Introduction

African development can be defined from Marcus Garvey’s perspective as constant and consistent African search for self-improvement. Indeed, prior to colonialism, African people, like all other human beings, constantly and consistently improved their lives and life chances. They were inventive and innovative in many ways. One can read Molefi Kete Asante and Abus S. Abarry’s *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources* (1996), which contains African works of imagination, invention, cultural dynamism, political engineering, religious and economic sophistication, and originality. In this work, Africans are captured as active and independent domesticators of plants and animals. They improved their technologies from stone to iron tools. They migrated in search of better environments that enhanced life chances. They formed sociopolitical systems: lineages, clans, chiefdoms, kingdoms, states, and nations of varying sizes and complexities. Just like other human beings, Africans even meditated on the meaning of life itself, on their origins, as well as on what being human meant. This is why Asante and Abarry’s (1996) work opens with a focus on African narratives of ‘the creation of the universe’. Myths of foundation and legends captured the meditative African practices, for example. Like all human beings, Africans developed complex religious ideas as they constantly and consistently made sense of their lives and their environment.

But the historical experience of Africa in the past 500 years invokes a fundamental question: What does development mean for a people struggling to emerge and free themselves from the inimical legacies of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid, neocolonialism and underdevelopment, as well as impositions of the Washington Consensus and neo-liberalism? Taken together, these inimical processes constitute what the Latin American scholars such as Anibal Quijano (2000), Walter D. Mignolo (2000), Ramon Grosfoguel (2007), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) and many others have termed ‘coloniality’. Coloniality names the silenced constitutive part of Euro-North American-centric modernity that captures the negative impact of modernity outside Europe and North America.

African scholars such as Peter Ekeh (1983) prefer to use the common term ‘colonialism’ to highlight the structural straitjacket within which Africa is entrapped and the paradigm of difference it inaugurated. Ekeh argues that ‘colonialism’ cannot be simplistically understood as an event (colonisation) of conquest and rule over Africa by Europeans. Rather, it must be viewed...
as a systemic social movement of epochal dimensions whose enduring consequences outlive
the end of direct colonialism (Ekeh, 1983). Kwame Nkrumah (1965) captured the long-term
consequences of colonialism and coined the term ‘neocolonialism’, and Walter Rodney (1972)
articulated it in terms of ‘how Europe underdeveloped Africa’. Concurring with this epic school
of colonialism, Ali Mazrui (1986: 13) understood colonialism as ‘a revolution of epic propor-
tions’, concluding that ‘what Africa knows about itself, what different parts of Africa know
about each other, has been profoundly influenced by the West’.

Samir Amin (1990: 58) highlights the epistemic implications of Eurocentrism and colonialism
on African conceptions of development, arguing that there is no ‘implementation of the principle
of autocentric development’ in Africa that is free from ‘economic rationality observed by con-
ventional economics’. Conventional economics, just like all other understandings of the world
cascading from Europe and North America, are basically local ideas that have been universalised.
They carry Eurocentrism. Samir Amin (1990) described Eurocentrism as one of the greatest ‘ideo-
logical deformations’ of our time as it falsely invented Europe as the centre of the world and as the
inventor of all positive human values. Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) defined what was unleashed by
Euro–North American-centric modernity in its colonial and imperial phase as a ‘cultural bomb’,
and elaborated on the long-term consequences in this eloquent manner:

The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their
language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their
capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of
non-achievement and it makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed
from themselves; for instance, with other people’s languages rather than their own. It
makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces which
would stop their own springs of life. It even plants serious doubts about the moral rightness
of struggle. Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The
intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish.

(Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 1986: 3)

Because of enduring legacies and realities of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid,
neocolonialism, underdevelopment and structural adjustment programmes, as well as the new
scramble for African natural resources, African conceptions of development continue to be a
struggle for what Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2009a, 2009b) understood as ‘re-membering,’ that is
‘a quest for wholeness after over five hundred years of “dismemberment”.’ Development as
understood from a decolonial ‘re-membering’ perspective is basically a restorative and recovery
project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015a, 2015b). After 1945, Africans and other (ex)-colonised peo-
pies increasingly demanded that development be made one of the important human rights – the
right to development. This made sense in a global terrain within which it was known that a
combination of enslavement, colonisation, apartheid and neocolonialism actively denied devel-
opment to those regions of the world that experienced colonial difference.

