

THABO MBEKI: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

by

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DECLARATION

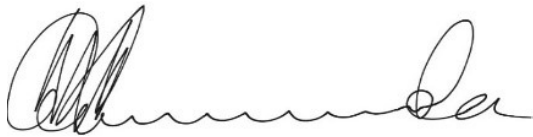
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ABSTRACT

Generally, this study contributes toward efforts to privilege African thinkers and scholars who have been and continue to be the victim of epistemic closure and silencing by Western (Euro-North American) scholarship and epistemic practice. This is framed through the intellectual biography of Thabo Mbeki in order to bring to the fore the evidence that could be used to advance this argument. The engagement with Mbeki's intellectual thought and ideas is approached from four different entry points and perspectives. Firstly, this study traces and locates the historical and intellectual context of Mbeki within the black intellectual tradition finding its roots in the New Africa Movement (1862-1960) of the nineteenth century, consisting of religious leaders, teachers, writers, and graduates who used the acquisition of modern colonial education to identify themselves as New Africans (specifically New African intellectuals). Secondly, it provides that Mbeki's intellectual thought is a product of the teachings and examples of the liberation movement's leaders within the ANC, an organisation steeped in rich intellectual tradition and thought leadership. Third is the travel of the world which exposed Mbeki to the Western education and liberal political tradition in Britain, the communist training and Marxist-Lenin political thought in the Soviet Union, as well as African political thought acquired during the period spent in Africa. Finally, this includes a critical analysis of Mbeki's thoughts and perspectives on politics, ideas, and power, as the three thematic areas of this study in order to understand the thrust of Mbeki's intellectual thought. Read together, these aspects not only contextualise and position Mbeki as an intellectual that he is, but they also reflect his intellectual dimensions and contribution to the body of knowledge. It should be noted that the intellectual thought of Mbeki and his political ideas can be convincing and not convincing depending on the position from which the truth is being looked at from. In the main, this study seeks to position, privilege, and defend Mbeki as a political intellectual that he is.

Keywords: Thabo Mbeki; Intellectual Biography; New Africa Movement; Black Intellectual Tradition; ANC, Traveling Theory; Tri-Continental Travel; Politics; Ideas; Power

DEDICATION

Rachel and Denga Ndou

(Wife and Daughter)

Boys Town Kagiso in Randfontein

(I joined the organisation as a street-kid in 1998. I am forever grateful for five years of shelter, education, and opportunity to rebuild my life)

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CHAPTER ONE

Setting the context of the study

General introduction

This thesis comprises four main parts that bring to the fore the intellectual contribution and ideas of Thabo Mbeki. Part One positions Mbeki as an intellectual, and in particular, a political intellectual. This thesis is framed not in biographical terms, since the literature is permeated with that, but through critical intellectual engagement. The genre of intellectual biography is deployed to grapple with Mbeki's thoughts and ideas. Mbeki has made a critical contribution to African politics through his thought leadership and practice. His political ideas are widely debated and even set the agenda in academic and public circles. Mbeki was, as acknowledged by McKaiser (2010:189), "a very cerebral president who buried his deepest thoughts in the written and spoken word". Mporu (2017a:53) notes, "Mbeki was a voracious reader," similar to his father Govan Mbeki, "who studied and read deeply in world literature and classical thought" (Mporu 2017a:59-60). Asante (2018:214) establishes Mbeki as a "distinguished African intellectual and politician". This study is an intellectual biography insofar as it concerns a political thinker's thoughts and ideas. Because this is an intellectual biography, this study does not engage with the private persona or personal life of the subject, but only the public persona of the subject shall be explored.

Part Two locates the intellectual corpus of Mbeki within a South African black intellectual tradition that dates back to the New Africa Movement of the nineteenth century by the New African intellectuals. Mbeki is part of the last generation of New African Intellectuals who were educated under the missionary education system. Indeed, his thinking is a product of the New Africanism inspired by the Seme-Lembede tradition in response to Western imperialism, colonialism, racism, and apartheid in South Africa. Within the New Africanism is a focus on issues of the reclamation of African identity, as well as ideas on freedom, justice, equality, and a vision of non-racial South Africa. This history is important in order to foreground Mbeki's intellectual thought and political ideas within the broader context of the black intellectual tradition, which informs the emergence of modern political and intellectual discourse in which black public intellectuals deliberate upon their perspectives and political ideas.

Part Three focuses on tri-continental travel that shaped and enhanced the worldview of Mbeki. Mbeki's political life has led him far away from apartheid South Africa where he was born a citizen and had acquired a missionary education. He journeyed to Britain in 1962 at age 20 as a young student, then proceeded to the Soviet Union for political and military training, and back to Africa to work for the ANC in several countries, including Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. Mbeki spent almost three decades in exile, and a combination of political philosophies critically shaped his thinking. Indeed, in his tri-continental travel, Mbeki's thinking became what Achille Mbembe (2012) termed 'metamorphic thought', with the blend of Western and African political thoughts as well as post-continental philosophy taking a profound form. Such political thinkers as Mbeki are described by Enrique Dussel (1985) as the philosophers of liberation whose political ideology was not narrow or nativist; because they had travelled the world and gained the expanded idea of liberation, beyond specific experience of their own continent. That being said, Mbeki's travel of the world was not just a travel but a travel that influenced and enhanced his intellectual thought and global sensibility into a liberating and humanising thought.

Part Four focuses on Mbeki's political ideas and perspectives which are categorised into three broad areas that feature in his varied works: (i) politics, (ii) ideas, and (iii) power. These aspects constitute the thematic areas of this thesis, and they are examined and explored in more detail in the subsequent chapters in order to bring to the fore the intellectual contribution of Mbeki to the body of knowledge. Mbeki's thoughts on politics, ideas, and power have a bearing on understanding the making and unfolding of South Africa's post-apartheid state. Mbeki's varied speeches provide topics which include 'I am an African', 'South Africa: a year of democracy', 'Is there a national agenda – and who sets it?', 'South Africa: two nations', 'Breaking with the past', 'The emancipation of women', 'African Renaissance', 'Stop the laughter', and 'New Partnership for Africa's Development', just to name a few. These topics feature in the chapters of this thesis as part of the original contribution to the body of knowledge by Mbeki.

Problem statement

In South African biographical writings, there is a problem of not taking black thinkers and scholars seriously as intellectuals. Readers are witnessing what Mabogo P. More

(2004, 2008), Ciraj Rassool (2006, 2010a, 2010b), Lungisile Ntsebeza (2008, 2014, 2016), Jonathan Hyslop (2010), Bongani Nyoka (2017a, 2017b) and others described as the epistemic closure of black thinkers and their intellectual contributions in the intellectual biographical writings. This is part of what Lewis R. Gordon referred to as “the ongoing practice of locking black intellectuals and their productions in the biographical subjects and political moment” (Gordon 2000:26). In South African universities, for example, this problem is highlighted in the fact that the works of black scholars rarely feature as the prescribed study material for students (see Adesina 2005; Letseka 2012; Sarimana 2011; Funani 2016; Nyoka 2012, 2013, 2017a). Of concern here is that the general target of epistemic closure is blacks, and by contrast, white or Western scholars are taken as the point of reference as far as scholarship in South Africa is concerned.

Mbeki is a philosopher of liberation¹ and a public intellectual whose thinking and ideas many scholars interpret singularly as political at the exclusions of the intellectual. This is evident in most publications written on him, which tend to singularly focus on his political activism and life struggles rather than engage with his written works and ideas that inform his embodiment of thought and intellect. Mbeki, similar to Steve Biko, Archie Mafeje, Bernard Magubane, Lewis Nkosi, and others who have been the victims of epistemic closure and silencing, is studied as political subject rather than as an embodiment of thought whose political ideas constitute the source of knowledge. This situation is not accidental but a necessary condition informed by the anti-black reality called racism (see Manganyi 1973; Gordon 1998, 2000, 2008, 2010). Racism has transcended the political and socio-economic domains to infuse even epistemological discourse, which takes various forms and practices of epistemic injustice, including what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) termed *epistemicide* (killing of indigenous people's knowledge).

Justification of the study

The importance of this study arises from the view that there is a gap in the existing scholarship on the intellectual dimensions of Thabo Mbeki. There is a near absence

¹ I am indebted to William Mporu in defence of Thabo Mbeki as a philosopher of liberation. See Mporu, W. (2017a). “Thabo Mbeki: Understanding a Philosopher of Liberation”, *African Historical Review*, 49(2): 48-71.

of literature that seriously undertakes to establish and position Mbeki as the thinker and intellectual that he is. While there are numerous biographies of Mbeki, these tend to focus more on his life struggles and politics and ignores other important aspects of his intellectual life and contribution. What emerges from a reading of this existing literature is the idea that Thabo Mbeki is an enigmatic and complex subject to comprehend. For this reason, Mbeki's intellectual thought is rarely examined and explored since he is said to be a difficult subject to understand. Mbeki's intellectual contribution is compromised by his critics and admirers alike, wittingly or unwittingly, who dismiss or praise his political ideas without giving a substantive reason behind. The scholars who have attempted to engage Mbeki, either attack the persona and ignore the ideas or defend him in admiration of a person he is, and as a result these do not engage with his ideas.

Beginning with Mbeki's critics, the popular argument is that Mbeki's intellectualism is self-imposed rather than being earned from the peers. In this regard, Siphos Seepe and Xolela Mangcu are the strongest critics of Mbeki, to an extent of characterising him as false-intellectual. Such self-imposed or false intellectuals that Mbeki is portrayed to be, have been characterised by Achille Mbembe (2002) as fake philosophers. Fake philosophers, Mbembe argued, have nothing to offer the world other than to engage in the populist narratives of Afro-radicalism, Afro-Marxism, and nativism. Eusebius McKaiser, now and again a critic of Mbeki, argues that Mbeki's views on race are akin to reverse racism. To McKaiser (2010:190), Mbeki is a 'race essentialist' ("someone who essentialised race in his engagement with fellow South Africans"). Correctly so, Mbeki is right to essentialise race because racism is a fact in South Africa. Sithole (2014a:328) notes: "If there is a politician and a president of South Africa who made his ideas known, it is Thabo Mbeki". Even as the black majority is poor and white minority rich in post-apartheid era, race and racism are not seen as the problem by the critics of Mbeki. Instead, the criticism lies on Mbeki alone, who is said to be preoccupied with this 'race thing'. Mbeki is all things gone wrong, as far as race issue is concerned, and not the racism itself. As a matter of fact, race has been and continues to be an organising principle of society and racism the operating ideology which emphasises white inclusion and black exclusion in economy.

Generally speaking, the practice among black critics of Mbeki has been to draw from racist Western scholarship, which projects African thinkers in the negative light and Western scholars in the positive light. This is evidenced by Siphoo Seepe's criticism of Mbeki. Seepe does not regard Mbeki as an intellectual. According to Seepe (2001), "the media packaged Mbeki as an intellectual" to be seen as reasonable "someone who could talk to business" in the negotiations to end apartheid. As a false intellectual, Mbeki is said to display "an intellectual dishonesty of misrepresenting the sources of his quotations and quoting out of context" by Seepe. To Seepe, Mbeki can be anything from a politician to a president, but not an intellectual. In this respect, one suspects that Seepe's criticism might have been a reaction to the statement by Mbeki toward black intellectuals: 'Where are the black intellectuals?'. Mbeki has often asked this question, pleading with black intellectuals to contribute to nation building dialogue rather than be silent on issues affecting the society. It is likely to have been read out of context and interpreted as personal attack on black intellectuals. The statement itself was intended to mobilise black voices in the public domain rather than implying there are no black intellectuals in South Africa. Seepe's criticism is an attack on the persona of Mbeki and not his ideas. Seepe further goes in stating:

Mbeki is superficial and contradictory. At times he displays the arrogance of not knowing that he does not know. An intellectual is someone who is persuaded by the evidence and who has the humility to know when he does not know something. Mbeki failed at the first test. (Seepe 2001)

Xolela Mangcu has labelled Mbeki as an intellectual pretender hidden behind the protection of presidency. As a president, Mbeki is said to project an "intellectual façade – a façade that had prevented many people from speaking out against the president" (Mangcu 2008:39). To Mangcu (2008:43), Mbeki is an intellectual pretender whose "fallacies and fables" are defended by his political loyalists in the Native Club, as being "misunderstood by a racist white media" because "he is too intelligent for ordinary mortals" and "because he is ahead of his time". Taking a step further, Mangcu accused the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) for being used to protect Mbeki and the news bulletins that project Mbeki as a rational and progressive leader and thinker. In this regard, Mangcu argued:

One of the most painful things to watch on television is an interview with Mbeki. The whole thing is so stage managed you wonder why any self-respecting journalist agrees to be part of it. But still with all that protection the much misunderstood Mbeki will say something embarrassing or downright self-defeating, and this is usually in an effort to be clever. (Mangcu 2008:43)

Both Seepe and Mangcu claim to be from the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) (Gerhart 1978). And the two are university professors, columnists in the leading South African newspapers, and self-proclaimed black public intellectuals. A close reading of Seepe and Mangcu's commentaries suggest that their political ideology is more aligned to the liberal school of thought than the black liberation thought. Both are regular guests in liberal-aligned talk shows and feature prominently in white platforms of public deliberation, and even have articles published in such journals as Hellen Suzman Foundation and the Public Culture. In their respective declarations in the books they authored, Mangcu (2008) acknowledged Sunday Independent and Business Day for the opportunity afforded to him by the two newspapers, and Seepe (2004) thanked the Mail & Guardian for having given him a column and for appointing him an associate political editor. In this regard, concerning Seepe and Mangcu, among other black critics of Mbeki, their views are often not independent from the influence of liberal agenda. Sithole (2012:121) is forthright in pointing out that "there is silence regarding the institutions that public intellectuals are attached to and/or the companies that fund them, if any; and whether they are independent from them". This study proceeds from this affirmed position that black critics like Seepe and Mangcu earn recognition from white institutions by criticising black radicals, and to a large extent, Mbeki is a victim of this condition.

