

**TOWARDS AN AFROCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT
PARADIGM IN AFRICA**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Towards an Afrocentric development paradigm in Africa* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I declare that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

Signature ...L.R Moloji (signed)

Date: 07/01/2021

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ABSTRACT

This study deployed the theory of Afrocentricity as a revolutionary epistemic and methodological framework relevant to challenging the dominance of Eurocentrism in the conception of development as an ideology, process and practice in Africa. The study argues that development as a field of study has remained hostage to Euro-North American-centric modernist and “civilizing” mission thinking. Due to this interpellation, it has become difficult for Africa to design alternative development models to replace the current Western-centric modernist and neo-liberal development model. This study analyses the discourse of development as a European epistemic creation and, in particular, as a product of European imperial strategies and a mechanism of conquest in the aftermath of World War II (from 1945 to 2020). “Development” masquerades as an emancipatory discourse, while in reality it is all too often a tool that serves the continuance of neo-colonialism and Westernization. The study hypothesizes that the post-World War II Truman development project, grounded within the modernization ideology, is derived from the logic of “voyages of discovery” and Enlightenment notions of salvation, progress, civilization, modernization, development and emancipation. These “voyages” opened the way for mercantilism, slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, and later, neo-colonialism in Africa. Consequently, development as an offshoot of the Enlightenment and modernity came to be used as a heuristic stratagem of domination entangled in a complex and long history of imperialism and colonialism. Informed by Afrocentric thought, this thesis proposes that African development debates need to be decolonized and indeed Africanized in order to help liberate the discourse of development from these parochial epistemic foundations. An Afrocentric paradigm which privileges Africa as the cradle

of humankind, as a continent with a very rich history, culture and agency, is deployed in the re-conceptualization and re-definition of development as an endogenous process which is not foreign to Africa. The study posits that sustainable resolutions to the development impasse in Africa must be found in Africa's own rich history and culture, and in asserting the significance of African agency.

Afrocentricity as a guiding theoretical paradigm in this study argues that the main challenge confronting African people is their "unconscious" acceptance of Western colonial epistemology and its theoretical frameworks as their own. Afrocentricity seeks to liberate Africans to assert themselves intellectually and psychologically within their own historical and cultural experiences, thus breaking the bonds of Western domination and enabling them to become agents of their own change, as opposed to being objects of European development discourses. Thus the deployment of Afrocentricity in this study enables a decolonization of Development Studies in Africa from a Western hegemony and sets the path for its re-articulation within the African context. The thesis is underpinned and framed by three units of analysis: history, culture and agency, all drawn from an Afrocentricity as liberatory paradigm.

Key words:

African history

African renaissance

Afrocentricity

Agency

Colonialism

Coloniality

Culture

Development

Domination

Hegemony

Epistemology

Eurocentrism

Neo-colonialism

Pan-Africanism

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT KEY TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

Eurocentrism/Eurocentricity/Western-centrism:

These concepts are used interchangeably in this study to refer to a worldview that is centred on Western civilization, or a biased view that favours Western civilization over non-Western civilizations.

Afrocentricity:

This refers to a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African agency in the context of African history and culture trans-continentially and trans-generationally.

Coloniality

This term is used to refer to the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, and that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration.

Neo-colonialism

This is the practice of using economics, globalization, cultural imperialism and conditional aid to influence a country, replacing the colonial methods of direct military control.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

LPA	Lagos Plan of Action
OAU	Organization of African Unity
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study is a theoretical and conceptual intervention in the field of Development Studies in Africa. It is an extended Afrocentric critique of the ideas and practices underpinning the discourse(s) of development. The empirical focal area is “postcolonial” Africa, beginning with Ghana, which attained its independence in 1957 to South Africa, which attained democracy for all its people only in 1994, as a product of complex histories and modernist global imperial designs. The study argues that the ideas and practices underpinning development as a process in Africa remain entangled in the Euro-North American-centric modernist paradigm, which perpetuates the “civilizing” and “salvationist” claims of Europeans.

This study hypothesizes that the post-World War II development project rooted in the modernization paradigm should be interpreted in the context of the European Enlightenment project whose roots lie in the voyages of discovery from the late 14th century (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). This study argues that development ideas and practices grounded in this model will not bring about the development that Africa wants, but will continue to undermine African development initiatives and cement the Global North’s domination agenda. The study argues that a development discourse for and from within Africa should be liberated from this parochial Eurocentric conception.

This study therefore seeks to shift the geography of reasoning and analysis from a Eurocentric epistemology to a more African-centred epistemology, specifically by

using Afrocentricity in a quest to liberate the discourse of development from the continuing bias towards the Eurocentric ideological framework. This implies privileging African knowledge informed by African history and culture, and the assertion of African agency as a means to attaining an African renaissance. The study has deployed Afrocentricity as a relevant theoretical framework to re-locate the interpretation of development to an African context to enable relevance to Africa. As Asante (1991) explains, Afrocentricity establishes an intellectual standpoint in which phenomena are viewed from the perspective of African people as centred within their own historical and cultural experiences. Such a perspective enables African people to take control of their own agency. This allows them not to see themselves as objects of others development initiatives. Afrocentricity as a liberatory paradigm enables the re-examination of all dimensions of the dislocation of African people resulting from the imposition of a Western canon of thought, be it regarding culture, economics, psychology, health, or religious ideas around African societies' development in general. This interrogation and reflection enable Africans to assert themselves epistemically, thus dismantling their entrapment in the Western epistemic colonisation of terms of reference and enabling African people to speak as their own agents of the change they desire, rather than merely existing as ideological dependants of the European canon of thought (Asante 1991:172).

The deployment of Afrocentricity in this study enables a decolonization of the discipline of Development Studies as an idea and practice in Africa adopted from the Western epistemological hegemony. It sets a path for a re-articulation of the discipline in an African setting. Afrocentricity therefore provides a relevant theoretical framework to enable African scholars to confront epistemic racism in the narrative of human

development and, in particular, to empower marginalized Africans to speak and define development from their own context.

This chapter provides the framework for this study by discussing the background to the research, the problem statement, the research objectives and key research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, and importance of this study. Lastly, it discusses the scope and limitations of this study, and ethical concerns surrounding the research, and it provides an outline of the study as a whole.

1.2 Background to the research

After the successful completion of my Master's degree in Development Studies in 2014, I felt the desire to pursue PhD in Development Studies. Having had the privilege of being a student and later a lecturer in the Department of Development Studies, UNISA, I began to reflect on my sense that there was something unsettling about the locus of enunciation and the historical framework which informs the theory of Development Studies as a field of study or discipline. In particular, I questioned the epistemological foundations which inform the discourse of development in Africa. I came to the realization that Development Studies as an idea, process and practice was, and continues to be, grounded in the particular historical and social experiences of European countries, which imposed themselves as the standard of modern development practice. This aspect is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this study.

Two predominant perspectives have shaped my reflections on the development discourse: first, mainstream Western development thought, grounded in modernization theory, and second, counter-development discourses, which include Post-development thinking, Afrocentricity and decoloniality as counter-ideological

frameworks. The intellectual battle between mainstream discourses and counter-discourses regarding development as a field of study has affected how the process of development has generally been understood by scholars. Scholars such as Langdon (2013:385) see “Development Studies today as framed largely as a ‘Southern-focused’ form of thinking, which they claim give the discipline a measure of inter-disciplinary legitimacy”. Admittedly, there has been a consistent push to shift the geography of epistemology in Development Studies, but the white gaze demonstrably remains. Perhaps this is why Summer (2006) and Sylvester (1999) posit that Development as a field of study fails to listen to the ideas of those in the Global South who are the ones most affected by development. This is why the current study deploys the theory of Afrocentricity to dismantle the hegemonic Eurocentric narrative of the ideas and practices underpinning development in Africa, and to ensure that development becomes grounded in the experiences and knowledge of African people, rather than objectifying these people.

The dilemma facing Development Studies today, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:48), is the fact that this field of study remains ideologically embedded in Eurocentrism; in particular, it is shaped by the European colonial agenda which has long masqueraded as a civilizing mission. This epistemic bias in the conceptualisation of development has made it difficult for alternative visions of development to emerge, especially in the Global South. This study therefore calls for the decolonization of the epistemology that informs the discourse of development, in particular, the study emphasises the need to reframe the conceptualisation of development from an Afrocentric perspective as a way to overcome ideological bias. Eurocentric ideological bias has for too long perpetuated a culture of intellectual dependence amongst Africans and has limited our opportunities to see and understand the world differently.

For this reason, Amin (2009:177-178) contends that “Eurocentrism as a by-product of European conquest remains a modern ideological construct that consists of a bundle of Western prejudices about other people”. Amin (2009) posits that Eurocentrism gave birth to “coloniality”, a term which Latin American decolonial scholars such as Quijano (2000, 2007), Grosfoguel (2007, 2011), Maldonado-Torres (2007), and African decolonial scholar Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) use to highlight the dark side of modernity. These scholars reveal the negative impact of modernity outside Europe and North America, in particular, and their use of the term “coloniality” unmasks the mysterious perpetuation of the same system in the post-colonial political order.

Despite the fact that in the late 1950s Africa began a process of formal decolonization, which involved the overthrow of colonial government administrations, beginning with Ghana in 1957, coloniality submerged the decolonization project into an emancipatory and reformist programme, rather than allowing it to become a revolutionary and anti-systemic project.

Kwame Nkrumah (1965), the first president of Ghana, uses the concept “*neo-colonialism*” to describe a situation where former colonial empires continue to exercise control over their erstwhile colonies, for example, through indirect methods such as the use of trade relations as a mechanism to thwart internal growth. Neo-colonialism has come to be seen more generally as comprised of well-coordinated strategies implemented by European powers to impede progression in their former colonies. The main agenda is to ensure that these former colonies remain sources of low-priced raw materials and labour for their former imperial masters. Neo-colonialism works as a crucial organizing process within international imperial schemes, sustaining the dominance of the Global North and ensuring the perpetuation of the subalternity of the

Global South (Mignolo, 2007:155-167). Thus, development ideas and practice in Africa continue to be fashioned and controlled by global imperial designs.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) deploys the concept of “colonial matrices of power”, adopted from Anibal Quijano (2000), to highlight how these structuring processes impeded, and continue to hamper, development in Africa. There are four colonial mechanisms through which former European powers maintain control over the Global South.

The first mechanism is control of the *African economy*. This was made possible through the exploitation of African labour, land grabbing, and control over and the pricing of Africa’s natural resources. The Scramble for Africa, as mapped out during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, gave power to competing European nations to partition Africa as a physical environment, and to extract mineral resources for the sole benefit of colonial empires, without any regard for African people and their livelihood strategies (Viriri and Mungwini, 2010:28), and the essential structures of this exploitation remain in place.

The second mechanism is the control of *authority*. This includes the formation of military superiority and a legitimization of violence against indigenous African people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012:49; Quijano, 2000). A long history of colonial conquest has sharpened the skills of the former European colonial powers in the art of violence. These countries had the military equipment to sustain control through force, to keep Africans and other people, for example, in South America, at bay to prevent them from attempting to topple the colonial powers.

The third mechanism is the *control of gender and sexuality*, which imposed a re-imagination of the definition of family in Eurocentric terms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012:49; Quijano, 2000). European colonization dismantled and undermined African traditional

family structures and imposed a European civil marriage union system, which, among other things, forced Africans in most colonies to register their marriages with the colonial government administration to be recognized (Arowolo, 2010).

The fourth mechanism is the *control of subjectivities and knowledge*, which includes knowledge colonization to ensure mind control of the colonial subjects, in particular, by producing an inferiority complex among colonial subjects, thus disrupting their culture (Grosfoguel, 2007:214; Quijano, 2000). For this reason, Africans continue to imbibe European colonial knowledge, perceiving it as superior, rather than indigenous knowledge. This has perpetuated the Global North's epistemic domination over Africa in particular, controlling Africans' imagination and interpretation of their reality.

This study therefore deploys the theory of Afrocentricity to challenge the negative impact of Eurocentrism and the resultant coloniality and how these have continued to shape African development discourses, with a view to decolonizing the development discourse and giving Africans a voice to shape their own future. Afrocentricity as a revolutionary intellectual paradigm aims to advance the search for epistemic justice by ensuring that African people become grounded in the centrality of their history and culture and as agents of change in human history, with the aim of dismantling colonial oppression. Asante (2007:31) argues that since Africans have been dislodged from their own economic, political, historical and psychological basis, it is important to insist on Afrocentric lenses for African people to understand their own lives. Hence, the proposition of Afrocentricity is that Africans must continually look at knowledge from the perspective of Africa, that Africans must be at the centre of their own historical and cultural experiences, and that they must assert their own agency. The primary call of

Afrocentricity is to reground African people within their own centre, which is their history and culture and a thorough assertion of their own agency.

In the opinion of Afrocentrists, Afrocentricity is not merely the antithesis of Eurocentrism. Instead, this discourse argues for diversity in philosophical views, without building any hierarchy; in particular, it discourages the idea that a particular ideology must become the overarching view that becomes the totalising voice; rather, it encourages diversity of perspectives, while emphasising the centrality of African knowledge for African people (Asante, 1980; Chawane, 2016; Mazama, 2001). Afrocentricity challenges Eurocentrism and its narrative of human development, which elevates white supremacist ideas in its attempt to exclude Africans from the contributions they have made to human history, and to present them even to themselves as merely dependent beneficiaries of modernity.

1.3 Problem statement

The main problem considered in this study is the unmasking of the idea, process and practice of development as expressed through Truman's interventionist development programme in line with European global imperial designs, which are then disguised as an emancipatory and civilizational mission. The primary contention of this study is the call for a liberation of development ideas and practice in Africa away from a constricted European colonial epistemology, and a reinterpretation of development using Afrocentric epistemological premises, as an expression of the pursuit of epistemic justice. Thus, the study argues that the agenda centred on Europe and North America has continuously undermined African-based development initiatives, specifically a human-centred approach, in favour of a free-market economy that has led African

states further into poverty in the aftermath of the independence era, beginning in the late 1950s.

The African development trajectory after independence was not conceptualized as part of an endogenous process rooted in African history, culture, identity and agency. Instead, the idea, practice and discourse of development in Africa tend to regurgitate a Eurocentric modernist perspective which was aimed at (re)colonizing Africans and turning them into European objects. As Cheru (2009:275-278) points out, this interventionist view of development expresses the “imperial project” at best as it is framed within the European and North American propaganda of sustaining conquest over the Global South through the rhetoric of advancing humanitarianism.

It is my view that African development must be grounded in people’s own context to remain relevant; it must provide solutions to the problems that people face, based on their own knowledge, experiences and culture in general. Therefore, African development needs to be contextualized within African people’s history and their cultural perspectives to ensure relevance.

1.4 Research objectives

The primary objectives of this study were the following:

- to provide a critique of the mainstream development thinking and its deep interpellation within the Euro-North American modernist paradigm;
- to propose Afrocentricity as an African-centred perspective of development;
- to contribute to the body of knowledge on development debates by prioritizing African-centred knowledge within an African context; and

- to confront the resilient “white gaze” (epistemic racism) embedded in the field of Development Studies with a view to contributing to epistemic justice for those who have been relegated to the periphery.

1.5 Key research questions

The following key questions guided my inquiry in this study:

- What is the origin and genealogy of development discourse and practice?
- How can Afrocentricity as a revolutionary paradigm be deployed to decolonize development discourse and practice in Africa?
- What contributions can be derived from shifting the geography of reason from Eurocentric to African-centred thinking in the field of Development Studies?
- How can the “white gaze” embedded in the field of Development Studies be confronted so as to attain epistemic justice and freedom?

1.6 Theoretical framework

The study was grounded on the theory of Afrocentricity to challenge the dominant Eurocentric narrative of development. Afrocentricity as a theory is influenced among others by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America. It was nurtured at the Temple University School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where the philosophy was institutionalized by a group of African intellectuals frequently referred to as the Temple Circle of scholars.

In his four core works, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980), *Afrocentricity* (1988), *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (1990), and *The Afrocentric Idea* (1998), Molefi Kete Asante has articulated and refined the ideas and

principles underpinning this paradigm. It is important to note that Afrocentricity has been articulated and used at various levels: as a philosophical movement (Anderson, 1995), as an ideological standpoint (Karenga, 2002), and as an epistemological and methodological approach to African discourses (Asante, 1990; Mazama, 2001). The common thread that binds these levels is their call for justice and change in how epistemology is produced, and challenging how it continues to be used unfairly to dominate over others – in particular, to question Eurocentrism.

The primary assertion in Afrocentricity is the centrality of African experiences in all dimensions of life to dismantle oppressive discourses. Afrocentricity emerged in part as an approach to combat ontological, epistemological and methodological hegemony arising from Eurocentrism as an institutionalised paradigm (also referred to Western-centrism). At the centre of Afrocentricity is the rejection of the claim that the European canon of thought must assume the status of a “universal knowledge” that transcends time and space. Thus, Afrocentricity believes that every knowledge emerges within a particular context and that there are multiple, and multiplicitous, contexts. Hence, Afrocentricity rejects any suggestion that one particularity can pretend to represent all particulars. Such a view, according to Afrocentrists, is a major distortion which serves the agenda of a domination of others, just as Eurocentrism has long done. For Afrocentrists, all centres of knowledge must be respected as valid for the people they serve.

The deployment of Afrocentricity in this study suggests that African development should be informed by Africans as agents, rather than as dependent beneficiaries of European-conceptualized ideas of development. Therefore, Afrocentricity aims to ensure that the discourse and practice of development in Africa overcomes what

Chambers (1983:2-3) has termed the “outsider’s perspective”. When development is defined by a Euro-North American agenda, it tends to express hegemonic practices and renders Africans mere objects – passive recipients of the process.

1.7 Methodology

The current study is conceived in a qualitative interpretive methodological framework in which Afrocentricity is deployed as both a theory and a method of conducting research. Its primary interest is unearthing meaning from people’s lived experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics that shape society as interpreted by those affected.

The goal of qualitative research is to investigate life as it is lived in real situations and to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are on particular issues (Woods, 2006:5). The principles underlying qualitative research are in harmony with the principles of Afrocentric theory, in that the phenomenon is interpreted from the perspective of the research participants.

Asante (2009:2) outlines five key principles or characteristics underlying the qualitative nature of Afrocentricity as a meta-theory:

- Afrocentricity argues that no phenomenon can be fully understood without locating it first. A phenomenon must be studied and analysed in relation to its psychological time and space. It must always be specifically located. This implies that even the study of development and its practice in Africa must be contextualized within the African milieu. Any effort to interpret and understand development in Africa outside of the historical journey of the people involved creates a dislocating effect and

undermines the beneficiaries of such a process. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, all the data relating to development discourses must be examined from the standpoint of Africans as subjects and human agents, and not as objects to be developed.

- Afrocentricity considers phenomena to be diverse and dynamic – in motion – and therefore it is necessary to note carefully and record accurately the location of phenomena even in the midst of fluctuations. This means that the researcher must be clear ideologically where he or she stands in this process of research. The concept of development should be regarded as fluid rather than fixed, because it deals with people's existential realities within their own context. It is important for the researcher to immerse him- or herself within the worldview and the experiences of those who are studied and to prioritise their knowledge.
- Afrocentricity is a form of cultural criticism that investigates etymological uses of words and terms in order to know the source of an author's location. This allows researchers to identify the connection of ideas with actions, and actions with ideas to recognize clearly what is detrimental, and ineffective, and what is imaginative and transformative at the political and economic levels of those being researched. This implies that the Eurocentric notions of development as an injection of European values and systems in a non-European context, as suggested by Lerner (1958), must be interrogated and resisted as a colonial practice which marginalizes other knowledge systems and worldviews, and must be challenged by relocating the analysis within Africa as a base.
- Afrocentricity seeks to unmask unfair power dynamics, in particular, as they relate to knowledge production, which privileges the colonial masters' narratives over African voices and experiences. Thus, Afrocentricity is perspectivist in its

approach, as it attempts to provide endogenous knowledge to dismantle imposed knowledge. For this reason, development as a process must discourage dependency of the ex-colonized on the colonisers, and enable the ex-colonized to define their own destiny.

- Afrocentricity locates the ingenious structures of a system of economics, bureau of politics, policy of government, and expression of cultural form in the attitude, direction, and language of the phenomena under review, whether these are text, institutions, personality, interaction, or events. In this way, the theory enables a qualitative inquiry of the people who are researched to understand the dynamics at the centre of their own lives. This implies that an inquiry into development discourse(s) should not be seen as an exogenous process, but as an endogenous one.

1.8 Literature review

The literature on development is massive and cannot be exhaustively reviewed in any one study. The approach taken in this study is theoretical, which means that the literature review is done across the whole study.

The project of development rooted in the modernization paradigm in the era after World War II (from 1945 onwards) that is critiqued here has been severely criticised for its embeddedness in the Eurocentric modernist paradigm, and for its negative consequences on the material conditions of its victims in the Global South, and in Africa in particular (Escobar, 1995; Langdon, 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012, 2017; Rodney, 1972; Sachs, 1992). According to Langdon (2013:389), the critique of Development discourse and practice falls into two categories, which emerged over time. The first category is premised on material criticism, which generally focuses on

how what was initially considered as the philanthropic character of development reinvigorated and sustained the colonial structure of centre/periphery relations. In other words, the idea of development rooted in the post-World War II modernist project was built on the wrong foundations, which cemented European domination and the exploitation of non-European nations. This is visible in the writings of the dependency school of thought which arose during the late 1950s as a result of discontent with the dismal failure of the modernization project (Baran, 1957; Wallerstein, 1974). Although the theorists in this school did not adhere to homogenous ideas in their opposition of modernization theory, they shared a number of common assumptions. Namkoong (1999:125) and Hettne (1983:253) summarize these common assumptions held by dependency theorists as follows:

- Dependency theorists refute the idea propounded in modernization theory that underdevelopment was created by internal factors in underdeveloped countries. Instead, they argue that the causes of underdevelopment are external and emanate from the exploitative nature of the relationship that these countries have with developed countries.
- They hold the view that the world is divided into two parts, namely, the centre (this includes industrialized/affluent Western countries) and the periphery (which includes underdeveloped, unindustrialized and poor countries in the Global South).
- In their view, an unequal exchange in international trade between the centre and the periphery is the main reason for underdevelopment in the periphery.
- As a strategy for a way forward, they recommend that the Global South, and Africa in particular, should delink from European development models and strive for self-reliance as a strategy to re-emerge.

Although the development project in the 1980s led into the globalization project that prioritizes free markets, the privatization of properties and individual incentives, it was still rooted within the modernization project that fortified Western dominance (Buch-Hansen & Laudridsen, 2012). The manifestation of centre/periphery exploitation continued in Africa during the 1980s through the conditions attached to the Economic Structural Adjustment (ESAP) policies that were recommended and implemented (Baah, 2003; Matunhu, 2011). Despite the failures of these policies, the International Financial Institutions continued to impose these policies on Africa into the 1990s, leaving Africa deeply enmeshed in debt (Baah, 2003:6).

The second category of criticisms levelled at development discourses addresses the link between knowledge hierarchies and power (Langdon, 2013:389). The very notion of “development” expresses a European worldview which fails to give non-Europeans an avenue to share their experiences and knowledge to enrich Development Studies. Brohman (1995) argues that grand theorization in Development Studies was a by-product of Western epistemology, and it suffers from a reductionist bias, because simplistic mono-causal explanations are provided to offer grand solutions to complex development challenges. Lushaba (2009), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) and Rist (2002) have criticised Development Studies as a discipline for suffering from a coloniality of power and the hegemony of a Eurocentric bias, which is expressed in the fact that ideas such as progress and development reflect only a European imagination.

Davis (1992) asserts that the development field must be challenged to reject preconceived colonial ideas and models; therefore, development scholars must unlearn the colonial practices of universalizing particular ideas and should treat development as a process which is contextual. There is therefore an urgent need to

re-invent Development Studies to accommodate the socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental contexts of various societies to subvert the fixity of Eurocentric idealism. Post-development scholars such as Escobar (1995) and Sachs (1992) have therefore called for the reframing of Development Studies within the socio-political cultural contexts of non-Western societies; in this way, epistemic racism rooted in Eurocentric bias could be overcome.

Baah (2003), Chukwuokolo (2009), and Matunhu (2011) argue that if Africa is to progress, it must frame development within its own context and not just transfer European experiences and ideas into Africa. According to Asante (1991), African minds must be relocated from Euro-dogmas and be contextualized within an African cultural setting, from which problems can be properly defined as a way to find relevant solutions.

1.9 Importance and contribution of the study

The debates on decolonization in Africa have regained momentum in the 21st century, and African universities now face the mammoth challenge of decolonizing their educational content and curricula to reflect on the existential realities of the marginalised African people. At the centre of the decolonization debates is the search for contextual relevance and the need to liberate academic discourses from the Eurocentric epistemic racism that has marginalized other ways of knowing.

Mafeje (2000) asserts that social science disciplines remain ensnared in what he calls an “epistemology of alterity”. The term refers to a scholarship entrenched in a Western canon of thought (Dastile, 2013:97). To overcome this tendency, Mafeje (2000) argues

that Africans must insist on thinking and doing things for themselves, while not rejecting assistance and collaborating with others who are like-minded.

My study proposes that, for development discourses to be truly beneficial to African people, these discourses must be sensitized to an African context; in particular, they must be historically and culturally grounded. The entry point to development debates is not to legitimize a Eurocentric canon of thought as a universal model, but rather to see it as only one particular geo-political viewpoint in the broader vista of history. It is in this regard that the idea and practice of development in Africa should speak to African problems in the context of the continent's historical experiences of European hegemony. Development Studies should not merely be understood as a regurgitation of Western thought in Africa, but must be grounded in an African worldview. This study therefore does not seek to reinvent the wheel, but seeks to join contending voices, such as those of the dependency theorists, post-development, and decolonial scholars who argue that development debates should be relevant to the contexts within which people exist. Thus, this study, *Towards an Afrocentric Development Paradigm in Africa*, is one attempt to shift the geo-politics of analysis and to ground and centre development debates within Africa as a geographic location.

1.10 Scope and limitations

The study focuses on postcolonial Africa, and in particular, provides a critique of the positioning of development initiatives from after World War II (post-1945) to date. In particular, the study examines the development challenges facing Africa since the advent of decolonization (1950s-2020). Alternative development strategies adopted by African leaders following independence are analysed and discussed. In particular, the study looks into the limitations created by colonial matrices of power and how they

have shaped modern African notions of development and, in particular, how they have impeded the African quest for liberation. The study is therefore primarily focused on the African continent.

1.11 Ethical considerations

This study makes a theoretical contribution to debates on development discourses and practice and does not involve human participants in the research process. The study uses primary and secondary written material sources such as published articles and academic books in the public domain. All sources consulted have been fully acknowledged in line with the prescribed referencing requirements, both in the text and at the end of this study.

1.12 Outline of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the general introduction and background to this thesis by discussing the problem statement, the research objectives and the key research questions emanating from those objectives, the theoretical framework, the methodology, and the importance of this study. Lastly, it discusses the scope, limitations of this study and ethical concerns.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework: Afrocentricity

This chapter lays the theoretical foundation for this thesis by providing a thorough discussion of the historical development of Afrocentricity as a paradigm, theory and methodology. The chapter provides answers to the questions of why, when, and

where, of who the key protagonists behind the emergence of Afrocentricity are, and of what its relevance is to a rethinking of decolonization debates in Africa and the globe at large, and of development in particular. The chapter starts its discussion by focusing on a definition of Afrocentricity, followed by considerations of its historical roots, leitmotifs, critics and responses to its critics. This theoretical chapter provides a foundation for the entirety of this study and, in particular, for the interrogation and critique of development discourses and practices in Africa.