When Rodney wrote *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), other scholars such as Andre
Gunder Frank were already articulating the lack of development in ex-colonised regions as
caused by peripherisation that bred dependency. Whatever critics of dependency scholarship can
say about its limits, it correctly identified constraining structural conditions born out of identifi-
able historical processes cascading from the encounter between Africa and Europe that produced
dependency. That dependency is still a central part of the asymmetrical relations of Africa and
Europe, 60 years after ‘decolonisation’. This means that ideas of development in Africa must
transcend the ‘myth of decolonisation’ (Grosfoguel, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b).
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In this case, development is partly a struggle to end dependency and broadly a re-humanising process after long years of denied humanity. This denial of being is well documented by Maldonado-Torres (2007) as ‘coloniality of being’, which captures in minute details of what I have called ‘technologies of dismemberment’ underpinning ‘genealogies of dismemberment’ (Ndluvu-Gatsheni, 2015b). The technologies of dismemberment include genocides, epistemicides, linguicides, various processes of alienation and disposessions (Ndluvu-Gatsheni, 2015b: 32). Consequently, at the centre of the African idea of development is the struggle for restoration of denied, if not lost, ontological density. One can even evoke Frantz Fanon’s (1968) ideas of the ‘zone of being’ and the ‘zone of non-being’ to elaborate on the African idea of development as part of long-standing struggles to rise from the ‘zone of non-being’ to the ‘zone of being’. The zone of non-being is a colonially invented space to which African people were forced to inhabit. It is characterised by depravity and suffering.

At the global level:

‘development’ in our time is such a central value. Wars are fought and coups launched in its name. Entire systems of government and philosophy are evaluated according to their ability to promote it. Indeed, it seems difficult to find any way to talk about large parts of the world except in these terms.

(Ferguson, 1990: xiii)

Inevitably, African leaders were so enchanted by the post-1945 developmental promise to the extent that they strongly believed that decolonisation would not only result in taking over of the colonially crafted colonial state, but that they would achieve full sovereignty, which would enable them to launch autonomous developmental trajectories aimed at not only reducing the inequality gap between economies of ex-colonies and those of erstwhile colonial powers, but also improving the socio-economic conditions of the formerly colonised peoples. However, 60 years since the dawn of decolonisation, ‘the promised land of development remained an illusion’ (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2002: xxvi).

Today, development can be understood from two vantage points. The first is an ahistorical and apolitical technicist-liberal approach. In this perspective, development is understood in three ways. First, development is understood as a vision, description or measure of the state of being of a desirable society. Second, development is understood as a process of social change in which societies are transformed over long periods. Finally, development is conceived to be consisting of deliberate efforts aimed at improvement of human life (Thomas, 2000). The problem with the ahistorical and apolitical approach is that it does not take into account the realities of world power and global interests, as well as colonial matrices of power that constitute the discursive context within which the notions of development emerge, are defined and articulated, contested and questioned (Ndluvu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2013b). For Africa, the long-standing challenge has been how to decolonise and democratise the racially hierarchised and Euro-North American-centric world system that is informed by power politics and coercion (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2002: xi–xxix).

This chapter favours a historical and political perspective where development is understood as a broad process of ‘re-membering’ of a formerly ‘dismembered’ people and a highly contested idea caught up within ‘a terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony’ (Pieterse, 2010: 9). This approach enables one to capture modern conceptions of development as an idea and discourse while at the same time speaking to African conceptions of development informed by decolonial liberatory thought. At the same time, such an approach remains consistently sensitive to the popularisation and universalisation of development as a human aspiration that is itself entrapped
within post-Enlightenment modernist conceptions of progress (Escobar, 2012). Below is a discussion of the Truman and Bandung versions of development as part of enhancing the distinctiveness of the African idea of development.

The Truman versus Bandung versions of development

The apogee of post-Enlightenment conceptions of development culminated into the post-1945 Truman version of development whereby Europe and North America claimed to have been entrusted by modern history with the task of developing the Third World in its image (Truman, 1964 [1949]). At the centre of the Truman version of development is what Fantu Cheru termed the ‘imperial project’ that is informed by geopolitical considerations and the Global North’s power calculations, as well as the consistent rhetoric of humanitarianism that conceals coloniality (Cheru, 2009).

