indigènes, religion et spiritualité

m) Sciences indigènes et durabilité écologique

Public cible de cet appel

Sont visés par cet appel les jeunes, âgés de 24 à 35 ans, engagés dans des activités de recherche et de production de savoir qui s'inspirent, ou ont pour ambition de s'inspirer, des perspectives des savoirs indigènes/locaux. Les jeunes ciblés doivent être rattachés à des institutions officielles de recherche et de connaissance ou à des centres de recherche sur les savoirs indigènes en Afrique. Les praticiens ayant des qualifications d'enseignement formel, qui sont engagés dans des activités qui s'appuient sur l'application des perspectives de savoirs indigènes/locaux, sont également encouragés à postuler. **Jusqu'à 70 % des jeunes sélectionnés pour la bourse seront des jeunes femmes.** Les candidats doivent préciser leur domaine/thème de recherche d'intérêt, conformément aux domaines prioritaires du Codesria identifiés plus haut.

Organisation et durée de la bourse

La bourse couvre l'initiation, le stage de mi-parcours, le travail de terrain, les activités de diffusion et les activités après la bourse, au cours desquelles les anciens boursiers apporteront leur contribution à une communauté de pratique dans les systèmes de savoirs indigènes et autres. Les boursiers seront regroupés en équipes de sept, accompagnés de deux détenteurs de savoirs indigènes/locaux et d'un mentor universitaire. La conceptualisation de la recherche, son exécution et les approches de diffusion seront élaborées conjointement par les jeunes boursiers, les mentors universitaires et les détenteurs de connaissances indigènes. La durée de la bourse, y compris le travail sur le terrain et la diffusion, sera de sept mois. Pendant toute la durée de la bourse, les équipes de recherche bénéficieront du mentorat et du soutien de pôles intellectuels, qui seront identifiés et constitués par le Codesria afin de renforcer l'engagement intellectuel et communautaire.

Modalités de candidature

Les candidatures individuelles et conjointes seront acceptées

Les candidatures individuelles doivent soumettre les éléments suivants :

1) Un CV d'une page précisant, entre autres, la date de naissance, l'emploi ou l'engagement actuel et l'affiliation institutionnelle.
2) Une note conceptuelle de deux pages qui présente un sujet, explique comment ce thème s'inscrit dans un domaine prioritaire défini par le Codesria, justifie le choix du thème et son caractère convaincant, et résume les principales étapes que l'intéressé.e souhaite suivre pour réaliser les objectifs du processus de recherche.
3) Deux lettres de référence d'une page de la part de deux personnes connaissant bien le travail de l'intéressé.e.

Les candidatures conjointes (7 personnes maximum) doivent soumettre les éléments suivants :

1) Un CV d'une page pour chacun des membres du groupe, à soumettre dans un document consolidé. Chaque CV doit indiquer, entre autres détails, la date de naissance, l'emploi ou l'engagement actuel et l'affiliation institutionnelle. **Le chercheur principal ou le chef de groupe doit être clairement indiqué en haut de l'ensemble des CV.**
2) Une note conceptuelle de deux pages qui présente un sujet, explique en quoi ce thème s'inscrit dans un domaine prioritaire défini par le Codesria, justifie le choix du thème et en démontre le caractère convaincant, et résume les principales étapes que le groupe entend suivre pour réaliser les objectifs du processus de recherche.
3) Deux lettres de référence qui soutiennent spécifiquement le groupe, plutôt que les membres individuels.

Les candidatures doivent être soumises via le portail du Codesria réservé spécifiquement au programme de bourses, à l'adresse suivante : https://submission.codesria.org/african-fellowships-for-research-in-indigenous-and-alternative-knowledges-afriak/

La date limite de dépôt des candidatures est le 15 mai 2025.

Notes

1. Paulin Hountondji, 'Scientific Dependence in Africa Today', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1990.
2. Paulin Hountondji, 'Recherche et extraversion : éléments pour une sociologie de la science dans les pays de la périphérie', in *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4, 1990.
3. Des discussions similaires sont menées par Yuen Yuen Ang, titulaire de la chaire Alfred Chandler d'économie politique à l'université Johns Hopkins et auteur de l'ouvrage *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*.

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.