Chapter 3: Critique of Eurocentrism and a mapping of African development initiatives

This chapter problematizes the Eurocentric conception of development in Africa as an academic discourse, ideology, and practice rooted in the post-World War II Truman paradigm. Informed by the Afrocentric critique of Eurocentrism, this chapter favours a historical and political approach in which development is understood as a broad process of the re-membering of a formerly “dismembered” people of Africa, and as a highly contestable and contested idea, caught up in a terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Chapter 4: Afrocentricity on the significance of African history for development

This chapter examines the significance of history as one of the cardinal units of analysis in Afrocentricity, which debunks Eurocentric history in its analysis of African development. Afrocentricity argues that unless there is a re-articulation of African history away from Eurocentrism, development in Africa will remain elusive. Development has to be anchored in a people’s history. Throughout its unfolding as a theory, Afrocentricity has consistently and systematically rewritten African history as a contribution to African development itself, and as part of a broader agenda of restoring

African humanity. The objective of an Afrocentric historicism is to discover Africa's contributions to human civilization as a launching pad for African self-discovery, as opposed to the current habit in Africa always to seek to adjust to European games. Thus, in terms of Afrocentricity, an understanding of the correct record of Africa's historical trajectory becomes a pre-requisite for Africa's autocentric development.

Chapter 5: Afrocentricity on the significance of culture in the conceptualization of African development

This chapter examines the significance of culture as a second cardinal element of Afrocentricity in this thesis to interrogate Eurocentric culture through the Afrocentric re-conception of development. The chapter argues that the post-World War II Truman development paradigm was infused with European culture, which has served to further dislocate African people, forcing them to think of development in European terms. The chapter argues that African development must be informed by African culture to remain relevant in Africa and to debunk a Eurocentric hegemony.

Chapter 6: Afrocentricity on the significance of agency in development in Africa

This chapter examines the role of African agency as the third cardinal element of Afrocentricity for a re-imagination of an Afrocentric development paradigm. The chapter examines Pan-Africanism and African nationalism, not only as two important ideological frameworks, but as expressions of African agency to combat European agency and its domination agenda. The chapter argues that the future of African development can only be attained when Africans themselves act in their own best interest.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, discussion and recommendations

This chapter provides the concluding remarks for this thesis, which attempts to make a compelling argument for the decolonization of the discourse(s) and practice(s) of development in Africa and its liberation from the prevailing Eurocentric colonial epistemology.

CHAPTER 2:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

AFROCENTRICITY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter lays the theoretical basis for this thesis by providing a detailed discussion on the historical development of Afrocentricity as a paradigm, theory and methodology. Afrocentricity challenges traditional Eurocentric perspectives in multiple dimensions of Africans' lives. The chapter provides responses to the questions of why, when and where, and identifies the key protagonists in the story of the emergence of Afrocentricity and its relevance to a rethinking of decolonization debates in Africa and the globe in general, and development in particular.

The chapter starts by focusing on how to define Afrocentricity, followed by a discussion of its historical roots, leitmotifs, critics and responses to those critics. This theoretical chapter provides a foundation for the entirety of this study and, in particular, for the interrogation and critique of development as a field of study in Africa. Thus, an Afrocentric interrogation of development aims to liberate an understanding of the subject matter from a particular African perspective. Afrocentricity as a guiding theory in this study privileges African history, culture and agency as the units of analysis and in understanding the gamut of African experiences under modernity. The proposed point of departure to the future is precolonial Africa, rather than Euro-modernity.

Afrocentricity has become the dominant intellectual paradigm in the analysis of African phenomena in at least the last two decades. Afrocentricity was conceptualised and developed through the skilful writings of Molefi Kete Asante, who is the leading

theorist, and the members of Africology and African American studies at Temple University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), which is considered the construct's intellectual home. The primary role of Afrocentricity has been a quest to depose the dominant Eurocentric paradigm, which has been identified as a leading cause of the de-centring and dislocation of Africans from their own historical and cultural experiences.

Thus, Afrocentricity proposes the relocation and the re-centring of African persons within their own historical, political, and cultural context as a key to their liberation from Eurocentric epistemic domination. Afrocentricity is first and foremost a paradigm of agency and action; it seeks to remove Europe, its knowledge system and its hegemonic practices from the centre of African reality, and replace it with an African-based knowledge system, informed by African history and culture, as framed within the lived experiences of African people trans-continently and trans-generationally. This means that establishing the intellectual location of the researcher is indispensable to any examination of African people's culture, politics, spirituality, economics and psychology in general. It is critical to understand in this study that Afrocentricity is not articulated as a fixed corpus of ideas or perspective, or as a closed system of beliefs, but as a dynamic position.

Since the advent of the colonization of Africa by Europe, starting in the early 15th century, information regarding the continent of Africa and its people has been articulated from a European point of view as a strategy to submerge an African worldview. The call for the liberation of Africans from European political hegemony and the subsequent neo-colonial ties in the post-independence era coincided with calls for the liberation of epistemology. The challenge that faced the newly independent

nation states was how to develop themselves by improving the quality of life for African people; with regard to education, the main challenge was to liberate African minds from the ravages of the legacy of the colonial knowledge system. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018:1) puts it as follows:

[B]ecause of the longstanding consequences of modernity, enslavement and colonialism, African people have been reproduced as objects of development within the Eurocentric historiography. Colonialism disrupted their societal order and re-oriented them on the false trajectory, which objectified them as backward people, as a people who are only acted upon rather than acting, and as a people without culture and history.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018:10) agrees with the views expressed by Asante (2007:10), stating that “although colonization of Africans has ended (as a direct control of African political administration), Africans remain psychologically dominated”. Having had their minds colonized by European invaders, Africans have remained colonial subjects relying on the colonial library to seek an understanding of themselves, which further deepened their dislocation. The relocation of an African mind-set into the African historical and cultural context is the solution in the pursuit of African decolonization to usher in the liberation of the African people.

Against this background, therefore, Afrocentricity seeks to restore African ontological density by opposing and deposing the destructive effects of Eurocentric historiography. It is crucial to note that while the call to reassert an African perspective and agency was made earlier, it is Asante who systematically introduced *Afrocentricity* as a paradigm into academic discourse. Many Africans on the continent and African-American historians, writers, poets, musicians and political activists before Asante’s time made the point that in order for Africans, in particular in America and other diasporas, to be fully liberated, they must trace their genealogy within the context of Kemet (Egypt) and, in particular, the Nile Valley civilization.

However, this call did not materialise as a philosophical concept and a paradigm in academia until the 1980s, when Asante published his book *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*. The book ushered in a new era; it framed Afrocentricity as a paradigm and gave it status in academia as a legitimate paradigm for the study of African phenomena. Thus, Asante offers Afrocentricity as an ethical ideological standpoint that positions Africans as subjects in their own development rather than as objects, and inaugurates a relevant ideological basis for explanations of African historical experiences (Asante, 1998:xiii).

2.2 Defining the concept of Afrocentricity

Asante (2003:2) defines Afrocentricity as follows:

Afrocentricity is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate. In regards to theory, it is the placing of African people in the center of any analysis of African phenomena.

The key aspect in Asante's definition is "the assertion of African agency within the lived experiences of African people in the context of their culture and history, regardless of which phenomena are analysed". Afrocentricity is therefore a ground-breaking intellectual perspective, proposed as a constructural adjustment to African disorientation, de-centredness, and the lack of agency created by the Eurocentric hegemony (Asante, 2009).

Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:1-2) explains that

Afrocentricity is primarily addressed to a detailed investigation and questioning of the Eurocentric nature of knowledge; to avoid personal and collective destruction of people of African descent; to reclaim an African cultural system as a coherent meeting point of every African cultural and historical past.

This position starts with the recognition that Eurocentrism as a particular perspective remains "a normal expression of culture", as far as Europeans are concerned but is in

fact “abnormal if it imposes its cultural particularity as ‘universal’ while denying and degrading other cultural views” (Asante, 2003:61). In opposing the hegemonic intellectual climate created by Eurocentrism, Afrocentricity aims to transmute human reality by steering openly towards a cultural diversity that cannot exist without unlocking our minds to accepting an expansion of our consciousness (Asante, 2015:vii). Refining his ideological position, Asante (2015:vii) asserts: “I seek to overthrow parochialism, provincialism, and narrow Wotanic visions of the world by demonstrating the usefulness of an Afrocentric approach, based on beginning with ancient Kemet, to question knowledge.”

From the perspective of Afrocentricity, the arrogance characterizing Eurocentric scholarship arises from its unwillingness to learn – indeed its fear of learning from others – as doing so might pose a threat to the European hegemony. Thus, Eurocentrism has plunged the Global North into an epistemic racist posture that has led to self-praise and the plague of egoism, denying Africans a platform to speak. In this context, Asante (2015:ix) argues that the primitive hold that Europe once held over the world is now crashing into the barricades of history, and that we are at a new turn in the world of ideas and knowledge. The former enslaved are using every means possible to foster their revolt against oppression; and in this revolt, they overturn both their own victimization and oppression, and the idea that Europe is supreme (Asante, 2015: ix). For this reason, the emergence of Afrocentricity, as Asante (2000a:50) contends, is a call to challenge the continuation of white racial dominion over all symbols and social systems, by opposing archaic structures of race based on the imposition of a particular cultural reality as if it were universal.

In this study, Afrocentricity is presented as an alternative perspective that seeks to restore African people within their own historical and cultural landscape to overcome the cultural crisis created by Europe's epistemic arrogance. Asante (2000a:50) emphasises that "it becomes essential to accept the subject position of Africans within the context of their historical realities if progress is to be made in interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or construction".

From an Afrocentric perspective, Eurocentrism has distorted African culture, de-Africanized the consciousness of Africans, and arrested their economic and cultural development; it therefore represents a potent threat to the cultural, social, economic and political development of Africans (Asante, 1990). In his further criticism of Eurocentrism, Asante (2000a:53) emphasises that the major dilemma with the Eurocentric supremacist way of thinking has been its intolerance of other ways of knowing; thus, Eurocentrism has become self-absorbed, and has trapped itself in the notion that it represents the categorical "universal" for the world. He adds that "everywhere Europe has sought domination, defeat, ethnic cleansing, and conquest and in no way has it sought co-existence with non-European peoples" (Asante, 2000a:53). It is because of this quest by the Global North for domination that African people, in the 500 years of their domination, became removed from their own terms and speak from European terms as theirs. Hence, Afrocentricity seeks to communicate the need to re-locate, re-assert and re-ground African people historically, economically, socially, politically and philosophically as a way to overcome their dislocation.

Ama Mazama (2001:387), another Temple scholar, holds that Africa's dislocation as a result of Eurocentric intellectual dominance has led us to willingly accept footnote

status in the white man's book. Here her argument draws on fellow Temple scholar Asante's (1998:8) lament that

...if there is anything Africans have lost under European domination, it is their cultural centeredness; that is, we have been moved from our own platforms. This means we cannot truly be ourselves or know our potential since we exist in a borrowed space and have become the spectators of a show that defines us without our own input.

This implies that without an understanding of our historical past, we remain merely the objects of European experimentation. Asante (2003) asserts:

...to say we are de-centered means essentially that we have lost our own cultural footing and have become other than our cultural and political origins dislocated and disoriented. We are therefore essentially insane, that is, living an absurdity from which we will never be able to free our minds until we return to the source.

Mazama (2001:387-388) expresses a similar view, acknowledging that Africans are dislocated – having lost sight of themselves in the midst of European decadence and madness, it has become increasingly difficult for them to orient their lives in a positive and constructive manner. Against this dislocation, Afrocentricity proposes that Africans must be restored to and placed within their own historical and cultural setting as a way to overcome their de-centredness and disorientation.

Therefore, the primary objective of Afrocentricity is to give Africans back their victorious consciousness. It also means locating “the European voice and perspective as just one among many, and not necessarily as the wisest one” (Mazama, 2001:388). It is a perspective that makes a call on all Africans, regardless of where they are located in the world. It calls on them to be re-located ideologically within their historical and cultural setting. In academic circles, Afrocentricity can best be understood as a paradigm which seeks to enthrone the centrality of African experiences as a base from which African people's reality should be interpreted.

Asante (2016:24) argues that

...until we as Africans reset the social sciences, humanities, natural sciences and arts more closely to our own historical narratives we will continue to assume the role of junior brother and sister to other world narratives as if our own experiences, that is, those of our ancestors are less important than others.

For this reason, Afrocentricity can have a significant influence in the manner in which African researchers view their identity and interpret their reality from a centred position to overcome the disorientation and de-centredness created by Eurocentric perspectives.

Jackson and Hogg (2010:2) also emphasise that Afrocentricity should not be viewed as a single monolithic theory of knowledge, but rather constitutes a gathering space for multiple theoretical orientations that focus on African agency, culture, history, philosophy, and society in an effort to reconstruct a global African identity and subjectivity. Hence, within the political climate constructed by European dominance, no one can assume to be a universal subject or claim to be an objective speaker; rather we are expressions of a culture. Either we speak from our own cultural perspective or we participate in someone else's cultural perspective – none can claim neutrality. Afrocentricity, therefore, boldly articulates the African cultural standpoint and unashamedly asserts African agency informed by African culture and history as the route to confront Eurocentric dominance.

In an effort to provide further clarity on what Afrocentricity is, Asante (2016:26) outlines the following five principal constituents that distinguish Afrocentricity from any other theoretical viewpoint (I quote at length, because of the importance of these points for my argument):

- Afrocentricity emphasises that Africans should to have a passionate interest in their own psychological or emotional location, as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals, ceremonies, and signs. The African thinker should be seeking

to determine by icon, myth, motifs, symbols, etc., where a text, person or event is located. This literally implies that no phenomenon can be apprehended adequately without locating it first. To understand the African people is to locate them within their own historical and cultural context defined by psychological time and space. This clearly suggests that no preconceived ideas originating from outside of African lived experiences can provide a proper understanding of Africans. In this context, a Eurocentric scholar is unable to explain African phenomena adequately without wearing the correct lenses. In fact, it is culturally hegemonic to use a Eurocentric worldview to navigate an understanding of Africa and its people.

- Afrocentricity asserts that scholars [must] be committed to finding the subject-place of Africans in any inquiry, be it political, social, economic, religious, and architectural. The researcher must know where he or she stands in the process of research and must prioritize the interest of the African people. In this manner, the Afrocentrist is enabled to comment on any injustice, inequality and marginalization of Africans.
- Afrocentricity insists Africans must guard African cultural elements as historically valid in the context of art, music, education, and literature. To defend African cultural elements means that we must study African cultures and be experts in our field of inquiry.
- Afrocentricity celebrates 'centredness' and 'agency' and stimulates commitment to a lexical refinement and reconstruction that eliminates any misperceptions about Africans.

We must thus determine where those who wish to make pronouncements on a variety of African-related matters are located intellectually, in order to enable us to make a proper assessment of the issues. Afrocentricity will remain, in future thought and scientific endeavour, a powerful imperative which should inform the revision of historical and social sources to re-vision for future generations the collective story of African people. It is essential to note Afrocentricity advocates, and becomes a tool in, a re-education of Africans to overcome the negativity that has been conferred on them by European scholarship as a way to liberate knowledge from Eurocentric hegemony.

In addition to the five principles outlined by Asante regarding what constitutes the essence of Afrocentricity, Ama Mazama (2001:399) has articulated four cardinal elements which must inform an Afrocentric research, namely its cosmology,

epistemology and axiology, and the aesthetics of African people; the research must also be centred in African experiences.

With regard to cosmology, Asante (1990:8-9) asserts that the place of African culture in the myths, legends, literatures, and oratories of African people makes up, at a mythological level, the cosmological issue in the Afrocentric enterprise. The critical task for Afrocentrists is to examine what role African culture plays or what it contributes in Africans' interface with the cosmos. Therefore, the focus in Afrocentricity is holism. This communicates the idea that systems (physical, biological, chemical, social, economic, mental, and linguistic) and their properties should be viewed as a whole, not just as a collection of parts. This implies that Afrocentricity rejects reductionism, which is mostly embedded within Eurocentrism, which has not only dismembered the African continent, but also Africans' view of life.

The second cardinal element is African epistemology. To question "if there is such a thing called an 'African epistemology'" is to question the very existence of the people called Africans, but in particular, it is to question their ability to produce any knowledge unique to their circumstances, in line with their life experiences. It is therefore impossible to imagine any future for Africans if we assume Africans do not exist. Asante (1996:256) explains that in his use of "African" as a prefix he is referring to a "composite African", not a specific discrete African orientation which would rather mean ethnic identification, such as Yoruba, Zulu, Nubian, etc. Afrocentricity, therefore, affirms the ability of Africans (in this broad sense) to think and be their own agents, using their own knowledge system informed by their composite history and lived experiences.

Senghor ([1959] 1964) highlights that the African mode of cognition is more emotionally laden than purely rational mode of cognition. He adds that European forms of thought or reasoning prefer to rely solely on rationalism; they are analytic and discursive, whereas African reasoning is more intuitive. African knowledge therefore emerges from the cooperation of all human faculties and experience, and not only reasoning.

The third critical aspect in Afrocentric inquiry, according to Mazama (2001), is an axiological aspect. Axiology, which is also called the theory of value, is the philosophical study of goodness, or value. In an Afrocentric inquiry, axiology concerns that which is deemed is tolerable and that which is not tolerable in the context of the African worldview. Afrocentrists believe that the practice of research must hold African history and the lived experiences of the Africans in the highest esteem. That which articulates the best interest of the African people – particularly, their liberation from all forms Eurocentric hegemony – should occupy the hearts of the researchers. Hence, the focal point in Afrocentricity is the relocation and re-centring of Africans within their cultural context, as a way to dislodge Western ways of thinking, being and feeling, and restoring them to the modes that are germane to their cultural perspective. In this context, Mazama (2001:387-388) argues that without re-centring ourselves to the African cultural context, we remain displaced, and having lost sight of ourselves in the midst of what she describes as European decadence and madness, it becomes increasingly impossible for us to position our lives in a positive and constructive manner.

The last important issue in Afrocentricity relates to aesthetics. For Asante (1990:11), aesthetics exists as the leading elements of the African response to the arts, whether

these are the plastic or performing arts. Welsh-Asante (1994) also points out that an understanding of aesthetics facilitates the paradigm for artistic, literary and philosophical criticism and scholarship. In addition, Welsh-Asante (1994) maintains that the cultural dynamics of a people create a specific aesthetic complexion. For this reason, African aesthetics play a critical role in asserting the ability of African people to be innovative and contribute in building their own societies. African people should therefore not merely be seen as objects that must be fashioned into the image and artistic expressions of a European cultural ethos. Rather, they must affirm their right to be their own agents in the multicultural global context.

In line with the five principles articulated by Asante and the four cardinal elements of Afrocentric research articulated by Mazama (2001, 2013, 2014), the foundational and ultimate goal of Afrocentricity is to expose and resist white racial domination over Africans in all matters of African life and to restore Africans to their cultural centre. Culture remains a central aspect in Asante's analysis and he defines it as "shared perceptions, attitudes, and pre-dispositions that allow African people to organize experiences in certain ways" (Asante, 1990:9). In Asante's view, "Afrocentricity should not be understood as the sheer reverse of Eurocentrism as others suppose, rather it ought to be understood as a perspective for analysis which privileges African voices without seeking to become a universal perspective just as Eurocentrism has often done" (Asante, 2003:5-6).

Chukwuokolo (2009:33) also affirms that Afrocentricity does not violently confront any person or people, but it is a resolute attempt to put the record straight. It is about placing Africans in their proper historical framework. It is a demand that the

contributions of Africans in all areas of civilization be correctly reflected in world history.

Therefore, Afrocentrists do not seek to impose an African-centred worldview on other people or posit that it is the “only” and exclusive framework for legitimate knowledge production. For Afrocentrists, the widely held misconception that human progress emanates only from white people and not the entirety of the human race shrinks the status of non-whites and promotes epistemic racism. Afrocentricity therefore seeks to position itself intellectually alongside other knowledges as a valid canon of thought. It calls on Africans to be heedful in scrutinising all aspects related to their being as a way to dismantle Eurocentric hegemony over their lives. Afrocentrists therefore argue for diversity in philosophical views without hierarchy, and call for all cultural centres to be respected.

2.3 Historical roots of Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity was conceptualised and crystallised through the writings of Molefi Kete Asante (its leading theorist), who, in the late 1970s, initiated discussions on the significance for an Afrocentric orientation to data (Asante, 2009; Bakari, 1997). In 1980 Molefi Asante popularised his ideas through the book titled *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, which launched the first full discussion of the concept (Asante, 2009; Bay, 2000; Chawane, 2016; Khokholkova, 2016:113). Asante (born as Arthur Lee Smith Jr), a Professor in the Department of Africology and African American Studies at Temple University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), along with other scholars, championed the concept and refined it into a paradigm. Other scholars who have written extensively on Afrocentricity and who worked with Professor Asante include Ama Mazama (2001, 2003, 2014), Theophile Obenga (2002), C. Tshehloane Keto

(1989), Kariamu Welsh-Asante (1994), Abu Abarry (who co-published with Asante in 1996), and Terry Kershaw (Khokholkhova, 2016:113; Verharen, 2000). Asante remains a leading scholar in the group.

Mazama (2001:403) locates the emergence of Afrocentricity as a paradigm within the context of the graduate programme, in particular, the PhD programme, in the Department of Africology at Temple University in 1988. Mazama (2001) explains that the development of this PhD programme was a milestone, not so much because the study programme validated the African experience, but because, for the first time, there was an attempt systematically and consciously to build an army of scholars who would be trained to challenge white supremacy in ways it had never been challenged before.

This theory emerged with an aim to address the life and experiences of people of African descent in America, and by extension on the African continent, and in other diasporas globally. In other words, from its inception, the idea of Afrocentricity sought to transcend the restricted African American context where it was conceptualised into a paradigm, and to establish itself as a global idea whose primary objective is to address the conditions and lived experiences of Africans in a world dominated by Eurocentrism and racism against Africans. Hence, Afrocentricity is not a paradigm only for Africans in diaspora as others have misrepresented it, but for Africans globally.

According to Asante (2000a), there are three intellectual streams that are directly linked to Afrocentricity's emergence, namely, Négritude, Diopian historiography, and the Kawaida communitarian philosophy proposed by Maulana Karenga. Although each of these intellectual theories influenced early work in Afrocentricity, the development of Afrocentricity itself must be seen as linked to each one in a different

way. Asante (2000a:60) acknowledges that from Négritude, Afrocentricity learned that the constituents of resistance to oppression are action and agency, although Asante argues that Négritude did not give us the kind of agency that would reverberate in the work of Afrocentrists. According to Mazama (2003), the leading figures of the Négritude movement, Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Leon Damas, were struck by the overwhelming colonial nature of French culture, and as university students they became exhausted and enervated by this colonial culture, so they erected defences against it by projecting what was their own from their ancestors. Mazama (2003) maintains that they liberated themselves from European culture when they embraced themselves and saw themselves as beautiful, and something wonderful to behold. However, they were unable to carry this project through to completion and often found themselves back in the bosom of whiteness.

Asante (2001) maintains that Afrocentricity is a broader paradigm than Négritude, which depends on Africanity much more than on Afrocentricity to wrest its place in the discourse of social change. In Asante's (1998:19) view, Africanity focuses primarily on the customs, traditions, and traits of the people of Africa and its diaspora. He argues that to be an African by birth does not automatically translate to being Afrocentric; Africanity is a state of being, and Afrocentricity a state of being *conscious* of one's African-ness as it relates to living experiences (Asante, 2000a:60).

Cheikh Anta Diop's historiography of Africa (1974, 1981, 1991) also made a critical contribution to the emergence of Afrocentricity. However, although it is true that Afrocentricity borrows from Diopian historiography in the arena of methodology and historical epistemology, Asante (2000a) maintains that Afrocentricity is not limited to

the subject of history alone. Afrocentricity is therefore an all-inclusive paradigm which investigates all matters affecting African lives from a centred perspective.

Afrocentricity was also influenced by Maulana Karenga's philosophy of Kawaïda, which aimed at re-orienting corrective action, which included the restoration of cultural values on the basis of African traditions (Asante, 2000a). In Asante's view, Afrocentricity sought to use the Kawaïdan critique of culture as a starting point for suggesting African agency in addressing the oppressive environment and how such an environment has influenced African reactions to remedy the situation (Asante, 2000a:61). Thus the reconstruction of an African value system was perceived as an important remedy to reconstruct positivity to confront mental slavery and structural systems designed to oppress. The Kawaïdan philosophy provided a base for Afrocentricity's cultural criticism, even though Kawaïda focuses on ethical aspects, whereas Afrocentricity explores the structural designs that encourage moral decisions.

According to Khokholkova (2016:114), Afrocentricity did not only develop as an approach, but also as a socio-political movement. From its very inception, Afrocentric theory was utilitarian, in the sense that it became a guide to action. Bay (2000:502) states that the adjective "Afro-centric" was coined by W.E.B. Du Bois in the early 1960s to describe the subject matter of his projected *Encyclopedia Africana*, which was to centre on Africa. She holds, however, that Afrocentricity's contemporary meaning was not defined into a theory of analysis until Asante published his book in the 1980s (Bay, 2000:503). According to Asante (1988:16), Du Bois prepared the world for Afrocentricity by establishing its foundations. As stated earlier, Asante also explicitly cites Cheikh Anta Diop, the Senegalese historian, as the precursor of Afrocentricity,

because he reconstructed African cultural theory with Africa as a subject (Asante, 1998:x).

According to Chawane (2016:84), the fact that Afrocentricity emerged in the United States of America has led some scholars erroneously to assume that it is a theory exclusively for African-American scholars. For example, Collins (1991:206) argues that for “one to become an Afrocentrist, he or she must be located within an African value system, thus, any paradigm that seeks to explain the existential socio-cultural circumstances of African people must be centred or located within the African continent”. Echoing Collins’s (1991) views, Mafeje (2000:69) also endorses African-centredness, arguing that

black African Americans are first Americans and second anything else they choose, like all Americans and irrespective of what they do, black Americans cannot hope to re-appropriate Africa. Any attempt to do so would lead to intellectual confusion and conceptual distortions.

Mafeje (2000:69) is of the view that “Africa must be studied from within in order to reclaim one’s identity”.

However, the position held in this study is that the history of African oppression and colonization did not begin in America; rather, it started in Africa; hence, the general history of Africans can never be complete without recognizing the Africans who became the victims of the Transatlantic slave trade and whose descendants form the bulk of the African American segment of the American population today. In addition, there is always a sense of solidarity and constant search by Africans in the diaspora for a common historical mission, for the elements that bind them together as a group, other than a common history of oppression. To exclude African Americans or Africans in the diaspora from the study of Africans would be an error, in failing to admit that they are Africans taken from Africa in the first place. In this regard, Asante cites Du

Bois, who once stated that “he speaks first and foremost as a son of Africa and calls to Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia and the need for Afro-Americans to see their thinking, self-understanding, and intellectual efforts to be related to those of Africans” (Asante, 2016:27).

The argument that African Americans cannot claim their status as Africans is merely another attempt by Eurocentric scholars (both white and black) to further divide Africans as one group of people with a common origin and common experiences of oppression. European historiography has separated Africans into different groupings as a strategy to disrupt African unity against their oppressive strategies. It is more important to note that most scholars agree that the experiences of enslavement and racism directed at Africans in American society created conditions for the emergence of the Afrocentric theory (Khokholkova, 2016; Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014; Verharen, 2000). Verharen (cited in Chawane, 2016:81) agrees that the experiences of slaves in the Middle Passage during the Transatlantic slave trade, the denial of education to slaves once they landed in the Americas, and the double cultures of Africanisms and Americanisms, stimulated Afro-American hypersensitivity to culture and its relativity. The role of Afrocentricity as a theory is to advance African unity based on African culture and history, with Africans as their own agents and subjects of their historical tale, and not as objects of the European modernization agenda.

2.4 The leitmotifs of Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity as a theory of knowledge proposes that knowledge about Africa and Africans be re-investigated cross-continently, as a way to subvert the epistemic racism created throughout the history of Eurocentrism and its colonization of the terms of reference. While Afrocentricity attempts to address all aspects of African lives, there

are specific topics that are widely covered within Afrocentricity which are considered of critical importance. Chawane (2016:86) outlines some of the interrelated critical key topics as including the contribution of ancient Africa to world civilization, a perspective on African history, slavery, colonialism, and racism.

2.4.1 Afrocentricity and its perspective on African history and Africa's contributions to ancient civilization

Afrocentricity posits that African history and Africa's contribution to world civilization necessitates a unique perspective on the study of African people, as many of their contributions were intentionally distorted because of racist Eurocentric scholarship. According to Adeleke (2015:202), the idea of Afrocentric history as narrated by black thinkers developed as a resistance strategy against the negative European tale of African history. This implies that the emergence of Afrocentric historicism emerged as a search by Africans to understand their roots and to narrate their story correctly.