On the other hand, commentators that regard Mbeki as an intellectual often do so as impressed by his intellectual posture and not the critical engagement with his ideas. For example, one of his biographers Lucky Mathebe (2001:4-5) commented: "[a]s a product of society dominated by images and symbolism, the looming pictures of Mbeki drew my attention. His smoking pipe, well-kept beard, beautiful clothing" impressed upon my impression of Mbeki as "a progressive, forward-looking and educated African leader". Through his intellectual posture, Mbeki made a strong impression on his

colleagues and observers who admired and desired to emulate his character. Clearly, this perspective centres on Mbeki's appearance in the context of a society in need of the inspirational figure. Therefore, this account does not fill the existing gap in knowledge, as far as focus of this study is concerned. Likewise, commentators that regard Mbeki as an intellectual because of his classic "I am an African" speech for example, do so in respect of the way in which the speech is written and presented carefully with emotional pulse. Beyond styling, there is need to engage Mbeki at the level of the political thought and ideas in order to make a case of his intellectualism.

Adekeye Adebajo (2016:13-14) attributed to Mbeki the figure of the "philosopher-king" that the Greek philosopher Plato portrayed in his *Republic*. As the philosopher-king, Mbeki is elevated from the level of politicians and mortals into that of rulers, kings, and immortals. Mkandawire (2005:24) notes that "African leaders had a penchant for assuming the role of philosopher-king and reducing intellectual work to the level of incantation of the thought of the leader". Adebajo saw in Mbeki an African leader and thinker who crafted a vision of "renaissance" for his people and, in the end, likened him to a philosopher-king. "Nkrumah with his pan-Africanism and Nkrumaism, Nyerere with his Ujamaa, and Kaunda with his humanism" (Mkandawire 2005:24), are some of the African philosopher-kings and examples Mbeki has been compared to. It is a truism that Mbeki is obsessed with the perennial question of the truth, but he does not think from the 'company of the gods' as philosopher-kings do, as Plato advocated. His thinking emerges from within the condition and the experience of the ordinary masses, and him as a concerned subject informed by a radical thought of questioning the condition of black oppression, as opposed to him being a philosopher-king whose thinking is from isolation of the people—or, so to say the 'company of the gods'.

Critics have also used the representation of philosopher-king to cast Mbeki as a leader who was out of touch with his own people. He has been presented as an enigma, distant, unapproachable, and lacking in common touch, the kindest of those being that he spent a lot of time isolated, reading books and on Google search than with his own people (Pityana 2018). It is not true that Mbeki goes on self-imposed isolation, understood to be a common habit of philosopher-kings. This negative reporting and misrepresentation of Mbeki has been used by his detractors, who, unable to argue and debate intelligently, resort to character assassination. The collection of

testimonies in *The Thabo Mbeki I Know* (edited by Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu & Miranda Strydom, 2016) written by his friends, colleagues and people who know Mbeki personally bears the opposite of what is being reported about him in the public domain. His detractors choose to ignore these testimonies and instead present what Mbeki is not. It is in the critical observation of Chris Landsberg (2016) that Mbeki is utterly misunderstood by many commentators who like to box him ideologically. People who worked with him say “Mbeki was often the last person to express an opinion” (Pityana 2018:32), as opposed to the dictator he is presented to be. As Pityana (2018:32) stresses, “[i]nvariably, his own opinion was drawn from the contributions of those who spoke ahead of him, and he always found a way of taking issues forward, guided by the history and principles of the ANC and the general interest of the people”. Mbeki is a simple person from the ordinary masses, asking them questions to satisfy his intellectual curiosity and developing personal intellectual skills. As attested by Netshitenzhe (2016:241), “Mbeki was very accessible, very easy-going person’ and ‘interacted with us in the manner that encouraged critical thinking, always debating issues’ for solving people’s problems”. Therefore, the intervention this study seeks to make is that Mbeki is an ordinary person—born, bred and socialised—in the rural conditions of apartheid South Africa among the ordinary peoples, which is a source of his intellectual formation.

Mbeki is not a philosopher-king—a somewhat figure that dislodges his belonging from his own people—but indeed a political intellectual whose thinking is a product of the condition of his environment. In an interview with Mark Gevisser, Mbeki affirmed his intellectual persona and the source of his thinking in simplified terms, in stating:

I belong among the uncelebrated unwashed masses, offering no rich pickings even for the most highly talented mind reader! ... I would like to assure you that nothing I have done, or not done, in this context, has anything to do with my psychological makeup.” (cited in Gevisser 2009:9)

The politics of life had a political influence on Mbeki, and this points to his source of intellectual formation. Gevisser’s (2009:9) own assessment is that “all one needs to understand [about] Thabo Mbeki is to know the value-system and political programme

he inherited from an established movement". In this regard, Mbeki attested to the teachings and examples of political education from his political mentors and leaders:

I am a product of the teachings and examples of Abdul Gamal Nasser of Egypt, of Ben Bella of Algeria, of Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Mohamed V of Morocco, of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, of Modibo Keita of Mali, of Patrice Lumumba of Congo, of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo of Zimbabwe, of Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique, of Agostinho Neto of Angola, of Sam Nujoma of Namibia, of Seretse Khama and Ketumile Masire of Botswana, of Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. I say this because all these people taught our generation to rebel. They said to all of us, as we grew up, that we must not accept injustice and we must not accept the demeaning of our continent. (Mbeki 1998a:289)

There is a view among his critics that Mbeki is doctrinaire-minded, who mastered the principles of the ANC and documents over the long period of being offered political education and training in the struggle. This view is used to cast Mbeki more as a pseudo-intellectual than a self-independent intellectual. They have attempted to impose a strict definition of intellectual using scholarly and conventional logic and methods which discriminates and excludes the organic intellectuals that Gramsci defended and defined in 1931. Raymond Suttner (2005) described the organic intellectuals that Mbeki became as having been produced by the ANC and SACP in the context of the South African liberation struggle. Mathebe (2001) argues that Mbeki's intellectual thought and politics are a product of the institutional tradition of the ANC – an organisation formed to fight for the freedom and rights of the African people in South Africa. This study argues that understanding the intellectual contribution of a political intellectual requires moving beyond the scholarly and conventional ideas relating to academia, the qualifications, and publications in accredited journals.

For an in-depth understanding of Mbeki's intellectual development, it is important to trace and understand his social scripting, the travel of the world, his education, and his training as some of the interventions which enhanced and influenced the development of his intellectual thought. This study argues that Mbeki became exposed

to different contending philosophies, political ideologies, and practices in three parts of the world he had travelled to and resided. This is used to augment the fact that Mbeki's travel of the world cannot simply be seen as the imposition of or by exile but as an intellectual journey which carried the physical, ideological, and epistemic growth on the part of a political thinker. Indeed, Mbeki's intellectual thought has been shaped and enhanced from different perspectives and entry points, sometimes made up of a combination of strange characters. But important to note is that his intellectual positionality, even as he travelled the world for a period that spanned almost three decades, has always been the ANC which loomed large in his political life.

This study is framed around Mbeki the man, using his thoughts on politics, ideas, and power as the three units of analysis. Still, its critical contribution refers to various spheres and practices of South African society and beyond. It shed light on the discourse in which black intellectuals exist and operate and the politics of intellectual biography in South Africa. Admittedly, Mbeki is not the only black political intellectual in South Africa or the first to contend with the issues relating to politics, ideas and power. Others include Joel Netshitenzhe and Pallo Jordan of his generation and equal prominence. The choice of Mbeki as the focus of analysis for this study rather than abovementioned figures is informed by his political history and his intellectual positionality, which has coloured his intellectual analyses and ideas differently from the rest. In addition, this is justified by the fact that Mbeki is a political intellectual that played a pivotal part in the anti-apartheid struggle, the liberation movement, as well as transition to a post-apartheid state, including being a former president of the country (South Africa) course. Therefore, his intellectual insight and arguments concerning the issues related to politics, ideas and power are based on the critical lived experience rather than theoretical abstraction. This is the originality this study seeks to bring to the fore.

Research objectives

This study comprises five objectives which have a bearing on Mbeki's intellectualism and brings to the fore other relevant issues relating to black intellectual discourse for consideration. These consist of the following:

- i. To position Thabo Mbeki as a political and public intellectual.

- ii. To contextualise Mbeki's thought within the black intellectual tradition which informs modern African political thought.
- iii. In addition, to explore how the tri-continental movement might have impacted and enhanced his intellectual thought.
- iv. To examine and explore Mbeki's thoughts on politics, ideas, and power.
- v. To investigate whether or not the intellectual thoughts of Mbeki and ideas are indeed helpful to understand the post-1994 South Africa.

Research questions

In positioning Mbeki as an intellectual, this study seeks to answer the four key questions:

- i. How does one characterise the intellectual thought of Mbeki, and what is the context and concern of his thinking?
- ii. What is Mbeki's intellectual positionality in articulating the notion of politics, ideas, and power?
- iii. How do these three aspects, as articulated by Mbeki, connect with the key issues in the post-1994 era?
- iv. In what ways do Mbeki's intellectual thought and ideas contribute to the advancement of the African continent?

Literature review: on politics of biography

The starting point in this regard is defining the term 'biography' before contextualising and appropriating Mbeki in it. A biography is "a document detailing the life of a person by highlighting his or her positives and negatives, strength and weaknesses, failures and successes, as well as trials and tribulations" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015a:10). While there is a burgeoning interest in the biographical writings on Mbeki, little is made of hagiographies as far as celebrating the intellectual persona and politics of Mbeki is concerned. By hagiography is meant "a particular type of biography that is designed to idealize, admire, celebrate, revere, and eventually elevate the person to sainthood" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015a:11). The near absence of hagiographies is a broad problem in South African domain that goes beyond Mbeki and affects all black thinkers and scholars in general. Anyway, biography differs from hagiography because the former

offers an account of someone's life in chronological order, while the latter focuses on elevating their political and social status.

The term biography is considered to originate from 'bios' (liveliness, life) and 'graphe' (script, form) and denotes the texts written to tell the life stories of people (Taşdelen 2006). The use of biographies in which life stories of individuals are told, according to Taşdelen 2006, can be regarded as an effective way of telling life history. For Possing (2010:2), "[b]iography is a reconstruction of human life, and a representation of a historical individual". Parke (1996) states that biographies are, in a sense, narratives of people's lives by which reaching beyond the limited course of human lives is aimed. For Oğuzkan (2000), biography relates to the account in which life-stories of renowned people in different areas are told. Oğuzkan (2000) also suggests that documenting the biographies of prominent people is important in that the life stories of such personalities, with their different aspects and examples, set the pace for the individuals living in the same society. "Biographies generally refer to the positive aspects of individuals; negative aspects should also be mentioned" (Er 2017:161). Broadly speaking, biographies are not only for presenting the life history of individuals, be it famous people or the general public, but also to record the history of any particular nation.

Any nation's biography is told through its people's history and life experiences. According to Sarimana (2011:30), "[t]his history is not only told through the lives of famous people but also the infamous as a cautionary tale or deterrent". In other words, the lives of the famous and infamous individuals and experiences of privilege and underprivilege, inclusion and exclusion, be it direct or indirect, underscores the biographical profile of the nation. The longest tradition of biography is in Europe and United States, and the origin of historical biography can be traced back 2000 years (Possing 2010; Riall 2010; Rotberg 2010; Preswich 2010). Possing (2010:2) provides that "[a]s a genre, biography in the West is considered to have been established by the Greek Plutarch (45-120 AD), who published the comparative lives of Greek and Roman statesmen *Bioi Parallelo*". Its aim was to "build upon the ethical-humanistic genre focusing on the fundamental principles of ethics" whereby "the central figures were either commended for having fulfilled their duty or censured for falling into the trap of ambition or arrogance" (Possing 2010:2). Biographies of antiquity were seen

as ideal to “inspire the general audience to become an ethical acting subject” (Posing 2010:2). Following Simonton, Sarimana refers to “biographical research as having a long tradition in America and Europe” in stating:

Biographical repositories in the USA profile the lives and contributions of that country’s founding fathers, slaves, abolitionists, presidents and first ladies, vice presidents, secretaries of state, governors, senators, justices/judges, religious/spiritual leaders, civil rights activists, pacifists, scientists, businesspeople, humanitarians, educators, filmmakers, Oscar winners, athletes and socialites. (Simonton in Sarimana 2011:30-31)

British scholar Lucy Riall (2010) in examining the traditional and modern life of writing biography in the United Kingdom, argues that biography “has an illustrious pedigree in Britain”. In the British context, Riall (2010:376) wrote: “[b]iography has long fuelled a major publishing industry dedicated to celebrating or exposing the lives of the rich, celebrated, beautiful, and notorious”. Currently, in Britain, same as everywhere, biography has evolved from catering only for important people to including general subjects, according to Riall. For Riall (2010:376), “[o]ne way of understanding the current status of biography in Britain is to look at its original aims and methodology”. The original aim was to follow the history of ‘great men’ for others to follow. “Inspired in part by the lives of saints, with their manifest emphasis on the sacred, as well as on leadership and example, the golden age of political biography was the nineteenth” (Riall 2010:376-377). While this is accomplished in “heroic-model of biography”, Riall (2010:377) explains, “linking of biography to the nation was taken for granted”. What becomes clear here is that the history of biography in Britain, as with the Greek-Roman golden age of biography, is premised on hero-making and, therefore would not have relevance to Africa because African biography is linked to the ‘becoming of a nation’.