The Truman version of development is deeply situated in the long history of the making of the modern world system and the invention of Africa that was accompanied by what Valentin Y. Mudimbe terms the ‘paradigm of difference’ (Mudimbe, 1988, 1994). It is traceable to what became known as ‘voyages of discovery’ that opened the way for mercantilism, the slave trade, imperialism and colonialism. These processes were articulated from a colonial perspective as entailing the spreading of civilisation, modernity, commerce and Christianity to those places such as Africa that were described as the ‘heart of darkness’ (Conrad, 1902). Consequently, development as an offspring of Enlightenment and modernity became entangled in a complex and long history mediated by the logics of coloniality informed by domination, oppression and exploitation, on the one hand, and the rhetoric of modernity that promised a brave modern society where salvation, civilisation, progress, economic growth, freedom and democracy would be the order of life, on the other (Mignolo, 2005).

The Truman version of development became contested by the Bandung decolonial version of development cascading from the Bandung Conference of 1955. The Bandung version articulated development as liberation and a human right that has to be fought for (Mkandawire, 2011). But African struggles for decolonisation and development have remained trapped within the hegemonic Truman version of development, which is backed up by what Adebayo Adedeji termed the ‘development merchant system’ (DMS) driven by the Breton Woods Institutions (BWI), which finance the implementation of an exogenous development agenda (Adedeji, 2002: 4). At the centre of the DMS is what David Slater termed ‘imperiality of knowledge’ constituted by ‘interwaving of geopolitical power, knowledge and subordinating representation of the other’ (Slater, 2004: 223). The DMS maintains coloniality long after the dismantlement of administrative colonialism. It still approaches Africa as a space inhabited by a people ‘shorn of the legitimate symbols of independent identity and authority’, as well as a ‘space ready to be penetrated, worked over, restructured and transformed’ from outside (Slater, 2004: 223). The DMS exists as a consortium of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organization (WTO), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and multinational corporations (MCs). They advance a ‘Bretton Woods paradigm’ of development as part of a continuation of the Truman version (Therien, 1999).

At another level, the Bandung decolonial version of development continues to contest the Truman imperial version of development through enabling the crafting of counter-hegemonic development initiatives and strategies that included: the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU); the demand for a New Economic International Order (NIEO); the crafting of the African Declaration on Cooperation, Development and Economic Independence of 1973; the Revised Framework of the Principles for the Implementation of New International
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The Bandung version shared some commonalities with the ‘United Nations paradigm’ and its emphasis on human development. The Bandung Conference was informed by the spirit of decolonisation, South–South solidarity and the principle of non-alignment. The conference laid the basis for the struggle to decolonise and democratise the international society so as to achieve equitable representation in global decision-making bodies as it called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) (Kahin, 1956). Development was articulated in terms of transcending colonialism and coloniality, as well as in terms of freedom, self-determination and self-reliance under state mediation and direction (Berger, 2004). The Bandung Conference also endorsed the right of governments to freely choose their own political and economic systems (Abdulgani, 1964). For all the states that emerged from colonialism, nationalism and development were articulated as inseparable processes simply because colonialism denied Africans both development and freedom. Therefore, in Africa and other ex-colonised parts of the world, nationalism and developmentalism constituted efforts at ‘re-membering’ those dismembered societies and peoples so as to regain their lost ontological density.

Development as ‘re-membering’ Africa and the traps of coloniality

In the language of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, African development initiatives constituted efforts aimed at ‘re-membering’ Africans after centuries of being ‘dismembered from the land, from labour, from power, and from memory’ (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 2009a: 22). Thus, development conceived in decolonial historical and political Africa-centred terms can be defined as a long-term struggle for the ‘re-membering of Africa’ that encapsulates such initiatives as Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, pan-Africanism(s), African personality, Afrocentricity, conscientism, African humanism, African socialism(s), the Black Consciousness Movement and the African Renaissance. This point was well captured by Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe when he said:

You have all heard of African personality; of African democracy; of African way to socialism; of Negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Sartre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are good as the next man but that we are better.