The primary argument advanced by Afrocentrists is that the study of the continent of Africa and its people requires proper research from an African-centred perspective, since the achievements and contributions of Africans were deliberately destroyed and distorted by European invaders. Chawane (2016:86) states that Western scholars driven by racism and cultural arrogance intentionally downplayed the achievements made by Africans in Antiquity as a strategy to deny Africans their humanity, thus portraying them as uncivilised humans and with no history to tell.

In the words of Adeleke (2015:200), "the black experience in America and the black experience worldwide has borne the burden of Western history, which is a history of negation". This historical narrative describes Africa as the "dark continent" and Africans as barbarians and heathens who required civilization and enlightenment from

Europeans. This narration denies people of African ancestry a credible space among civilized beings. For this reason, the colonization of the non-Europeans was justified as a “civilizing” and “Christianizing” mission to forestall criticism of the actions of the Europeans who invaded Africa.

Perspectives on Africa’s contribution in human civilization vary, depending on who writes on African history and for what purpose. The majority of European historians deliberately minimised the contributions made by Africans, whereas Afrocentric writers and historians credited black civilization in Egypt with many cultural advances. Thus, the rewriting of African history by black intellectuals was part of black resistance against racist European scholarship, which deliberately downplayed Africa’s contribution to world civilization. Generations of black intellectuals since the 19th century have undertaken this struggle for historical legitimation (Ernest, 2004; Hall, 2009). Afrocentric scholars epistemically revolted against false European narratives of Africa by re-writing African history with an objective to correct the historical injustices.

For example, Nwala (cited in Chukwuokolo, 2009:31) notes that

African achievements in science and philosophy were appropriated as European achievements. Thus, we read about such African philosophers like St. Augustine, Origen, Philo, Plotinus, Porphyry, and many others as part of Western intellectual tradition and achievement. The great achievements of Egyptian thought were largely appropriated as European achievements.

Eurocentric bias was a strategy to elevate Europe as the centre of world history, thus downplaying the civilizations and the technological and intellectual achievements of those outside of Europe, in particular Africans. It is in this context that Asante (2016) emphasises that the Eurocentric argument that the ancient Egyptians were not black Africans and that the Great Zimbabwean walls and the pyramids were not built by

Africans have to be challenged. He adds that Africa's influence on ancient Greece (considered Europe's oldest civilization) was enormous in art, geometry, medicine, mathematics, architecture, politics, astronomy, and religion (Asante, 2016). However, racist Eurocentric scholarship has continued to undermine and discredit Africa as a place of barbarism with no history. One of the most notorious instances of Eurocentric racism by scholars in the narrative of African history is postulated by G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1837).¹ Hegel divided Africa up into three regions: North Africa, Egypt, and "Africa proper".

Hegel's views were grounded on the notion of European racial superiority (Kuykendall, 1993:571-581), as he believed that nothing good could come from black Africans. His artificial division of Africa cemented the idea that black Africans were nothing but uncivilized barbarians devoid of culture and history and had nothing to offer. Historians of that period continually invalidated African people in order to justify the idea that Africans should be civilised and enlightened into the image of a European man as a way to redeem Africans from their barbarism. David Hume ([1748] 1969:208) had earlier framed a similar racist attack on black Africans:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in either action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences.

This malicious web of intellectual bias and racist posture continued to inform how Europeans looked down on Africans and other non-European people. For this reason, Afrocentrists aim to reclaim Africa and the civilizational achievements of its people in

¹ He delivered his lectures on history at the University of Berlin in 1822, 1828, and 1830, and they were published in 1837. I used the 1956 English translation.

order to combat Eurocentric distortions. Chukwuokolo (2009:31) affirms that the biases of the Eurocentric intellectual atmosphere were conducive to Europeans' subtly (and often not so subtly) manipulating Africans' consciousness to view their realities from the European perspective in all spheres, be they social, political, developmental, technological or scientific. Hence, the primary objective of Afrocentrists must be to rally African scholars and educators to rewrite the whole landscape of African history to ensure the preservation of African heritage, culture and contributions to world civilization. Asante (2009:1-2) makes this clear:

[T]he fact of the matter is that the history of Africa written by European scholars discounts and twists the substantial evidence of African influence on Greece. In particular, to bring to light that ancient Egypt was before ancient Greece as ancient Greece was before Rome, in this way the Greeks are left in their place and the Egyptians are respected for their achievements, without seeking to relegate them to the junior status.

The goal of Afrocentricity is therefore to reaffirm Africa as a place of greatness which has contributed immensely to world civilization in order to instil a victorious consciousness to overthrow Eurocentric distortions and set the record straight.

The re-narration of African history must reopen the discussion on everything from race theory, ancient civilizations, colonial and post-colonial, African and European personalities, and dislocation in the writing of African authors (Asante, 2007).

2.4.2 Afrocentricity's perspective on racism, slavery and colonialism

Afrocentrists maintain that the subject of race and racism must be tackled urgently, because it has contributed to a distorted understanding of Africa and its people. Although the concept of race is more recent, Afrocentrists argue that a racist line of thought has its roots as far back as the 15th century (Asante, 2014). Olusoga (2015) demonstrates that since the 15th century to date – the entire period during which

Europeans and Africans have been connected through trade, empire and migration, both forced and voluntary – Europe has viewed the people of Africa through the distorting lens of racism and racial theory. During the era of colonialism and Transatlantic slave trade, the idea of race was invented and soon became a strategy to oppress and exterminate Africans. Asante (1980) highlights that “in the Netherlands, around the same era in which Hume was writing, Peter Campier compared facial and skull measurements of black people and monkeys and developed a hierarchy in which he said that the Greek statuary was the highest form and the lowest was the Negro”. During the late 18th century, at the University of Gottingen, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt began to develop the racial hierarchical theories that would shape European thought into the next centuries and would cause Africans to question themselves (Asante, 1980). The European colonialists recruited historians, ethnographers, clergymen and scientists to do the ignoble job of degrading Africans as less-than-human beings.

Chawane (2016:87) states that the European colonisers projected themselves as the liberators and saviours of the African savages with the ostensible primary objective of freeing them from their barbarism and primitive state and bringing them into the civilized trajectory of the European man. They downplayed the fact that they were raping the people and the land, and robbing them of their possessions, thus enriching themselves. Asante (2017) emphasises that the colonial masters claimed to be obeying the precepts of some form of universal reason or rationality; anything contrary to their way of thinking was an act of irrationality and backwardness. They cared little to understand African culture and modes of production, and imposed their own, which amounts to a malicious assault that rendered Africans the objects of colonial oppression. For this reason, European colonisation not only fractured the African

physical environment, but it extended itself to unleashing cultural disintegration aimed at destroying African lives. Ekeh (1983) rightly argues that

...colonialism as a process cannot be simplistically understood as an event of conquest and rule of Africa by Europeans. Rather, it must be viewed as a systemic social movement of epochal dimensions whose enduring consequences outlives the end of direct colonialism.

Essentially, the success of the colonial enterprise relied not just on the physical subjugation of Africans and their continent, but the colonization of the mind and the fostering of a slave mentality amongst Africans. Chawane (2016:89) clearly articulates this as follows: "Colonisation of the mind of Africans could not succeed without taking away the language and names of the ruled and replacing them with those of the ruler" (Chawane, 2016:89).

The Scramble of Africa as mapped during the 1884/85 Berlin Conference was the nadir – Africans lost on their land and were reduced to nonentities and an unwanted human-like species. This conference introduced and defined the rules of the partition of Africa among 14 European nations without any regard for the lives of African people. According to Asante (2009), what emerged from these self-confident imperial conferees was three important doctrines that would govern European political and military policies towards Africa for more than a century and beyond, including

[t]he doctrine of the spheres of influence by which Europe established its right to control the African coastline. The doctrine of effective occupation by which Europe established the idea that it could occupy an entire country by controlling the commerce along the coast. Lastly, the doctrine of European protection of its agents, especially missionaries, explorers, and scientists who exploited the African people's resources. (Asante, 2009:1-2)

Despite the attempts by Europeans to impose total control on the continent, Africans resisted and continue to resist, just as they did in the early days of European invasion beginning from the late 15th century. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and Asante (2009) attest

that African people have now organized their resistance against European domination by deploying Pan-Africanism and African nationalism as strategies for projecting their agency to contest this immanent logic of their dehumanization manifested through slave trade, imperialism, and colonialism. This point is addressed in more detail in Chapter 6 of this study.

2.5 Afrocentricity and its critics

Afrocentricity has provoked much controversy and has been harshly criticised by many Eurocentric scholars, both black and white. These critics have labelled it a pseudohistory, a reactive posture and merely therapeutic scholarship by those who are desperate to heal the wounds of the past, but display unwillingness to forgive the historical past (Shavit, 2001). These Eurocentric critics include Adeleke (2015), Early, Moses and Lefkowitz, in their co-publication of 1993, Lefkowitz (1996), Owens (2009), Richburg (1996), Shavit (2001), Walker (2001), and many more. The critical arguments advanced by these scholars relate to the three primary objectives which they argue to be the main points in Afrocentricity: establishing the antiquity of history and civilization in Africa; affirming the influence of Egyptian civilization on ancient Greece, and by extension, the proclamation of Africa's superiority over European civilization; and finally, proclaiming the "universality" of the African worldview (Adeleke, 2015:205).

In the first chapter of his book, *History in Black: African-Americans in Search of Their Past*, Shavit (2001) describes Afrocentrism as an historical account of black people, stating that it constitutes articles of faith, a gospel, a collective and personal revelation, but also a scientific (what he calls pseudo-scientific) historical dogma, and a mass project of rewriting human history. He recognizes that the aim of the Afrocentric

movement and its theorization is an attempt to provide a revised history of the past, one in which Africans are the founders and architects of all cultures and the main agents of change worldwide. However, Shavit (2001) claims that Afrocentrism offers only an imaginary monolithic Afrocentric universal history in an attempt to construct black identity.

Applying a similar line of argument, Moses, in the joint essay by Early *et al.* (1993:46) also criticises Afrocentrism as a form of utopian or millenarian movement which romanticizes the African past. He compares Afrocentrists with Christian evangelists who have undergone the kind of charismatic spiritual experience that the African-American psychologist William R. Cross has labelled “the Negro to Black Conversion Experience”. Moses contemptuously attacks the Afrocentrists by suggesting that those who “convert” to Afrocentrism often change their names, as a sign that they have put off the old man and put on the new man (Early *et al.*, 1993:46). He believes that Afrocentrists are fundamentalists who do not argue in a scholarly manner, and claims that Afrocentricity is not an intellectual movement but a secular religion, which assumes that it holds the absolute truth. To him Afrocentrism is not a political ideology – rather it is a utopian evangelical cult that is anti-intellectual (Early *et al.*, 1993:46).

Lefkowitz is another Eurocentric scholar who criticises the historical claims of Afrocentricity that Egyptians were the founders of Greek civilization. Lefkowitz, in the same joint essay (Early *et al.*, 1993:51), criticises the claims made by Afrocentrists, and in particular, by George G.M. James in his book, *Stolen Legacy* ([1954] 2009), that the Greeks were not the originators of Greek philosophy, but that black people of North Africa, the Egyptians, were. Lefkowitz (in Early *et al.*, 1993) dismisses such views as untrue, sensational and not supported by scholarly evidence. Lefkowitz (in

Early *et al.* 1993) lambasts the theory of *Stolen Legacy* for its lack of evidence and as mere false proclamations. She claims that if the great Greek philosophers had stolen their ideas from Egyptians as James ([1954] 2009) asserts, she would expect evidence of texts showing frequent verbal parallels. However, as it is, she argues that James ([1954] 2009) only highlights some generalized similarities between Egyptian religious ideas and Greek theories, and fails to prove them by producing written evidence, Lefkowitz, in Early *et al.*, 1993:53). She closes her argument by suggesting that such misinformation entitles *Stolen Legacy* (James [1954] 2009) to a place on the shelf with other hate literature, as a mere influential mythology in recent history.

Adeleke (2015:204-206) is also among the scholars who have criticised Afrocentricity. He maintains that Afrocentric historicism's framing of Africa is nothing but a reversal of Eurocentric racist history with a black racist historiography. He argues that Afrocentric historicism constitutes a fundamentalist and absolutist discourse that has repositioned Africa in the "universalist" edifice from which Afrocentric scholars have dislodged Europe (Adeleke, 2015:206). It is claimed that this attempt by Afrocentric scholars represents the basis of what Shavit (2001) decries as Afrocentric "Greek dependency theory".

The critics of Afrocentricity argue that its logic is simplistic. Shavit (2001) argues that if ancient Greece was the fountain of Western culture, and if it could be proven that Greek culture was heavily influenced by Egypt, it seems reasonable to depict Western civilisation as a product of non-Whites, referring to Africans in particular. It would then be this view that influenced Afrocentric scholars to invoke the "stolen legacy theory" as articulated by James ([1954] 2009). From this view, Afrocentric scholars then

merely characterise Western civilization as nothing but the product of “stolen” ancient Egyptian legacies.

Another critical point raised by the critics of Afrocentricity relates to the Afrocentric idea of Pan-Africanism and an “identity paradigm”. Adeleke (2015:207) states that in the opinion of W.D. Wright, the Afrocentric “Pan-African” construction of identity establishes no boundaries separating continental Africa and the black diaspora, and merely present one global world idealism. Such critics ignore the view that black Americans and continental Africans have always been drawn together by shared historical and cultural experiences, despite centuries of exposure to, and acculturation in, Western values – such a view is argued to be untrue and is decried as a myth which must be challenged (Adeleke, 2015). Adeleke maintains that the “Pan-African” identity paradigm as preached by Afrocentric scholars contradicts Du Bois’s duality theory.

W.E.B Du Bois (1903:30) articulated his view of “double-consciousness” as follows:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of the others, of measuring one’s soul; by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Adeleke (2015:208) argues that while acknowledging the American experience, Afrocentric scholars seek to delegitimize its identitarian significance. He maintains that Afrocentricity builds a flawed historical account, which simply suggests that African Americans came out of slavery and the American experience with their African identity intact (Adeleke, 2015:208). Therefore, according to Adeleke (2015), the portrayal of black Americans (African Americans) and Africans (continental) as one people unified by cultural attributes and historical experiences, as pertains to the argument advanced by Afrocentrists, is theoretically and practically flawed. According to Richburg

(1996:xiv) and Owens (2009:128), the “Pan-African” idea raised by Afrocentric scholars and their common African heritage romanticizes history. Both these scholars represent what Adeleke (2015:208) has termed the “slavocentric” perspective, as they reject any commonality between black Americans and continental Africans; in their view, black Americans today have nothing to do with Africa. Moreover, with regard to the idea of “continental unity” among Africans, Shavit (2001) suggests that Africa is not as homogeneous as Afrocentricity would like us to believe, but that the continent has a multiplicity of languages, genetic variants and profound religious differences. He therefore argues that Afrocentricity and its historical projections is just an attempt to build a nation of blacks on false historical grounds and should be rejected (Shavit, 2001).

2.6 Afrocentricity and its response to its critics

According to Keita (2000), the vast academic corporate pursuit of uniformity, rooted in the tradition of the assertive Euro-American reach for hegemony in thought, inevitably leads to confrontation between Afrocentrists and those who would like to subsume all new ideas under some or other form of Eurocentrism. As a strategy to maintain their intellectual hegemony over their colonial subjects, Eurocentric scholars have made it their priority to shoot down any idea that seeks to challenge the status quo. Responding to the critics of Afrocentricity, Asante (2007:3) argues that “it has become plain to see that some scholars are nervous about the possibility of a perspective on data, that is, a locative thesis, which does not adapt to the overarching ideas of a European hegemony”. Asante further asserts that “everyone now has something to say and normally what they have to say is critical of the fact that Afrocentricity appears ‘outside’ the mainstream” (Asante, 2007). Afrocentricity is “outside” because it traces

its genealogy from the African ideas and African authors; it is not Eurocentric in its analysis, for if it were, it would mean Europe would be assaulting its own patriarchy and a sense of superiority in language, content, and structure. One of the emerging Afrocentric scholars, Gwekwerere (2010:120), in affirming Asante's words, rightly reminds us that "European scholars who have made it their business to indict the Afrocentric historicism, culture and conception of reality are products of culture and a history that stand unrivalled in vilifying African people".

Responding to his critics, both white and black, Asante (2000a:52) responds that Afrocentricity should not to be confused with "Afrocentrism", as many scholars do. He argues that the opponents of Afrocentricity first used the term "Afrocentrism". "Their aim was to assign religious signification to the idea of African-centredness, but the term has come to refer to a broad cultural movement of the late 20th century and its philosophical, political, and artistic ideas, which provide the basis for the musical, sartorial, and aesthetic dimensions of the African personality" (Asante, 2000a:52). On the other hand, Afrocentricity, as I have stated earlier, is a theory of agency: the idea that African people must be viewed as agents rather than as spectators to historical revolution and change. This is why Asante (2000a) argues that Afrocentricity in fact precedes Afrocentrism, that is, it is older as a term in the intellectual discourse. Gordon (2008:106) affirms Asante's position by arguing that

...the confusion emerges from the fact that proponents of Afrocentricity refer to themselves as Afrocentric, which unfortunately means that their work is mistaken for, as many of them have protested, Afrocentrism, which, they further argue, presents itself as a centrism along with Eurocentrism but with a black face.

This misnaming of Afrocentricity as Afrocentrism clearly reflects an attempt to misdirect those who have not immersed themselves in the essence of what Afrocentricity really constitutes, and this is indicative of ongoing ideological warfare to

ensure the continuation of the subjugation of African people as objects of analysis, thus discouraging them from being agents in their own history.

Gwekwerere (2010) argues that “the Eurocentric prerogative to subvert Afrocentricity is born out of the struggle for European survival and is inspired by the desire to keep the world misinformed in order that Europeans may escape their inferiority and crimes committed in history”. As a strategy to evade criticism, these scholars accuse Afrocentricity of what they themselves are guilty of, which is to use political propaganda and present it as scholarly work to deny Africans a voice and agency. As a result, the systematic analysis of scholarly work is watered down as politicians pose as academics to discredit published scholarly work for the sake of political expediency.

Hilliard (1995:130) argues that “much of the public’s understanding of Afrocentricity heavily relies on journalists, rather than on the published research from Afrocentric scholars”. Alkebulan (2007:422) mentions, for example, the media distortions of Afrocentricity: the media have constructed Lefkowitz’s (1996) article “Not out of Africa” as a definitive criticism of Afrocentrism (again mistaken for Afrocentricity). Along with Lefkowitz, others, including Adeleke (2015), Owens (2009), Richburg (1996) and Shavit (2001) and many more critics, represent the rejection of Afrocentricity without accepting the facts of history of African negation and do not see the significance of African agency.

Asante (1999:51) writes in response to Lefkowitz as follows:

The aim of Professor Lefkowitz is to support the unsupportable idea of a miraculous Greece and thus to enhance a white supremacist myth of the ancient world.

The primary motive of her 1996 book is therefore to further discredit Africans as incapable beings without the ability to represent themselves. This is done as a political

strategy to deny African agency and to cement Eurocentric lies regarding Africans' contributions to world civilization.

The proponents of Afrocentricity have classified the three types of opponents of Afrocentricity and their reasons for opposing it: Capitulationists, Europeanised Loyalists, and Maskers (Chawane, 2016). Capitulationists condemn Afrocentricity because they are uncomfortable with themselves and do not believe that Africans should be considered agents. They include, amongst black scholars, Crouch (1995), Adeleke (2015), Richburg (1996), and Owens (2009). According to Chawane (2016), the functioning element for these critics is self-hatred, accompanied by the belief that these African critics are really nothing but whites in a black skin. Their rejection of Afrocentricity is tied to their rejection of themselves. Therefore, they seek affirmation from whites because of their lack of grounding on their own historical consciousness. Moreover, the Capitulationists aspire to universalism without reference to their particular experiences. For them, any emphasis on particular perspectives and experiences suggest separatism, and separatism suggests hostility (Chawane, 2016). The second type, the Europeanised Loyalists, include many Marxists and integrationists such as Lefkowitz, Early, Moses, Wilson and Shavit, who are staunch critics of Afrocentricity. These critics oppose the Afrocentric idea because they have immersed themselves in an alien canon of knowledge without knowing African history (Chawane, 2016:97). The last type, the Maskers, are critics who are ashamed of Afrocentricity and therefore deliberately do all they can to conceal their ideological framework and identity, thus posing as universalists. Their tragedy is that they seek to please their masters, so they attack Afrocentricity to prove to whites that they are like them, for fear that they may lose their careers (Asante, 2017).

2.7 Afrocentricity's approach to development debates

In this study, Afrocentricity is deployed for a re-conceptualisation of development as a process and practice in Africa. The theory advances the idea that in order for the study and practice of development to remain relevant in Africa, such ideas and practices must be grounded on the history, culture and assert African agency. The theory argues that unless African people are relocated to their own terms, they remain hostage to the terms defined by others (Europeans, their history, culture and their agency, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study). Afrocentricity is therefore deployed as a liberatory intellectual standpoint from which African people can re-create meaningful existence in their efforts to re-member their lives, to overcome European hegemonic practices.

2.8 Conclusion

Afrocentricity has been championed by Asante, and the Temple University scholars, frequently referred to as the Temple Circle, which emerged to challenge and oppose a Western epistemological hegemony. Although this theory emerged in the African American cultural arena, it sought to account for an understanding of an African sense of totality and wholeness for all people of African descent across the globe. Afrocentricity seeks to challenge orientations to history foreign to the history of the African subject; it demands an epistemological location that places the critic or scholar inside the African experience, and African ideals and values at the centre of inquiry, framed by African codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, and myths that give meaning to the history of the African subject and a sense of that subject's place in the world arena. Against the history of the Eurocentric negation of Africa and African modes of

cognition, and, in particular, the exclusion of African contributions to world civilization and history, this theory aims to set the record straight. Unless we shift the geography of reason and relocate our minds in our own historical and cultural context, Africans will remain objects in a European frame of reference.

This chapter has unpacked what Afrocentricity is, distinguishing it from what is not. In particular, it has discussed the key themes covered in the Afrocentricity paradigm. Moreover, the chapter has discussed the criticisms levelled against Afrocentricity and responses to its critics, with the primary objective of outlining this theory as a leading revolutionary approach to relocate Africans to their own centre in epistemological contestation. Lastly, this chapter suggests the relevance of Afrocentricity's approach to the debates on decolonizing development as a field of study. In the next chapter, I problematize development as an idea, process and practice in Africa. I also unmask its interpellation within the Eurocentric paradigm as a continuation of a Euro-epistemic colonization of terms. The main goal is to challenge a European intellectual location, and to encourage Africans to relocate to their own terms in their analysis of development in Africa.

CHAPTER 3:

CRITIQUE OF EUROCENTRISM AND A MAPPING OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

3.1 Introduction

Having laid the foundation of Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework that informs this thesis in Chapter 2, the current chapter problematizes the Eurocentric conception of development in Africa as an academic discourse, ideology, and practice – a Eurocentrism rooted in the post-World War II Truman paradigm. Informed by the Afrocentric critique of Eurocentrism, this chapter favours a historical and a political approach in which development is understood as a broad process of re-membering of a formerly “dismembered” people of Africa and as a highly contestable and contested idea in the terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony. Without an interrogation of the historical political processes that dismembered the continent of Africa, and which came to a head during the Berlin Conference of 1884/85, it becomes impossible to map out the structural and systemic constraints to African development.

As I explained in Chapter 1, the primary argument advanced in this study is that development discourse has remained deeply imbricated in the Enlightenment’s and modernity’s notions of scientific progress, a civilizing mission, and universal economic prescriptions guided by Europeans’ “enlightenment” propaganda.² As a result, grand theorization in development discourses has deprived non-Western societies, in Africa

² I use upper case for Enlightenment when I refer to the 18th century philosophical movement, and lower case when I refer to claims of enlightenment in a broader, and often misleading, sense by proponents of a Eurocentric vision.

in particular, of the platform freely to conceptualize alternative development models based on their own lived experiences, informed by their history, culture and agency. The tendency to view Western experiences as the universal totalizing framework of analysis has led African conceptions of development to be submerged by the hegemony of Eurocentric intellectual thought.

This chapter proposes that solutions to development challenges in Africa must be found in the contextuality of development as a product of particular historical processes. This literally implies that principles and models that should underpin African development discourse and practice should not merely imitate preconceived European ideas. The role of history, culture and agency should be considered critically to inform how development is understood and imagined in particular societies and should be approached with a desire to liberate people, and not to enslave them ideologically to serve foreign interests. Therefore, an approach to development discourses and practice in Africa should encourage sensitivity to the African local context, rather than indiscriminately replicate exogenous ideas. The current chapter therefore problematizes the Eurocentric notion of development discourse and practice in Africa which conceptualizes development as a European saving and civilizing mission project.

The current chapter is divided into four sections. The first section scrutinizes Eurocentrism in Development Studies, from modernization to neo-liberalism. The second section analyses the Eurocentric idea of development as modernization and its implications for Africa. The third section provides an analysis of Africa's journey with development in the postcolonial administration epoch. The fourth section maps

the future of the African development trajectory beyond Eurocentrism, followed by a conclusion.

In order for Africa as a continent and its people to experience freedom from Western intellectual bondage, the conceptual framing of African development discourse(s) must be re-grounded within African knowledge systems, values, history and culture, through an assertion of African agency. Such a shift in thinking will enable Africans to participate actively in shaping their own development as agents, rather than merely existing as the objects of the European development story. African colonization by Europeans has long rendered Africans as people without any history nor knowledge of their own to improve the quality of their own lives. As I have already shown, this view, held by many European scholars, was used to justify the colonization of Africa as the continent and its people. As a result, Africa's future development was also placed in the hands of Europeans, who were presented as a perfect model of how development was imagined. Anything that seemed to differ from this view was regarded as a form of backwardness. Similarly, the idea and practice of development in Africa since the aftermath of the World War II (post-1945) was a continuation of the same colonial propaganda to undermine African people's capacities to solve their challenges.

3.2 Eurocentrism in Development Studies: from modernization to neo-liberalism

The fundamental challenge facing Development Studies is to see how the subject can transcend the limitations created by Western epistemology, and to open the path for alternative development visions. According to Pieterse (1991:8), Eurocentrism as a guiding intellectual paradigm has long served the agenda of imperial management of

the societies labelled as the “Third World”. In this regard, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:1) raises the following fundamental question: *What does development mean for a people struggling to emerge and free themselves from the inimical legacies of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, underdevelopment as well as the imposition of the Washington Consensus and neo-liberalism?* In the light of this question, it is important to interrogate the epistemological foundation that informs the nature and structure of development as a discourse in the Global South, and in Africa in particular. The main challenge facing Development Studies in Africa has been the fact that it is a derivative of Western epistemologies and that it is informed by Western experiences and agendas. Therefore, African scholars face a mammoth challenge of decolonizing development theory itself to enable contextual relevance. Brohman (1995:128) argues that “Western-centric concepts and research methodologies are infused with a false idea of ‘universalism’ that serves to legitimize their application in diverse Global South nations”.

Thus, the Eurocentric ideological bias in Development Studies is a manifestation of epistemic racism embedded within the discourse, which has excluded non-Western societies in general, and Africa in particular, from contributing to the body of knowledge with regard to their own development. This happens despite the fact that archaeological evidence has confirmed that Africa was the cradle of humankind (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:332). African scholars such as Peter Ekeh (1983) prefer to use the common term “colonialism” to refer to the structural straitjacket within which Africa finds itself and the paradigm of difference it has entrenched (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017:2). Ekeh (1983) argues that colonialism cannot be analysed merely as an event of conquest of and rule over Africa by Europeans. Instead, it must be understood as a process that involved a series of events whose enduring consequences have outlived

the end of direct colonial administration by European colonizers. Far beyond the direct administration of the continent by competing European nations, the control endures, even after the formal political decolonization of the continent. Neo-colonial links have ensured that the newly established post-colonial governments continue to be subservient to the European agenda of domination.