In general terms, biography can be defined as the life history of a person or nation. It is also called historical biography since it brings to the present the historical life and experiences of the past. By historical biography is meant the telling of history. Biography as a historical genre consists, among others literary biography and autobiography. For Posing (2010:2), “historical biography encompasses more than a pure life depiction,” that is, “it encompasses both the events of a life, the narrative of

a life, and the interpretation of its characteristics". While there is no specific rule in the style of writing biography, there is a common view among scholars of biography that a well-written biography is determined by the interplay of text and context of the subject of the biography. Possing (2010:2) argues that "[t]raditionally, biography places the individual at the centre of the narrative, instead of a larger analysis of dynamics, structure and events". Over the years, biography has evolved, and the general perception among new scholars of biography is that a well-written biography places the environment's socio-political analysis at the center of the biography. For Er (2017:157), "well-written biographies are supposed to be well documented and knowledge based, while providing the reader with an unbiased narrative of real facts".

This, however, does not pre-empt the possibility that there are no scholars of biography who hold a different view, for example, that biography must omit the analysis of environment structure to focus only on an individual studied. As amplified by Michael Prestwich (2010), the arguments against placing the individual at the centre of the analysis are varied and wide. Geoffrey R. Elton, utilised by Prestwich (2010:326), pointed out that "[a] historian' should not suppose that in writing biography he is writing history". Prestwich (2010:326) lamented further in stating: "[b]roadly, the argument against biography is that history is about much more than the lives of individuals; it is about the study of political, social, economic, and intellectual movements that are much more than the sum of those involved in them". For Prestwich (2010:326), "Elton's views are supported by the fact that historians are not trained to write biography". Riall concurs with Elton's sentiment. Many would agree that biography has come "to express the spirit of our age", Riall (2010:375) wrote, "[y]et, we do not have to look far for claims about a terrible crisis in biography". This argument that places an individual at the centre of writing a biography is frowned upon by historical/traditional biographers, whose primary argument is that external consideration makes a biography subjective and compromises the accuracy of the information provided on the person being studied.

Kendall (1985), Possing (2010), and Hägg (2012), respectively, questioned the framing of biography around an individual instead of a larger analysis of the environment, structure, condition and events of society. Correctly so, they have anonymously argued that biography is supposed to bring to light not only a subject's

historical life but also the society's socio-political condition around which the individual exists. Nyoka (2017a:4) argues that "researchers engage in their intellectual pursuits already burdened with their socio-political baggage". A biographer who makes reference to socio-political analysis, for Nyoka (2017a:4), "takes seriously the fact that ideas are a product of their environment". Separating a researcher from the social world is tantamount to the dispossession of being, language and belonging in that researchers write regarding the conditions that affect them. The contention in this study, concerning Mbeki in this regard, is that to point out that the socio-political factors should not be engaged is to eliminate Mbeki not only from the racist apartheid state and its logical order called racism but the very environment of his social scripting in terms of his thinking. Brian Roberts points out the importance of biographical research that utilises environmental aspects as part of methodological ways by stating:

The appeal of biographical research is that it is exploring, in diverse methodological and interpretive ways, how individual accounts of life experience can be understood within the contemporary cultural and structural settings and is thereby helping to chart the major societal changes that are underway, but not merely at some broad social level. Biographical research has the important merit of aiding the task of understanding major social shifts, by including how new social experiences are interpreted by individuals within families, small groups and institutions. (Roberts 2002:5)

For Robert I. Rotberg, biography and history are interdependent, for they gain meaning from one another, meaning they each suffer grammar and loss meaning if not applied simultaneously. Roberg emphasises this point in arguing:

Biography is history, depends on history, and strengthens and enriches history. In turn, all history is biography. History could hardly exist without biographical insights—without the texture of human endeavour that emanates from a full appreciation of human motivation, the real or perceived constraints on human action, and exogenous influences on human behaviour. Social forces are important, but they act on and through individuals. Structural and

cultural variables are important, but individuals pull the levers of structure and act within or against cultural norms. (Rotberg 2010:305)

In comparing biography and autobiography, in the context of fiction/non-fiction debate, this creates the problem of what Ciraj Rasool referred to as the “biographical illusion”. Rasool (2010:29-30) argues that this “biographical illusion” arises from “[t]he history of a life tended to be approached as a linear human career, formed by an ordered sequence of acts, events and works, with individuals characterised by stability, autonomy, self-determination and rational choice”. Taking a step further, Rasool (2010:30) argued that “[t]hese linear biographical constructions, born out of realist projects where subjects were thought to have lived lives in chronological narratives, served to perpetuate a modern fantasy about society and selfhood, and a ‘biographical illusion’ in which the main challenges of the historian were deemed to be empirical”. Jonathan Hyslop concurred with many of Rasool’s concerns in this regard. Hyslop (2010:105), for instance, criticised the tendency in South African biographical writing “to rely rather on a sort of contemporary academic common sense” from which “[t]he politics of daily life, in all its myriad forms, is marginalised and trivialised”. Generally, scholars of fiction and auto/biography agree on the need for biographies that adopts the three-pronged disciplinary approach—namely; multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary—for inclusivity in order not to approach lives from same biographical consideration (Roberts 2002; Rotberg 2010; Merrill and West 2009; Rasool 2010; Hyslop 2010; Prestwich 2010; Nyoka 2017a).

The abovementioned point is quite crucial in the light of the politics of racial binaries in biography and autobiography in South Africa. Biography is, according to Merrill and West (2009:39), “interplay between culture, power and available narrative resources, on the one hand, and individual lives and struggles for voice and story, on the other”. In an ongoing debate in South African academy, over the past three decades or so, South Africa finds itself a peculiar subject of debate involving fiction in one hand, and non-fiction on the other hand. Essentially, this debate is about what is the most appropriate genre for exploring the contemporary South African society (Twidle 2012; Hyslop 2012). The aim here is not to reopen this debate with regard to what fiction and non-fiction are perceived to do, but of interest in particular to this study, is to find out why this is brought up. For example, Twidle (2012:20) says non-fiction due to the

predicament of cultural entanglement, fails to “render visible the discrete strands that constitute this entanglement”. In Twidle's argument, the Marxist revolutionary thought, which claims to be progressive South African intellectual life, remains trapped in historical past that is struggling to effect progress in post-1994 academy. In other words, the biographical turn that introduced the dominance of non-fiction is nothing more than “opportunist” according to Twidle. On the other hand, Twidle is challenged by Hyslop (2012:59), who in response, lamented: “understanding where South African non-fiction is coming from and where it is going to requires a more exact political genealogy of South African social history than he offers (Twidle). It is imperative to highlight that this debate is taking place in a country that has been dominated by black people as biographical subjects in fiction written by white scholars.

Currently, the dominant mode of non-fiction in South Africa is biography and autobiography (Rasool 2006, 2010a, 2010b; Hyslop 2010, 2012; Twidle 2012; Jacobs & Bank 2019). During the apartheid era, it is fiction that dominated the South African discourse, but as a result of a transition to the post-apartheid era, non-fiction has been on the rise since 1994. Unsurprisingly, this shift is witnessed by a decline in the creative outputs of short stories, poetry, novel, artist and other genres of fiction. As pointed out by Twidler (2012:9), “[f]or whereas during apartheid, it was the domain of literary fiction” which dominated South African society “in post-apartheid the most significant literary production is the realms of non-fiction”. Post-apartheid South Africa can be said to be witnessing what in biographical studies is usually termed ‘biographical turn’. According to Jacobs and Bank (2019:165), “[s]ome 800 biographies or autobiographies have been published in English in the 28 years since the liberalisation of apartheid and freeing of Nelson Mandela in February 1990”. Most of these were authored in South Africa and published in South African print houses, with fewer published internationally, as pointed out by Jacobs and Bank.

Political biography and political autobiography have emerged as the dominant mode of biographical writing in post-apartheid South Africa. “Political biography (refers to the lives of those directly involved in politics, particularly political and religious leaders” (Jacobs and Bank 2019:165). The definition of political autobiography is no different from political biography, except that the former is an account of a person's life written by someone else, whereas the latter is an account of a person's life written by that

person. Political biography and political autobiography, for Hyvarinen (1992:51), are “read as major texts in political writings”, and writing or publishing them is a political act “often with further political action”. Anyway, readers are not even interested in whether the book is a biography or autobiography, but the political content inside them is what matters to readers. According to Jacobs and Bank (2019:165), “political biography and political autobiography represent over half of all production by the life history industry over the last three decades”. Reasons for this increase are mostly driven by an interest in the stories of people in the political history of South Africa and apartheid. Jacobs and Bank amplify this point by stating:

We suggest the immediate post-apartheid cohort of readers was driven primarily by a curiosity about diversity, a desire of individuals to read life stories that could not be told during the apartheid years, as well as the need to engage in some process of inner reckoning, of coming to terms with the pain and suffering of apartheid as narrated in accounts of the life paths of others. In this time of transition and optimistic uncertainty, biographies became a literature of inspiration with Nelson Mandela of course looming largest. While we like to think that curiosity, interest in diversity, and empathy with the suffering of fellow citizens might still play a role in readers’ selections, we suspect the profound moral crisis of the African National Congress (ANC) under the presidency of Jacob Zuma has shaped reading habits of the second generation. The contemporary crisis has pushed readers, now able to choose between some 20 biographies and almost as many autobiographies every year. The interest of this recent reading public might be about groping towards reimagining political possibilities in the light of a depressing spiral of revelations about corruption, failing social services and ultimately state capture. (Jacobs & Bank 2019:166)

While publications in political biography and political autobiography have been on the rise since 1994, there is a near absence of psychobiography. “Psychobiography is a synthesis of psychological approaches and biographical data/sources of personal information” (Sarimana 2011:47). This mode of biography is “told through the medium

of psychological theories such as personality, trait, developmental and social psychological theories” which by this “is partly the reason why psychobiography is currently highly valued in life narratives in social research in South Africa” (Sarimana 2011:48). This is most exemplified by the writings of Daniel Levinson (1978, 1990, 1996) which are characterised by theories of life, a structure of mind and aspects that goes through the individual’s mind. In recent times, psychobiography has gained prominence as a methodology used by academics and students seeking to uncover and reconstruct the lives of historically significant and extraordinary individuals psychologically (Fouche and Van Niekerk 2010). Of concern in this regard is that this mode of biography is dominated by white academics, with black theorists and black scholars relegated to the medium of political biography and political autobiography.

The near absence of psychobiography covering black thinkers is not without controversy. Of note thus far regarding credible psychobiography is one written and published by Chabani Manganyi on the psychological biography of Gerard Sekoto, regarded as “one of South Africa’s most famous painters” (Fouche and Van Niekerk 2010:497). In the observation of Graheme Hayes (2016), South Africa is indebted to political scholarship and the commitment of Chabani Manganyi for having brought up the intellectual biography of Gerard Sekoto within the harsh constraints of apartheid. A study by Fouche and van Niekerk (2010:498) shows that in the period 2005-2009, “all the psychobiographical subjects were White, except Stephen Bantu Biko and Gerard Sekoto, who were Black”. This is not without controversy, of course in the country that has produced a plethora of black thinkers, leaders, and scholars of the calibre of Nelson Mandela, Archie Mafeje, Bernard Magubane, Ntongela Masilela, including Thabo Mbeki and many others. Yet, there is insufficient intellectual biographical accounts on black thinkers. What the headline of political biography and political autobiography signify is the making of the life histories of blacks as political and liberation heroes rather than thinkers worthy of intellectual biography.

Percy Mabogo More, in examining “the near absence of an explicitly cultivated philosophical tradition”, laments persistent racism in the social science academy. “South Africa has produced a number of internationally acclaimed African literary, social, religious, and political figures whose works are full of philosophical insights and arguments” (More 2008:45). Epistemic racism is carried out through the institutional

and systematic processes of the research academy and publishers who make it hard to write and publish the black intellectual biography. “Yet this country has apparently not produced African philosophers of the same calibre and comparable to internationally well-known African philosophers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, Odera Oruka, Kwame Anthony Appiah, or V.Y. Mudimbe” (More 2008:45). It is not correct that the South African black thinkers and scholars are of a lesser pedigree in comparison with the aforementioned names. It is critical in this regard to note that South Africa is a country steeped in the racist history of apartheid and still battling to overcome it even in the period of independence.