(cited in Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 179)

‘Re-membering’ Africa entailed building unity inside individual states, aspiring for pan-African unity at the continental level, and fighting for deimperialisation, deracialisation, decolonisation and democratisation of the racially hierarchised and Western-centric modern world system that came into being in the fifteenth century. Coloniality is underpinned by theft of the history of the colonised. Inevitably, the discourse of development in Africa commenced as a struggle over Hegelian denial of African history. Since the encounter between Africa and Europe, African history experienced usurpation, if not its displacement and silencing (Depelchin, 2005). This is why Paul Tiyambe Zeleza posed the question: ‘Is autonomy of African history possible, can
this history be written without European referents, is it possible to liberate African history from the epistemological traps of Eurocentrism, the traps of the “colonial library”? (Zeleza, 2005: 1). This is also why Edward Wilmot Blyden and later Kwame Nkrumah emphasised the need to rewrite the history of Africa as part of ‘re-membering’ the continent and the centring of ‘African personality’ (Nkrumah, 1964). Nkrumah’s concept of philosophical consciencism articulated African development as embracing traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa as constituent elements of a new emergent ideology for the harmonious growth and development of society. This is how he put it:

The philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution is that which I have once referred to as philosophical consciencism: consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality is itself defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society.

(Nkrumah, 1964: 79)

If, to African nationalist thinkers and theorists, development meant moving from one state of being that is characterised by depravity and suffering towards another that is more desirable, then that state of being was that of slavery, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and capitalism. Such African leaders and theorists as Frantz Fanon, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela emphasised the importance of humanism that was denied by the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and neocolonialism. Humanism in African thought is a central leitmotif of ‘re-membering’ for a people whose very being was questioned and denied. Among Africans, there was and is a strong feeling that slavery, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, apartheid and neocolonialism were the antithesis of humanism and resulted in a denial of humanity to black people. Independence and development had to culminate in restoration of lost African ontological density as part of the ‘re-membering’ process. Kenneth Kaunda defined humanism as a ‘philosophy of life’ and noted that colonialism ‘devalued man’ (Kaunda and Morris, 1966: 19–21). Kaunda posited that:

It was nationalism, of course, which restored our self-confidence, for it taught us what we could do together as men [and women], and only as men [and women] – at no stage in the freedom struggle had we the material power or military might of colonialists. It was humanity in revolt that won us freedom. [. . .] It was the triumph of a Man-centred society over a Power-centred society. This intense belief in the possibility of Man is a discovery which Africa appears to be making long after the West has discarded it.

(Kaunda and Morris, 1966: 21)

Kaunda noted that when Europe embarked on enslavement and colonisation of other spaces and peoples, it was actualising its long-standing abandonment of humanist ideas that envisioned a humane society and world where every human species had space to live comfortably. In his ‘meditations on man’, Kaunda expressed his conviction that ‘only the recovery of a sense of the centrality of Man will get politics back on the right track’, and he posed the question: ‘How can we humanise our politics in Zambia so that the humblest and least endowed of our citizens occupies a central place in Government’s concerns?’ (Kaunda and Morris, 1966: 41). The dominance of humanist nationalism resulted in various experimentations with African socialism,
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The most well-known example being that of ‘ujamaa’ (familyhood) of Tanzania under Julius Nyerere, which sought to provide an escape route from capitalism’s idea of happiness based on ‘exploitation of man by man’ (Nyerere, 1967).

The search for a humane society by African nationalists is further exemplified by such charters and declarations as the Freedom Charter (South Africa), the Arusha Declaration (Tanzania), the Common Man’s Charter (Uganda) and the Mulugushi Declaration (Zambia). These charters and declarations were part of nationalist humanist imaginations of a better world, free from racism, exploitation and oppression. That these declarations and charters did not eventually reflect the practical political practices of African leaders partly reflects how difficult it was to decolonise the Western conceptions of politics in terms of ‘will to power’ rather than ‘will to live’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016).

But at another level, nationalist developmentalism was informed by a realisation that colonial domination was imposed on Africa successfully because of ‘guns and steel’ (Mkandawire, 2005: 13). Therefore, for Africa to survive domination and humiliation, there was a need to develop and modernise. Another important element of nationalist developmentalism was the desire to eradicate what Thandika Mkandawire termed the ‘unholy trinity of ignorance, poverty and disease’ (Mkandawire, 2005: 13). It is therefore important to take stock of African nationalist-inspired development initiatives since the dawn of decolonisation, beginning with the implications of the Bandung decolonial spirit and the legitimate decolonial demand for a New Economic International Order (NEIO) amenable to the possibilities of African development that is unencumbered by global colonial matrices of power.