Post-development scholars such as Escobar (1995), and Esteva and Prakash (1998), have analysed the idea of development as imperialistic and colonial in character. They dismiss the concept as a hegemonic tool used to interpolate African people as objects of the Euro-North American power structure. In the post-independence era, Africa still had to define itself within the colonial framework that denied the continent and its people the avenue to reframe and define development based on its own terms and continues to exist as the periphery constructed by Europe, which imagines itself as the centre of the “universe”.

Escobar’s (1995) analysis of the axes of development is helpful in understanding the relations that shape thinking about development, and this is how he explains it:

I propose to speak of development as [a] historically singular experience, the creation of the domain of thought and action, by analyzing the characteristics and interrelations of the three axes that define it: the *forms of knowledge* that refer to it and through which it comes into being and is elaborated into objects, concepts, theories, and the like; the *system of power* that regulates its practice; and the *forms of subjectivity* fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognise themselves as developed or underdeveloped. (Escobar, 1995:10, my emphases)

Along similar lines, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:3) points out that development as an idea and practice in the Global South, and Africa in particular, is not decolonized from its epistemic colonial entanglements. Thus, it remains a product of world-wide imperial

schemes and mechanisms of subjugation, which masquerade as liberatory while in reality serving the perpetuation of the colonial order (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012).

Coloniality, which names the enduring negative experiences emanating from the process of colonisation, continues to shape political governance and the development agenda of the post-colonial nation states in Africa. Ferguson (1990) posits that development as a colonially inspired discourse is not innocent of power and cannot be understood outside of the current global colonial matrices of power dynamics. It is part of what Ferguson (1990) terms the “anti-politics machine”. For this reason, to solve the development impasse in Africa, we must understand the global structuring processes that shaped the context that informs the very notion of development itself.

The idea of development is therefore one of the contrivances mobilized by European imperialism in the colonies in the context of the history of African dismemberment through colonization enterprises. The deep interpolation of development as a field of study within the Euro-North American modernization project means that the Global South, and Africa in particular, has been derailed from re-imagining any development trajectory based on their own terms. In order to unsettle the dominant Eurocentric articulation of development, it is thus necessary to understand how development was, and continues to be, defined from a Eurocentric perspective.

Amin (1990:58) highlights the epistemic implications of Eurocentrism and coloniality in African conceptions of development, arguing that there is no “implementation of the principle of auto-centric development” in Africa that is free from the economic rationality observed by conventional economics. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:2) argues that the idea of conventional economics, just like all other understandings of the world cascading from Europe and North America, are local European notions that have been

universalized. These ideas are rooted in the European canon of thought and are colonial when applied in the African context without allowing African knowledge systems to become a guiding framework in the understanding of economics and development.

In the words of Dussel (1993:65), the idea of enlightenment (also modernity) is, in fact, a European phenomenon, but one constituted in a dialectical relation with the non-European other that is its ultimate content. “Enlightenment” in Eurocentric terms occurs when Europe affirms itself as the “centre” of a world history that it claims to have inaugurated; the “periphery” that surrounds this centre is consequently part of its self-definition. Modernity, according to Amin (2009:13), projects the idea that human beings, armed with secular thought and science, individually and collectively, can and must make their history. The irony is that Europe, while asserting itself as the centre, simultaneously denies non-Europeans, and Africans in particular, the right to make and define their own history. Thus, the colonial conception of development remains entrapped within Eurocentrism as a guiding frame of thought, which elevates the European view of what progress and civilization entails.

This view demands that the Global South and Africa in particular be moulded into the image of Europe and replicate the historical processes by which Europe came to be the centre of the world. Eurocentrism has thus created an impression of the world as one, under Western values, while being dismissive of non-Western alternative worldviews. Eurocentrism therefore promotes “unicentricity”, thus denying Africans the right to map out their own development trajectory, informed by African knowledge and an African understanding of the world, embedded in their own history and cultural practices. According to Davies (1999:96), “uni-centricity” (also One-Centredness) is a

logic that demands a single centre (intellectual, economic, political, cultural, and geographic) from which everything emanates. In “uni-centricity”, the logic of “core and periphery” functions to centre some experiences, and to marginalize others. Thus, Eurocentrism is the basis of dominance and control, because it positions Europe and North America in their relations with other countries in terms of competition, hierarchies and subordination, as a strategy to maximize the gains for those countries’ Euro-North American counterparts.

For these reasons, the interpolation of development discourse in the Eurocentric narrative should be decolonized and re-articulated from African perspectives as a way to democratize knowledge and to liberate the oppressed to speak from their own centres. This implies that the idea of development rooted in Western experiences cannot be projected as a universal model of development, as it has long been, when it has been used as an instrument of conquest to reduce others as peripheral to the West, which falsely assumes the centre stage. Development now has to be divorced from the logic according to which non-Europeans can only be said to be progressive if they accept the European cultural ethos and replicate European historical experiences as the sole trajectory towards their development. This dangerous logic simply implies that outside of Europe (and since the start of the 20th century, North America) there is no development, but mere primitivism and backwardness, which can be overcome through embracing the injunctions of Europe as the epitome of enlightenment.

3.3 The post-World War II development project and its implications for Africa

Post-Enlightenment conceptions of development which culminated after 1945 in Truman’s version of development, according to which Europe and North America

claimed to have been entrusted by modern history with the task of developing the Global South, and Africa in particular, in its image (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017:4). The contemporary ideas and practice of development can be traced to the late 1940s through to the 1950s. Therefore Development Studies as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of enquiry has been around since about the 1950s (Buch-Hansen and Lauridsen, 2012:293). Although scholars cannot provide the exact date around which the discourse of Development Studies emerged, many agree that the 1949 inaugural speech by United States President Harry S. Truman was a defining moment in the history of the present development discourse. An excerpt of his speech reads as follows:

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. (Truman, 1949:1)

Without a doubt, “development” in Truman’s terms was understood as a “Euro-American missionary task of saving and developing the Global South in general and Africa in particular” (Mkandawire, 2011:7-8). This Eurocentric narrative of development as an exogenous saving mission perpetuates the colonial portrayal Africans as objects of European development. Daniel Lerner (1958:1) affirms this view, arrogantly claiming that “the only hope for non-European nations is to be modernized by an injection of Western values and expertise”. At the centre of Truman’s version of development is what Cheru (2009:275-278) terms “the imperial project”, which is informed by geopolitical considerations and the Global North’s power calculations, as well as a consistent rhetoric of humanitarianism that conceals coloniality. The Truman perspective of developmentalism is traceable in what became known as the “voyages of discovery” of the 15th century that opened the way for mercantilism, the slave trade, imperialism and colonialism. These processes were articulated, from a colonial

perspective, as entailing the spread of civilization, modernity, commerce and Christianity to places such as Africa, which were often described as the “heart of darkness”, as the novelist Joseph Conrad (1902) shows.

Modernization theory, which is sometimes called developmentalism or development doctrine, and which emerged around the 1950s, supplied the working concepts through which Western Europe understood its “obligation” towards those it considered unindustrialized, underdeveloped newly independent nations in the last half of the 20th century (Cullather, 2002:1). Modernization theorists’ episteme is based on claims of conscious, purposeful, nonviolent change (Stewart, 2016). They pronounce development to be a mission, which implies that it is unilateral and is thus only administered by Europeans; at the same time, their pronouncements deny any recognition of African achievements before their colonizing arrival in the continent.

Lushaba (2009:1) reminds us that we should keep in mind that the year 1950 does not mark the commencement of the continent’s engagement with the question of development, even if it is a watershed moment in the long tortuous sequence of “development” along Eurocentric lines in Africa. Lushaba (2009:1) points out that the historiography of development in Africa, in a wider sense, both as a concept and process, long predates 1950.

Modernization focuses on what were considered the deficiencies of countries viewed as less developed according to Eurocentric standards. Therefore, modernization prescribed how those countries labelled as underdeveloped in the Global South could overcome their deficiencies to assume an accepted standard of development, defined in terms of European standards. Development in this context simply meant an effort for the underdeveloped to catch up with the industrialized Western world. This catch-

up doctrine is traceable, amongst other things, to Rostow's (1960) construct of growth stages), and has been revisited and re-articulated by leading African intellectual voices such as Thandika Mkandawire (2011:13) as follows:

The idea of 'catching up' entails learning not only about ideas from abroad but also about one's capacities and weaknesses. 'Catching up' requires that countries know themselves and their own history that has set the 'initial conditions' for any future progress. They need a deep understanding of their culture, not only for self-reaffirmation, but in order to capture the strong points of their culture and institution that will see their societies through rapid social change (...).

The theory of modernization has been challenged from the Global South's perspective, particularly by leading Latin American dependency theorists, who argue that what looks like development is actually a process of "development of underdevelopment or of dependent development" (Buch-Hansen and Lauridsen, 2012:293; Stewart, 2016). The primary argument advanced by these theorists is that the more powerful states (the Global North) take wealth from the weaker states (the Global South). They believe that weaker states are funding the growth of the stronger states. The very idea of development assistance from wealthy states is seen as exploitative, paternalistic and coercive, objectivizing the dependent states.

Modernization theory has also been challenged by critical counterpoint approaches, which criticise the fact that modernization processes take the form of large-scale industrialization, urbanization and bureaucratization. These large-scale processes tend to ignore the role of local cultures; thus, they are top-down at best. Pieterse (1996:3) notes that the dissatisfaction in the 1970s with mainstream development crystallized into alternative, people-centred, participatory approaches to development. However, Pieterse (1996) argues that the alternative development approach has failed to offer a real alternative, as it was also still trapped in the prescriptions of Western

modernity. The only thing that was different was that it proposed the attainment of these Western ideals through a different methodology.

It is against these ideas that this study argues that the notion and practice of development remains trapped, even today, within the European imperialist project that seeks to justify colonialism of the non-Europeans, Africans in particular, as a “civilizing” mission aimed at bringing development to a part of the world that had remained outside of history (Lushaba, 2009:2).

What is perplexing about this view of development is the deliberate inability to account historically for the depravity of European colonization and the disruptions it has caused through disintegrating the cultures of those who became victims. Hence, the colonially inspired idea of development was established through domination and taking from others, thus impoverishing them to benefit the establishment and empowerment of Europeans. Plaatjie (2013:124) also demonstrates that, while the mantra of the 15th century was to civilize and to enlighten the “soul-less” subalterns of the globe, and to rescue them from their barbarity, which from a European perspective was seen as a development project, at the same time, the worst forms of barbarism were being perpetrated on the colonized, and this is the darker side of this notion of development.

The ground-breaking book by Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, first published in 1972, also exposes how European colonial regimes deliberately exploited and underdeveloped Africa. Rodney (1972) shifted the geography of analysis by clearly articulating the ripples of colonialism from Africa’s viewpoint. Rodney (1972) shows the comparative nature of the concept of development by which Africa, Latin America and Asia are only viewed as underdeveloped in comparison to Europe. The unbalanced pattern of development is created by the fact that Europe as the “exploiter”

becomes developed, while the “exploited” become underdeveloped. The very vocabulary of describing some as developed and others as underdeveloped implies a discriminatory and racist worldview premised on European hegemonic standards.

It is therefore the contention of this study that modernization theory has nothing to do with development, conceived as philanthropic handouts towards non-Europeans. Instead, this theory peddles coloniality-anchored perspectives to conceptualize development. The most culpable aspect of this perspective’s hypocrisy is its concealment of the effects of Europe’s under-development on Africa. The modernization theory is also a smokescreen for European racism against non-Europeans – who are misrepresented as beneficiaries of European development’s benevolence. In essence, the modernization theory represents a Eurocentric fundamental order and its exclusionist insinuations, suggesting that Europe is the epitome of modernization and a barometer of the apex of civilization.

Europe has effectively granted itself the right violently to impose its autonomy on those it categorizes as under-developed in a bid to “redeem” them from their primitivism and traditionalism. It is in this context that Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955:2) speaks of Western civilization as colonialism. In fact, Césaire’s (1955) question about what is fundamentally colonialism unmasks the rhetoric of “development” as a cover-up for deeper forms of colonialism. These forms of colonialism go into the psyche of the colonized subjects while affecting and re-articulating their power, knowledge, being and nature. The idea of development as an imitative process for Europe and North America’s non-European counterparts therefore conceals the unfairness on which that process is based. It raises fundamental questions about the Western development project: *Should Africa catch up with a process founded on colonialism and imperialism*

and the objectivization of others? *Should* colonialism and the suppression of others be deemed a morally acceptable method of attaining so-called progress?

It is crucial to reflect on the implications of European notions of development, because they have contributed to environmental decay in the pursuit of economic wealth creation for European nations. When the idea of development harms the very environment on which we depend for our survival, surely it is founded on undesirable values. Escobar (1995:1-17) demonstrates in frightening detail how the theory and practice of development is characterized by serious errors in terms of cultural bias, misunderstanding and failed promises. He argues that there is no linear model of economic and social development that can be accurately applied to the diverse local cultures of all those societies misleadingly grouped under the label “Third World” (Escobar, 1995:9). The very construction of the term “Third World” is an

...ethnocentric invention of the post-World War II era; and development is an equally flawed ‘regime of representation’ crafted from a conflicting ensemble of ideology, partial interests and the attempts of the West (especially the United States) to impose its power-driven interests on non-Western peoples. (Escobar, 1995:10-11)

Esteva and Prakash (1998:282) add their voices to these debates by arguing that

almost two billion people became under-developed overnight in the post-war era, with the launching of global development, they were placed in undignified position of having started on the road that others know better towards a goal that others have reached, a one-way street.

This way of thinking about development contributed to the marginalization of non-Europeans, and Africans in particular, and presented them as objects waiting to be developed by Western Europe, which assumed a superior position and belittled the rest. Mehmet (1995:9) is another author who notes that “Europeans became the agents of development while Africans became the objects of development”.

Hence, the current study calls for the decolonization of the very idea of development conceptualized as a civilizing mission that objectifies Africans. The study advances the view that development should be informed by the historical journey, cultural dynamics and knowledge of those at the centre of the development process. It should not be a hegemonic, but rather a liberating process, which must be endogenous. Thus, from the perspective of the Global South and Africa in particular, the discourse of development needs to be redeemed from hegemonic Eurocentric views and must be relocated within the epistemologies of the Global South, including Africa.

3.4 Africa's journey with development under postcolonial administrations

Africa's struggle to develop should be understood within the historical context of the factors that shaped the continent – in particular, the colonial legacy. For this reason, African conceptions of development in the post-independence era continued to be informed by the Truman version of developmentalism. The African nation-building projects in the postcolonial era still adopted modernist-elitist models informed by Western ideals. As Baah (2003:1) reminds us, the very construction and stratification of the present continent of Africa into 54 nation states was not mapped by Africans, but by imperialists whose selfish ambitions did not include the socio-economic development interests of the continent.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:345) posits that “when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at its formation in 1963 accepted the principle of the inviolability of the existing boundaries inherited from the colonial era and the Berlin consensus of 1884-1885, it became clear that the decolonization struggle was permeated by what Frantz Fanon (1968:23-25) labelled repetition without change.” The implication is clear: African leaders themselves have failed to reconstruct and re-stratify the continent after their

own imagination and as a result, the borders imposed by the Berlin Conference became legitimized as a point of departure for the OAU. The failure of African leaders to change the stratification of the continent must be understood in the context of neo-colonialism, which continues its assault on Africa.

Prior to colonialism, African people, like all other human beings, constantly and consistently improved the quality of their lives, however, the negative impact of the 1884–1885 Berlin Scramble left a permanent mark on Africa's territories, from which its peoples are still seeking to extricate themselves. The post-independence era meant that the new African leaders faced the mammoth task of rebuilding ravaged economies to improve the quality of life of all Africans. Moreover, according to Alemazung (2010:64), “when colonialism finally ended the Western powers could not afford to keep their hands completely off these regions, thus they continued to indirectly influence local politics and development trajectory”. Temple scholar Benjamin Talton (2017:1) also notes that “culturally and politically, the legacy of European dominance remained evident in the national borders, political infrastructure, education systems, national languages, economics, and trade networks of each former colony”. This legacy means that Africa, even after independence, continues to be shaped by the imprints of its former colonial masters.

Nkrumah (1965) in *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* also describes a situation where former colonial empires continue to exercise control over their erstwhile colonies, through indirect methods such as the use of trade relations as a mechanism to thwart growth. Neocolonialism has come to be seen more generally as involving a coordinated effort by the former colonial powers and other developed countries to block growth in developing countries and retain them as sources of cheap raw materials and labour.

This is why Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:6) posits that

[a]fter political independence beginning with Ghana in 1957, African leaders pursued nation-building and development as critical interconnected goals in an effort to 'remembering' the dismembered African societies and peoples so as to regain their dislocated ontological density and attain unity.

The majority of African leaders adopted human-centred development strategies after independence with the main objective of freeing Africans from the inimical legacies of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid and underdevelopment, as well as the imposed Washington Consensus and neo-colonialism. African alternative conceptions of human development should be understood as a struggle for what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009a, 2009b) understands as a re-membering, that is, the quest for wholeness for people who have been marginalized and dismembered for a period of five hundred years of European modernity. Humanism in African thought is then seen as the central theme of nation-building and development for people whose very being has been questioned and denied. In the words of Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda (see Kaunda and Morris, 1966:19-21), "humanism is defined as the 'philosophy of life' to correct the devaluing of humanity emanating from colonialism".

African humanism was conceived as an alternative decolonial version of development vision, which challenges the hegemonic Eurocentric idea of development rooted in the modernization paradigm. It is in this context that a humanist orientation to development should be understood as an alternative African development path, as there was a strong feeling that imperialism, colonialism and apartheid were processes that resulted in the marginalization and dehumanization of Africans. The leitmotif of humanism has resulted in experimentation with African socialism, with "Ujamaa" (Family-hood) in Tanzania under its first post-independence president, Julius Nyerere, as the most notable example:

Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa* was rooted in traditional African values and had as its core the emphasis on family-hood and communalism of traditional African societies. *Ujamaa* was founded on a philosophy of development that was based on three essentials – freedom, equality and unity. (Ibhawoh and Dibua, 2003:62)

Nyerere was not alone in this path, as already noted, as the majority of African nationalists co-partnered in this vision. “Kwame Nkrumah's agenda for ‘social revolution’, Leopold Senghor's ‘negritude’ and Kenneth Kaunda's ‘Zambian Humanism’” (Ibhawoh and Dibua, 2003:62) – all displayed a similar attitude in orientation to counter the legacies of African marginalization and underdevelopment by European powers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:8) further suggests that the search for a humane society by African nationalists was further exemplified by charters and declarations such 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 grounded on African nationalist humanist imaginations of a better world, free from domination, racism and exploitation.

However, these initiatives were not easy to implement, as a result of the interference of the Western powers. Hence, from the start of the 1970s, the growth profile of most African countries began to decline sharply, and it became clear by the mid-1980s that these economies would need financial rescue packages in the form of financial relief. Numerous factors were cited for this sharp decline, amongst them overinvestment in the social sector, for example, “in Ghana, 62 per cent of all investment was directed to social services” (Baah, 2003:2). This was seen as the consequence of the human-centred approach to development, which was deemed less competitive than the free market economic development path. According to Alemazung (2010:69), neo-colonial relations created African leaders who became European patrons; as a result, the leaders participated in corrupt practices as they sought to protect their own interests

at the expense of the people they lead. Thus, a high level of corruption amongst officials has been cited as the main reason for the economic decline in the aftermath of political independence. Perron (1989) also notes that the international oil shock of 1973 further negatively affected the global economy, and as a result imposed heavy debts on African countries. Alemazung (2010), Baah (2003) and Talton (2017) cite the lasting effects of the Cold War as a key contributing factor to economic decline.

The Western powers viewed African states at independence through the lens of the Cold War, which categorized African leaders as either pro-West (leaning towards free market ideologies) or pro-East (leaning towards pro-socialist ideologies). As part of the strategy to escape ideological rivalry between the East and West, African countries joined forces with the Asian countries in 1955 at what became known as the Bandung Conference, whose main aim was to hasten the process of decolonization through Afro-Asiatic solidarity and to create conditions for global peaceful co-existence in the post-World War II landscape, which was characterised by ideological competition between the West and the East. The tensions of Cold War politics deprived these initiatives, in particular, of the ability to empower Africa to shape its own autonomous development path, which was inward-looking.

Adedeji (2002:4) also argues that the development merchant system driven by the Bretton Woods Institutions, namely the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), worked effectively to destabilize African initiatives and to ensure that African states do not operate independently from Euro-North American development orthodoxy and coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017:12). The Western powers saw alternative humanist development strategies by African leaders as a threat to the free market ideology. They therefore sought to interfere in Africa's political and economic

affairs through the international financial institutions (the World Bank and IMF). These powers keep Africa's development journey trapped in coloniality.

As part of their strategies to restore their declining economies, African leaders proposed regional integration as a strategy to foster cooperation – the Economic Community of West African States and the East African Community were established: “In 1979, the EAC [East African Community] drafted a document entitled *Revised framework for principles of the new international order in Africa*, which was followed by the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) in the 1980s” (Baah, 2003:4). The LPA identified Africa's development as structurally problematic and exacerbated by a hostile external environment. Despite the fact that the LPA was criticised as a top-down project which focused mainly on external influence on Africa, but did not focus on internal problems of African leaders themselves, it was another effort by African leaders to find a way out of their development challenges. According to Ikome (2007), the “LPA itself did not represent complete de-linking of African from the West but sought to strategically disengage from those features of international economic systems that was keeping Africa dependent, underdevelopment and marginalized.”

These African initiatives advocated a development strategy with self-reliance, democratization and the just distribution of wealth as its core principles. Unfortunately, these initiatives failed to improve the situation. One of the main reasons was that the international financial institutions imposed their own recommendations in the form of structural adjustment programmes. Implemented from the beginning of the 1980s through to the 1990s, the policies of these programmes focused on privatization, liberalization and fiscal austerity, which directly contradicted African leaders' initiatives. Stiglitz (2002) argues that many of the structural adjustment programmes and policies became an end in themselves, rather than a means to equitable and

sustainable growth. Therien (1999:723-742) warns that it is vital to comprehend that international financial institutions, through the structural adjustment programmes and neoliberal policies (sometimes collectively called the Washington Consensus) “were pursuing the Bretton Woods paradigm of development which is entrapped within the exogenous development mission”.

While the highlighted factors are cited as the real causes behind Africa’s apparently dismal “failure to develop”, it remains important to interpret them within the context of a history of five centuries of imperialism, colonialism, enslavement and the dehumanization of African people. The very framework against which the notion of progress in Africa was (and is) measured was itself predetermined by Eurocentric standards of modernity. These are not informed by an African-defined view of progress but by an imposed Eurocentric view, which continues to portray the continent as a hegemonised space, physically and ideologically. As part of the strategy to overcome this legacy, the spirit of the Bandung Conference (1955) must be resuscitated to enable the liberation of the development discourse in Africa, and to give power to African leaders and the masses to speak in their own voices, for their own liberation. History has proven that the role of Bretton Woods Institutions in Africa has been to sustain the interventionist Eurocentric idea of Truman’s development mission. Hence, it is the view of this study that the genealogy of development intervention from the West since independence has continued the historical objectification of Africans and sustained Euro-American hegemony over Africa.

3.5 Mapping the future of an African development trajectory beyond Eurocentrism

Afrocentricity as a guiding theoretical framework in this study proposes that we must transcend the narrow Eurocentric framework in our interpretation of the idea and practice of development in Africa. Asante (2007:66) argues that we cannot understand Africa's contribution to its own development and the world without examining the basis for society. Therefore, Afrocentricity's call is about relocating African people within their own history and culture as a necessary base from which to conceptualise their development future.

Asante (1998:xii) offers Afrocentricity as an ethical intellectual standpoint that seeks to empower Africans to become the subjects of their own development. The understanding and interpretation of development should therefore be framed within the historical and cultural narratives of African people as centred, to properly serve their own interests. African resurgence will never take place until Africans champion a renaissance grounded in a new paradigm of dramatic narratives of victory (Asante, 2015:1).

Afrocentricity is premised on the argument that all knowledge results from an occasion of encounter in a place. Thus, without being centred in a place, Africans will continue to imbibe other people's narratives as though they are theirs. Until such time that Africans claim the classical past of their ancestors in Kemet (Egypt), the story of African development will remain improperly narrated, and all we will have is mere half-truths. That classical past sets an example of resilience. Asante (2015:1) argues that "the ancient people of ancient Egypt who lived along the banks of the Nile River took

advantage of whatever situation was presented to them by the river's flow". He demonstrates this point as follows:

If the river was full of water, the Kemites (ancient Egyptians) used large barges to float stones to various sites. If the river had little water, they used heavy sledges pulled by hundreds of people over constantly replaced wooden rollers. Every day was one of decision-making in the best interest of society. (Asante, 2015:2)

It would thus be incorrect to suggest that Africans did not develop on their own and were merely unknowable subjects who waited to be developed by European interventions, which started in the 1950s after World War II, as suggested by Harry S. Truman's Point Four programme. Therefore, unless Africans reclaim their history, they cannot define any future. Rather, they would continue to be replicas of the histories of other nations and be permanently dependent people. The challenge facing African scholars is to debunk the Western narrative rooted in the Greek philosophical foundation that presents the West as the sole originators of civilization. Stepping outside of the historical moments as narrated by European scholars would permit new interpretations and the acquisition of new knowledge about Africa.

Lushaba (2009:58) also affirms that "it is time for Africa to reclaim its autonomy of thought and seek to understand our own reality without the authority of others". The restoration of the dismembered ontological density of Africans created throughout Western historiography and the Berlin Scramble means that for true development to occur in Africa, Western epistemologies must be questioned, analysed and rejected in favour of African-centred narratives. In this context, it is important to remind ourselves that Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009a) frames African conceptions of development as a struggle for re-membering Africa after the Berlin Scramble. Re-membering can be understood as the African quest for wholeness after more than five centuries of dis-memberment.

Afrocentricity, therefore, challenges all faculties of social sciences and policy-makers to shift the geography of reason and analysis for Africans from Euro-centredness to Africa-centredness. This means that the idea and practice of development should be engaged from a position of Africans as centred and rooted in their own existential realities. Africans should engage with development not as dependent beneficiaries of European-conceived ideas of development, but as people capable of defining their own needs and solving their own challenges.

This means that the idea of development should not be interpreted solely to mean economic freedom and overcoming the scourge of poverty in Africa, as this would be a narrow interpretation. Modernization as a perspective has used wealth (and economic indicators) as a primary indicator to determine the level of a country's progress (Regan, Borg, and Meade, 2006:22). This way of measuring development fails to account for the social, political and cultural aspects of development. This approach is giving way to the Human Development Index (HDI), which was devised by the United Nations Development Programme and is now employed as a measure of development or human progress and quality of life by many countries. This indicator, among other things, looks at life expectancy, education and income in the individual country (Regan *et al.*, 2006). There is also an emerging pan-African-centred perspective focusing on the "human-factor" approach to development (Chivaura and Mararike, 1998). This view states that human capital is a valuable asset in promoting development. Therefore, development practitioners and participants must have a self-driven attitude and positive orientation towards a particular angle of development that they expect in critical areas of their respective countries' needs. This implies that the pace of any development prospect must be determined by localized expectations of the worldview of the countries concerned.

It is then the mandate of the human factor (practitioners' and participants') approach to correlate the expected function with societal growth in critical gaps to promote sustainable human livelihoods. The human factor approach and its Afrocentric underpinnings is more relevant to Africa than the modernization model. This is confirmed by the continent's multifaceted repression, and the need to develop beyond economic limitations, which the modernization perspective to development has indeed reinforced. The limited relevance of the modernization theory is exposed by the realities of the multiple destructive effects of colonialism and slavery. These effects were not only economic and politically catastrophic to Africa's growth, but led directly to the stagnation of the gradual growth of sustainable sources of human livelihoods on the continent. The enormity of the realities that the task of development has to face in Africa validates an epistemic transition from the Eurocentric modernization articulation of development towards an Afrocentric paradigm.