Indeed racism is not history but informs the present South African reality and is sustained in structures of power. By extension, it dictates the logic of common sense and consensus. More (2008:46) argues that “[t]here is an ongoing tendency in certain quarters of locking African thinkers and their productions in the biographical moment and political activism”. It is in the observation by More (2008:46) that “Biko was to some extent a victim of this practice”. Biko’s theorisation of black consciousness and the psycho-inferiority complex of the oppressed black subject is one of the most comprehensive psychological analyses ever in the human and social sciences. Yet Biko is remembered as a political, humanist, and cultural activism who died on 12 September 1977, rather than as an embodiment of thought that his contemporaries found him to be. “He defies the simple reduction to a politician or activist by assuming other equally important identities. He also combines the cultural, the political, and the philosophical in the same person” (More 2008:46). It is absurd that every September his death is commemorated but not his ideas. Biko’s example is important more in the light of the ongoing calls and struggles for epistemic and academic freedom and decolonisation in South African universities.

A similar fate befell an intellectual giant Archie Mafeje. About Mafeje, Nyoka (2017:9) wrote: “[t]hough acknowledged as a world-renowned scholar, South African academics have tended to shy away from engaging Mafeje’s writings but focus, instead, on his life ‘experiences’”. Thus Mafeje’s contribution is widely acclaimed in the South African academy, but his ideas are rarely acknowledged in any meaningful way. Nyoka (2017:2) argues that “South African intellectuals usually put a premium on his life circumstances rather than his scholarship”. This means that “Mafeje was not

known for what he wrote but for what happened in his life”, according to Nyoka. Generally, what has tended to define black thinkers is political to the exclusion of the intellectual. The politics of black intellectual exclusion is premised upon the hegemonic discourse of Western epistemic practice. Its logic is informed by a self-imposed duty to define the methods and theories of carrying out the writing of a biography.

Lewis R. Gordon, in examining the problem of biography, argues that blacks are studied as a problem instead of people capable of producing knowledge. Following on W.E.B. Du Bois, Gordon (2000:23) argues that “‘blackness’ often afforded theorists a problematic moment” that is “focused on black people over and against what they may live”. In other words, blacks are perceived in the light of the blackness—so to say, bodies that do not possess thought—and therefore exist as objects to be studied. Gordon is pointing out that blacks are a problem that white theorists research and theorise on. According to Gordon, this bears and comes to create “epistemic closure” on the potential knowledge produced by black thinkers. Gordon amplifies this point by saying: “the reality is that such epistemic closure (that is, knowledge of their being black brings knowledge claims to a close) is locked outside of the historical and, hence, exists neither as the universal nor the particular” (Gordon 2000:23). By epistemic closure, defined in literal terms, is meant “the closing off of what can be known - a refusal to accept empirical evidence, instead relying on flawed and uninformed opinion” (James 2017:10). According to James (2017:10), “[a] person suffering from epistemic closure is said to have closed him or herself off from information contradictory to their flawed belief system”. In this case, epistemic closure is informed by the logic of imperialism and utilised as a tool to privilege imperialist knowledge forever and marginalise native knowledge. Gordon surmises the problem of biography by stating:

It is no wonder that the autobiographical medium has dominated black modes of written expression. The autobiographical moment afforded a contradiction in racist reason: How could the black, who by definition was not fully human and hence without a point of view, produce a portrait of his or her point of view? The black autobiography announced a special form of biography, a text that was read for insight into blackness, which meant that paradoxically some of the problems

of epistemic closure continued through an engagement that admitted epistemic possibility. The interest in black autobiography carried expectation and curiosity. (Gordon 2000:23)

Gordon's analysis of the epistemic closure on black thinkers and their intellectual contribution is important because it is critical to understanding the near absence of black intellectual biographies in South Africa. In addition, the black intellectual erasure by white scholars leads to what Gordon (2007:6) refers to as the "epistemological dependency". The problem of epistemological dependency is more engrained in the South African academy, wherein Western-centred episteme and methods serve as a point of reference in South African universities, for instance. In other words, this means the black scholarship is not seen as the body of knowledge but as personal experience that only amounts to existential phenomenology, which cannot be translated into the body of knowledge and the student's education. This means that black scholars and their intellectual contributions are read at the level of existential experience rather than as producers of knowledge. What is currently obtained in the South African education system is the curriculum that sustains and reinforces the dominance of the Euro-North American scholarship on the one hand and decentres black scholarship on the other hand. In such a situation where blacks count as subjects in the biographies written by white scholars, or black intellectual production is reduced to political subjects and footnotes rather than as a source of knowledge, in Gordon's (2007:6) view, "[t]he result is a form of epistemological dependency". Gordon argues that "[a]t a structural level in the academy, this took the form of the black world of experience, and the nonblack, often white world of theory and reason brought to that experience". In essence, the problem of epistemic closure leads to epistemic dependency wherein Africa is theorised and written from outside rather than inside.

In working through Nelson Maldonado-Torres' characterisation of philosophy, there is an understanding that political thinkers and intellectuals are aligned to either analytic philosophy or continental philosophy. Maldonado-Torres provided the distinction between analytic and continental philosophy:

Analytic philosophy is often referred to as a style of thinking centred on the question of whether something is true, rather than, as continental philosophy, on the multiple factors that constitute

meaning. Analytic philosophy is also said to be closer to the sciences, while continental philosophy has more affinity with the humanities. One of the reasons for this lies in that while analytic philosophy tends to dismiss history from its reflections, continental philosophy typically emphasizes the relevance of time, tradition, lived experience, and/or social context. (Maldonado-Torres 2006:1)

Maldonado-Torres's distinction in terms of the abovementioned is important for locating Mbeki's intellectual thought and, by extension, constructing his intellectual biography. Mbeki's intellectual thought needs to be foregrounded and read within the context of continental philosophy instead of analytic philosophy, which is about science and interpretations at the level of textuality rather than the human condition. Indeed the set of ideas relating to the intellectual thought of Mbeki is not supported by analytic philosophy, which adopts and adheres to the conventional and scholarly framework that is from upon the Euro-North American method of scholarship. Rightly so, Williams (2009) points out that "analysing the intellectual and political thought of a practising politician requires moving beyond conventional ideas relating to the work of political intellectuals". While the strand of intellectuals operating under analytic philosophy justifies the validity of life with scientific methods, continental-based intellectuals focus on analysing and interpreting problems which affect them in relation to colonialism, racism, and oppression (Maldonado-Torres 2006). So, the scholars who defines Mbeki's thinking singularly as political at the exclusion of the intellectual do so sorely on the basis of utilising the scholarly idea of analytic philosophy.

Enrique Dussel, in examining the methods used by thinkers whose politics and philosophy of liberation emerge from the periphery, argues that their methodology is informed by the lived experience of domination and oppression of the colonial condition. Here, argues Dussel (1985:170), "[t]he method is analytically theoretical; intrinsically it is neither practical nor poetic although it is conditioned by both". In other words, thinking in the periphery is not only thinking methodologically or "demonstratively or scientifically", as Dussel (1985:170) puts it, but also "thinking critically and dialectically". From what is being said, the notion of analytic philosophy, which decides whether an idea is intellectual, lacks what Dussel refers to as 'dialectic' discretion. Being dialectic in approach, for Dussel (1985:160), "permits us to open

ourselves to methods that not only are not scientific but are not even theoretical". In other words, Mbeki is an intellectual not according to the logic or strict sense of the practical method of political sciences but of ideology at the level of political practice.

In analysing the intellectual ideas of Mbeki, as well as writing his intellectual biography, one is compelled to move beyond the conventional and scholarly interpretation of intellectual to approach a set of ideas relating to political ideologies and protest literature. Indeed, the intellectual thought of Mbeki and his ideas is a product of the black intellectual tradition that emerged in response to or as a result of imperialism, colonisation, and apartheid. In other words, and most crucially, the intellectual thought of Mbeki needs to be foregrounded in the anti-black world in which he is at the receiving end of racism, inferiorisation, and oppression and him as a resisting black subject that is informed by the radical thought of black intellectual tradition. That means, in constructing Mbeki's intellectual biography, it is essential to trace and diagnose the South African intellectual tradition that shaped and enhanced his intellectual persona.

The entry point of locating the modern black intellectual tradition that informed the intellectual foundation of Mbeki is New Africa Movement that founded the New African Intellectuals. Much of the literature covering this movement can be found in Ntongela Masilela's historical archive of the 19th-century South African black intellectuals in colonial South Africa. According to Masilela (1996, 2003, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2013, 2014), the New African Movement dates back to about 1862 and consisted of teachers, writers, religious and political leaders who called themselves New Africans, specifically New African intellectuals, whose mission was in response to white hegemony and domination toward African population in South Africa during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. This movement started with Tiyo Soga, succeeded by Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Anthony Lembede, Albert Luthuli and others. It led to the formation of the South African Natives National Congress (later renamed ANC) in 1912. Although these early African intellectuals belonged to different generations and differed in ideologies, linking them was the inclination of 'New Africanism' that Seme and Lembede had propounded in affirmation of Soga's vision. While the New Africa Movement was disbanded in 1960, its intellectual heritage continued to be expressed within the black intellectual tradition that informs and propels the ANC and PAC.

Thomas Ranuga's thesis Marxism and Black Nationalism in South Africa (AZANIA): A Comparative and Critical Analysis of the Ideological Conflict and Consensus between Marxism and Nationalism in the ANC, the PAC, and the BCM 1920-1980 refers to the role of colonial missionary education as an important component that produced the South African first generation of the educated black elite and the formation of the Cape liberal tradition. Cape liberal tradition focused on the set of ideas relating to race and racism. Many years later, these aspects become a counterpoint to the issues of democracy and non-racialism, which can be found in Mbeki's thinking and indeed informs a great deal of his political and intellectual ideas. Gevisser (2009:26) labels this generation of educated blacks the "New Africans", referring to the idea that this generation distinguished itself from Old Africans by acquiring modern education. According to Masilela (1996, 2003, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2013, 2014), although these intellectuals appreciated the white master's generosity of offering them education, they eventually began to reject their process of Westernisation and European acculturation, which formulated their own ideological version of New Africanism. Ranuga's examination of the rise of ideology and black nationalism in South Africa is critical in that it speaks to the Cape Liberal Tradition of the period that led to the formation of the ANC. Of course, the liberal tradition would later be rivalled by the militant radicalism of the Youth League and communism.

Mark Gevisser's biography of Mbeki, titled A Legacy of Liberation: Thabo Mbeki and the Future of the South African Dream, is the most comprehensive account that foregrounds Mbeki's thinking and ideas in the long-standing black intellectual tradition of the New African Intellectuals. The idea that emerges is that Mbeki, the son of Govan and Epainette Mbeki, whose parents were at the centre of the making and unfolding of New Africanism in the 1930s, came to embrace the same. New Africanism was a philosophy of life, an attitude of mind and an African cultural expression to articulate the entrance and participation of the African intellectuals, especially the educated black elite, in the new historical experience of modernity in South Africa (Masilela 2013). Gevisser (2009:29) argues that "[m]any years later, Thabo Mbeki would place himself squarely in this Seme-Lembede tradition". Rightly so, Mbeki's speeches, for example, 'I am an African' and 'African Renaissance' resonates with the influences of Seme-Lembede tradition in his intellectual thought according to Gevisser. As Williams (2009:17-18) correctly notes, "Mbeki is part of a black South African intellectual and

political tradition that is located within the social and economic interstices of British colonialism finding its roots in the missionary education system”. In specific terms, Mbeki’s intellectual thought is a product of a black intellectual tradition that has been shaped and re-shaped from many entries and perspectives to the point of evolving into modern political and intellectual thought.

In addition, Lucky Mathebe’s Bound by tradition: the world of Thabo Mbeki situates the intellectual thought of Mbeki within the institutional tradition of the ANC. Mbeki is a ‘man of tradition’ according to Mathebe (2001:11); that is, his intellectual thought and politics have been “constituted along the lines of the institutional traditions of the ANC”. According to Mathebe, Mbeki has been constructed and reconstructed as a ‘Machiavellian Prince’ and ‘Victorian Prince’, referring to the way in which Mbeki is (mis)represented for what he is not. Mathebe says the ANC has always had a tradition that its leadership is taught to adhere to, and refers to Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, O.R Tambo, Joe Slovo, Chris Hani, Tokyo Sexwale, Pallo Jordan as among respected leaders who passed through this tradition. These were eccentric thinkers that crafted the tradition of the ANC, and Mbeki is one of them. It is among them that the intellectual tradition of Mbeki can be located. In other words, without them, Mbeki carries little intellectual authority. In essence the contention here is that constructing Mbeki as an intellectual, and his intellectual biography, requires a comprehensive understanding of the political and intellectual traditions that produced him. Dismissing Mbeki as not an intellectual, because it does not fit the scholarly definition, tends to create the epistemic closure that Gordon (2000) and More (2008) and this study are challenging.

Raymond Suttner (2005:117), in defining the nature and function of intellectuals in the ANC-led South African liberation movement points out that “intellectuals should be defined by the role they play” and “by the relationships they have to others”. Following Gramsci, Suttner says the term intellectual does apply to political parties. Suttner has no problem with scholars who tends to limit the definition of intellectual to the scope of a scholar and says theirs, however, is a very limited definition of what constitutes an intellectual. According to Suttner (2005:117), “[i]t is common for scholars to see themselves as representing what is covered by the notion of an intellectual and to restrict the scope of the word to those who contribute via accredited journals, within universities or recognized research institutes”. For Suttner, intellectuals within the

context of the South African liberation movement, led by the ANC, are called 'collective intellectuals' or 'organic' intellectuals. Following Suttner (2005:119), "The ANC-led liberation movement has played an intellectual role in so far as it welded together a variety of intellectuals in forming a common will, contributing towards the voicing of a new national popular will". This description of 'organic' intellectual is important in that it provides the backdrop against which the intellectual ideas of Mbeki may be analysed. Indeed, Mbeki should be seen as a custodian of the tradition and ideals of the ANC. That is, his perspectives speak for the 'collective' of the ANC, albeit in his own terms.