The Bandung spirit and struggles: New Economic International Order

The Asian-African Conference that was held in April 1955 in Bandung in Indonesia constituted the highest point of the Afro-Asian solidarity movement that was informed by Afro-Asian decolonial nationalism. When the Afro-Asian movement was formed, its specific aim was to hasten the process of decolonisation (Kimche, 1973). But by 1955, the focus of the Bandung Conference was how to create conditions for global peaceful coexistence within a post-1945 dispensation that was troubled by ideological rivalry between the West and the East, which became known as the Cold War.

The Cold War was another layer of coloniality. Both the Soviet Union and the United States of America’s rise to superpower status inaugurated other forms of global coloniality and imperialism. We can call it ideological coloniality. Those who met at Bandung had a clear understanding of this ideological coloniality. In the first place, the Marxist idea of unity of workers was substituted with the slogan of the unity of all ex-colonised peoples of the world at the Bandung Conference. What was emphasised was solidarity and cooperation among newly independent states in the face of a ‘mixture of wooing, bullying, flattery, threats and “presents” coming from superpowers’ (Jansen, 1966: 309). Richard Wright’s book The Colour Curtain (1956) captured the decolonial essence of the Bandung Conference in these revealing words:

The despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed – in short, the underdogs of the human race were meeting. Here were class and racial and religious consciousness on a global scale. Who had thought of organizing such a meeting? And what had these nations in common? Nothing, it seemed to me, but what their past relationship to the Western world had made them feel. This meeting of the rejected was itself a kind of judgement upon the Western world!

(Wright, 1956: 12)
At another level, a 12-point economic cooperation agenda of the Bandung Conference identified development as an urgent priority for Afro-Asian states. It is clear that at Bandung, the African and Asian leaders realised that the development they urgently wanted could not be attained within a modern world system that was racially hierarchised and Euro-North American-centric. Decolonisation needed to be expanded to grapple with a global system that remained asymmetrical in its power configuration – a world where the newly independent African states had no voice in global decision-making. This is why the participants at the Bandung Conference were deeply troubled by their lack of participation in the international institutions that had been established to govern world affairs (Abdulgani, 1964).

One can safely argue that the Bandung Conference correctly identified ‘global coloniality’ as a major hindrance to the achievement of development in Africa and Asia (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). This argument is amplified by the fact that three objectives drove the Bandung spirit, namely non-alignment in the age of the Cold War, elimination of all forms of colonialism and racism, and finally modernisation and economic development (Mayall, 1990). The idea of non-alignment spoke to an aspiration for a new international norm that gave states the right to develop and orchestrate an autonomous, freely chosen trajectory in the international system without being compelled to follow the imperial-hegemonic dictates of the superpowers. The issue of equality of states was stressed, including raising concerns about under-representation of African and Asian states on the United Nations Security Council. The Bandung spirit also articulated the problem of international economic injustices (Krasner, 1981).

What is also important about the Bandung world view was to introduce new and alternative principles for international society informed by international engagement based on dialogue and cooperation, justice, fairness and peaceful coexistence. These principles indicated the desire of those states emerging from colonialism to make a paradigm shift from imperial and colonial principles that were informed by the spirit of domination and coercion as an international mode of interaction that has been in place since the fifteenth century (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

The Bandung spirit laid a strong basis for the crystallisation of a Third World coalition in the United Nations, which in 1964 constituted the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and informed the ideas that produced the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), which was formerly constituted at a summit in Algiers in 1971. NAM included Latin American states that had gained political independence far earlier than Asian and African colonies. The Latin American states had been active within the United Nations in pushing the agenda of reforming the international economic and political system. At the Cairo Economic Conference of 1962, the Afro-Asian and Latin American states had already pointed out that the more dangerous division of the world was the North–South divide, which was taking the form of the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’, rather than the ideologically informed East–West divide that preoccupied the Western powers (Nesadurai, 2005: 12).

The resolutions of the first NAM Summit held in Belgrade in Yugoslavia in 1961 and the Cairo Summit of 1962 are credited for putting pressure on the United Nations to establish UNCTAD as an agency to address Third World development issues. The problem is that UNCTAD played a marginal role in global economic governance as the United States of America and other industrial powers rejected any role for the body in trade negotiations (Taylor, 2003). At the time of the launch of UNCTAD, the Latin American economist Raul Prebisch was pushing forward the dependency thesis to explain the problem of development in the Third World. He was appointed UNCTAD’s first Secretary General. Informed by dependency ideas, UNCTAD’s demands included greater access to industrial countries’ markets, greater self-reliance among Third World countries, the right to nationalise assets, and democratisation of all binding international decision-making based on the principle of ‘one-nation, one
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vote’ (Gosovic, 1972). These demands were informed by Prebisch’s decolonial diagnosis of Third World underdevelopment in terms of its structural dependency on a capitalist core that controlled all levers of international decision-making and profitable economic activity. The proposals were rejected by industrial powers.