This perspective is informed by the merits of Afrocentricity's inclusive character in unpacking the African development agenda beyond narrow Eurocentric/economic-centred aspects of development, as espoused in the modernization theory (which neglects the human factor question). The modernization school of thought has sought to account for the level of development of those considered as "developing nations" by using the wrong indicators altogether. For this reason, this study argues that using Eurocentric standards is misleading and merely builds on stereotypes of what progress and development are in multicultural societies in Africa. As far back as 1980, Asante already asserted that the Eurocentric view had become an ethnocentric view which elevated the European experience and downgraded all others and that foregrounding and exposing this epistemological abuse is essential if Africa is to

displace Eurocentrism in all the multifaceted aspects from African lives, be it economically, socially, politically, culturally or religiously.

The Afrocentric development paradigm should therefore enable a relocation of Africans to their own cultural context. From that context, they are able to become their own agents and subjects. That said, this study proposes that development, as also suggested by Chukwuokolo (2009), be understood to involve a holistic evaluative process of the epistemic, cultural, economic, political, religious, normative, psychological and sociological stance of African people. Chukwuokolo's view affirms the expressions of the Bandung Conference of 1955, which perceive development as a redemptive human aspiration; development should promote the attainment of freedom from political, economic, ideological, epistemological and social domination instilled through colonialism and coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). This conception of development offers a more holistic picture and seeks to resist reductionist tendencies to measure development as solely an economic project, disregarding other contributing aspects.

The conception of an Afrocentric development paradigm should be framed from a clear understanding of African classical history in a pre-colonial era, the impact of a colonial expedition and the aftermath of the postcolonial era. A historical understanding of how the African continent advanced itself prior to colonization would enable a proper account of the factors that have limited African people from realizing their dreams of a better quality of life. This is to counter the effects of the fact that, as Mazrui (1986) points out, what Africa knows about itself, what different parts of Africa know about each other, has been profoundly influenced by the West.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:485-486) highlights six long-term impacts of colonialism in Africa as identified by Mazrui (1986). Firstly, colonialism and capitalism forcibly incorporated Africa into the world economy, beginning with the slave trade. Secondly, the exclusion of Africa from the post-1648 Westphalian sovereign state system and the physical scramble for Africa after the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, and the incorporation of Africa into the post-1945 United Nations state system has shaped Africa's position in the global sphere to this day. Thirdly, the incorporation of Africa into the Euro-North American-centric world culture and European languages has had a deep impact. Fourthly, the incorporation of Africa into a heavily Euro-North American-centric world of international law has reshaped its trajectory. Fifthly, Africa has been incorporated into the modern technological age, including being enmeshed in the global system of dissemination of information. Lastly, Africa has been swallowed up into a Euro-North American-centric moral order dominated by Christian thought.

The unmasking of the above hegemonic factors would enable a logical explanation of why Africa as a continent is less developed in comparison to Europe and North America. The historically based account would dispel the mythologies imposed by European scholars such as Hegel who propounded that "Africa only hears the echo of the majestic march of world civilization across Europe and through which the absolute spirit fulfils and realizes itself" (Hegel, cited in Chukwuokolo 2009:29). Such revelations would deconstruct the negative images that have been implanted to see Africans as zoo-bound people who lack philosophy, which is humankind's greatest intellectual achievement.

Moreover, a historical analysis of the continent's contribution to world civilization would end the tendency to teach half-truths, which is deliberately done by Euro-centrists as

a strategy to suppress Africans so that they cannot know themselves and thus to ensure that they will never rise to oppose their oppressors. In the same way, European colonization has dismembered Africa to be a replica of Europe and plant its memories in the psyche of Africans to reproduce itself. An Afrocentric development paradigm must undertake the re-membering of Africa and improve Africans' quality of life. An Afrocentric development idea should end the alienation of Africans and re-orient them to themselves, as well as prioritise their cultural expressions. It is within this context that Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993) argues that the centre should be moved from its assumed location in the West to a multiplicity of spheres in all the cultures of the world, in particular, Africa, as the centre of analysis for Africans. What this means for the study of development is that African-centred perspectives must inform how Africans conceptualize their own development, thus overcoming the hegemony of Euro-centredness.

The narration of the discourse of development from an Afrocentric perspective will enable Africans to overcome what Chambers (1983:2-3) refers to as the "outsider perspective". Hence, Mafeje, an African scholar and a social anthropologist, argues that social science disciplines (including Development Studies) still suffer from an "epistemology of alterity", which refers to a scholarship rooted in Western thought (Dastile 2013:97). Mafeje (cited in Dastile, 2013:97) emphasises the need for "insistence on Africans to think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place. This does not imply an unwillingness to learn from others, but this is a rebellion to domination by others, irrespective of color or race". In essence, the Afrocentric development paradigm is about Africans defining development for themselves and determining what best suits African circumstances, thus overcoming European paternalism.

3.6 Conclusion

In order for the meaningful decolonization of development discourse in Africa to be attained, the geography and biography of knowledge for Africa must shift from Europe to Africa. African perspectives must be privileged over European theoretical prescriptions to enable relevance. The legacy of colonialism, which has been perpetuated by coloniality even beyond direct colonial administration, has ensured that Africa remains in a subservient position in relation to Europe. The pervasiveness of Eurocentric thought in the socio-political and economic spheres has enslaved African governments, preventing them from experiencing and achieving authentic development informed by African history and culture. It will take Afrocentric thought, grounded on an Afrocentric paradigm, to counter the negative effects of Eurocentric thought, which has contributed to the denigration of African voices.

The discourse of development should therefore be rescued from the colonial entrapment in which Africans came to be viewed as dependent beneficiaries waiting to be developed by Europeans. Instead, meaningful development should start with the local context; it must be relevant to the people it seeks to benefit, and add value to their living realities. In particular, it needs to enable them to become their own agents of the change they desire. African-centred paradigms should take priority in the articulation of the development agenda, and this agenda should be mapped from a clear understanding of the African political history that privileges African people. External European bodies that serve their own hegemonic interests should not define the African development trajectory; rather, Africans themselves must take charge, and this will ensure contextual relevance and will indeed contribute to the justice and liberation of those who are marginalized. The challenge facing development discourse

and practice in Africa is learning to unlearn some of the predominant ideas emanating from Euro-America, which sees development as merely involving the exercise of “catching up” with the Western world. It is only when African epistemologies are factored into our narrative of life as Africans that Africa can experience true development, which serves the needs of the African people. The next chapter provides a detailed analysis of Afrocentric historiography as understood from Afrocentricity as a paradigm, and reflects on Africa’s development prior to the colonial invasion, with the aim of grounding the debates on development within the African continent.

CHAPTER 4:

AFROCENTRICITY ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN HISTORY FOR DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has problematized the discourse of development in Africa and articulated its entanglement in the Eurocentric canon of thought and experiences. The current chapter examines the significance of history as one of the cardinal units of analysis in Afrocentricity. For Afrocentricity, without a re-articulation of African history away from Eurocentrism, the discourse of development in Africa will remain elusive.

Development therefore has to be anchored within the people's narrative of their own history. Throughout its unfolding as a theory of social change, Afrocentricity has consistently and systematically rewritten African history as a contribution to African development itself, and as part of the broader agenda of the restoration of African humanity. The objective of an Afrocentric historicism is to rediscover Africa's contributions to human civilization as the relaunching pad for African self-discovery, as opposed to the current habit of Africans to seek to adjust to the European game plan. Thus, in Afrocentricity, an understanding of the corrected record of Africa's historical trajectory is a pre-requisite for Africa's reconceptualization of its own development ideal. At the centre is the imperative of understanding how the people of the continent of Africa have lived within their own environment to improve their quality of life. The consistent and systematic challenge of Eurocentric negative tropes about Africa as an uncivilized, unmodern, underdeveloped and backward continent is part of

Afrocentricity's work of restoring a distorted history and countering the falsification of information about Africa (Asante, 2014).

The theft of Africa's history has gone hand in hand with a denial of African genius and agency. As I have already shown in Chapter 3, the consistent pattern of the negation of Africa by European writers has contributed to a denigration of African voices and to a devaluing of African contributions to world civilization. It is against this pervasive European epistemic injustice against Africans that Afrocentricity as a paradigm for an African renaissance is committed to address the re-interpretation of history from a perspective in which African people stand as subjects and not objects of European analysis. Moreover, Afrocentric historiography provides a clearer perspective on Africa's pursuit of Africa's own advancement. Thus, the discourse of development in Africa must be liberated from the factors that have negatively shaped Africa and its people, relegating them to the lower political, social and economic structures of the modern world system, which continues to be dominated by Europe and North America. Hence, the interrogation of the role of African history in Africa's own development enables a fuller perspective that could enable Africa's resurgence to its former greatness and glory. To attain this desirable ideal, it will require Africans to deepen their commitment to decolonization, be it politically, economically or epistemologically, thus bringing to an end their dislocation created through coloniality.

The current chapter therefore begins by interrogating Eurocentric historiography and its negative views regarding Africa's contribution to human civilization. This section is followed by the re-narration of an Afrocentric historiography, grounded on the theory of Afrocentricity, to debunk the negation of Africa by European scholars. Detailed reflections on the work of African scholars such as Cheik Anta Diop (1974, 1981,

1991), G.G.M James ([1954] 2009), Theophile Obenga (2002), Maulana Karenga (2002, 2006), Ama Mazama (2001, 2003, 2014), Molefi Kete Asante, Kwame Nkrumah (1965) and the works of many other various Afrocentric scholars are used to build a legitimate understanding of the subject of Africa's own development. The chapter also discusses African renaissance in general, as well as the African Renaissance project as a necessary restorative project to achieve African re-humanization and overcome the development impasse in the "post-colonial administration" epoch, followed by a conclusion.

4.2 Eurocentric historiography and the negation of Africa's contribution to world civilization

According to Asante (2007:55), what makes Africa a complex area of study is that Europe continues to present itself as the source of information about Africa, to the neglect of Africans' imaginations of themselves. Similarly, Gordon (2002:33) argues that "throughout the 19th and most of the 20th century, African history and African historiography were dominated by Western grand narratives of how Europeans interpreted the world". In discussing Africa, European historians distorted the image of Africans, resulting in a form of history that those engaged in colonizing Africa could use as propaganda to expand Europe through the invasion of Africa, while presenting Africa and Africans in a negative light. Thus, the inferiorization of Africa became part of the philosophical and cultural fabric of Europeanization. Adeleke (2015:200) concludes that the African experience worldwide, since the rise of modern Europe, has endured the burden of Western history, which is the history of negation. "Enlightened" Europeans used racist epithets such as "the dark continent", "heathens", "savages" and "barbarians" as a way to negate Africans as human beings capable of

producing any civilization. These pejorative views nullified African history, culture, and agency, and mandated Europeans to lead Africans towards civilization (Blaut, 1993; Smedley, 1993).

The 15th century European “voyages of discovery” which opened the way for mercantilism, the slave trade, imperialism and colonialism were motivated from a colonial perspective by the mission to spread civilisation, modernity and Christianity to places such as Africa, which were described as the “heart of darkness” (Conrad, 1902). The grand theory of Modernization was introduced after World War II (from 1945 onwards) as a project aimed at the civilization of Africa, and was rooted in the same false narrative of European supremacy, seeking to transplant European experiences to Africa in the hope of “saving” Africans from what North America in particular considered to be backwardness. This view was projected from a dislocated perspective regarding Africa as a barbaric area without any history or civilization.

Prior to European colonization, African people, like all other human beings, constantly and consistently improved their lives and life chances. They were inventive and innovative in many ways. Asante and Abarry in their book *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources* (1996) capture African works of imagination, invention, cultural dynamism, political engineering, religious and economic sophistication and originality. In this book, Africans are presented as active and independent domesticators of plants and animals. They improved their technologies from stone to iron tools. They migrated from place to place in search of better environments that enhanced their life chances. They established socio-political systems, lineages, clans, chiefdoms, kingdoms, states and nations of varying sizes and complexities. Like all other human beings, Africans developed complex ideas as they made sense of their lives and their environment.

Nevertheless, European accounts of Africa continued for a long time to be the mainstream historical literature on Africa which fed on the agenda of negation. Europe mobilised historians, ethnographers, and philosophers by sponsoring the contemptible task of distorting historical facts about Africa (Chukwuokolo, 2009:29). According to Gordon (2002), interesting examples of such studies include Richard Burton's *Travels in Arabia and Africa* (1866) and A.P. Newton's lectures to the Royal African Society in London on "Africa and Historical Research" (1923), in which he asserted that "Africa had no history before the coming of the Europeans" (quoted in Gordon, 2002:26).

Fage (1969) also attests that professional colonial historians who were wedded to the concept that African people had no history, or no history that they could study or that was worth their studying, wrote more recent histories of Africa. Thus, for the most part, African history was written in Arabic and in European languages, indicating the dominance of those cultures in African political, social, and religious life (Gordon, 2002:25). The general view of European philosophers and historians, beginning in the 15th century, was that the only history that was of any significance was the study of "Western civilization", from its alleged origin in ancient Greece, Rome, and Judea (Fage, 1969).

This implies, therefore, that European historians reinvented the idea of Africa in ways that suited politicians' and economic interests' colonial mission of conquest. According to Gordon (2002:33-34),

...these historians disregarded the African origin of human civilization; indeed, they tried to disregard the African origin of the human race. Civilizations of the Nile Valley, such as the Badari, Kemetic, and Meroitic were simply dismissed as non-African although they were in Africa or ignored altogether.

Asante (2007:68) argues that European scholars sought to attack the very Africanity of the ancient Egyptians as a ploy to distort information, thus advancing their

commercial greed over the symbols, icons, and values of the African people. Because of their colonial ambitions, Europeans took from their historians only that which was deemed to serve the European conquest agenda over Africa. Theirs was a mission to (dis)place Africa within a historical context understandable to Europeans and honouring only their own ancestors' contributions to world history. Today, we can see and rightly critique the nefarious role played by Hegel in particular in this process of projecting Africa in negative terms in the social sciences. As Asante (2014:115) explains, in Hegel's 1828 lectures on history (published 1837), Hegel supported the negative view held by his fellow European historians that Africa's role in world history should be forgotten, because it had no history or culture to show, other than barbarism. Hegel, who never set foot in Africa, thus attacked the very humanity of African people and their worldviews, as a people not capable of projecting their own realities.

A flood of academic writings "proving" the inferiority of Africans accelerated the derogation of Africa (Asante, 2014). Another such European historian was Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Regius Chair of Modern History at Oxford University, who, as recently as 1967, according to Gordon (2002:34), made the unkind remark that what had happened in Africa was no more than "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes".

Chukwuokolo (2009:30) argues that Max Weber, a German sociologist and philosopher, was also caught up in this anti-African web when he averred that all forms of indices for civilization only existed in Europe, namely, art, music, architectures, science and other aspects of human endeavour. Weber (1958:13) asserted:

[I]t is only in Europe that science had reached its apogee of evolution, which we recognize today as valid. Empirical knowledge, reflections on problems of the cosmos and of life, philosophical and theological wisdom of the most profound, the full development of a systematic theology must be credited to Christianity under the influence of Hellenism.

Such anti-African views were conducive to Europeans' manipulation of the consciousness of Africans to view the world from European perspective in all spheres, social, political, developmental, religious and economic (Chukwuokolo, 2009:31). For this reason, many African intellectuals who received a Western education continue to reject Africa's contribution to world civilization and are apologists of Western political propaganda. As Asante (2007:57) reminds us, the colonialists did not respect or honour African terms; for this reason, Africans have been moved completely away from their own terms, be they political, economic, social, linguistic or cultural. Thus, the colonization of Africa was not only a physical act but also an intellectual one.

Asante (2007:57) states that

...the one objective of European colonialists was to produce in the African person an individual who was European in thought, education, behavior, attitude, opinions, and taste, artistic and otherwise, while remaining black and African only in colour. The consequences of such dislocation were enormous. It meant that Africans who had been taught in French schools 'the Gauls were their ancestors,' or the Africans in the United States of America or in the British colonies in the African continent who had been told that English literature represented the highest form of art in human history.

Such pronouncements had the effect of moving Africans further away from their own agency, history and cultural perspectives and being infused into the colonially constructed view of reality.

Academic imperialists in the 19th century held and propagated the view that no theory could exist if it did not produce dependency upon the Euro-supremacy mythology. Gordon (2002:34) states that imperialist European historians discredited the work of African historians, such as the 19th century precursors of Pan-Africanism, including Edward W. Blyden, Carl Christian Reindorf, Samuel Johnson or Joseph Isharam (cited in Gordon, 2002). Their historical work was regarded by European historians as the works of gifted and dedicated amateurs, but their work was not recognized by

“professional” historians and was little regarded in the universities and in schools (Gordon, 2002:34). Consequently, the very idea of development as an offspring of the Enlightenment and modernity became entangled in a complex and a long history mediated by the logic of coloniality informed by domination, oppression, and exploitation. In addition, the rhetoric of modernity promised a brave modern society where salvation, civilization, progress, economic growth, freedom and democracy would be the order of life (Mignolo, 2005).

In 1987, the then outgoing president of the Organization of American Historians, Leon Litwack, Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, criticised European scholars for their deliberate falsification and mythologizing of African history and culture. In his critique, he slated past historians for perpetuating racism and asked his present-day colleagues to try to heal that wound. He pointed out that “no group of scholars was more deeply implicated in the miseducation of American youth and did more to shape the thinking of generations of Americans about race and Blacks than historians as they deliberately perpetuated racial stereotypes” (Litwack, 1987:67). This accusation is explicit about the agenda of European scholarship to denigrate Africa and form false perceptions which in fact continue to sustain Euro-supremacist mythology. It is for this reason that even African scholars who suffered from intellectual dislocation as a result of their embeddedness in Eurocentrism continued to deny that Africa had philosophy during the “Great Debate” of the 1970s and 1980s (Nwala, 1992:5).

According to Gordon (2002:34), since 1947, there has been a revolution in African historiography. He claims that the year 1947 marked the effective beginning of the modern movement, which led to the establishment of the University of Ibadan in

Nigeria and the University of Ghana in 1948, and other institutions of higher learning throughout tropical Africa (Gordon, 2002:34). The new African universities had the blessing of Africans who had gone abroad to study in the United States, Great Britain, France and other European countries and in non-western countries in the Caribbean. Scholars such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere began to challenge western perceptions of Africans and African history (Gordon, 2002:35). For this reason, the retelling of African history from an African-centred perspective aims to debunk deliberate Eurocentric distortions. Thus, Asante (2007:64) asserts that the new Afrocentric historiography is not a false or artificial contrivance. Rather, it is a legitimate approach to the place of Africa in the world and the re-assertion of African agency in pursuit of an African renaissance. Out of an experience of great inquietude over a period of five hundred years, Africans have now put into place, in the face of great resistance, the elements necessary for a truly African renaissance founded on the principles and the centrality of African interests (Asante, 2007:7).

Afrocentricity, as an intellectual *djed* grounded on centring Africans within their own historical and cultural experiences, provides a better perspective for interpretation and understanding of Africa history that challenges African scholars to study history from the viewpoint of Africa and not of Europe. They can now insist that African people have a history in their own right, not one that is an appendage to European history, but one that antedates all other histories (Luke, 2002:95).

Keto (1989) attests that the Africa-centred perspective of history rests on the premise that it is valid to posit Africa as a geographical and cultural starting point in the study of peoples of African descent. Thus, the non-hegemonic intellectual approach to the

study of African history is significant not only for Africans, but can also provide a better perspective for Europeans seeking to understand African ways of living.

4.3 Afrocentric historiography and the restoration of Africa's contribution to world civilization

As I have already indicated, Asante (2014:113) maintains that the emergence of an anti-African falsification has its origins in the rise of the European slave trade, because prior to the 15th century, Europeans had not formed the false logic of racial superiority and inferiority later used to justify negative ideas about Africa. Adeleke (2015:203) lauds two individuals for helping to advance the counterargument to this falsification: W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson. They laid a foundation upon which future generations, including Afrocentric scholars, would flourish. Thus Afrocentric historicism emerged against the backdrop of deliberate Eurocentric falsification and mythologization of Africa by European scholars once African intellectuals, borrowing from the past, invoked ancient African civilization in their quest to counteract the Eurocentric narratives about African history. Adeleke (2015:201) states that the preoccupation of black intellectuals with rewriting, revising and publicizing black history and culture became a critical repertoire of resistance.

Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:37) explains that in the 20th century, Africa's struggle for independence and self-determination was to embody a vaster desire for liberation from oppressive colonial domination. This quest was more than a political journey; it included a call for economic, cultural and social agency, because European modernity was the face of oppression. African intellectuals, therefore, by insisting on an Afrocentric historical orientation in the spirit of a search for an African renaissance,

opened the doors long held shut by Eurocentric orientations to phenomena, and especially African phenomena.

The emergence of the field of Africology since the 1980s enabled the development of innovative approaches to apprehending African phenomena as a restorative approach for the re-centring of Africans. Monteiro-Ferreira (2009:332) attests that “the Western grand narratives, both mythological and historical, lost their omniscient truth in favour of the multiplicity of the different perspectives of non-hegemonic voices”. As one of the founders of Afrocentricity, Asante (2015:15) emphasises that Africology is sustained by the commitment to studying the life narratives, cultures, values, and possibilities of the African people transnationally and trans-continently. One of the most important perspectives in this regard was the development of Afrocentricity as a locative paradigm.

Afrocentrists, therefore, validate the work of Cheik Anta Diop, the Senegalese scholar, who wrote for the Negritudists, as the precursor for the new Afrocentric historiography (Asante, 2014). Asante (2014:13) sees Diop as the most significant African scholar of the century because of his demolition of the European construction of ancient Africa. Diop single-handedly, without African or European support, using melatonin studies as well as linguistic methods, established that the ancient Egyptians were black-skinned Africans and that the origin of civilization must be traced to the Nile Valley (Asante, 2014).

Asante and Mazama, as the leading Afrocentrists at Temple University, contrasted Diop’s argument to the Hegelian notion that Africa was outside history because the African people did not have, according to Hegel, a historical consciousness (Asante, 2007:13). Mazama saw in Diop’s work “a conscious elaboration of a paradigm whose

main principle is the reclaiming of ancient Egypt, Kemet, for Africa” (Asante, 2007). For this reason, Afrocentrists under the guidance of Diop argue that Kemet is to Africa what Greece is to Europe, and that a genuine African renaissance must be grounded in the fertile soil of the Nile Valley civilization, as Diop suggests (Asante, 2007:69). The Nile Valley civilization, which arose about 3400 BCE in historical terms, and ended with the Roman dispossession around 50 BCE, did not evolve in isolation from the rest of Africa. Egypt was clearly an African civilization, and was connected to Africa’s history and geography, just as ancient Nubia was (Asante, 2002:11). Therefore, robbing Africans of their account of history is nothing but a campaign designed to destroy their civilization, and promote unfair intellectualism among European scholars who attempt to falsify African history.

Africans, like other human beings, are products of the environment. Gordon (2002:28) argues that the geographic base of Africa provides a background for understanding the genesis of humankind and the origins of agriculture in Africa, as well as the rise and fall of African kingdoms, the world of the desert and African trade with the outside world. For this reason, the understanding of Africa’s geographical form and location has a great impact on understanding African ways of life, if African history is to be told from the African standpoint.

Asante (2015:15) calls for “[t]he anteriority of the classical African civilizations [to] be entertained in any Africological inquiry”, adding that “[c]lassical references are necessary as baseline frames for discussing the development of African cultural phenomena”. Asante (2007:69) also maintains that “a new revolutionary moment in which African people interrogate and locate within their own history the values,

concepts, and ideals that are essential for a reinvigorated society can be advanced by seriously engaging the Nile Valley civilizations.”

Thus, the research on classical African history produced by Diop, Martin Bernal, Du Bois and G.G.M James ([1954] 2009) and many other African scholars remains relevant and critical in laying the foundations for understanding African history. The Diopian view of historiography combines research on linguistics, history and psychology to interpret the cultural unity of the African people (Winters, 2002). As already indicated, the key Diopian argument is that the ancient Egyptians were black-skinned Africans and that the origin of civilization must be traced to the Nile Valley. As Diop (1991) indicates in his introduction to *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, his final and most powerful work, his theory of the African origin of civilization is grounded in the idea that all cultures have a continuity that can be traced back to an African origin. Thus, Diop’s concern with the African origin of civilization is related to the modern idea of Afrocentricity, which includes, but is not limited to, the discourse around the origin of civilization (Verharen, 2002:70).

According to Asante (2007:13), Diop reconstructed an approach to a counter-European understanding of African history that unsettled the long and vast tradition of European historiographic thought, including that of African scholars who were rooted within a Eurocentric paradigm. It was this principle that upset Western scholars and unleashed an avalanche of criticism of Diop’s work and of Afrocentricity. Winters (2002:121) affirms Asante’s assertion, positing that the critique by many Eurocentric scholars of Afrocentricity results from white aggression in reaction to Diop’s idea of a black Egypt, and the view that Egyptians spoke an African language, rather than an Afro-Asiatic language. Karenga (2006) would later endorse the Diopian historiography

by calling for Kemet (Egypt) to be seen as the source for an African renaissance, because the position it holds is unquestioned as the source of the energy behind the expansion of African ideas that have held Africans together in a unique historical situation.

The reason that the history of Kemet still excites interest among many African scholars is that it established its own will over a long period and shaped succeeding civilizations with its profound discoveries (Asante, 2007:70). For this reason, it is crucial to state that what Europe had succeeded in doing to Africa and Africans since the rise of modern Europe to power was to dethrone Africans from their own agency, self-assertion, and cultural definition, based on Africa's own historical development, turning the continent's people into a beggar people (Asante, 2007:56). Indeed, the African paradox since the colonial expedition, is that Africa remains a continent with immense riches, yet with its people are the poorest in the world.

Asante (2007:69) maintains that "a new revolutionary moment in which African people interrogate and locate within their own history the values, concepts, and ideals that are essential for a reinvigorated society can be advanced by seriously engaging the Nile Valley civilizations". Most European historians in the 19th century sought to sustain the false idea of Egyptians as white or Mediterranean in line with their political agenda; thus it is necessary to interrogate historical facts to reassert the blackness of ancient Africans. According to Winters (2002:122), many European scholars who mention the work of Diop in their articles have never reviewed his work properly because they seem to lack the ability to understand the many disciplines that Diop mastered.

Diop earned his PhD in Egyptology from the Sorbonne University in Paris (Hilliard, 2002:63). In the course of his higher education, he conducted formal studies and

gained practical experience with the great physicists and chemists of Europe, and he himself later directed the radiocarbon dating laboratory in Dakar, Senegal. Moreover, Diop was trained in anthropology, and was a linguist of note (Hilliard, 2002). Diop, with all his achievements, became an unparalleled expert in the study of Kemet and Greece. For this reason, it is surprising that Euro-supremacist scholars denigrated his knowledge and disregarded his work as being of worthwhile consideration in the study and understanding of Africa.

One of the Eurocentric scholars who has criticised Diop's work without providing any evidence based on a thorough interrogation of his work is Lefkowitz (Winters, 2002). Lefkowitz rejects Diop's argument that ancient Egyptians were black in her book *Not Out of Africa* (1996) without presenting tangible evidence to counter Diop's work, or even using the work published by other scholars to prove that Diop is incorrect in his analysis (Winters, 2002). Lefkowitz rejects Diop's work by claiming that "his research is not so thorough as it might appear"; she further criticises Diop by stating that his work only relied on one source, and has uncritically repeated an ancient assertion of "dubious accuracy" (Lefkowitz, 2006:17).

Baines (1991) in the *New York Times Book Review* did the most popular review of Diop's work. Similar to Lefkowitz's criticism of Diop's work, Baines (1991) also fails to substantiate his opinion and merely criticises Diop's work by labelling it "unsound". Winters (2002:122) argues that their criticism is not sufficiently professional to carry weight and states that in academia for one to refute a thesis one must present counter evidence that disproves the logic of the thesis under review, and cannot rely on unsubstantiated rhetoric. This in itself shows the simplistic manner in many Euro-

supremacist scholars' style of argumentation is used to dismiss African scholars as a way to maintain their false supremacy.