While Gramsci and Suttner's concept of 'organic' intellectual is important in contextualising the nature and function of intellectuals within the ANC-led liberation movement, it is not sufficient to understanding the role of public intellectuals in society. While Mbeki does the work of the ANC as an organic intellectual, his function and role forms part of the public intellectual in society. For Edward W. Said (1994), a public intellectual is someone who serves as a representative figure—this person visibly represents a standpoint of some kind or makes representation of ideas to the public despite all sorts of barriers—concerning issues that affect society. Said (1994:12) argues that "[t]here is no such thing as a private intellectual, since the moment you set down words and then publish them you have entered the public world". Being a public intellectual, according to Said (1994:12), is a role that entails public representation, "whether that is talking, writing, teaching, or appearing on television", it thus becomes publicly recognisable and involves both commitment and risk. South Africa's black public intellectuals have been on the rise since the post-1994 era, and the reason for this increase is complex. Black public intellectuals play a unique role in the post-1994 era regarding the state of politics, economy, development, and all claim to speak truth to power.

It is in taking into account the abovementioned points that the understanding of biography and the construction of intellectual biography needs to transcend the limited view of conventional and scholarly thought. There is a need to understand biography in the light of the autobiography, or so to say the self-mode of writing, in order to account for black thinkers whose intellectual thought and contribution is marginalised from mainstream academy for a technical reason. The conventional idea of intellectual biography continues to be essentialised on an untransformed discourse of race,

making white scholars reluctant to engage with the political and biographical turns in black scholarship in the post-1994 era. Presently, the conventional idea of biographical writing 'relies rather on a sort of contemporary academic common sense' in which the status quo is able to continue uninterrupted (Hyslop 2012:105). In light of this, there is a need for transformation in terms of re-thinking biographical research in South Africa. A starting point is a biographical approach that adopts a multidisciplinary approach consisting of meta-auto/biography, creating inclusivity and recognising unconventional ideas and knowledge.

Limitation and delimitation of the study

Mbeki is a complex subject, and his thought encompasses a vast number of issues that cannot be captured in a single study of this nature. Moreover, the scope of Mbeki's thinking is also broad, with many interpretations of his ideas. Therefore, it falls beyond the scope of this study to study Mbeki's entire thought. It is, therefore, necessary to limit this study to Mbeki's thoughts on politics, ideas and power. Also, the aspects mentioned earlier (politics, ideas, power) are a global phenomenon. As such, it is necessary to focus the study within the limited context of South Africa's post-apartheid era.

The genre of biography is not homogeneous, as well as the discourse of black intellectualism, and this study cannot trace and analyse all possible examples. Instead, as stated earlier, this study focuses only on the intellectual biography of Mbeki. This thesis is neither a meta-biography nor is it a biographical account in the medium of life history, and it is not about the methods and procedures of writing a biography. Instead, it is the critical engagement with the intellectual thought of Mbeki. Therefore, the private life of Mbeki is not essential since Mbeki is a public persona. Another limitation of the study is the number of sources. The selection of sources is based on their relevance to the themes of politics, ideas and power, as the selected three thematic areas of this study. Limiting this thesis to the abovementioned aspects will make this study more manageable and focused.

Notes on the methodology

The study employed a qualitative research methodology in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, and, thus, Mbeki's thoughts on politics, ideas, and power. The qualitative approach has been preferred ahead of other approaches because of its flexibility and in-depth approach to any phenomenon being studied. "It encompasses many dimensions and layers" (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:133). The qualitative research approach can be defined as a scientific method of investigation used in research to gather non-numerical data (Babbie 2014). In this respect, it has been used to approach and investigate the political, ideological, and intellectual discourse against which Mbeki's thinking on politics, ideas, and power may be analysed. The reason the quantitative approaches were not preferred is because they are "limited in the way subjective experience is quantified" (Henning et al., 2004:3). The use of the qualitative approach enabled a critical interrogation of Mbeki's thought on politics, ideas, and power as a lens to understanding the realities in South Africa and Africa generally. This approach was most appropriate since the nature of this study is multifaceted, and it can penetrate deeper into any issue being investigated.

A qualitative bent of this study was a content or textual method based on the reading of Mbeki's varied works consisting of books, speeches, interview extracts and other sources. According to Lockyer (2008:2), "[t]extual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse". If there is any president who invested his thinking in content and text is Thabo Mbeki, explained by several books bearing his name and weekly Letters from the President on the *ANC Today* website, all of which he wrote in his engagement with the public on broader issues affecting the society. Mbeki was, as indicated above, "a very cerebral president who buried his deepest thoughts in the written and spoken word" (McKaiser 2010:189). This researcher has had the privilege of utilising the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library at the University of South Africa (UNISA) where Mbeki's collections dating far back to exile until today are archived for historical and scholarly purposes. UNISA has one of the largest libraries on the continent that houses archival sources such as scholarly books, journal articles, speeches, essays and other sources by and of Mbeki. All these resources were utilised by this researcher.

Furthermore, this study adopted a thematic analysis as a research technique to analyse the themes which feature in Mbeki's topics systematically, but the focus was on selected themes and issues relating to politics, ideas, and power. Thematic analysis refers to "a technique for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke 2006:6). Pertinent topics that feature in Mbeki's varied works, and were adopted as themes in this study, include (i) South Africa: A Year of Democracy, (ii) Our Common Vision: A Non-Racial and Non-Sexist Democracy, (iii) South Africa: A Workable Dream, and (iv) South Africa: Two Nations. These were analysed to explore Mbeki's thinking of politics. A second set relating to the theme of ideas in Mbeki's readings is (i) Is There a National Agenda – and Who sets It?, (ii) How to end the nightmare of racism, (iii) Where are the 'natives'?, (iv) Black Economic Empowerment, and (v) The emancipation of women. Thirdly, another set of themes which feature in Mbeki's topics on power includes (i) Liberation and post-1994 democracy, (ii) The struggle continues, and (iii) Toward a new politics. And lastly, Mbeki's topics include a focus on issues beyond South Africa. These themes relate to (i) Stop the Laughter, (ii) Perspectives on and of Africa, (iii) African Renaissance, (iv) New Partnership for Africa's Development, and (v) Mbeki and Zimbabwe: a case study. All these themes were taken from Mbeki's varied topics and systematically analysed to bring to the fore the nature of Mbeki's thoughts and ideas.

And this included the in-depth interviews with Mbeki's closest friends in exile, the Pahad brothers, Essop and Aziz, with whom he formed lifelong bonds. Sadly, Mr. Aziz was not able to complete the interview due to personal reasons (which may not be divulged here for ethical and confidential reasons). The Pahad brothers first met with Mbeki in Johannesburg in 1962 during their youth activism. They were in Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC) and Mbeki in the ANC Youth League. They reconnected a year later at the University of Sussex in Britain, proceeded together to the Soviet Union for military training, and back to Africa together working in the ANC office. And they also served under Mbeki administration, both as ministers in government. Both respondents knew Mbeki personally and professionally, so their accounts are deemed accurate and reliable, and interviews were conducted in Johannesburg. Sadly, attempts to interview Mr. Thabo Mbeki were unsuccessful, several requests via emails and phone calls were made to his office at the Thabo Mbeki Foundation. In total, five follow-up emails, including phone calls, were made to

his office and acknowledged by the Personal Assistant. This did not disadvantage the study from proceeding, as there are sufficient materials by Mbeki, including books, interviews and official biographies he provided, as well as a plethora of publications written on him.

Although this study was officially registered in the 2020 academic year in UNISA, serious research on this project started in 2018. I learned about Thabo Mbeki back in secondary school in the mid-2000s from a history teacher. We were taught that Nelson Mandela, along with Mbeki, helped South Africa achieve freedom from apartheid. But I was more for Mandela; he was famous because he served 27 years in jail, and Mbeki was lesser known. It was only when I entered the University (of Venda) that the name of Thabo Mbeki loomed large in history and politics modules. We were required to master by heart his classic “I am an African” speech as part of an oral presentation on a history course, and marks were allocated by how far one could go. One by one, we were summoned to the lecture’s office to present. Mbeki made a strong impression on me by his habit of smoking pipe, hair and beard, well-spoken English and intellectual command. Media and newspapers of the time, including speakers who addressed us about him said he was the son of Govan Mbeki, one of political prisoners along with Mbeki. His struggle surname and intellectual outlook attracted me, and I started reading every piece I found on him wanting to know more and more about him. And to this day his attractive social and intellectual outlook has been an everlasting impression upon me, personally and scholarly. This sense of obsession and preoccupation with his intellectual ideas has indeed strengthened my capacity to research on Mbeki more as a political intellectual than anything else.

Lastly, this researcher has had the opportunity to travel to the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal as part of this research project. During the period spent at the Council, the researcher was able to gain access to the Council’s CODICE Unit, including the Library that holds thousands of publications on the subject matter of African intellectuals. The Council has also assisted in connecting this researcher with senior members of the Council to support this project. This research was discussed and debated with senior researchers and often at odd hours and places around Dakar where their incisive comments, criticisms, and suggestions helped to shape this research. Fortunately, I always had a

tape record in hand, pen and paper to take notes. This research did not suffer lack of data and information due to the researcher's exposure to the knowledge on Thabo Mbeki.

Ethical consideration

This study accepts and undertakes to adhere to the ethical issues involved in biographical research. The necessary ethical clearance and permission were applied for and obtained before commencing with the proposed study and were obtained through the correct channel. As Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:66) stress, "ethical concerns should be an integral part of the planning and implementation of research". Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:66) state that "[t]he essential purpose of ethical research is to protect the welfare and rights of research participants". Furthermore, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:66) add that "autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence are three principles which should be observed in research." This study, for that reason, took all the necessary measures to ensure that participants are not forced to participate, that participants are well informed of the proceedings, and that the research will be beneficial to society. This study is based on the biographical account of a living person, the public persona; for that reason, the boundary between the private and public life were noted and, as such, the private was not essential. This researcher undertook to ensure that confidential information is handled with sensitivity and that written consents were requested from the relevant authorities or subjects, and the information will be disseminated in line with the terms and conditions of the signed consent form. Likewise, authorities and subjects will be briefed on the outcome of the research. Furthermore, the respondents' names, images, locations, and contact numbers are protected. The data set containing these pieces of information is password-protected and stored on my personal computer. The password is known only to me.

Chapter organisation

Chapter One provides the general introduction and sets the context of the study, and thus in relation to problem statement, justification, objectives, research questions, literature review, limitations and delimitations, methodology, ethical consideration, and chapter outline of the study.

Chapter Two provides a theoretical framework that applies the ‘Traveling Theory’ of Edward W. Said to provide a foundation for this study. This is presented with specific reference to three topics in terms of (i) theory on travel, (ii) tri-continental travel, and (iii) post-continentality as traveling theory.

Chapter Three focuses on the political history of African intellectuals in South Africa to contextualise and situate Mbeki’s intellectual thought and practice within the black intellectual tradition in South Africa.

Chapter Four is the ideological location of Mbeki, and it relates to his intellectual positionality, as a backdrop against which his intellectual thought and ideas may be analysed. This is done in three ways in terms of (i) locating the political formation, (ii) locating the intellectual ideology, and (iii) the path to political power.

Chapter Five examines and explores the “I am an African” speech of Thabo Mbeki to bring to the fore his contribution toward the advancement of an inclusive notion of African identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter Six is the Mbeki’s political idea of post-apartheid South Africa, and it attempts to understand the making and unfolding of the post-apartheid state in South Africa using the lens of Mbeki. The chapter comprises four topics: (i) South Africa: A Year of Democracy, (ii) Our Common Vision: A Non-Racial and Non-Sexist Democracy, (iii) South Africa: A Workable Dream, and (iv) South Africa: Two Nations.

Chapter Seven reads and analyses Mbeki’s thoughts and ideas on post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter engages the following topics in terms of which Mbeki expresses the South African realities: (i) Is There a National Agenda – and Who Sets It? (ii) How to end the nightmare of racism, (iii) the ‘native’ question, (iv) Black Economic Empowerment, and (v) emancipation of women. In essence, the focus of this chapter entails a critical interrogation of the terms in which post-1994 South African realities are [re]formulated using the thoughts and ideas of Mbeki.

Mbeki and Power are examined in Chapter Eight, consisting of the topics of (i) liberation and post-1994 democracy, (ii) the struggle continues, and (iii) toward a new politics, to foreground the notion of power in South African politics.

In Chapter Nine, the focus falls on exploring and examining the politics and intellectual contribution of Mbeki on the continent and beyond. This chapter concerns the African Renaissance, South Africa and the World, and it is explored with specific reference to five topics in terms of (i) Stop the Laughter, (ii) Perspectives on and of Africa, (iii) African Renaissance, (iv) New Partnership for Africa's Development, and (v) Mbeki and Zimbabwe: a case study.