Third World leaders did not give up the fight for a reformed international system. The period from 1973 to 1980 were dominated by the demand for the NIEO. It was following the oil crises of 1971 and 1973 that the Third World coalition united to push further for the NIEO. They pushed for this through the G77 – a coalition of developing countries. The NIEO was informed by the dependency ideas that emphasised decolonisation of global coloniality that favoured the industrial powers and disadvantaged those countries that emerged from colonialism. The NIEO called for the restructuring of global structural regimes informing unequal trade and other economic interactions (Cox, 1979: 257). The more radical members of the G77 demanded restitution based on the notion that the industrialised powers owed something to the South as compensation for slavery and colonialism (Cox, 1979). In the spirit of the NIEO, the African leaders adopted the African Declaration on Cooperation, Development and Economic Independence in 1973, which articulated Africa’s strategy for gradual disengagement from the world economy through escalation of national and continental self-reliance. This was followed by the production of the Revised Framework of the Principles for the Implementation of New International Economic Order in Africa of 1976. It was produced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and became the intellectual and theoretical foundation for the drafting of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa of 1979. The Monrovia Declaration emphasised collective self-reliance and economic integration of African economies, investment in science and technology as the backbone of Africa’s development process, ensuring Africa’s self-reliance in food production, and a commitment to achieve modern African economies by the year 2000 (Baah, 2003).

The African demand for the NIEO was resisted by the industrial powers as part of a communist conspiracy, as irrational and as too revolutionary. Consequently, very little headway was made simply because the powerful and dominant wanted to stay powerful and dominant. The little concession made was the adoption in 1975 of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States at the United Nations General Assembly, which to a minor extent included the rights and duties of all countries to help other countries develop economically in terms of their chosen path of development (Murphy, 2005). But the overall picture is that proposals and demands from the Global South suffered rejection by the powerful industrialised nations of Europe and North America. The lack of strong unity within the Third World coalition also contributed to the failure and collapse of the NIEO. Samir Amin had this to say about the demise of the NIEO:

So, in the end, the battle for the NIEO was lost. As well as the failure being noted, the causes have to be studied. Are they purely circumstantial (in the economic crisis)? Can they be attributed to ‘tactical errors’ by the Third World (its own divisions and weaknesses)? Or do these circumstances and weaknesses show the impossibility of autocentric development at the periphery of capitalist system?

(Amin, 1990: 56–57)

The NIEO was soon eclipsed by the era of hegemonic neo-liberalism that was ushered in by the Anglo-American leaders Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the late 1970s. But African leaders continued to try to forge ahead with African development initiatives even within a context dominated by a development merchant system that carried imperialism and coloniality.
The search for autonomous development trajectory

Over the years since the dawn of decolonisation, it became increasingly clear to many Africans that African development could not be merely a philanthropic gift from the industrialised powers of the West. It had to be planned for and fought for as part of deepening decolonisation. This is why the OAU working closely with UNECA produced a consciously inward-looking pan-African development plan that sought to articulate a comprehensive and unified strategy to reduce dependence on external powers and to replace it with self-reliance. This initiative became known as the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of 1980. At the centre of the plan was not complete delinking, but strategic disengagement from those features of the international economic system that were keeping Africa dependent, underdeveloped, weak and poor (Ikome, 2007).

The LPA was a comprehensive initiative consisting of 13 chapters covering all sectors of the African economy and informed by detailed objectives that included alleviation of poverty among Africans, diversification of productive economic capabilities, internalisation of forces of supply and demand, and mobilisation of Africans for production. Just like the Bandung Conference, the LPA identified Africa’s development as structural and exacerbated by a hostile external environment. The LPA was informed by both dependency ideas and the spirit of pan-Africanism.