Another revered African American scholar who has challenged the idea that Greeks were the authors of philosophy and science is George G. M. James, with his 1954 book, *Stolen Legacy: The Greeks Were Not the Authors of Greek Philosophy, but the People of North Africa*. James ([1954] 2009) sought to prove that Greek civilization was influenced by Egyptian civilization, not the other way around. Asante (2014:13) affirms that “from this vantage point it was easier for those who came after James to examine his arguments and to use them in their own redemptive work”. Other scholars such as John Henrik Clarke, Ivan Van Sertima, Yosef ben-Jochan-non, Jacob Carruthers, Wade Nobles, and Asa Hilliard have used James’s ([1954] 2009) work with great benefit to their readers as well (Asante, 2014). James (1954) argues that the Egyptians, as black Africans, produced the arguments, knowledge, evidence, and theories upon which Greek civilization, which was to come thousands of years later, would depend (Asante, 2014:14). Finch (2002:38) corroborates that the Nile Valley high culture was already complete and mature by 4000 BCE and remained an intact and powerful force for the next four millennia. Thus, Egypt stood out as the political and intellectual overlord of most of the Eastern half of the Mediterranean and, even when Egypt was not in political control, its cultural hegemony was paramount (Finch, 2002).

Asante (2000b) contends that Egypt is far older as a civilization of thinkers than Greece. He argues that Egypt predates Greece not only in political terms, but in age also. Egypt is thousands of years older in terms of its development of science, method, theory, and philosophy (Asante, 2000b). The ancient Nile Valley thinkers contributed

to the world a full body of intellectual and creative works long before Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes of Miletus and Heraclitus of Ephesus, or Isocrates the Ionian came to study with them in the 6th century BCE (Asante, 2000b:viii).

Obenga (2002:167) notes that Thales, considered to be the father of Greek philosophy, received his education in Egypt and was trained by Egyptian priests. Having received instruction on the method of studying, the nature of things and of truth in Egypt, Thales went back to his native city of Miletus as an elder, with knowledge and wisdom (Obenga, 2002:168). For this reason, to many Afrocentrists, it is surprising that modern European scholars deliberately omit such details, and as a result continue to falsify African knowledge and contributions to the foundation of Greek civilization.

Besides African contributions in philosophy and science, Karenga (2006) contends that Africans contributed significantly to the ideals of an ethical and just society by introducing the concept of *Maat*. According to Karenga (2006), the concept of *Maat* is derived from a physical concept of straightness, evenness, and levelness. Thus, *Maat* came to be identified with the pursuit for truth, righteousness, justice, order, balance, harmony, and reciprocity. Through the concept of *Maat*, a society founded on the ideals of peace, harmony and justice could be established. Asante (2014:21) maintains that African history is rich with philosophical concepts in search of *Maat*, even if it is often called by different names, and is taught by sage philosophers in the villages. “This concept corresponds to certain aspects of Dja, Iwa or Ubuntu in various parts of Africa” (Asante, 2014:21).

With regard to architecture, Finch (2002:38) rightly reminds us that Egypt was the first to raise massively precise edifices in stone, developing elaborate architectural styles. The so-called Doric column had already achieved a perfection of form by the 3rd

Dynasty, more than 3000 years before the building of the Parthenon (Finch, 2002:38). How could it then be that Eurocentric scholars fail to acknowledge these grand achievements, unless their motive is self-aggrandisement through deliberate attempts to falsify knowledge? The European historians of the 19th century generally discredited *African* contributions to civilisation in a bid to deny Africans their rightful and deserving respect. Much evidence abounds that the Egyptians were great, for example, Finch (2002:39) indicates that in astronomy, almost every Greek writer who mentions the subject traces the origin of scientific astronomy to Egypt and Chaldea, through giving priority to Egypt – the Greeks were open about the influence, although later scholars prefer to forget it:

Ancient Egyptians developed no fewer than three calendars: lunar, Sirian-solar, and precessional. The precessional calendar is derived from the retrograde movement of the celestial North Pole around the ecliptic North Pole, encompassing the period of 26,000 years. The Sirian solar calendar is based on the difference between the true year of 365 determined by heliacal rising of Sirius at the summer solstice and the civil calendar conventionalized at 365 days. In the late antiquity, at the insistence of first the Ptolemies, then Julius Caesar, the calendrists of Kemet devised a leap year to reconcile the two calendars. (Finch, 2002:39)

Besides astronomy, it is also to the Nile Valley that we must look for evidence of early influences on Greek mathematics. Finch (2002) points out that the geometry of Pythagoras, Eudoxus, and Euclid was learned in the Nile Valley temples. Four mathematical papyri still survive, most importantly the Rhind mathematical papyrus dating to 1832 BCE. With so much evidence abounding about Egyptian influence on Greek civilization, European scholars' elevation of the Greeks without giving sufficient credit to the ancient Egyptians (as Africans) does not hold water. These scholars have falsely created an impression that ancient Greek civilization was a product of an "immaculate conception" untouched by any influence from their Kemet neighbours.

With modern-day Afrocentric scholars exposing the false logic of an African history rooted in Eurocentrism, the monumental challenge facing African scholars is to retell the African tale in pursuit of an African renaissance. According to Asante (2007:55), the issue during the last half of the 20th century seems to be to address the following question: “Now that African nations are independent and African peoples throughout the world are gaining freedom from oppression, humiliation, degradation and inequality, what are the missing pages in the book of African redemption?” Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:1) puts it slightly differently, as I have already noted: What does the search for African development mean for people struggling to emerge and free themselves from the inimical legacies of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, underdevelopment as well as imposition of the Washington Consensus of 1989 and neo-liberalism? To respond to both Asante and Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s questions: it is clear that it would be impossible and indeed pointless for Africa to attempt to imitate any idea of development or advancement outside of its own history and cultural paradigm, as this would be the continuation of African dislocation. Without a doubt, Africa must find itself based on its own terms and assert its own agency for its own renaissance.

The answers for a resurgence of Africa lies in a re-centring of Africans within their own historical and cultural terms, to end the dismemberment engineered by the Scramble for Africa that reached its apex at the Berlin Conference. The Berlin Conference not only physically partitioned the continent, but also wrecked the psychological make-up of Africans by reducing them to recipients of the purported “salvation” of an imposed European identity.

Therefore, the only hope for Africans in a world hegemonized by a colonial lineage (both Arabic and European) is for Africans to find their own roots and be relocated to their own centre and terms. From that centre, they will be able to understand their own identity correctly and fulfil their destiny. The establishment of identity determines activity. For this reason, Afrocentricity aims to revive an African consciousness grounded on African history and culture to end the alienation from itself created by the European invasion.

4.4 The African Renaissance and the African development challenge in post-colonial Africa

Cheikh Anta Diop popularized the concept of what he called an African renaissance in the mid-1940s when he drew attention to the significance of anchoring African development in African history and African culture, as well as the importance of mobilizing Africans on the continent and in the diaspora to take charge of creating their own futures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019:5). Asante (2014:79) reminds us that Diop was born in the colonial era and was educated in schools established by colonial teachers, and yet he was capable of reading the documents of Western culture with two sets of notes, one for the examination and another for his personal sanity. This great African scholar knew that the only way for Africa to rise up again was through a revival rooted within Africa's historical past and not in its imputed (false) colonial identity.

The concept of the African renaissance became a viable tool to debate the intellectual relocation of Africans from Eurocentric intellectual imprisonment into the streams of their historical journey and culture. Since Africans have been removed from their own terms culturally, psychologically, economically, politically, and historically, it is essential for any assessment going forward from the current African condition to be

made from an African location (Asante, 2007:31). This means that all analysis of African phenomena should be seen in the light of Africans as actors and not as mere spectators and mimics of Europe. Thus, Afrocentricity, as a paradigm that seeks the resurgence of Africans, establishes the intellectual location for the interpretation of African phenomena. The intellectual location in this context speaks to the psychological and historical space occupied by an observer of phenomena (Asante, 2002).

The African Renaissance project as a Pan-African concept sets Africans on a trajectory toward their own liberation by restoring their memories of how they came to be disrupted from their destiny. The Dakar meeting of African intellectuals called by President Wade of Senegal during December 2003 was the most historic congress on the African continent (Asante, 2007:55). The congress brought African intellectuals from Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas together to contemplate an African renaissance. Now that Africa had become politically independent, it was necessary for intellectuals to help deepen the epistemological decolonization necessary for the relocation of African minds from Europe.

The implication of this is that it is not enough only to remember an Africa that was colonized by Europeans – we should transcend the painful memory and integrate the whole of Africa, beginning with the Nile Valley civilization, Africa East, West and South and hold Africa as one with all its invention. The renaissance of Africa therefore begins with the idea that Africa must never participate in its own demise and must escape all conceptual imprisonment created by European colonialists. This also implies that African conceptions of development must shift from European lenses and cultural practices to Afrocentric lenses to enable relevance. Thus, the moral aesthetics of

Afrocentricity as a guiding theoretical frame in this study is that it situates Africans in the centre of the African narratives of place and time, demonstrating that the dislocation of Africans from the centre of their own history is a form of intellectual and cultural terrorism that maintains its constant attack on the African concept of self and idea of time (Asante, 2014). As a result of colonialism, Africans are coerced to live through terms defined by someone else and not by themselves, which means they are dislocated from their own social reality. Hence, Afrocentricity advances the idea that the resurgence of Africa can only happen when Africa is grounded within its own historical and cultural terms. Similarly, unless the idea of African development, which is the focus in this study, becomes grounded in the philosophical soil of African history, there can be no African renaissance nor any useful future. Asante (2018:8) affirms that “Africans cannot be future oriented if they cannot conceive of themselves as subjects and agents responsible for their own freedom”.

African renaissance is about the quest for wholeness in the aftermath of what the Berlin Conference of 1884/5 did to cut Africa into 54 colonies (now independent nation-states) that continue to be the surrogates of European colonialists, even in the aftermath of independence. Kwame Nkrumah (1965) correctly uses the term “*neocolonialism*” in his description of the state of capture that African states continue to suffer in the post-independence era.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2009a:28) describes the dismemberment of Africa as a “colonial act”, a “practice of power, intended to pacify a populace, and a symbolic act, a performance of power intended to produce docile minds”. Moreover, dismemberment is also an act of absolute social engineering; thus, the dismembering of Africa was the foundation on which Europe’s capitalist economy was established (Ngugi wa Thiong’o,

2009a:28). Therefore, the renaissance of Africa can be mapped as a restorative trajectory which is called upon to cure the socio-political and economic ills created through colonialism and neo-colonialism, and to bind up the hurts and pains that the continent of Africa suffered.

In mid-1997, Thabo Mbeki delivered a lengthy speech in the United States of America where he posited that “the African Renaissance is upon us”, and elaborated as follows:

This generation remains African and carries with it an historic pride which compels it to seek a place for Africans equal to all the other peoples of our common universe. (Mbeki, 1997:1)

Without a doubt Mbeki struck the correct chord by emphasising Africa’s desire to be self-dependent as the main strategy for Africa’s resurgence from oppression. Asante (2014:101) agrees with Mbeki that Africa possesses its own rich heritage of intellectual ideas and these ideas must be mined for the proper and correct gems for the future of the African renaissance. Thus, Afrocentricity as an intellectual *djed* affirms the significance of centring Africans within their own history as a compass leading them to the streams of their eternal glory. For this reason, any notion of African development which does not advance the interests of the African people remains a hegemonic strategy to continue the subjugation of African people.

Asante (2007:66) through the idea of Afrocentricity emphasises that we cannot understand Africa’s contribution to its own development and the world at large without examining the basis for society – the history, culture and values that make up that society. Undoubtedly history is significant in the narrative of societal advancement. What is more important is *who* provides the historical narrative of Africa and *for what agenda*. The history of Africa told by Europeans only serves the purpose of glorifying Europe as the centre of Africa. It is for this reason that the post-World War II

articulation of how Africa should advance itself in pursuit of its future glorified the idea of European modernization, which encouraged Africa to imitate European experiences. Such an idea must be rejected because it locates African development within the epistemic foundations of European history and experiences and further dislocates Africans from their own history.

Thus, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Truman version of development after 1945 was interwoven with Western triumphalist declarations and acts, which eroded the possibility for Africans to rise. It was nothing but another “imperial project” as Cheru (2009:275-278) points out, because this articulation was rooted in the long history of Europe’s mission to conquer Africa, as expressed in the comments on Africa by European thinkers such as Hegel, Hume, Trevor-Roper, Weber and many others. This idea of development remains the offspring of the Enlightenment and modernity and is entangled in a complex European history mediated through the logics of “neo-colonialism” (Nkrumah, 1965). Therefore, African revitalization lies in the ability of Africans themselves to transcend the narrow Eurocentric constructions and reclaim their own definitions not shaped after European thoughts, but their own.

In the spirit of raising the bar of the African renaissance, Asante (2007:25) raises the following fundamental questions:

Who is to say that the historical experiences of the African world are less valid for Africans than others? What resonates more than the centrality of Africans to their own history, not someone else’s?’

In the light of five hundred years of European physical, political, economic and epistemic domination of Africans, it can only be noble for Africans to seize power to define their destiny. Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:2) invokes Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s idea of “re-membering” in his reflections on the African development challenge when

he states that “African conceptions of development continue to be a struggle for the remembering of the continent”, that is, the quest for wholeness after over five centuries of “dismemberment.”

Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s article “Revisiting the African renaissance” (2019) articulates what he considers to be the five moments of contemporary African history and politics that have framed the struggle for African renaissance. In his view, the first moment was formed by the 17th century struggle for political decolonization in Haiti, which Kwame Nkrumah in the 20th century expresses as seeking a “political kingdom”. This moment was exemplified by the historic struggle which led to the establishment of the first “black republic” through the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Both Asante (2014:60) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019:7) concede that the Haitian Revolution exemplified the struggle of African people to break away from a racist Western oppressive regime in search of their freedom to self-govern. After the Haitian Revolution, we witnessed the rise of Pan-Africanism in the early 1900s as a base for an African awakening to political decolonization globally. In the brilliant leadership of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, despite their strategic differences, what was clear was the fact that they led the Pan-African desire for African liberation.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019:10) affirms that the second moment that fortified the search and call for an African renaissance was the call for economic decolonization and addressing what Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana termed “neo-colonialism” (Nkrumah, 1965). In Chapter 3 of this study, I have already shown that “neo-colonialism”, according to Nkrumah (1965), described the subtle state of capture in which Western colonial empires continued to exercise indirect control over their former African colonies, through trade agreements, as a strategy to ensure that they never become

economically independent (Nkrumah, 1965). Thus, it became significant for African leaders to devise strategies for economic renewal to ensure that they could escape from economic dependence on their former colonizers. Political decolonization that is not underpinned by economic decolonization means that independent African countries will continue to remain tied to the strategems of Western empires, thus failing to break free from colonial bondage. For this reason, both political and economic decolonization struggles were and still are intertwined with African decolonization projects.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019:12) sees the third moment of the crystallization of the African Renaissance as the postcolonial struggles for popular democracy, ranged against long-standing single party and military dictatorships, as well as opposition to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank austerity measures of the Structural Adjustment Programmes which have created debt dependency for African states. African leaders, in the spirit of African renaissance, never gave up but created counter-hegemonic development initiatives to challenge the Western neo-colonial powers, even when most of their initiatives were disrupted and undermined. For example, to mention only a few initiatives, there are the *African Declaration on Cooperation, Development and Economic Independence* of 1973, the *Revised Framework of the Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa* of 1976, the *Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa* of 1980, the *African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery* of 1986, the *African Charter for Popular Participation for Development* of 1990, the United Nations' *New Agenda for Development of Africa* of 1991 and the *New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)* of 2001 (cited in Adesina, Graham and Olukoshi, 2006).

Lastly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019:18) mentions two more major moments which are significant for the African renaissance: the Afro-Arab Spring and the #Rhodes Must Fall movements. The Afro-Arab Spring movement, which broke out in 2011, targeted the long-standing dictatorial regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, which had survived the second and third waves of democratisation that engulfed sub-Saharan Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019:18). However, Villa-Vicencio, Doxtader and Moosa (2015) liken the North African revolutionary movements to the fleeting spring season, and argue that the mere change of a “season” is not enough to amount to a renaissance. This implies that these countries have yet to go beyond the mere change of a political season and that the movement must mature into a more strategic political change to lead to a true democratic mass revolution.

The outbreak of the *Rhodes Must Fall movements* in South Africa in 2015 was a demand for epistemological decolonization. This movement began with a demand by students to be taught the relevant educational content that correctly portrays Africa’s achievements in world civilization and not Africa as a dependent of Europe. Thus, their demand for epistemological decolonization was about dismantling the colonial epistemic empire and unleashing African native intelligence, with an aim to correct the injustices committed by colonial epistemicides. Hence, the demand for epistemological decolonization advanced the critical call to ensure that the education system for Africans centre Africans within their own historical context and liberate them from epistemic dependence on Eurocentrism.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the significance of an Afrocentric historiography as a necessary base from which to understand African development discourse. The

chapter has unmasked the falsity of Eurocentric historiography and its perspectives on Africa's contribution to world civilization. The incompleteness of the narrative of European history about Africa has been justified on erroneous premises propagated by European historians during the 19th century, namely, that Africa did not have any history and that it was devoid of culture. African scholars both on the continent and in the diaspora have since rejected these claims by European writers and began to set Africa on the path of reimagining and claiming its own glorious past. The continuation of this false narrative of history was the foundation on which the United States, in the aftermath of World War II, based its justification for a civilizational mission and modernization project towards Africa. In the wake of African independence, African intellectuals have begun to take up the mammoth task of retelling Africa's story as a way to advance an African renaissance.

The primary argument advanced in this chapter is that Africa's underdevelopment status results from European colonization of Africa and the minds of Africans. The appropriate path for Africa to attain its glory is through re-centring Africans within its own history, culture and asserting their agency. African decolonization requires the deepening of epistemic decolonization by overthrowing a Eurocentric canon as irrelevant to understanding African challenges.

CHAPTER 5:
AFROCENTRICITY ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURE
IN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter 4) discussed Afrocentricity's privileging of African history as an anchor for African development. History was presented as one of the critical units of analysis in Afrocentricity's conception of African development as a form of social change. The theft and falsification of African history by Western scholars became one of the strategies in the destruction of an African identity and of the recognition of African contributions to world civilization. Western historiography has portrayed Africans as people without history and culture, and as sub-humans to be civilized according to Western standards. However, based on a corrected analysis of history, as interpreted from the Afrocentric lenses, Africans do have the ability to activate their own victorious consciousness, enabling them to conceptualize their own development ideas and practices, grounded on their own lived experiences, to challenge European-imposed notions of what the development process must entail.

The present chapter addresses culture as another critical aspect of Afrocentricity in terms of an analysis of what should inform the development trajectory in Africa. As I have mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the discourse of development in Africa has remained deeply entangled within colonially imposed matrices of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Quijano, 2000, 2007). It has not enabled Africans to imagine development from the perspective of their own history and cultural experiences. Such a perspective on development has only imposed on Africa a tendency to mimic the

European modernization project as the sole model that should define what development is for Africa. For this reason, the conceptualisation of the mainstream development in the aftermath of the World War II, guided by modernization theory, with its extension as a neoliberal framework, has remained deeply entangled within the experiences of Western countries.

The main challenge facing Africa since the 15th century, which marks the start of mercantilism and Christianization, is the need for Africans to find their own voices and to find a cultural anchor for their endeavour to shape Africa's development prospects. Epistemic colonization by European scholars has produced a continent that has been dependent on Europeans to define what the development future of Africa must entail. Their primary agenda was to create Africans who think from a European perspective and who will forever remain dependent beneficiaries of Europe. As a result, African development discourses became entangled in the idea of the "catch-up thesis", as Thandika Mkandawire (2011:13) calls it, which presents development in Africa as seeking to be like the West – industrialized and modern.

In order to redefine what the process of development should entail for Africa, the deliberations must be grounded on African history and culture as a base to enlighten relevant development theorization. For this reason, Afrocentricity as a guiding theoretical framework for this study insists on the significance of the particularity of a context defined by time and space as a base from which to understand the making of an African society. In particular, this paradigm emphasises the significance of relocating African people to their own roots (their history and culture) as the basis for an interpretation of their reality. Asante (2015:vii) contends that without a plausible

ideology we as Africans can never march in the same direction; Afrocentricity is therefore essential for the attainment of a collective African development vision.

When we ignore the cultural context from which we speak and analyse a phenomenon, we become dislocated in our understanding and thought process. Thus, development in Africa, grounded on the ideals of Afrocentricity ensures that Africans must be the agents of their own development as opposed to being viewed as dependent beneficiaries of European development designed development experiments. Such a development vision must be informed by African history and cultural practices – anything outside of African experiences becomes a hegemonic enterprise. Bruton (cited in Brohman, 1995:121) notes that “knowledge about the development process in a particular time does not exist in transferable form, rather it is a product of the development process itself”. This chapter rearticulates the question of development as inextricably intertwined with the question of culture. Cultural imperialism as an important technology of under-developing Africa needs to be addressed to resolve the development impasse.

European colonization of Africa ushered in European cultural dominance, which remodelled the continent to push it towards imbibing a Western way of life, and thus made Africa’s political, economic and social development aspirations conform to European (and thus foreign) ways of life. It is no wonder that such development projects had little success in Africa, since they were rooted in the idea of a European modernization of Africa. The primary argument advanced in this thesis, and in this chapter in particular, is that Africa must be relocated to its own terms of reference and must be the subject and not the object of (European) development. African cultural

regeneration is projected as the starting point and solution for the liberation of the continent from Western domination. Mbakogu (2004:42) also points out that

[c]ulture plays an invisible role in determining our customs, values, morals and growth in society, and that if we truly aspire freedom from the shackles of underdevelopment, there is an urgent need to break away from the confines of Western cultural systems and search for that which made us Africans prior to colonization.

No human exists outside of culture. Rather, we are inheritors and conveyers of culture. Culture informs the meaning we give to life and it determines our activities in pursuit of our destinies.

5.2 Defining the concept of culture

The concept of culture connotes different things to different individuals, and has been defined differently by many scholars. However, although there are probably as many definitions of culture as there are writers, most definitions have a number of elements in common. For Asante and the circle of Afrocentric scholars, “the useful way to view the cultural question Afrocentrically lies in the understanding of ‘culture as shared perceptions, attitudes, and predispositions that allow people to organize experiences in certain ways’” (Asante, 1990:9).

The culture of a people is what distinguishes them from other societies in the family of humanity. Culture, as it is understood from an Afrocentric perspective, entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other peoples or societies. These peculiar traits include a people’s language, dress, music, work, arts, religion, dancing, and so on. Other scholars who are not necessarily part of the Afrocentric circle led by Asante have also shed some light on

the concept of culture, which affirms the views expressed by the Temple Circle of Afrocentric scholarship. For example, Aziza (2001:2) defines culture as follows:

Culture is the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people, for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs.

Idang (2015) is another scholar who classifies culture into its material and non-material aspects. He argues that material aspects of culture refer to the visible tactile objects which humans are able to manufacture for the purpose of survival in their environment, such as artefacts and crafts; while non-material aspects entail beliefs, values, attitudes and general behaviours that shape the course of people's lives (Idang, 2015:100).

In a nutshell, culture is a network of traits that are learned, based on interaction or derived from history. Culture is passed from one generation to the next generation, and it is gained as a by-product of the socialisation process. Therefore, the idea of African culture, as defined by Ezedike (2009:455), refers to the sum total of the shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans. It can be conceived of as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that are socially transmitted from one generation to another. African culture, therefore, refers to the entire African heritage. Thus, human behaviour, value systems, attitudes and practices are all cultural expressions, as no human in the world exists outside of culture or without culture.

That said, it can be inferred that culture is the pride of every society; it regulates our lives consciously or unconsciously. These reflections on culture challenge the incorrect postulations made by Hegel in his 1828 lectures on history, published 1837, when he made the pronouncement that "Africa must be forgotten because it was no

part of history and had no culture” (Hegel cited in Asante, 2014:115). Hegel, like many other European historians, was influenced by racist scholarship which portrayed Africa in a negative light in support of European conquest. Asante (2014:115) points out that when King Leopold of Belgium declared Africa to be “a magnificent cake”, this had little to do with Africa’s fountainhead position in humanity’s history, or Africa’s contributions to the origins of civilization; it had more to do with the desire to capture Africa’s human and mineral wealth and use them for the benefit of the West. To do this successfully, Europe set out to capture the African minds and re-programme Africans to think of themselves as Western men and women. Thus, the European colonial enterprise not only fractured the physical environment of Africa, but extended to the appropriation of the African mind and a distortion of African cultural identities. With regard to this, Asante (1990:8) argues: “[W]e are either existing on our own ‘cultural’ terms or the terms of others[...] [W]here will the African person find emotional and cultural satisfaction, if not in his/her own terms?”

To add to the debates on history and culture, Gordon (2002:28) asserts that “Africans like other human beings on earth are products of the environment. Geography is the handmaiden of history and culture. Thus, it can be concluded that all events of large significance take place within the setting of some culture”. For this reason, the significance of culture lies in its being shared amongst people within the same territorial space to attain unity; it is not just for an individual’s fulfilment; rather, it shapes the identity of the group of people and their destiny.

Mbakogu (2004:38) argues that cultural disintegration can be explained as the destabilization instituted when cultural changes go beyond the control of the people in the affected societies. Under colonial expansion into Africa, African traditional cultures

and values were seriously threatened. A key reason for cultural disintegration in Africa is the impact of the Berlin Conference of 1884/5, which divided Africa into 54 colonial territories with very little regard for the traditions, languages and values of the African people than for the continent's geography. The colonialists introduced their education systems, disrupting Africans' ability to retain any memory of their past, thus controlling their lives and subjugating them into slavery to serve white self-imposed masters.

These facts justify Gbotokuma's (1996:23) contention that "Africa has been weighed down by 400 years of exploitation, alienation, cultural and economic dismantlement, and the white man's recent deliberate political absolution of his conquest by renouncing colonialism, does not change anything". The main challenge facing Africans is to find solace in the reclamation of their history, culture and tradition as a way to re-emerge from colonial brutalization. In the Akan culture of West Africa the word *sankofa* is used symbolically to represent retrieval of the past memories in order to pave a path to the future. Similarly, the Afrocentric intellectual enterprise led by Asante and the Afrocentric Temple Circle of scholars is framed by cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic issues (Asante, 1990:8). Unless we reclaim African history and culture, our decolonization efforts will remain a vain exercise.

Therefore, it is necessary for decolonization as a process of African reclamation to dismantle colonial culture by seeking first the restoration of the African mind from the wilderness of the Eurocentric intellectual heritage. If culture relates to attitudes, practices and a way of thinking about life in general, then it is true that colonialism dismembered even the fabric of how Africans think about themselves. This is the essence of the damage caused, and it reduced Africans to non-beings. Therefore, cultural reclamation as a restorative process must aim to affirm the humanity of

Africans and their way of life. Asante (1990:8) stresses that the only way for an African to find emotional and cultural satisfaction is when he/she is relocated to his/her terms, meaning his/her own space or location. Thus, the role of African culture is significant in shaping the cosmological, axiological, and aesthetic issues as they relate to an African, in particular, according to Asante (2007:15), they create a *djed* which helps Africans to be grounded in the traditions of their ancestors.

5.3 Eurocentrism, culture and development in Africa

Eurocentrism is the cultural anchor of Euro-modernity. As I have highlighted in Chapter 3 of this study, Eurocentrism is described by Amin (1989) as one of the greatest ideological deformations of our time, as it has falsely invented Europe as the centre of the world and as the inventor of all positive human values. The colonial enterprise disrupted the progress that Africa was making towards its own amalgamation and the attainment of a form of progress defined by African standards and experiences. Colonialism dismembered not only the physical environment of Africa, but also disrupted African culture and converted Africans from the dignity of their own way of life into slavery, and imposed on them the Western way of life.