Finally, Chapter Ten is the general conclusion on the study, consisting of different sets of conclusions from the nine chapters. This entails the restatements of the study and further suggests ways for the future research toward strengthening the body of knowledge with reference to the focus on Thabo Mbeki.

CHAPTER TWO

Edward W. Said—Traveling Theory

Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical framework that applies the ‘Traveling Theory’, which Edward W. Said propounded. Specifically, this deploys three topics, namely; (i) theory on travel, (ii) tri-continental travel, and (iii) post-continentality as traveling theory. These topics have a bearing on the understanding of Mbeki’s intellectual thought and bring to the fore the parts of his learning and ideas that were acquired during the course of his tri-continental travel—that is, travel from South Africa to Britain, the Soviet Union, and back to Africa in several countries including Swaziland, Botswana, Zambia and Nigeria. Like theories and ideas, Said (1983:266) demonstrates: “people and schools of criticism travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another”—and from whom are affected directly or indirectly by their journeying under different conditions. Underpinning the travelling theory is the idea of intellectual circulation that is similar to the intellectual thought of Mbeki as the product of tri-continental travel and a combination of different strands and ideologies. Utilising Said, this chapter submits that Mbeki’s tri-continental travel is not just a travel but a travel that constitutes the intellectual agenda, for it strengthened his sense of reason.

The ‘traveling theory’ and theory on travel

It is no accident that the global geographical framework in use today is essentially a cartographic celebration of European power. After centuries of imperialism, the presumptuous worldview of a once-dominant metropole has become part of the intellectual furniture of the world. Even postcolonial intellectuals, bent on creating new visions for an alternative global order, find themselves stuck with a collection of parochial geohistorical categories that originated in the Eurasian Far West. Admittedly, those categories have been stretched almost beyond recognition during the past five hundred years. Forced to accommodate a world full of previously unknown lands and peoples,

they have also been subjected to increasingly disciplined forms of scientific inquiry and abstract representation. (Lewis and Wigen 1997:295)

In his 1982 essay 'Traveling Theory', Said posits that theories and ideas are influenced by both people and movement, and more importantly, space and culture in which the theories and ideas in mobility find themselves. "Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another" (Said 1983:226). The world as we perceive and read it, criticise and recommend it, Said explains, is usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas. According to Said (1983:226), "the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity". The transfer of knowledge, science and technology is constituted by the migration of people and the movement of ideas that Said attributed to the power of travel. Having attributed the travel of theories and ideas to people's movements, Said pointed out whether the theory/idea loses or gains in strength in its host destination. In saying so, Said wanted other considerable factors to be considered, such as the power of travel and not just the theory on travel. In this analysis, he pointed out that the power of travel on its merit does stimulate the intellectual agenda. He, therefore, wanted it to be looked at alongside the travel of the people and ideas and the theory on travel. The very fact that Said suggested that this factor be considered and pointed out its absence in most cases is laudable.

While Said's traveling theory concerns the influence of people's travel on theory and the meaning of the theory on travel, others have focused on describing the term traveling theory. For instance, in James Clifford's reading, one finds the terms travel and theory separated and described in various ways. Travel: (i) a figure for different modes of dwelling and displacement, (ii) for storytelling and theorising in a postcolonial world of global contacts, (iii) a range of practices for situating the self in a space or spaces grown too large. On the other hand, theory: (i) a product of displacement, comparison, and a certain distance. In this case, to theorise, one leaves home (Clifford 1989). For Lloyd (2015:121), theory is a term "connoting to consider, speculate or look at". And while Said's concern was Literary Theory, others are making a case for political theory. In this case, political theorist Fred Dallmayr (2014:9) describes political

theory as “the practice or attitude of ‘looking at’ or ‘gazing at’ something from a political perspective”. For Suttner (2011:4), “[t]heory is important not just to philosophers but all of us, because how we understand our world enables us to direct our action in a manner that is most fruitful and more likely to achieve the results we seek”. Taking a step further, Suttner argues that “[t]he words national, democratic and revolution are concepts”, that is, for example, “ways of making sense of our world and in this case purporting or aiming to advance liberation”. Against this backdrop, it is important to broaden the meaning of traveling theory as expounded above to encompass migrants as theoretical entities that translate practices and ideas.

Of course, theory can be convincing and not convincing depending on one’s standpoint in relation to the subject of theory. It is the interpretation that allows the theory to serve as the test of reason. Mbembe (2021:7) posits that “[t]heory has been not only the name of the West’s attempt at domesticating contingency, but also the way in which the West has distinguished itself from the ‘Rest.’” In this respect, theory is seen as set of ideas, and has been used as a modern form to pose questions and to answer questions. As Mbembe (2021:8) notes, “[t]heory has always been many things at the same time”. There is somewhat a consensus that the task of theory is to test the conditions and limits of knowledge. What the theory does is to pose question in terms of the experiences of the people within conditions or cultural settings. “What gave theory its edge was its presupposed capacity both to transform the existing structures of power and to imagine alternative social arrangements” (Mbembe 2021:8). In Africa, among the people yearning for liberation and freedom, theory has always been perceived as a political intervention into an era of colonisation, of apartheid, of dispossession, of capitalism. These factors have always profoundly impacted the relationship between theory and people. There is no agreement about the impact of theory on life, but there is no denying that theory is changing the world every day, as does people’s reasoning capacity.

The Eurocentric theories such as liberalism, capitalism, humanism, modernism, critical theories including Western claims on issues of human rights and democracy were all imported into Africa by the movement of people and travel of ideas as propounded by Said. These travel theories are sustained on the African continent and indeed in critical dialogue with the African people, politics, tradition, and indigenous knowledge. They

either engage with the discourse they encounter creatively, or undertake to distort as a measure to impose own subjectivity. Indeed, some of these theories that include Pan Africanism and African nationalism had inspired the imaginings of the national liberation struggle and the post-1994 South African democracy, as the result of the movement of people and ideas across the continent. As in the case of Mbeki, his political and intellectual thought was profoundly enhanced by the power of the travel of the world, which sustains a combination of philosophies, world literature and political ideas that he imbibed to inform his corpus of political and intellectual thought. But it would seem that the one which has profoundly influenced his intellectual thought is Pan-Africanism and postcontinental philosophy. Whether it is possible to accept the new theory without being colonised by it is a question worth asking. In terms of this point, part of this research is to expand the idea that Mbeki's thinking was transformed into postcontinental philosophy by the power of the travel of the world.

Said (1983:226) argues that "travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another" constitutes the "circulation of ideas" that takes different forms including "acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation". Theories emerge from within traditions, bearing the identities of their particular histories and cultural conditions of production, moving across spaces and cultures different from their own contexts. Said, however, cautions that the theories/ideas or migrants in transit may either gain the strength of influence in the context and culture distinct from that in which they originated or lose their originality in the process of adapting to conditions of the new contexts they find themselves. For Lloyd (2015:121), "[t]he ability of a particular theory or body of ideas to survive over time, or to gain influence in a historical epoch distinct from that in which they originated, might well be attributable to this capacity for travel". Culbert (2018:345) stresses that "context plays an important role in the life of ideas, both in the local origin of a given theory and in the translations, modifications, and misreading that may occur at the point of destination". That being said, every theory at the level of the political idea has its own experience of the context it finds itself, the same way with people when they migrate into some new contexts and culture of another country.

According to Said (1983:226), "one should go on to specify the kinds of movement that are possible, in order to ask whether by virtue of having moved from one place

and time to another an idea or a theory gain or lose in strength, and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation". Considering how such movement occurs is important in determining the transformation of theory in the different contexts, as to whether it gains or loses in strength. In this respect, the movement of people and theories/ideas from one context to another is never 'unimpeded,' according to Said. As far as Said is concerned, theories/ideas as they move from one context to another will mutate, as with the migrants. To some extent, these are transformed by the culture of the society they find themselves in. In accordance, it is a simple fact of life that migrants and theories/ideas in the journeying from one context and culture to another are likely to be affected, be it for good or bad, change will nonetheless happen to them.

Concerning theories/ideas, Said suggested, 'interpretation' plays an important role in the life of a theory/idea. In this regard, Said (1983:227) argues that "theory/idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place". (Mis)representation is the phrase used by Said to highlight part of the reason that theory/idea changes to become different from that in which they originated. Indeed from situation to situation – between the original place from which a theory stems and a new place or transplanted place – a life of theory takes different forms. In their travel, for Said, theories are not left unhindered by the conditions of traveling. Misinterpretation, translation and interpretation can very well be important factors in determining the life of a theory. As aptly argued by Lloyd (2015:121), for example, "interpretation, whenever and wherever it takes place, does violence to the text under examination". As a consequence of travel whenever the theory journeys is affected by encounters of textual meaning and translations. Of course, in many other instances, a theory can stand its ground, and retain its originality, depending on its strength.

Through the works of Georg Lukacs, Lucien Goldmann, Raymond Williams, and Michel Foucault, for example, Said expresses concern about how European theories have been applied as they migrate from the Western into the Marxist spaces and contexts. The problem lies within the "tragic correspondence between world vision and the unfortunate class situation", according to Said (1983:235). Misinterpretation, for Said, distorts and degrades theory; lowers its originality and domesticates it to the exigencies outside its originality. According to Said (1983:235), it has "become so

accustomed”, for instance, “that all borrowings, readings, and interpretations are misreading and misinterpretation” that “everyone” and “even Marxists, misreads and misinterprets”. The point here is that theories/ideas are not often taken in their originality; often they are (mis)read and (mis)represented, intentionally or unintentionally, in their new context by the combination of factors, including the people transporting and receiving them. These include, for instance, different meanings by contextual shifts, translations, and interpretation. This is rampant in political contexts and often through deliberate misrepresentation wherein a noble idea about human rights and development is taken to promote a particular political agenda outside the original meaning of theory.

Theory, as it travels from one situation to another, like people and ideas, it get to be misused and abused as part of political and intellectual life. Mpofu (2017b:4) posits that ‘theories are born in time, place and situations, and get used and abused. In their various movements across space and time, theories get misread and distorted, and a new generation of theories emerge out of them with dissimilar meanings and implications for society. For instance, Mpofu (2017b:4) argues that “decoloniality has not escaped the perils of travel, use, distortion, usurpation, appropriation, resistance and even neglect”. As a humanist philosophy of liberation and life, decoloniality for instance, is propagated to promote the rhetoric of populism, and more so the case in the South African political context. South Africa, for example, has one of the oldest liberation movements on the continent called the ANC. Its protracted liberation struggle has been propelled by several critical ideologies of the African nationalism that inspired the struggles of decolonisation waged against racism, apartheid, and capitalism. African nationalism constituted the framework within which the struggle was conducted, including the imaginings and ideas about the post-apartheid state. As far as Said is concerned with the trap of theory, in relation to post-apartheid in this case, African nationalism has become loosely misunderstood and misused to mean all political actions including reverse-racism, nativism, xenophobia, ethnicism, tribalism, political violence, radicalism including populism, nepotism, corruption, and consumerism. African nationalism diverged from its original meaning and appeal for liberation to be a form of majority exclusion, including for advancing personal, factional and sectional interests.

An imported political idea may be destructive and cause serious harm in the new environment it arrives. A point in mind, for example, is the Rwandan Genocide which was motivated by the political idea of ethnic cleansing of Tutsi by the Hutu group. It is estimated that over 800,000 thousand Rwandans, mostly Hutus, were killed in the name of ethnic cleansing (Mamdani 2001). Schilb and others in the Composition Field had deconstructed the attention of theory as always progressive and suggested that it also be looked at from the perspective of regression. Mamdani (2001) has asked in his classic *When Victims Become Killers* as to why the majority Hutu population, who had never before killed, took part in the slaughter. Mamdani attributes the politics of naming (informed from a particular political idea) as the reason which motivated the killings. Before people can eliminate an enemy, Mamdani suggested, the enemy is first defined by either racialised, nativist, or bigotry terms. According to Mamdani, the Rwandan genocide needs to be thought through within the logic of colonialism which promoted the logic of inclusion and exclusion, protection and hatred, life and death. Green and Brock (2000:701) contend that “[t]o the extent that individuals are absorbed into a story or transported into a narrative world, they may show effects of the story on their real-world beliefs”. What this brings to the fore is Said’s assertion that theories and ideas are transported by people. In turn, the people’s behavioural pattern is inspired and guided by subjective theories and ideas.

The life of theory is to travel, to circulate, to be in exile, where they gain parts of other theories and lose parts of themselves according to Said. Magdalena Nowicka’s work focuses particularly on the directions and consequences of such circulations of theories and ideas in other environments outside their context. In research enquiry, Nowicka (2015:327) notes, “[r]esearch inspired by traveling theory is often of a ‘patchwork’ nature, combining ‘anything with anything’ and mechanically reducing epistemological differences between the original theory and its new variations, ‘translated’ according to new”. In such circulation, Nowicka suggests, simplifications of the original theory may be transgressed. As observed by Dipesh Chakrabarty, “a problem of a translation is raised by displacing the conceptual horizons” (Nowicka 2015:328). In addition, Nowicka refers to the concept of modernisation coming from the West, that it constitutes part of traveling theory, and albeit the many positive effects it may be bringing; its one-way process of exporting ideas constitutes a tool of cultural westernisation. This point is particularly important in understanding that, not all

theories and epistemic cannons from the United States and European capitals are redemptive, these often desist progress and development. On that note, it is important to critically interrogate the concepts and ideas that Mbeki uses in relation to politics, ideas and power in order to formulate the political idea of the desirable Africa.