The LPA of action has been criticised for articulating a one-sided cause of the development crisis in Africa. It identified hostile external environment without paying equal attention to internal problems that are equally important in understanding the problems of African development. The emphasis on a hostile external environment led the LPA to focus too much on trade and ignore such internal constraints as a lack of serious commitment of African leadership to the development of the African continent and its people (Onimonde et al., 2004). Corruption and authoritarianism were not clearly identified as internal constraints to development. The LPA is said to have been conceived as a top-down project that ignored other important sectors capable of driving African development. More importantly, the LPA identified the problems and offered some solutions, but without committing financial resources to the implementation of the initiative (Ikome, 2007). But more importantly, the LPA document ‘demonstrated both a disturbing lack of imagination and a low level of consciousness of the character of the option of self-reliance’ (Amin, 1999: 59).

What must be emphasised is that if the LPA was an authentically African development initiative, it was destined to suffer a lack of financial support and delegitimisation by forces of coloniality. Thus, when one assesses the failure of African development initiatives, it is important to broaden the critique to the level of global discursive terrain within which Africans fought for development. What Adedeji identified as the development merchant system worked actively to destabilise any African development initiative so as to push in an exogenous initiative that does not threaten the hegemony of the West. The LPA, despite its declared self-reliance paradigm and its robust criticism of the colonial and neocolonial heritage, ‘could not escape the conventional methodology closely associated with the conventional strategy of peripheral capitalist development’ (Amin, 1990: 59). Amin posed the question:

Should development be conceived in accordance with the demand of the international order, or conversely, is it necessarily in conflict with it. Can the international order be transformed and ‘adjusted’ to the priority demands for Third World development, or conversely can the latter only be the result of the reverse ‘adjustment’?

(Amin, 1990: 60)
It is important to realize that the LPA was launched in the midst of the rise of neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus.

**African entrapment in the development merchant system**

According to Adebayo Adedeji, ‘the overarching objective of the DMS is for the African canoe to be firmly tied to the North’s neo-liberal ship on the waters of globalization’ (Adedeji, 2002: 4). The DMS actively works to make sure African development initiatives do not operate outside the grip of Euro-North American development orthodoxy and coloniality. If we understand this reality, it becomes clear why the powerful industrial powers of the North have consistently rejected demands for reforming the modern world system and actively made sure that no alternative development paradigms, alternatives and agendas are entertained. It is within this context that the Lagos Plan of Action (1980–2000), the African Priority for Economic Recovery (1986–1990); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation, the African Charter for Popular Participation for Development (1990) and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s were not well received by the donor community and the Breton Woods Institutions.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the ascendance and consolidation of the neo-liberal model of development informed by post-Keynesianism. This post-Keynesianism became known as the Washington Consensus, which carried anti-state philosophies and a strong belief in the free reign of markets, privatization and deregulation. The Berg Report of 1981 introduced the philosophy and practice of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). As a result of the implementation of SAPs, African states lost the little that was remaining of their control over development policy. African development became driven from the outside, with devastating consequences on the African people and their leaders. Thandika Mkandawire argued that ‘For Africa the 1980s and 1990s was a period of wanton destruction of institutions and untrammelled experimentation with half-baked institutional ideas. The result was “unconstructive destruction” in its most institutionally debilitating form’ (Mkandawire, 2003: 10).

The consequences of SAPs included removal of the state from driving development, exacerbation of internal inequalities and worsening poverty, rehabilitation of coloniality, and loss of policy space by African leaders. Instead of the Bretton Woods Institutions accepting responsibility for drawing Africa deeper into crisis through the introduction of SAPs, the World Bank produced a document entitled *From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* in 1989, in which they blamed lack of good governance and policy reform as the cause of economic crisis and lack of development in Africa in the 1980s. In 1994, the World Bank produced another report entitled *Adjustment in Africa*, in which the issue of sound macroeconomic and structural management was defended as a prerequisite for growth and poverty reduction in Africa. Lack of development and economic growth in Africa was explained in terms of poor policy choices by African leaders, inefficiency and corruption. Structural barriers in the international political economy were not identified as a cause of underdevelopment. The African postcolonial state was identified as the major culprit inhibiting development in Africa (Fukuyama, 2004).