Evidence abounds that the European writers distorted African history as part of their self-serving mission to negate Africa's achievement from history books. The main question is: Can the European account of African history be trusted, given that Europeans were persuaded by the colonial conquest mission in Africa? This European colonial mission was disguised behind the veil of civilization, salvation, and development when actually it was the mission to rob Africa of its material resources and to disrupt Africans from their own way of life. Many of the European writers who actually set foot in Africa after the 15th century engaged in a study of the behaviour of

Africans, their religion and tradition, but primarily with the intention of subjugating Africans and converting them into slaves (Onyenuru, 2014), abroad or at home. They employed anthropological and historical methods in documenting their findings. What is fundamentally important to understand is that the functional agenda of their anthropological study was not to understand Africans in good faith, aiming at building genuine relations rather than to conquer them. They could not see African history and culture as unique and different from their worldview, rather they elevated their experiences and understanding as higher in a hierarchal order and placed that of Africans in a lower position. In Mudimbe's (1988:2) view, the agenda of the colonialists was "domination of physical space, reformation of native's minds and integration of their local economic histories into the Western perspectives".

According to Mudimbe (1988:5), the suppressive programme of the West, because of its colonial mission, produced two types of *ethnocentrism*. The first is *epistemological ethnocentrism*, based on the perpetuated belief that nothing good can come from the Other, and even whatever it seems the Other knows is only a participation in the universal, which is Western. Many Europeans to this day still believe that Africans have nothing intellectual to contribute to the international community other than learning and repeating what Europeans have taught them. Secondly, Mudimbe (1988:50) mentions what he refers to as cultural ethnocentrism. This points to behavioural attitudes, beliefs, and a general way of life rooted in the Western consciousness. Europeans believed that they were intellectually and culturally superior to the indigenous people they found in non-Western countries, and that their redemption from their backward and barbarous way of life was through an injection of Western worldviews.

Colonial missionaries and anthropologists of the time misrepresented African history and culture as that of a downtrodden part of humanity, to reproduce their own imaginary “African” culture, and cement their negative views about Africans. Wagner (1981:27) argues with reference to a colonially inspired mission that in one sense the anthropologist invents “the culture he believes himself to be studying, that the relation is more real for being his particular act and experiences than the things it relates”.

In Onyenuru’s (2014:5) opinion, this paradigm of difference accounts for the normality, creative dynamism, and achievements of the civilized world against the purported abnormality, deviance, and primitiveness of what the Eurocentric view has labelled non-literate societies. Asante (2015: viii) emphasises that

the proponents of [a] western worldview have hedged their bets in a perspective that is moribund when it comes to looking at the outside world. Thus, they cannot truly grasp the significance of a revolutionary idea that would challenge the Eurocentric projection of its method as universal. However, the time has come for a total re-evaluation of both intellectual privilege and the assertion of European dominance in knowledge.

It is for this reason that when Europeans think of African development from their cultural ethnocentric perspective, they view it as a programme directed at “upgrading” Africa to Europe’s image, since Africa has been projected as backward and populated by sub-human beings. The modern-day development project, which is traceable to the aftermath of World War II (after 1945) has continued the assault on Africans’ humanity by projecting Africans in the negative light of Europe’s glory. As I have already articulated in Chapter 3 of this study, the watershed moment in the emergence of modern-day development discourse is Harry S. Truman’s Inaugural Speech in 1949. Truman, like many other European and North American writers, scholars and administrators, proceeds on the basis of premises that reveal their entanglement within narrow negative projections of Africa and Africans. They do not see Africans as

human beings with a history and culture and with the capabilities to uplift themselves to overcome their own development challenges. Rather, they objectify Africans into the status of children unable to help themselves to change their circumstances. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:4), “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 (1988) terms the ‘paradigm of difference’”. This idea of development is a cultural hegemonic moment in which the “superior” European logic and perspective cements its authority over those they consider backward, those whose humanity is doubted, except under the tutelage of Europeans.

For this reason, Eurocentric triumphalism inculcated a culture of despondency amongst Africans, leading them not to believe in their own capacity or that of their leaders to emerge from the imposed limitations. Thus, development became a project of assimilation and subjugation to spread the European cultural ethos. The idea that African notions of development were merely viewed in the context of an imitative process in which the non-Western subjects must regurgitate the experiences of the West was a further blow in the dislocation of the colonial subjects. For this reason, Escobar (1995:1-17) warns that “the theory and practice of development is characterised by enormous errors in terms of cultural bias, misunderstandings and failed promises”. For Olutayo (1985), the implication of modernization is “Europeanization”; this implies that Europe is perceived as having the higher culture, which the lower culture of the underdeveloped nations by implication needs to develop. According to this premise, if the less developed nations correctly implement the outlined imitative process, they will automatically reap the benefits of development enjoyed by “high cultured” developed nations.

For Brohman (1995:125), modernization theory can be regarded, at best, as a heuristic device; it is too simplistic and too vague to be taken seriously as a comprehensive theory of development. In the end, it cannot establish its relevance to the “developing world”, because it is really a celebration of the achievements of the “advanced industrial countries”. Thus, the theory of modernization is a theory of violence that degrades the people located in the Global South, Africans in particular, in the quest to colonize and recolonize them. This theory literally undermines Africans as it labels them backward people requiring civilization, when actually this is a racist ploy. Brohman (1995:125) argues that the categories of “modern” and “traditional” employed by modernization theory are implausible because of their imprecision, narrowness and distance from reality.

This corresponds directly with Dabaghian’s (1970) summation of “acculturation”, which refers to the process by which an individual goes from one culture to the next. The process requires an individual to superimpose a second culture on top of the individual’s first culture. In some ways, the colonized individual is still a member of the culture into which he/she is born, but in many ways, he/she has become a member of the culture in which he/she now lives (Onyenuru, 2014). Thus blanket terms such as traditional and modern fail to do justice to the variability of societies both in the North or South, neither of which is homogeneous, and both of which are invariably fissured by factors such as class, gender, ethnicity and religion (Brohman, 1995).

The effects of this way of thinking have been disastrous in many ways to the lives of the non-Western societies. Thus, Eurocentric epistemology has produced in Africans a “tortured consciousness”, because “one wanted to be something that one was not and the something that one wanted was perceived to be better than what one was”

(Asante, 2007:158). In the words of Du Bois (1903), colonized people suffered from what he labelled “double consciousness”, which is the highest manifestation of alienation. Such a people

identify with the foreign base as the starting point towards the self, that is, from another self towards one’s self, rather than the local being the starting point, which allows moving from the self to other selves. (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 2012:20)

This implies that the European development culture was not undertaken with good intentions regarding Africans; rather, it was a process of the destruction of a people’s way of life, aimed at relocating them into a false culture. For this reason, the challenge facing Africa is re-culturization grounded on African history and the lived experiences of African people, and to debunk European domination.

For most European neoclassical economists and related development theorists, the concept of economic growth is neither culture-specific, nor based on historically changing conditions (Brohman, 1995). In the view of these theorists, economic growth is subject to its own laws, which they see as untouched by history and culture. Modernization views cultural factors such as ethnicity as nothing but obstacles to development that were rooted in backward societies and which must be eradicated in order to usher in newness rooted in the Western way of thinking.

The newer neoliberal development thinking, like the older modernization approach, also employs universalist theoretical constructs based on unrealistic assumptions. This thinking still excludes much of the variability of non-Western society’s social formations (Brohman, 1995). The post-war development thinking was dominated by an unrealistic and racist concept of modernization, which encouraged the construction of the single model of modernity, based on the experience of a few Western countries. However, if change is to happen, in Africans’ understanding of societal development,

non-Western societies should unlearn the European grand theories of development and recentre the debates within their own unique historical and cultural settings.

Prah (2006) raises the following fundamental questions with regard to development in the Global South: “The question we (non-Western societies) face now is ‘where are we headed?’ How can we ensure that we get to where we wish to go? How do we get there? What sort of ideas and practices are needed to get us there? How can we use democratic theory and practice to achieve the goals of African emancipation and development?” For this reason, Afrocentricity as a revolutionary paradigm seeks to challenge the way we think and conceptualize African development by re-centring Africans to their own culture as a base from which Africans must project their development trajectory. The notion of development, therefore, ought to be interrogated and deconstructed from an Afrocentric location, in order to unmask the hegemony and the thuggery of a Eurocentric bias. The African development trajectory can only be relevant if Africans themselves assert their power to define what they want, guided by their own cultural and historical experiences. Without African-centredness as a guiding perspective, Africans will remain imitators of others’ way of life, chained to the colonial agenda. Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:15) argues that

...the reality about the African struggle for development is that it takes place within a modern world system that is resistant to decolonization 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 decolonization of the discourse of development, therefore, requires Africans to reassert and re-establish Africa as the centre of their own narratives. Asante (2007:66) argues that we cannot understand Africa’s contribution to its own development and the world without examining the basis of its society. Thus, African culture must be

reclaimed and used as a resource and a base for interpreting and enriching African development debates, thus enabling Africans to map out their own path.

5.4 Afrocentricity, culture and development in Africa

In the second chapter of this study, I unpacked Afrocentricity as the guiding theory to challenge the idea of Western universality and the distortions it created in Africa's search for its identity and meaning of life. As I have pointed out, since the early 15th century, information about Africa has been falsified as a strategy to subdue Africans by placing them under the tutelage of the European colonialists. Afrocentricity enters into debates on history and culture with the aim of recentring Africans within their own experiences to dispel deliberate distortions created to dismember the continent and its people. Moreover, it aims to denounce Eurocentric epistemology and its hegemonic stance as the foundation from which people of Africa must interpret their realities.

Asante (2007:16) defines Afrocentricity as a consciousness, a quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert a subject place within the context of African history and culture. Therefore, Afrocentricity's main objective is cultural reclamation and the assertion of the right of the African person to act as an agent in human history in an effort to eliminate the illusion of the fringes created by Eurocentrism. In her book *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, Mazama (2003) explains that Afrocentricity is not merely a theory, but a *paradigm* that results in the reconceptualization of the social and historical reality of African people.

Asante (2014:1) argues that "it becomes absolutely necessary to accept the subject position of Africans within the context of their historical realities if progress is to be made in interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or construction". Afrocentricity's primary

contention is that the Eurocentric view has become an ethnocentric view, elevating the European experience and downgrading all others (Asante, 2007). Throughout history, the main problem with European thought has been its “inability to allow space for other cultures and therefore it becomes self-absorbed in some notion of Europe as the categorical universal for the world” (Asante, 2014:3). Such authoritarianism has contributed to epistemic racism against non-European others, particularly Africans, who view their reality differently from the European canon of thought.

Afrocentricity enters the debate not as the obverse of Eurocentrism but as a particular perspective for analysis which does not seek to occupy all space and time as Eurocentrism has often done. By contrast, Karenga (2002) argues that Afrocentricity is about values and interests and puts it this way: “Afrocentricity is the quality of thought, practice and perspective that perceives Africans as subjects and agents of phenomena acting in their own cultural image and human interests.” Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:2) affirms that

...while Afrocentricity poses a severe criticism over the preponderant Eurocentric myths of universalism and challenges the colonizing concepts and racist theories that presides over the triumph of Western thought, it also offers the possibility of a non-hegemonic alternative perspective in the understanding of human expressions in our diverse multicultural society.

Thus, the Afrocentrists argue for pluralism in philosophical views, without hierarchy. They advocate respect for all cultural centres with the specific aim of centring African experiences and history as a base from which *African* people, in particular, must interpret their reality.

Since the 1980s, Afrocentricity has presented a revolutionary challenge to the ideology of white supremacy in education because of its insistence on centring African people, inside their own history, culture, and science, rather than outside these subjects

(Asante, 2014:48). While colonial education was used as a tool for the *miseducation* of the African masses, according to Woodson (1933), Afrocentricity advocates that if education is to be relevant and substantive within African society, it must first address African historical and cultural experiences which have been deliberately ignored by Eurocentric scholars. Thus, this revolutionary approach in education begins by affirming the critical location of the researcher and the subject matter being researched. For Asante (2014:46), the critical location refers to the site where the researcher locates a researchable problem within a matrix of political, social, and economic fields in order to determine the extent to which the problem is affected by internal and external forces.

Unless the researcher is located in relation to the problem or phenomenon that is being studied, such research loses meaningfulness and cannot bring about the change so much desired. Moreover, such a dislocated approach to education contributes to a cultural dislocation of learners, as it takes them away from their own understanding of the world and makes them view reality from someone else's understanding. For authentic change to happen in terms of education, including Development Studies, Afrocentricity emphasises *centricity*, which refers to a perspective that involves locating learners within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives (Asante, 2014). For this reason, Afrocentricity is particularistic in its approach to an understanding of phenomena and encourages every African person to become an agent in his/her own narrative, and not exist as a non-participative object of study.

Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:3) adds that Afrocentricity as a cultural theory is committed to the reclamation of ancient African classical civilization as the place for interpreting and

understanding the history of African peoples, their narratives, myths, spirituality, and cosmogonies. The cultural reclamation is key in affirming the lost African ontological density as a result of epistemological, psychological and physical violence Africans became subjected to.

Two types of multiculturalism are advanced here. The first is a particularistic multiculturalism, which has characterised the Western domination and racist culture. Its implications are that all non-Western societies must be subsumed under European culture in order for them to progress. The second is a non-hegemonic view of multiculturalism, which affirms the right for any human group to practise its own culture without being subjected to the dictates of the other. Afrocentricity seeks to advance the latter view, and believes that unless respect is granted to all cultures, we will not attain the harmonious society which we desire.

Based on these reflections, it becomes necessary for Africans to relocate their lenses for a valid remapping of their development path in Africa and the African diasporas, grounded on their own cultural understanding. Afrocentricity calls for us systematically to displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling, and so forth, and consciously replace them with ways that are germane to our own African cultural experiences (Mazama, 2001:388). Therefore, any idea of development rooted in mimicking others' experiences to the exclusion of the African experiences merely sustains the imperialist logic. For this reason, it is crucial to acknowledge that, Africa, with all of its natural resources, has been robbed for centuries, but the robbery was not simply of organic materials but also of sense of place, knowledge, and information (Asante, 2014:14).

Africans must be bold to embrace their own history and engage with the fact that their development did not begin with the arrival of Europeans on the African soil, but just

like any other human beings everywhere in the world prior to colonialism, Africans could and did improve their own lives. Asante and Abarry (1996) in their book *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources* captures African works of imagination, invention, cultural dynamism, political engineering, religious and economic sophistication and originality as evidence of African creativity and innovation in surviving the challenges faced in diverse environments. However, the colonial invasion ushered in a period of tribulations, which altered African ways of living and presented Africans as slaves who depended on their colonial masters for their survival. The project of development after World War II continued Western domination over the non-Western societies and failed to bring the changes so greatly desired in those countries.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:4) regards the Truman version of developmentalism as an offshoot of the colonialist enlightenment and modernity project, entangled in a complex and long history, mediated by the logics of coloniality, itself informed by domination, oppression, and exploitation. Lushaba (2009:2) remarks:

[T]he year 1950 does not mark the commencement of the continent's engagement with the question of development; rather it marked the beginning of new forms of imperialist domination, that is, neo-colonialism. As part of their strategy to maintain control over the continent, Western powers devised new forms of strategies to sustain their domination.

Kwame Nkrumah (1965), the first president of Ghana after independence in 1957, labelled these forms of control by the West as neo-colonialism. Thus, Lushaba (2009) states that 1950 can roughly be said to mark the beginning of the transition from the "colonial" to the "neo-colonial mode" of production. Development as we have come to know it is interventionism and it has made it difficult to imagine any development outside of intervention (Maiava, 2002:1). Thus, the Western development project converted Africans into dependent beneficiaries who lacked the capacity to change their own circumstances.

The post-development theorists have been the most outspoken regarding their dissatisfaction with the concept and practice of “development”. These theorists, most of whom originate from Western countries, Latin America and Asia, see development as a tool in the hands of the political elites of Western countries – a pattern for consolidating the Euro-North American hegemony (Lubieniecka, 2013:2). Attempts at deconstructing the concept of development have been undertaken in order to reveal the operations of power and knowledge in development discourse and practices. Escobar (1995), one of the leading voices in post-development theory, in his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, describes development in the following manner:

Development was – and continues to be for the most part – a top-down ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treats people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress. Development was conceived not as a cultural process but instead a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some badly needed goods to a target population. It comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to the Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests. (Escobar, 1995:44)

Without a doubt, Escobar agrees that culture should be at the centre of our imaginations about development, as no society exists in a vacuum. Therefore, existing cultural patterns of the people must guide the direction of their own development, and not an externally imposed programme. Brohman (1995:123) argues that “a complex factor such as culture could have no place in the neoclassical search for order in the ‘imperial development project’ because it would expose the irrelevance of neoclassical economists and their idea of universal laws for economic growth”. This implies that the liberation of Africa from neo-colonial oppression lies in a reclamation of culture as a resource to shape African development ideals. We should factor in voices such as that of Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania after independence, who opted to

interpret development as the “political mobilization of people for obtaining their own objectives” and not the objectives set by the others (cited in Lubieniecka, 2013).

Mbakogu (2004:40) notes that culture became increasingly important in the 1960s with the evident deficiencies regarding cultural diversity within modernization as a development model. In response, in 1966, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference, in Article 1 of its *Declaration*, stated that “each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved” and that “every people have the right and duty to develop its culture” (UNESCO, 1966 cited in Mbakogu, 2004:40). In another UNESCO conference, namely, the Intergovernmental Conference on the Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies, held in 1970 in Venice, culture was emphasised as crucial for any policy-making agenda. A highlight of this conference was the message of Rene Maheu, the then UNESCO Director-General:

Man is the means and the end of development; he is not the one-dimensional abstraction of homo economicus, but a living reality, a human person. In the infinite variety of his needs, his potentials and his aspirations...in the concept of development the centre of gravity has thus shifted from the economic to the social, and we have reached a point where this shift begins to approach the cultural. (UNESCO, 1970, cited in Mbakogu, 2004:40-41)

Indeed, if Africans do not perceive development within their own cultural settings, they remain shackled in oppression, in the shadow of the darker version of modernity as the only base from which to launch their development discourse. Hence, Afrocentricity espouses the cosmology, aesthetics, axiology, and epistemology that characterize African culture (Mazama, 2001:393). Karenga (2002) identifies as the core cultural African characteristics the following: “[S]hared orientations, the centrality of the community, respect for tradition, a high level of spirituality and ethical concern, harmony with nature, the sociality of self-hood, veneration of ancestors and the unity

of being”. Thus, a development model that fails to observe the above elements continues to replicate a European cosmology and will not be able give Africans a victorious consciousness.

Development should thus not be conceived in an interventionist manner; rather it should be seen as embracing people’s way of life, which is their history, their attitudes, their traditions, and their values, all of which enable them to give meaning to life. For this reason, this study argues that the development discourse can be greatly enriched by reframing it within an Afrocentric paradigm to enable African voices to take priority. Without this, Africa cannot experience a different future from the present state of affairs. The challenge is for African scholars to transcend global colonial domination in the sphere of knowledge production and consider African culture as a resource to shape their thinking about development.

5.5 Conclusion

The primary challenge facing Africans is reclaiming their culture and history as a base from which to map out their development path to debunk the European development agenda. Throughout the history of Western domination, Africans have been portrayed in a negative light, as people without development in need of civilization and development by Europeans. Such a view has created a perception that nothing happened in Africa in terms of development prior to the arrival of Western imperialism.

The dismal failure of modernization development idea after World War II proves that any ideas about societal advancement not rooted in people’s own culture are bound to fail. African development, therefore, has to be conceptualized as an endogenous process rooted in people’s culture, which entails their aesthetics, cosmology, axiology

and epistemology. African liberation therefore rests in the ability of Africans to reclaim their humanity by emphasising their own cultural outlook as a framework from which to interpret their development needs. Inquiry into the discourse of development in Africa will require Africans to shift their focus from a European cultural ethos, and a Eurocentric view of reality to relocate themselves to their own terms.

The current chapter has discussed the significance of culture as a resource for enriching African development debates and consequently practice. It has revealed that the development discourse is in fact predicated on a false Euro-American totalitarian “truth” that universalized itself through the colonial endeavour. Besides looking at the impact of Eurocentric culture on African conceptions of development, the chapter discussed the significance of Afrocentricity as a paradigm and a cultural perspective in the interpretation of what must constitute an African development agenda. The next chapter discusses the significance of African agency in the attainment of African development as one of the cardinal elements in Afrocentricity.

CHAPTER 6:

AFROCENTRICITY ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AGENCY IN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

6.1 Introduction

In Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, I discussed two cardinal elements of Afrocentricity, history and culture, and their significance in the reinterpretation of an Afrocentric development paradigm. Only European-North American history and culture informed the Truman development paradigm in the aftermath of World War II, as discussed in Chapter 3, and this model was a dismal failure in Africa, because it was founded on false universalized predictions grounded on modernization theory, which further deracinated Africans from their history and culture. The current chapter aims to discuss the role of African *agency* as the third cardinal aspect of Afrocentricity used in this study to re-imagine an Afrocentric development trajectory. The chapter also aims to examine Pan-Africanism and African nationalism as two important ideological frameworks, and as expressions of African agency to combat European domination. The chapter argues that the future of Africa can only be attained when Africans themselves act in their own best interests. Therefore, Africans must think, plan, implement and be the beneficiaries of their own development plans. They may not be reduced to puppets of the European games of conquest, but should take charge of their own lives and map out their own futures.

It is important to note that the advent of modernity, which began in the late 15th century, ushered in European domination over Africa and dislocated Africans from their historical and cultural patterns of life, and converted Africans into European subjects.

The domination of Africans from that time onwards set in motion the processes for Africa's dismemberment and loss of its own agency. As I have highlighted in Chapter 4, Africa was stripped of ownership of its contributions to world civilization and came to be considered a place occupied by sub-human savages without a history or culture. This was part of the European strategy to denigrate Africans and to elevate the European human experience as the superior model for all. Thus, the invention of racism from the 15th century onwards became a strategy and a device to classify human beings in terms of their descriptive physical qualities and create hierarchies, placing Africans in the lowest echelons of humanity. This racist fallacy was then used to justify colonial invasion of Africa and the overthrow of African kings, making them and their people obedient subjects. It is for this reason that Asante (2007) argues that European domination contributed to a denial of African agency, since Africans were no longer allowed to govern themselves, but were treated as servants for colonial masters.

Mazrui (2005:77) explains that European colonialism in Africa played havoc with African memory, by planting false memories, and inducing amnesia and nostalgia, in particular, through the colonial education system. The European colonial mission dismembered the *physical* environment of Africa to extract mineral resources for use by Europe as planned during the Berlin Conference of 1884/85. It also negatively affected the psychological dimension of African people. To paint colonization as a noble undertaking to salve Europeans' conscience and colour their perceptions, the colonial endeavour required justification. This included the appropriation of the African people's bodies and minds, subjecting them to European interests through the imposition of a Eurocentric education system (Moloi, 2018).

Similarly, the modernization theory of the 1950s, which represented a continuation of the European supremacist civilizational and enlightenment movement, depicted non-Western societies, Africa in particular, as backward and pre-historic. The only means by which these societies could be developed, according to Europe and North America, was a (forceful) injection of Western values and culture (Lerner, 1958). Thus, from the parochial European perspective, Africa had not achieved any development on its own, and it allegedly remained stagnant because of primitive cultural traditions. European scholars portrayed Africa as a continent of despotic civilizations with no legacy of the kinds of democratic principles that are enshrined in the West's self-image.

Mazama (2014:1) lists four key assumptions that inform the Eurocentric ideological framework, and which have played a strongly negative role as far as African people are concerned. First, it is assumed that all human beings evolve along the same linear pattern. Second, it is tacitly assumed that the European experience is universal. Third, Europeans are assumed to be superior. Fourth, “others” are defined by their experiences with Europeans. This implies that the essence of European ideological framework rests, among other things, on a flawed belief in the superiority and universality of the European experience to the exclusion of others.

Afrocentricity as an emerging contrasting and combative paradigm against European domination seeks to reassert the centrality of Africans within their own historical and cultural experiences, and it emphasises the significance for Africans of becoming their own agents in pursuit of their own future. This paradigm stresses that Africa before the arrival of Europeans had its own complex civilizations, including the kind that Europeans regard as valid and important – civilizations that produce great kings,

impressive empires, and elaborate technological skills (Asante and Abarry, 1996; Mazrui, 2005:77).

This chapter therefore seeks to advance an argument that the future of African people must remain unattainable unless Africans themselves retell their own tales and reframe their projections of what their future entails within their own history, culture and agency. For this reason, any serious development agenda aimed at contributing to African resurgence must be informed by African agency, which must enable Africans to think from where they stand. Asante (2014: ix) maintains that we Africans “are not yet free when in the imagination of some of our young people we are still hoping to discover that Africa is not in our past”. Therefore, an African development discourse should be sensitive to cultural dynamics and history, and must be contextualized to include an African axiology, aesthetics, cosmology and epistemology. African development processes can only be seen as relevant if they are initiated as endogenous processes that affirm African people’s wishes and are driven by them as subjects and not objects of European development agendas (such as that expressed in the post-World War II development paradigm).

The remainder of the current chapter is sub-divided into three more sections and a conclusion. It first discusses the concept of African agency for the advancement of African development interests. Then it considers the Truman development paradigm, agency and development in Africa to reveal the flaws of European-North American ideas of development disguised as the “saving” mission for Africa. Next, the chapter discusses Afrocentricity, agency and development in Africa as a relevant redemptive approach towards the liberation of African conceptions of development. The chapter

specifically focuses on Pan-Africanism and African nationalism as decolonial ideological expressions of Africans' own agency to counter European hegemony.

6.2 Defining the concept of African agency

Asante (2007:40) defines “an agent” as “a human being who is capable of acting independently in his or her own best interest”. Agency refers to the ability to provide the psychological and cultural resources necessary to advance human freedom. The long history of European domination over Africa that began in the 15th century rendered Africans as incapable people and it contributed to the removal of African agency. Within the context of Afrocentricity as a paradigm of African renaissance, the key challenge is the restoration of African people to their own history and culture to enable them to become their own agents in the interpretation of their own lived experiences. Asante (2007:41) further argues that “when agency does not exist or is disempowered we have the condition of marginality, and the worst form of marginality is to be marginal within your own story”. Thus, white racial domination implies more than marginalization: it also means the obliteration of the presence, meaning, activities, or the image of the African people (Asante, 2007). Colonial domination has resulted in a loss of African ontological density, relegating Africans to the periphery of the European experience.

Mazama (2001:388) believes that because of colonial domination “Africans became dislocated, and lost sight of themselves in the midst of European decadence and madness, it became increasingly difficult for them to orient their lives in a positive and constructive manner”. The absence of an African-informed political consciousness means that Africans' agency continues to be grounded on un-African grounds, on foreign ones. The trajectory is self-annihilation as long as, in the aftermath of

colonization, we by-pass ourselves as we speak and act to serve the interests of others. For this reason, the restoration of active African agency demands that Africans be able to find a strong place to stand, in terms of their intellectual and cultural position. Africans must therefore relocate to their own cultural and historical terms as a standpoint from which they can engage with the world as free agents (Asante, 2007:15). The re-development of African societies requires Africans to take charge of their own lives, shake off domination, and map out their own development path within the ideal of Pan-Africanism. Asante (2018:10) warns:

Africans cannot enter their imaginary future on the wagons of victimhood, hounded by the dogs of marginality, with their minds centered only on their colonial past. The idea of African development future not informed by African history, culture and agency only serves to sustain the perpetuity of the colonial culture of domination and African marginalization.

Mazama (2001:388) therefore maintains that the challenge facing Africans is monumental, because it rests on their ability systematically to displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling and so forth and consciously replace them with ways that are germane to their own African cultural experience. The imposition of Europe under the guise of objectivity and universalism is part of a narrative of white superiority, a racial mythology, based on the rather strange belief on the parts of whites that they are superior to Africans, allegedly giving them a right to establish and maintain a hierarchy over blacks by force of arms or customs or laws or habits (Asante, 2007:136). The moral aesthetics of Afrocentricity as a paradigm advancing African renaissance is then to resituate Africans in the centre of African narratives of place, time, and space. Thus, Afrocentricity demonstrates that the dislocation of Africans from the centre of their own history is a form of intellectual and cultural terrorism, constantly attacking Africans' concept of self and idea of time (Asante, 2014).