Tendayi Sithole discovered that Achille Mbembe's—a Cameroonian philosopher, political theorist, and public intellectual based at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa—theoretical cannons are “rooted in the French archive and also the colonial library” which relegates the African discourse to the ‘ghetorisation’ and elevates Western cannons to the metropolitan landscape (Sithole 2014:3). Green and Brock (2000) use ‘transportation theory’ to explain the processes that occur when the theory in travel turns out to be new rhetoric which turns out to be accepted as a truism. Green and Brock (2000:701) note that “[t]o the extent that individuals are absorbed into a story or transported into a narrative world, they may show effects of the story on their real-world beliefs”. The narrative advanced by Mbembe in the light of the postcolony, concerning Africa as experiencing the regressive effect of history and history heading to repeat itself, resonates with the new rhetoric of Western scholars and their theories on the African continent. This is known that Mbembe has been accused by several African scholars, in their respective critiques of his postcolony, of being complicit to coloniality in his assessment and analysis of African condition. Being critically pessimistic does not mean being forthright or combative toward coloniality.

In this midst of pointing out and dwelling on the trajectories of rhetoric of theory, the point is not to generalise the notion that all knowledge from foreign places is bad. It is to indicate the contradictions of theory in travel, either by persons importing them to propagate the colonial agenda or those at the host spaces misusing them for the reasons of political agenda, can cause serious harm if not considered carefully. Said (1983:226) himself pointed out that “the specific problem of what happens to a theory when it moves from one place to another proposes itself as an interesting topic of investigation”. Said is not entirely in defence of theory or shunning the darker side of theory, he calls for the critical ways in which theory must be looked at, questioned, analysed, and adjudicated in order to make sense of it. As Said (1983:236) argues, “the idea that all reading is misreading is fundamentally an abrogation of the critic’s responsibility”. Taking a step further, he added, “[i]t is never enough for a critic taking

the idea of criticism seriously simply to say that interpretation is misinterpretation or that borrowings inevitably involve misreadings.” Indeed, a theory must not be simply dismissed on the basis that it is part of the “historical transfer of ideas and theories from one setting to another” (Said 1983:236) without attempting to interrogate its merit. This is known, in the South African context, that under the atmosphere of correctness, the merit of truism is often not questioned and doing so is rendered irrational. Said amplifies this point to say:

Assume, therefore, that, as a result of specific historical circumstances, a theory or idea pertaining to those circumstances arises. What happens to it when, in different circumstances and for new reasons, it is used again and, in still more different circumstances, again? What can this tell us about theory itself—its limits, its possibilities, its inherent problems—and what can it suggest to us about the relationship between theory and criticism, on the one hand, and society and culture on the other? (Said 1983:230)

In putting this into perspective, in relation to Mbeki in this regard, his political idea may be correct or not correct based on the position from which he is being assessed. Of course, looking at Mbeki from the Western and Eurocentric perspective will bear a different conclusion from when he is looked at from within African or Communist, perspective. Said has, in the case of Lukacs and Goldmann argued:

In measuring Lukacs and Goldmann against each other, then, we are also recognising the extent to which theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is a part. Thus what is insurrectionary consciousness in one instance becomes tragic vision in another, for reasons that are elucidated when the situations in Budapest and Paris are seriously compared. I do not wish to suggest that Budapest and Paris determined the kinds of theories produced by Lukacs and Goldmann. I do mean that “Budapest” and “Paris” are irreducibly first conditions, and they provide limits and apply pressures to which each writer, given his own gifts, predilections, and interests, responds. (Said 1983:237)

What is fundamental to Said regarding the traveling theory is the ability to transport creative ideas, to open conversations and create space and possibility for human interactions and emancipation. According to Lloyd (2015), new ideas provide ways of thinking about rhetoric and how such rhetoric can be transcended. This, as Lloyd (2015:7) argues, attends to “kinds of transformation wrought in ancient theories of sortition when they circulate in an environment different from that in which they emerged”. In other words, truth is not entirely truth until is tested by other forms of truth. Thus traveling theories and ideas enable a deeper debate and reflection on the issues that affect people and their environment. The crucial aspect of Said’s argument is that traveling theories and ideas influence change in their new destination. In turn, these are transformed by the condition of the context they find themselves in. In other words, theory and context shape and influence one another. Said encourages the mobility of theories through the movement of people because new ideas can unblock cultural formations in their new destinations. But he nonetheless cautions that these movements and ideas can also be a trap. “They can quite easily become cultural dogma” like of racism and nationalism particularly when “appropriated to schools or institutions – they quickly acquire the status of authority within the cultural group, guild, or affiliative family”, according to Said (1983:247). In other words, these can be critical influencers in their new context in terms of the struggle for liberation or suppression of democracy and human rights.

It is the thrust of this research to examine and explore the extent to which this theory (traveling theory, according to Said) has a bearing on Mbeki. The section below seeks to contextualise and appropriates the traveling theory within the context of Mbeki’s tri-continental travel and the political thought he acquired during this travel. While Mbeki identifies with the range of theories and ideas of the liberal and communist worlds, the one which has tended to dominate his thinking is African political thought—or, so to say, black diasporic thought, forged home and abroad. Mbeki is sometimes combative toward black liberation thought for being racially exclusive, which Achille Mbembe described as ‘nativist’ and retrogressively motivated toward reverse-discourse of racism. Mbeki sustains his intellectualism in the ‘power of the truth’, using the theories and ideas borrowed from the Western knowledge, textuality and British poetry of W.B Yeats and William Shakespeare, of whom he is most fond. Gumede (2007:35) states that “Mbeki was enthralled by Shakespeare while at Sussex University in the roaring

sixties and never misses an opportunity to quote the great wordsmith”. Gumede (2007:37) also refers to the “black culture, music, poetry and literature not only as powerful liberation tools, but to restore black pride and dignity”, which have had a profound influence on Mbeki and features profoundly on his pan-Africanist thought. “An African at heart, Mbeki romanticises the great African past: the pyramids of Egypt, the sculptured stone buildings of Aksum in Ethiopia, African music, dance, and so on” (Brits 2008:36). This interplay of the Western canons in the one hand, and African thought and black tradition on the other, is found in his critical dialogue with Western colonialism, and with Mbeki turning around to criticise the regression effects of African populism.

Tri-continental travel

This section demonstrates how the migrants on travel mutate, in the same way as the theories, to adapt to the socio-cultural conditions of the new context in which they find themselves. As suggested by Said, the definition and meaning of traveling theory encompass migrants as theoretical entities that translate practices and ideas. Many more examples could be applied to broaden the complex meaning of traveling theory. Central to migrants as theoretical entities are the ways in which migrants are shaped by the conditions of travel in relation to their historical and cultural experiences. Migrants as theory, as argued by Clifford (1992:103), “[t]alks about the ways people leave home and return, enacting differently centred worlds, interconnected cosmopolitanisms”. Mbeki, in his tri-continental travel—that is, travel from South Africa to Britain in Western Europe, to Soviet Union’s Moscow in Eastern Europe, and back to Africa—indeed underwent several mutations that make an intellectual journey. The tri-continental travel was not just a travel but the travel that transported the theories/ideas across the Atlantic. In this privilege of traveling the world, Mbeki acquired a vast knowledge of politics and breadth of philosophies. All of these philosophies are highlighted in the corpus of his intellectual thought and perspectives.

‘Tri-continental movement’ refers to the “triangular systems of Africa, the Americas, and Europe that make up the Atlantic world” (Zezeza 2005:36). This term has recently come to be driven by academics focusing on travel as an intellectual agenda that is stimulated by what Edward Said called ‘the people’s movements that circulate the theories and ideas’. On that note, Mbeki’s tri-continental travel stresses what he

received from the transatlantic world and what he transported to the world. The people he encountered in the host countries also did benefit from his political thought and ideas. Even though Mbeki sees himself as a product of the teachings and examples of the leaders of the liberation movement in Africa, his politics and philosophy of liberation are, to some extent, a product of tri-continental travel beyond just a single continent of Africa. (In the next section, I will expand this point concerning the metamorphic thought of Mbeki into a postcontinental philosopher).

There are at least four ways of understanding the migrants as theoretical entities as far as Said is concerned. According to Said (1983:226-227), “[f]irst, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse”. In the same way, the starting point to understanding Mbeki from the ideological point of view is to explore the conditions and the teachings he received at a young age. The young Mbeki’s thinking is the product of the communist teachings. As a son of communist activists, the young Mbeki grew up exposed to communist beliefs, and he too imbibed those communist beliefs. In a strong way, communist ideology had a way of appealing to a set of political and intellectual questions to the young Mbeki. This communist leaning is more apparent in his earlier writings ‘Why I Joined the Communist Party’, in which he explains the factors that contributed to his thinking. Writing under an alias as J.J Jabulani, Mbeki said: “the countryside contributed to my education” (Mbeki in Roberts 2007:288). He emphasises the countryside partly because it conditioned his thinking—or, so to say, it contributed to his communist thinking. Mbeki reaffirmed this to Mark Gevisser: “I belong among the uncelebrated unwashed masses” of the countryside (Mbeki in Gevisser 2009:9). In both instances, the Marxist leaning is evident in the selection of words and vocabulary.

There is a second way of “a distance transversed”, according to Said, “a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence” (1983:227). In relation to Mbeki in this case, this aspect begins when he sets to Johannesburg and then London in Britain. The idea of the theory in travel gains prominence in Achille Mbembe’s notion of the exilic thinkers. In this travel, the theory/idea becomes tightly linked to the human body and its functioning in the world, but that which constantly

depending change on life events (Mbembe 2017). What is most important in the life of the theory/idea is that the human body must be able to move, according to Mbembe. “The body is made first and foremost to move, to walk, which is why every subject is a wandering subject (Mbembe 2017:144). The human body without traveling from one context to another, in other words, means that the theory/idea will remain in the same place. Above all, Mbembe (2017:144) sees travel/wandering as “the series of experiences in which one is an actor and to which one is a witness, and, above all, the role played by the unexpected and the unforeseen”. This is to say that Mbeki, as a migrant in transit, was in part a carriage of theory/idea from one context to another.

And thirdly, there is what Said describes as “a set of conditions” or “conditions of acceptance” at the arrived destination which then “confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be” according to Said (1983:227). In Britain, Mbeki encountered the theory/idea of liberal democracy as practised in the Western world and also made contact with British institutions and political culture. A traveling theory/idea can either lose or gain a new dimension depending on the context's socio-political condition. Adebajo (2016:37) notes that Mbeki developed a “polyglot identity”, enveloping what he had brought from South Africa and what he learned in Britain. To point out that Mbeki, after having left South Africa as a young communist to Britain and embraced the liberal ideology, is to say that his thinking ‘came into a new prominence’ as Said puts it. Essentially, migrants in transit tend to mutate or change their ideological beliefs to adapt to the new conditions of the context they find themselves in. Said sees migration not just as a movement of migrants from one context to another but as a systematic form of knowledge creation and circulation across transnational borders. What Mbeki brought to London among his diverse group of friends and students at Sussex University is the socialist idea of the anti-apartheid struggle and the liberation movement from the perspective of a young communist ANC leader.

Finally, according to Said, the fourth phase is mutation of the migrant and/or theory/idea as a result of the coalition with the new culture. Said (1983:227) asserts that “the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place”. In the new context that migrants are received, they tend to transform to assume the character

and culture of that place, usually in an implicit way. In this form, the extent of change is concealed, but their attitude and speech continue to effect change. In the same way, a traveling theory changes its form and content depending on the new context it finds itself. This is because the power of travel – an intellectual journey across the Atlantic – is powerfully grown since traveling from one country to another is part of learning experience and exchange of life, according to Gilroy (1993). Indeed, in London, Mbeki was profoundly strengthened by the theories of liberal democracy and principles of capitalism. The same could be said of the period spent in the Soviet Union and African continent in several countries, that it strengthened his thinking in multiple ways. In addition, those who encountered Mbeki in exile were often left in admiration of his reasoning and ideas, what informs the circulation of ideas across the Atlantic.

To the extent that the travel does not powerfully outgrow some theories/ideas, this too applies to some migrants; that there are those who continue to sustain/retain their originality even when they are in a foreign country. This case applies to Mbeki, whose thinking was strengthened rather than changed by the host countries' travel—or socio-cultural conditions. Mbembe (2017:144) provides that the power of travel is in the 'ability to metamorphose'. It is apparent that, concerning Mbeki in this regard, this assertion does not hold. This is simply because the exposure of the tri-continental travel rather strengthened Mbeki's thinking as opposed to being subdued by the power of the coalition. Indeed Mbeki's intellectual thought contains and retains all elements of his teachings, education and training, and exposure to the three parts of the world. Certainly, Mbeki's thinking borrows from elements of what he learned in exile from liberal democracy and capitalism, the communist path of development and from African exposure. In effect, this means that his intellectual thought combines the liberal, the communist and the African thought in the same persona.