An African consensus emerged that SAPs were a disaster for the development of the continent. By the late 1980s, through UNECA, an alternative to SAPs was being sought, and these efforts culminated in the production and adoption of the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation of 1989. Through this document, Africans rejected SAPs and offered well-reasoned arguments for the rejection (Tomori and Tomori, 2004). This African initiative was not taken seriously and its recommendations fell on deaf ears.
The dawn of the third millennium witnessed the rise of the so-called new African leaders who were considered to be less corrupt and fully committed to the economic renewal of the continent. The new leaders committed themselves to enabling Africa to claim the twenty-first century as the African century for development. The philosophy of African Renaissance that was increasingly associated with President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa provided the discursive framework for relaunching African development. The flagship project for the new leaders of Africa became the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) that was adopted in 2002. NEPAD was informed by positive millenarian thinking. There was an optimistic mood that the twenty-first century would indeed be an African century where Africa would be allowed to drive its own development with the positive support of the developed countries of the North. This optimistic mood made some Africans oblivious of coloniality as an obstacle to African development.

Inevitably, unlike the LPA, which focused mainly on external structural barriers as responsible for African development failures, NEPAD highlighted such factors as bad governance, corruption and conflicts as responsible for African underdevelopment. What is distinctive about NEPAD has been its strong conviction on the possibilities of mutual beneficial partnership between the poor African countries and the industrialised and rich countries of the North. Coloniality as a global power structure that sustains asymmetrical economic power relations between the underdeveloped South and the developed North remains a destabilising and inhibiting force.

The political rhetoric of the leaders of the industrialised countries of the North misleads one to believe that there was a paradigm shift and a new international order that was favourable to African development was emerging. The G8 pledged to fully support NEPAD. The question that developed in the minds of many progressive African scholars was why the G8 was openly supporting NEPAD when throughout the postcolonial period the industrialised countries from the North opposed African development initiatives. Was NEPAD really an African initiative? Is NEPAD not part of those spurious neocolonial partnerships that hides the realities of structural inequalities? Is NEPAD part of Africa’s indigenous/endogenous development agenda, or is a project cascading from the DMS but masquerading as an African development initiative? It would seem that NEPAD falls neatly within the discourse of partnerships that commenced with such initiatives as the Lome Conventions rather than the Bandung decolonial version of development. At the Lome Conventions, the industrialised European countries countered the African development initiatives by putting on the table fake partnership proposals that were not only informed by the imperial logic of donor–recipient relationships, but were basically part of the sustenance of coloniality long after the end of direct colonial administrations. The Lome Conventions were a precursor to the hypocritical discourse of ‘our common interest’ contained in Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa (Hurt, 2007).

Conclusions: where is Africa heading?

Today, many Africans are toying with the notion of ‘developmental states’ in an attempt to follow the developmental path of the Asian Tigers. But the global colonial and imperial matrices of power are not enabling them compared to the time of the rise of Asian Tigers. Today, Africa is experiencing what has come to be known as the second scramble for African natural resources. The scramblers are no longer from the West only; they also come from the East. China is leading the scramblers from the East. It is within this context that there is also the discourse of ‘Africa Rising’ predicated on increased demands for African primary products. This time, development is narrowly defined as economic growth driven from outside by outside demand for African natural resources. African ideas must drive the development trajectory.
But the reality about the African struggle for development is that it is taking place within a modern world system that is resistant to decolonisation and an international order that consistently works towards disciplining anti-systemic movements and forces so as to give the world system a new lease of life. The world system and its shifting international orders continue to subject African development initiatives and plans to the logic of classical economic thought and the dominant logic of capitalist accumulation that created Africa as a periphery. This is why the Bandung spirit was consistently frustrated and the African demand for a new international economic order was vehemently resisted.

The acceptable model of development for Africa in the eyes of those in the Global North is one whereby African economies are adjusted and aligned to the imperatives and demands of the international division of labour. Africa has never run short of development initiatives and plans, but what has been lacking is imagination of autocentric development outside the template cascading from classical economic thought and capitalist imperatives. The DMS works actively to prevent and destroy any development initiative that threatens to subvert the modern world system and its international order.

As argued by Samir Amin (1990), Africa has been fighting for a space to originate new economic ideas and imagine new development alternatives suitable for the African reality and experience. Such a space is denied. But Africa continues to work in cohort with other developing countries for space and economic justice. To achieve the objective of building a new international economic order, there is need for Europe and North America to genuinely accept decolonisation and deimperialisation of the world system as a form of ‘re-membering’. Only a combination of genuine deimperialisation on a world scale and decolonisation would result in a global democracy in which Africa would be afforded space to develop.

References


The African idea of development