From 1945, in the aftermath of World War II, Africans and other colonized peoples increasingly demanded that development be made one of the important human rights. Historically, the Bandung Conference of 1955 was the turning point. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:5) states that the spirit of decolonization, South-South solidarity and a principle of non-alignment informed this conference. The conference laid the foundation for the struggle to decolonize and democratize international society so as to attain equitable representation in global decision-making bodies. It therefore called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:3), this made sense in a global terrain in which it was known that a combination of enslavement, colonization, apartheid and neo-colonialism actively denied development to those regions of the world that experienced colonial difference. While the conference was a great initiative in the spirit of collaboration among ex-colonized nations, the critical thing for Africa was to find its own voice, rooted in the vision of Pan-Africanism and African nationalism.

The development future of Africa means that Africans themselves must not merely exist as dependent beneficiaries of exogenous development projects and programmes. The call has increasingly been for Africans to become active participants in the ideation, planning and implementation of their dreams. It is, after all, impossible to think of the future of Africa if Africans themselves no longer exist. African agency therefore denotes active participation by people of African descent in all spheres of life, be it political, social, economic or cultural – they must be active in asserting their presence and taking charge to define their own future(s). In relation to development, active agency thus implies that Africans must resist Eurocentric thinking and replace it with their own strategies for success. In this regard, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017: 1) points out that African development, in the words of Marcus Garvey, means “a constant and

consistent African search for self-improvement". It is also as defined by Julius Nyerere to mean "political mobilization of people for attaining their own objectives" and not the objectives set by others (quoted in Estera, 1996:7). Although it is important for Africa to create collaborative interventions within the bigger Global South, the main call is for Africans themselves to rely on their own cultural traditions as a base from which to engage the world.

The main problem with development theory to date is its deliberate omission of African voices in shaping development discourse. This is a major cause of the paternalistic tendencies which have projected Eurocentric ideas as superior to others. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:48) argues that Development Studies in Africa has remained deeply intercalated within the Euro-American modernist and civilizing mission. Thus, development remains a heuristic device used in the domination of Africans; as a product of global imperial designs it serves the agenda of maintaining imbalances in decision-making, thus, chaining Africans to preconceived ideologies without any hope to escape. Therefore, African victory against epistemic and physical domination by Europe and the United States requires Africans to take charge by first relocating to their own terms of reference; this means shifting the location of reasoning from the Global North to Africa. This would enable Africans to interrogate all concepts rooted in the Global North's (read Eurocentric) cultural ethos, such as democracy, development, progress and the nation-state, which have been projected as that which the continent requires in order to advance.

Mazama (2001:399) emphasises that "a people's worldview determines what constitutes a problem for them and how they solve problems". Afrocentricity demands that the scholars of Africa must reflect on the ontology, cosmology, axiology, and

aesthetics of African people, and that they must be centred in their own experiences to step away from domination by others.

6.3 Problematic agency and African development impasse

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I discussed the epistemological crisis affecting the conception of development as an ideology, and as a field of study and practice in Africa. I showed that the discourse of development is still trapped within the Euro-North American mission of maintaining conquest over the Global South, and Africa in particular. For this reason, the post-World War II development vision outlined through the Point Four programme of Harry Truman in 1949 has become irrelevant to the advancement of the African continent (if it ever was relevant). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) concedes that this version of development was entangled within a complex and long history mediated by the logics of coloniality, informed by oppression and exploitation of non-Western countries in general, and Africa in particular. This idea of development was informed by the historical experiences of a few Western countries and their culture, and was driven by their own agents.

The European agents in the form of development experts, administrators, including academics such as historians, sociologists and anthropologists, facilitated the European colonial conquest mission, disguised as an emancipatory endeavour. For this reason, they could not act as African agents serving the best interests of the African continent and its people. To this effect, the European-conceptualized notion of development, although it was relevant for Europeans, is a straightjacket when it is imposed, ostensibly to “guide” an African development trajectory.

Adedeji (2002:4) suggests that the paradigm of development guided by Truman’s interventionist development propaganda was backed by what Adedeji terms the

development merchant system, in turn driven by the Bretton Woods Institutions, as the agents that finance the implementation of this exogenous development agenda (Adedeji, 2002:4). Therien (1999:723-742) claims that the development management system exists as a consortium comprised of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, various international non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations. These agents have long worked together to advance the Bretton Woods paradigm of development as part of the continuation of the hegemonic Truman version of developmentalism.

According to Stewart (2016),

these organizations were guided by the neoliberal economic agenda. The neoliberal ideas that underpinned these organizations included the broad endorsement of the project of globalization; giving corporate business a prominent role in both policy-making and in proposed models of development governance and growth, believing that the institutions of global governance themselves are the key creative actors in the facilitation of development and growth.

This collection of ideas has sometimes been labelled “the Washington Consensus” (Taylor, 1997). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that such institutions would act as agents advancing African development interests, since they are inclined towards serving the neo-colonial agenda of Western nations.

In sum then, as P. W. Preston (cited in Hettne, 1995) also suggests, development thinking since the mid-1940s has been based on three main pillars: economic growth, state planning and international aid (Hettne, 1995:36). This idea of development has precipitated and then perpetuated the neocolonial capture of African states even in the post-independence era to sustain Western domination. Suffice it to conclude that the idea of European development was driven by Eurocentric knowledge, historical experiences, culture and agency, and was not designed to serve African interests. Thus, the African states remained located in the lowest level of the capitalistic global

structures and were merely used for raw material and cheap labour to support the exogenous colonial agenda of the Western nations.

As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:339) has shown, the long-term consequences of the Berlin Scramble 1884/85 was the submerging of the African people within the territorial boundaries created by Europeans. This destabilized Africa's traditional governance systems and rendered Africans ineffective agents in their defence against colonial brutality. African kingdoms were replaced with the foreign notion of the modern nation-state, based on a European ethos and facilitating European business interests in the wake of the Berlin Scramble.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:337) argues that the construct of the modern nation-state applied to Africa at the Berlin Conference can be traced back much further, to the year 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia was signed at the end of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Europe. The Westphalian Peace Treaty signalled the institutionalization and norming of a modern world order as a juridical political formation (Hardt and Negri, 2000). While the European states recognized each other's sovereignty, they did not recognize non-European people's sovereignty, or, as the Berlin Scramble showed, the humanity of non-Europeans, particularly of African people, or their political formations. Therefore, even in the post-independence era, the political attempts of African leaders to exercise their political agency had to be made within colonially created boundaries. The post-independence nation-states were the direct products of the Berlin Conference's mapping of African territory; they were not designed by Africans for Africans, but were imposed within the logic of a colonial paradigm of difference. I discuss this point in detail in Section 6.4.2, where I address

the challenges of African nationalism as the ideological framework that guides the expression of African agency.

6.4 Afrocentricity, agency and development in Africa

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I discussed Afrocentricity at length as a new perspective on existence that privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture, trans-continently and trans-generationally. In the words of Mazama (2001:387): “[S]ince the past two decades Afrocentricity became a formidable pan-African ideology that introduced fundamental changes in the way African people interpret their reality.” Its ability to theorize and articulate the disturbing conditions of African people is the main reason for its appeal intellectually. Moreover, the remedy that Afrocentricity suggests – centralising African realities and calling for Africans to relocate to their own centre – helps in building an African victorious consciousness as a mechanism to overthrow domination. For Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:89),

Afrocentricity remained an alternative paradigm autonomous from ethnocentric Eurocentrism, and as a truly liberating framework for the recognition of the African philosophical and scientific contribution to civilization, and an approach to re-centering on an African ethics of human existence that is self-determined and self-defined.

Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:89) further notes

[t]hat there is no liberation for a materially and mentally colonized people of Africa unless they will be able to exist outside the prison box of the European paradigm. Afrocentricity as a theory advancing the significance of African agency in all matters affecting an African life recuperates the classical African historical past and the Kemetic philosophical thought as the fundamental sites of African liberation.

Afrocentricity then offers the methodological and epistemological potential to embrace the ontological, cosmological, and functional aspects of African life and experience as a means to overcoming European domination.

Thus, if Africans do not relocate to their own terms of reference, as is suggested by Afrocentricity, they will remain trapped in an epistemological prison that thwarts their own understanding of the world, and will have nothing to contribute to the world, being trapped in a dehumanising acceptance of the darker version of modernity. The fundamental call made by Afrocentric scholars is the call for an epistemological reclamation grounded on the lived experiences of the African people, which paves a path for their re-emergence against almost more than five hundred years of European domination (Asante, 2007; Mazama, 2003). Mazama reminds us that

one of the consequences of the denial of African agency has been the conspicuous absence of African people in the narration of history. Their presence became invisibilised even to themselves since their existence was denied; thus, Africans have been negated in the system that privileges white racial domination. (Mazama, 2014:9)

Monteiro-Ferreira (2014:71) agrees that the colonial and imperialist powers, European and American, and their extensions on the African continent are dependent on the system of racism, and can only be overridden through structural changes whose source has to be identified with African material, spiritual and cosmological realities. Omari (1970:193) also concedes that it is only through an Afrocentric cosmological reclamation that the free agency and worth of African people in their own business will be restored, as it pertains to the African traditional values of harmony, justice, equality, and diligence. Along similar lines, Article 4 of *Agenda 2063*, published by the African Union Commission (2015:1), states the following vision: “We rededicate ourselves to the enduring Pan African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its ‘own citizens’ and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.”

This affirms the view expressed by Afrocentricity that “unless Africans themselves become their own agents in outlining the vision of development and participate in its

implementation they will remain entrapped within the prison box of colonial domination” (Asante, 2007:66). This construct adjustment will lead Africans to the renaissance that is necessary in Africa, and thus in African Studies and Development Studies, and will assist in Africa’s own achievement of a political, cultural, economic, and social renaissance.

In the two subsections below, I examine two more ideological frameworks which have guided and framed the expression of African agency to challenge European domination over Africans, namely Pan-Africanism and African nationalism.

6.4.1 Pan-Africanism

Asante (2014:95) offers Pan-Africanism grounded on Afrocentricity as the best defence of African people and their resources, and it is an expression of a much-needed agency to overthrow the European-North American hegemony. Asante believes that the Pan-African congresses, which began in the 19th century, were meant to establish the framework for African unity. Asante’s (2007:2) definition of Afrocentricity therefore includes the fact that it is a Pan-African intellectual perspective that privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture trans-continentially and trans-generationally, to include Africans in Africa, African-Americans and others in the African diaspora for the advancement of African liberation. Afrocentricity as a pan-African ideology and intellectual *djed* believes that the authentic call for Pan-African unity must be grounded on an understanding of African history, culture and with Africans as their own agents of change, and in particular, it must be informed by African epistemology. Therefore, Pan-Africanism literally connotes an *all-African* movement that embraces the ideology of liberation for continental and

diasporic Africans in every political, economic and cultural sphere (Ghelawdewos, 2014:1).

According to Legum (1965:14), the Pan-African ideology and movement, like Afrocentricity, began not in the homeland of Africa but in the diaspora – to be specific in the Caribbean and the United States of America. At the base of the formation of this movement lies deep feelings of dispossession, oppression, persecution and rejection suffered by African people worldwide. It was through the Pan-African Congresses that Africans from the rest of the world spoke the truth directly to the colonial powers and revealed the hypocrisies, conceits, and double standards within the modern world system and global orders. The Pan-African Congresses' initiatives became an avenue to make an appeal to the nations of the world “to protect the Africans from depredations of the European empire builders” (Padmore, 1972:96).

Several great historical incidents fuelled the Pan-African movement. The first was the Haitian Revolution, first led by Boukman in 1791 and later by Toussaint L'Overture. It culminated in the founding of the first Black Republic in the Western hemisphere in 1804 (Ghelawdewos, 2014:2; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:340). Another great historical event that raised the political consciousness and confidence of Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, and that added fuel to Pan-Africanism, was the resounding victory of Ethiopia over Italy in the battle of Adwa in 1896 (Ghelawdewos, 2014; Legum, 1965). Repatriation became a manifestation of early Pan-Africanism in the last quarter of the 17th century and the first decade of the 19th century, but race relations became another dimension to propel Pan-African resistance.

in 1897, W.E.B. Du Bois started to talk about the need for the pan-Negro movement (Legum, 1965:24). The first Pan-African congress was held in London in 1900, led and

sponsored by the Trinidadian barrister Henry Sylvester Williams, who is credited with coining the concept of Pan-Africanism (Legum, 1965). Du Bois became a part of this conference. It was during this congress that Du Bois spoke his famous prophetic lines: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line – the relations of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (quoted in Legum, 1965:25). Although there were many important figures in the early stages of the growth of Pan-African ideas, the two most dominant political figures became W.E.B Du Bois and Marcus Garvey (Ghelawdewos, 2014; Legum, 1965). Asante (2014:95) maintains that the Pan-Africanists during the first conference put their hands together in the *harambee* spirit to demand the liberation of Africans from colonial oppression.

The second Pan-African congress, the first under Du Bois’s leadership, was held contemporaneously with the Peace Conference in Paris 1919 and was attended by 57 delegates (Legum, 1965:28). The ill-treatment of Africans in the Congo Free State of King Leopold II and the lack of recognition of Africans who participated in World War I (1914-1918) provoked Du Bois to organize the second Pan-African congress (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:340). Du Bois wanted the European powers to adopt a Charter for Human Rights for Africans as a reward for the sacrifices they had made during World War I, fighting for the Allies (Adejumobi, 2001).

The third Pan-African congress was held in London and Brussels in 1921, followed by the fourth, which also held sessions in London and Lisbon in 1923 (Legum, 1965). The fifth Pan-African congress, the last of the series of congresses directly led by Du Bois, was held in New York in 1927. The sixth Pan-African congress was held in 1945 in Manchester in Britain, and it brought together Pan-Africanists from the diaspora and

Africa. The Africans who attended include Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, Wallace Johnson from Sierra Leone, Peter Abrahams from South Africa and Marko Hlubi, representing the African National Congress (Legum, 1965:31-32).

Three significant aspects of Pan-Africanism could be identified throughout these meetings: Pan-Africanism as an avenue for waging the anti-colonial struggle; Pan-Africanism as a protest against Euro-American racism against black people in the diaspora and on the African continent; and Pan-Africanism as a quest for African unity (Esedebe, 1970). Legum (1965:38) highlights that the Pan-African political movement came home to the African continent in 1958, led by Kwame Nkrumah, but its cultural wing remained in the diaspora.

The All-Africa People's Conference of 1958 became the precursor to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, which in its turn became a precursor for the African Union in 2002. Therefore, the OAU and later the African Union remain critical vehicles in advancing African agency within the continent to oppose European domination. The journey has not been easy, but these structures remain critical in providing an avenue for African voices to be heard.

However, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:341), Pan-Africanism as an expression of African agency paradoxically continues to be in conflict with African nationalism, as some Africans remain reluctant to sacrifice territorial nationalism for the greater goal of Pan-African unity. Nkrumah coined the slogan of seeking a political kingdom as the first step in decolonization, and by 1965 already articulated the problem of "neo-colonialism", which makes it difficult for African leaders to translate their hard-won political decolonization into a desperately needed economic decolonization (Nkrumah,

1965). Nkrumah published *Africa Must Unite* in 1963 when he realized the key problems with attaining the ideal of a political kingdom.

The main challenge that faces African leaders is how to forge a pan-ethnic national unity to overcome the possibility of internal fragmentation of the newly independent states. This challenge has been expressed through nation-building and state-making processes. Nkrumah (1963:173) believes that the greatest danger facing Africa is neo-colonialism, and that its major instrument is balkanization. Balkanization describes the breaking up of Africa into small and weak states, which makes it difficult to sustain continental and nation-state unity. For this reason, Asante's Afrocentricity argues that the quest for Pan-Africanism must not be merely symbolic, but must also be deepened within the philosophical soil of African culture as a resource (Asante, 2018). To be specific, Asante (2007:67) argues that the "classical past must be viewed as a resource for an African renaissance". In particular, Asante emphasises that "the new revolutionary moment in which African people interrogate and locate within their own history the values, concepts, and ideals that are essential for a reinvigorated society can be advanced by seriously engaging the Nile Valley civilizations". Without this, there can be no authentic African renaissance, nor any useful future for Africa.

6.4.2 African nationalism

African nationalism, like Pan-Africanism, became an ideological framework used by African leaders to express their own agency to rebuild dismembered African communities after independence. While African nationalism was a necessary call, it remains important to scrutinize the impact of coloniality in the conceptions of these concepts lest we use them without careful attention to how they have been hijacked by modern discourses. Just as Mazama (2001:387) warns us that "our failure to

recognize the roots of such ideas in the European cultural ethos has led us, willingly or unwillingly, to agree to footnote status in the white man's book". Epistemological colonization of political terms under modernity also meant that African leaders in the post-independence era fell into the trap of legitimizing European-created borders in Africa. Asante (2014:86) affirms this point by stating that

...[t]he boundaries of nation-states established by Europe are unstable and serve to exacerbate inadequate communication, ethnocentric worldviews, poor interstate transportation, marginal trade with neighbours, lack of crop diversity, overemphasis on export crops to maintain connection to former colonial powers, and lack of regional planning authorities.

Nationalism can be defined as an ideological movement, for the attainment of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, with the aim of becoming a nation (Smith, 1971). For this reason, Breuilly (1993:2) defines nationalism as a *political movement seeking to exercise state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments*, which are the existence of a nation, the importance of the interest of this nation, or that the nation must be independent with the attainment of political sovereignty. According to Gunn (2018:2989), the concept of nationalism flourished in Europe, especially Western Europe, particularly during the 19th century, when sovereign states developed very strong feelings about nationality. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:342) argues that "a balanced assessment of the character of African nationalism is to depict it as both a derivative discourse as well as a new creation of the African people as they responded to colonialism". Along similar lines, Chatterjee (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:341) suggests that "while nationalism in Africa has been significant in the re-organization of African societies to resist colonialism, it remains a 'plagiaristic discourse' that was entangled with colonialism".

Africans have had three options in their pursuit of nationalistic discourse: "reproducing pre-colonial nationalistic formations; embracing existing colonial states; or re-creating

a new pan-African political formation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:342). On the whole, African leaders in the post-independence era settled for the production of postcolonial nation-states grounded on the modernist paradigm.

African conceptions of nationalism could not escape the immanent logic of colonialism, as they were shaped by the colonizers’ models. Hence, newly appointed or elected African leaders legitimized the colonial borders created by the imperialists, and failed to reconstitute Africa from their own newly designed framework: African agency remained trapped in the very paradigm these leaders sought to overthrow. In publishing *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980), Asante’s intention was to give African people the sense that we are capable, that we have our own agency, to operate in our own best interests. For the Pan-African vision to become a reality, African leaders must express their willingness and have the courage to work with their citizens to remap African borders in the ways that can best serve their interests.

Smith (1971:74) points out that while colonialism brought modernization to Africa, it also destroyed traditional structures and established a new type of social class constituted by the intelligentsia, a bourgeoisie and a small working class who are an interest group, and the members have in common a finance and an economic system similar that in the colonial period. What was at play was the manifestation of a colonized imagination and a constrained agency.

This leads to the conclusion that, although Africans have deployed Pan-Africanism and African nationalism as strategies to express their own agency in the fight against European domination, such an agency remains entrapped in the logic of imperialization. African decolonization efforts must therefore be deepened to deal with profound cultural, psychological and epistemological dimensions of colonialism to

overthrow European domination. For this reason, Afrocentricity encourages Africans to

step outside of the European thinking frames and its models and interpretation of reality to generate new acquisition of knowledge. Afrocentricity challenges the orientation to history foreign to the history of the African subject; it demands an epistemological location that places an African inside the African experience framed by African codes, symbols, motifs, myths that creates an African sense of being in the world arena. (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014:2)

Thus, Pan-Africanism and African nationalism, as far as the argument in this thesis is concerned, must be rooted within Afrocentricity as a paradigm, and must seek to reclaim the centrality of Africans in the narrative of their own lives, not to live as the surrogates of a European cultural ethos. It is important, as Asante (1992:23) has suggested, to ensure that “their agency is framed within the African cosmological, epistemological, axiological and aesthetic issues”. For this reason, the central argument advanced by this thesis is that the discourse of development in Africa must be decolonized from its entrapment within the Euro-North American-centric genealogy and epistemically reoriented within the Afrocentric paradigm to overthrow European hegemony.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the significance of African agency in pursuit of an Afrocentric development paradigm. The chapter highlights the flaws of a European development agenda driven by European agents in pursuit of the conquest mission over Africa, even in the post-independence era. The chapter has also discussed how the African renaissance spirit has continued to enable Africans to design counter-hegemonic development initiatives guided through the ideologies grounded on Pan-Africanism and African nationalism as an expression of African agency. To this day,

African leaders continue to make efforts to fight neocolonialism, which has made it difficult for them to forge any real unity among themselves and has limited their ability to take control of their continent and pave a path for Africa's development. Afrocentricity as a revolutionary paradigm guiding this thesis advances the view that Africans need to relocate to their own terms to counter the manoeuvrings of European powers and the United States aimed at delaying the continent from attaining its development vision. Africa's development future is only attainable if Africans themselves act as their own agents in their self-defined development vision. The major challenge is therefore to challenge Africans to ground their struggle for development within African history, culture and agency as a way forward. African leaders must take lessons from the successes they have achieved since the early Pan-African movement and deepen their commitment to enforce their dreams to achieve their goals.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the concluding remarks for this thesis and the summary of the main points covered in each chapter, from Chapter 1 through to Chapter 6 of this thesis. Lastly, the chapter provides concluding remarks and recommendations and provides reflections on the future research.

7.2 Summary of the key points covered per chapter

Chapter 1: Research design

This chapter provided the general introduction and background to this thesis by discussing the problem statement, the research objectives and the key research questions emanating from those objectives, providing an outline of the theoretical framework for the thesis, the methodology, and the justification for the importance of this study. Lastly, it discussed the scope, limitations of this study and ethical concerns surrounding the study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework: Afrocentricity

This chapter laid the theoretical foundation for this thesis by providing a thorough discussion of the historical development of Afrocentricity as a paradigm, theory and methodology. The chapter provided answers to the questions of why, when, and where, and who the key protagonists behind the emergence of Afrocentricity are, and explicated its relevance for rethinking the discourse of development in Africa. The

chapter began the discussion by providing the definition of Afrocentricity, followed by considerations of its historical roots, leitmotifs, critics, responses to its critics and lastly, a discussion on Afrocentricity's approach to development. In general, this chapter provided a firm theoretical foundation which informs the entirety of this study for the critique of development discourses and practices in Africa.

Chapter 3: Critique of Eurocentrism and a mapping of African development initiatives

This chapter problematized the Eurocentric conception of development in Africa as an academic discourse, ideology, and practice rooted in the post-World War II Truman paradigm. Informed by Afrocentricity's critique of Eurocentrism, this chapter favoured a historical and political approach in which development came to be understood as a broad process of re-membering a formerly "dismembered" people of Africa, and as a highly contestable and contested idea, caught up in the terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Chapter 4: Afrocentricity on the significance of African history for development

This chapter discussed the significance of history as one of the cardinal units of analysis in Afrocentricity, which discredits Eurocentric historiography in its analysis of African development. For Afrocentricity, unless Africans retell their own narrative or genealogy, instead of one informed by a Eurocentric canon of thought, the discourse of development in Africa will remain elusive and misunderstood. The idea of an Afrocentric development paradigm must be anchored in a people's history, culture and assertion of their own agency. Throughout its unfolding as a theory, Afrocentricity has consistently and systematically rewritten African history as a contribution to enrich the understanding of African development itself, and as part of a broader agenda of

restoring African humanity. The overall objective of an Afrocentric historicism is to discover Africa's contributions to human civilization as a launch pad for African self-discovery, as opposed to the current habit in Africa of always seeking to adjust to European games of conquest. Thus, in terms of Afrocentricity, an understanding of the correct record of Africa's historical trajectory becomes a pre-requisite for the re-conceptualisation of an Afrocentric development paradigm.

Chapter 5: Afrocentricity on the significance of culture in the conceptualization of African development

This chapter discussed the significance of culture as a second cardinal element of Afrocentricity in this thesis to interrogate the negative impact of Eurocentric culture on Africa's efforts to re-conceptualise its development trajectory. The chapter argued that the post-World War II Truman development paradigm was infused with European culture, which has served to further dislocate African people, forcing them to think of development in European terms. The chapter argued that a re-imagination of African development must be informed by African culture to remain relevant in Africa and to debunk a Eurocentric worldview

Chapter 6: Afrocentricity on the significance of agency in development in Africa

This chapter discussed the role of African agency as the third cardinal element of Afrocentricity in this thesis for the re-imagination of an Afrocentric development paradigm. The chapter examined Pan-Africanism and African nationalism, not only as two important ideological frameworks, but as expressions of African agency to combat European agency and its hegemonic agenda. The chapter argued that the future of African development can only be genuine when Africans themselves act in their own best interest.

7.3 Discussion and recommendations

The thesis was guided by Afrocentricity as a theoretical paradigm conceptualized by its leading theorist Molefi Kete Asante and the Temple University Circle of scholars. These scholars believe that the liberation of Africa and Africans on the continent and in the diaspora requires an unmasking of all epistemic colonization of the terms which inform the framework within which development debates take place. They argue that unless Africans relocate epistemically to their own terms, grounded on their own understanding of historical and cultural experiences, and asserting their own agency, framed by cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic issues, they will remain the objects of Western development experimentation and subjugation.

Thus, the proposition made by Afrocentricity is that Social Sciences Studies in general, and Development Studies in particular, must be re-examined anew from an African intellectual standpoint as a way to liberate Africans from colonial bondage. In his own words, Asante (2015:1) emphasises that “African resurgence will never take place until Africans champion a renaissance grounded in a new paradigm of dramatic narratives of victory”.

As a result of Eurocentric epistemic injustices, many analyses of development have been conceptually incapable of addressing the root causes of critical development problems in non-Western societies.

Therefore, to escape from this impasse, African scholars must shift the geography of analysis to reflect on the historical journey that Africans have travelled. Asante (2007:67) argues that the understanding of Africa should not begin with the European invasion of Africa, rather, the entire history of Africa beginning with the Kemetic civilization along the Nile Valley would offer a fairer assessment of the continent and

its people. Africans must pursue in the most determined manner the practice of their renaissance, that is, the rebirth of culture, philosophy, traditions, and values of the continent, not in some antiquated form, but in the spirit of creative responses to contemporary times (Asante, 2007:68). What African development discourses need is to foster a sensitivity to the African local context, which will assist in debunking the European hegemony. Development debates should not be formed via the direct transplantation of preconceived approaches; instead, they should be reconsidered in terms of African particular sociocultural, political, economic and environmental conditions.

Lastly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:64) cautions us that neoliberal ideas have gradually managed to neutralize politics, resulting in a mind-set that is dismissive of any radical thinking, or any questioning of the current status quo privileging the West. Such thinking is often dismissed as sentimental, nostalgic, anti-systemic and, at worst, as terrorism. The West has sought to blame the African development impasse on African leaders themselves, accusing them of not implementing their prescriptions, as a way to exonerate themselves of the outcomes of their imperial global designs. The critical challenge facing African leaders and scholars is to deepen decolonisation by demanding that Africans decolonize fully from the West – politically, economically, psychologically, spiritually, and most importantly, epistemically, and take their future into their own hands.

7.4 Future research interventions

Some of the future areas of study which I consider relevant in the pursuit to deepen the African quest for decolonisation include the following:

- The study of Kemetic civilisation and its significance for modern African development trajectory will strengthen the foundation of an Afrocentric epistemology in the remapping of African futures.
- The study of Kawaiida as a communitarian cultural philosophy for the pursuit of an African renaissance, based on the ideas of Maulana Karenga (2002, 2006) as one of the leading scholars in the study of ancient Kemetic culture, *maat* and ancient Egyptian languages, is pivotal in an understanding of the African resurgence.
- Afrofuturism and the significance of asserting African agency are crucial areas of study. Afrofuturism is now emerging as the most creative avenue for Africans to rethink their lives: it has become a catalyst for the imagination to take flight. It is an all-enveloping mythology combining black narratives across time and space, and it combines elements of science fiction, history, fantasy, film and music to address black struggles in the past, the present and in future society at large. Thus, it can serve as a platform to catapult our hopes, dreams and visions as African people into a shared future.

To quote a Sesotho proverb,
Kopano ke Matla (Unity is the Power)
as we push the Afrocentric agenda
in our time.

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