Mbeki's tri-continental travel and, indeed, his intellectual exposure may be measured by his breadth of theoretical grasp and cannons. As a rural child from apartheid South Africa, British institutions exposed Mbeki to English education and literature. Mbeki's portrayal is that of "[a] rural child who became an urban sophisticate" according to Adebajo (2016:9). He is an Anglophile and also a Marxist who, while in government, embraced both conservative economic policies and politics of radical economic transformation. He also embraces socialist ideology as practised in the African states

and, indeed, an Africanist at heart who called for an African Renaissance. It is apparent that the corpus of Mbeki's intellectual thought was profoundly shaped by ideas of the varied schools of thought. Admittedly, although Mbeki has a grasp of the huge breadth of theoretical canons, due to his travel of the world and the exposure to different schools of thought, the one that dominates his thinking is the idea of the liberation movement. Thus, political idea of liberation is his centre of gravity and the threshold that centres all other strands of ideas together. In his exposure to the world of ideas, it is fair to say that Mbeki wanted to ensure that the liberation project is completed.

Mbeki is asked about his music and the sense of influence that contribute to his intellectual insight. Mbeki (2013, interview) responded by stating that he listens to all music from across all continents—that is, “including European classical music, all South African and African popular music, all jazz, US blues, all gospel and church music, old and new pop, and so on”. Taking a step further, Mbeki (2013) thus insisted: “I would like to believe that I do not suffer from any prejudice about the musical form as a result of which I would come to the conclusion, both spiritually and intellectually, to close my ears to one expression of music as opposed to any other”. This may sound like an exaggeration and over-generalisation. If read otherwise, the statement suggests the sense of globality and, by extension, exposure to different sets of music. The notion of tri-continental travel has been a site of intellectual exposure and reflection on the part of Mbeki, even though he tends to be silent regarding what he has benefitted from the travel of the world. By extension, the idea of tri-continental travel has been a catalyst aspect and indeed influential to Mbeki's intellectual capacity. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1996) regard travel as part of exposure that makes it possible for one to be open-minded on the issues of contention. According to them, intellectual migrants have the privilege to look at issues in a much broader sense from outside than with someone reaching from within. Due to the privilege of traveling the world, Mbeki's intellectual thought combines the liberal, the communist, and the African political thought in the same persona, and at times in critical dialogue with these ideological strands.

Post-continentality as traveling theory

In this regard, the idea of post-continentality is also inspired by Said's theory on travel. Like theories and ideas, political thinkers travel from their respective continents to

other continents in search of wisdom and inspiration, as far as Said is concerned. Said, in different ways, illustrated aspects of theory as thinkers and thinkers as theories of commendation and criticism. Theory, in this sense, might also be understood as “practice of travel and observation” according to Said (1983). To theorise, one must leave home, as far as Said is concerned in order to aspire and inspire the generation of new theories. The idea of post-continentality arises in part because of travel of theories and ideas that make the transnational and transcultural coalitions outside the place they originated. Essentially, the idea of post-continentality entails the understanding of the world beyond one’s own continent. Therefore, being a post-continentality thinker borders on having an expanded idea of the world and a grasp of a huge breadth of political theories and ideas acquired from the travel of the world.

The term post-continentality is often associated with Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2006) and, by extension, is often used by him. Those thinkers who have travelled the various parts of the world and have been exposed to the different modes of thought and ideas are what Maldonado-Torres labels post-continentality thinkers or philosophers. Post-continentality philosophy is referred to by Maldonado-Torres (2006:1) as a style of thinking that ‘defies rigid boundaries’ of the so-called ‘analytic and continentality philosophies’. For many years, the colonial/modern world has been drawn by Western researchers relying on conventional and scientific methods. Analytic and continentality philosophies as practised in the Western societies, for Maldonado-Torres (2006:2), “contributed to the marginalization of forms of thinking that defy multiple forms of colonization”. Both the analytic and continentality philosophies are the brainchild of Western researchers. The emergence of post-continentality philosophy is itself informed by the “intellectual production of third world peoples” according to Maldonado-Torres (2006:1). So, those political thinkers whose thinking and reason stretch beyond analytic and continentality philosophies, and encompass the third world philosophies and practices, are called post-continentality philosophers.

Said perceives theory as situated but not fixed to the specific context or place it was constructed. For the point that will be stretched below, it is noteworthy that this is made in relation to the movement of theories and ideas from one geographical continent to another. Once the theories of analytic and continentality philosophies were constructed, emphasising European culture and practices, these were transported outside of

Europe and taken to a whole new level. The prefix “post-”, according to Hladík (2011:566), “attempts to express a combination of elements, past and present, that constitute the reality that the term aims to capture”. It essentially marks the periodisation and also evokes intellectual rapture. On that note, post-continental philosophy is a product of rapture that furnishes theorists and political thinkers with new possibilities outside their strict traditional use. This rapture does not, however delink the theory from its source of origin. The idea of post-continental philosophy belongs to a theory of post-colonialism. This, like other “posts” – post-apartheid, post-structuralism, post-modernism – borrows from existing theories of “post-colonialism”, all sharing the notion of a movement beyond. The idea of negotiating to combine the progressive ideas of the past and present in one epoch is essentially what the post-continental philosophers desire to create a better world.

The privilege of traveling the world, in relation to Mbeki’s educational and political journey, brought to bear the benefits of understanding the conditions of the world beyond his continent. According to Mpofu (2017a:50), “[t]hose political thinkers who have the benefit to travel” the world “[t]end to achieve a globalised sensibility”. In this critical observation, Mbeki, in his tri-continental travel and learnings, imbibed the post-continental philosophy which precludes any form of narrow nationalism or nativism in his analysis of African condition. Mbeki, in his post-continental thought, advocates for the notion of humanism, freedom, human rights and the idea of politics based on democracy, nonracialism, equality, justice, reconciliation, and reason. It is because he travelled the world and exposure to critical humanism in other parts of the world that Mbeki, as a post-continental philosopher, his determination was to bring about reconciliation between black and white races rather than resort to vengeance and violence. Sahra Ryklief reveals that there was ‘anger’ in the young Mbeki’s inspired-Marxist speech in 1978, but as a result of travel and movement in his political consciousness, there is “an ideological shift away from the revolutionary aspirations expressed in his 1978 speech” (Ryklief 2002: 108). Indeed, it is the power of travel that inspired the shift of imagination to reason rather than narrow nativism on the part of Mbeki’s post-continental sentiments.

The debate on the indigenisation of post-colonial African states has seen Achille Mbembe (2002) emerging as the ferocious critic of ‘nativism’ in Africa. This is known

that Mbembe (2002:240;241), in his opposition to African modes of thought, urged African leaders to go beyond 'Afro-radicalism', 'Afro-Marxism', 'nativism' of what he called a racist paradigm. He argues that African leaders are still suffering "from a distinctively nativist understanding of history—one of history as sorcery" (Mbembe 2002:242). It is on the basis of his tri-continental travel that Mbeki emerges as a post-continental philosopher of liberation whose thinking defies the regression effects of nativism. The intellectual thought of Mbeki had indeed been conditioned and reinforced by the tri-continental travel and learnings, making him open-minded. Mbembe urged Africa to transcend the 'ghetto' and embrace the new world. For Mbembe, the African modes of thought that are placing Africa in ghetto, have nothing to offer to the world. Of course, Mbembe can be correct and not correct depending on the angle from which he is being assessed. What remains a fact is that those lacking travel experience and exposure to the world tend to harbour nativist aspirations and xenophobic attitudes toward foreigners.

Maldonado-Torres (2006:2) provides that "Frantz Fanon's intellectual itinerary offers a good example" of post-continental philosopher in that "while he travelled from the Caribbean to Africa and Europe he resisted investing them with the power of giving meaning to his existence or providing the general framework for his reflections". Fanon's politics and philosophy of liberation was/is nonracial, inclusive and yearning for the liberation of both oppressor and oppressed, in that both coloniser and colonised subjects in their superiority and inferiority complexes are the victims of the structure of violence and oppression. To Fanon, it is this structure of colonial world which need to be decolonised in order to reimagine the free world, a world which advocate the new humanity toward coexistence. That said, Fanon became a post-continental philosopher whose thinking had benefitted from the tri-continental travel—the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. Both Europe and Africa, in Fanon's analysis, are considered as political projects in terms of the project of liberation and humanity rather than 'home' and 'abroad'. Even as he found refuge in Africa away from 'racist' Europe, Fanon pleaded for European humanisation. Fanon advocated for the free world – a borderless world in which humanity precedes race – which itself informs a broader idea of post-continental philosophy. Absolutely, the power of travel can have such a profound influence on one's own thinking and attitude toward humanisation.

Indeed, what is also highlighted in Said's analysis of traveling theory is the idea of metamorphic thought resulting from the power of travel and cross-cultural coalitions. Said utilises this phrase in relation to the metamorphic thought that develops in migrant persons of their new contexts different from where they come from. This of course is what Said (1983:227) means when he partly speaks of being "transformed" by the cultural and intellectual setting of new conditions. In Mbembe's (2012) view, "Fanon's thought became 'metamorphic'" because of his tri-continental travel exposure beyond the continent of his birth. "Fanon's life had led him far away from the island of Martinique in the Caribbean where he was born a French citizen" (Mbembe 2012:19). In his travel to Europe and Africa from the Caribbean, Fanon had benefitted from the different philosophies and strands of thoughts. This enabled him to propagate a comprehensive idea of a free world that was not narrow or limited to a specific continent. "For Fanon, to think meant traveling along the same road as others towards a world that was perpetually and irrevocably created in and through struggle" (Mbembe 2012:20). It is in the analysis of Said that the idea of the free world is "usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation" of migrants and ideas. This, precisely, is to point out that Mbeki's metamorphic thought, like Fanon, became liberating and humanising because he had been exposed by travel to a range of ideas.

What is profound about the idea of traveling theory and theory as travel from the perspectives of Said is how they enable the process of borrowing and contributing. This is in relation to the "creative borrowing or appropriation of thinking when they circulate in an environment different from that in which they emerged" as far as Said (1983) is concerned. In a way, the emergence of post-continental philosophy as a by-product of traveling theory has enabled the contemporary thinkers to contest the rhetoric of particular theories or political thought in the sociology of public discourse. The idea of post-continental philosophy is, in the way, the mode of thinking or contemporary political theory to challenge a certain orthodoxy of thinking. In his critical thought as a post-continental philosopher of liberation, Mbeki, for example, invested more in the idea of Pan-Africanism than a commitment to nationalism which he perceived to be narrow and exclusionary. This is known that Mbeki even rejected the idea of visiting his own village in which he was born and bred (Mbewuleni), according to his mother. "I've told Thabo the villagers want to see him. But he told me that this is the very last village in the whole of South Africa he will ever come to" (Gevisser

2009:14). This indeed says much about Mbeki's rejection of narrow or single village and in favour of continent. It says much, too, about his expanded idea of humanity. He has no attachment to his roots and for that matter, his family and village. This may sound polemic, but his post-continental mindset does not "sit easily with the conventions of being a member of a clan, of having a 'hometown' or roots", as alluded by Gevisser (2009:14), which is why he ignored a call from his village.

In a sense, the idea of post-continental philosophy can be conceived as a theory of broadening the ways of thinking and freeing the world. It can also be a theory, too, of liberation and humanisation beyond the strict limits of a single territory, as demonstrated by the case of Fanon. In this regard, Fanon ([1952]2008:1) uses terms such as "Toward a new humanism... Understanding among men... Our colored brothers... Mankind, I believe in you... To understand and to love..." in his expression of post-continental humanisation. Post-continental philosophers of liberation have been found by Enrique Dussel as fighters for the liberation and humanisation of the whole of humanity toward the creation of a new world. According to Dussel (1985), philosophers of liberation can love and sympathise under the conditions of political life, which humanises, humiliates, and depersonalises their very humanity. In his politics and philosophy of liberation, which Enrique Dussel described as the 'critical thought that arises from the periphery', Mbeki exemplifies the post-continental philosopher whose political thought concerns the liberation and humanisation of the oppressed peoples in the parts of the world still in search of freedom and justice.

Conclusion

This chapter, from the perspective of Said on traveling theory and theory as travel, demonstrated how the power of travel could transform the world. It demonstrated, as well, that the creative borrowing or appropriation of ideas in transnational and transcultural coalitions can improve one's own thinking and reasoning (as in the case of Mbeki). For said, transnational and transcultural coalitions, be it theories or peoples, can provide a starting point for global conversations in ways that create space and possibility for humanisation and globalisation. Underlying the traveling theory and theory as travel is that theory can be taken as an agent for social change, a necessary component for critical consciousness and human emancipation. Said hopes for a more robust understanding of the travel of theories, emphasising that the migration of

theories is often not taken seriously as a field of intellectual enquiry. Indeed this may be why African scholarship in African modes of thought, for example, rarely becomes curious about why globalisation is realised according to rigid Western theories and not those of Africa.

Furthermore, through the deployment of Said's Travel Theory and Theory as Travel, this chapter brought to the fore ways in which Mbeki's thinking (as a subject of analysis) is sustained in the tri-continental travel that makes an intellectual agenda. The question was asked in the main as to what is it that Mbeki brought back from the tri-continental travel. The answer, as highlighted in the discussion, is that the travel not only led him far away from his own country and peoples, but his thinking became 'metamorphic' because of the specific experience and benefit of travel and expanded his idea of the world. In addition, this travel transformed his thinking into the mould of the post-continental philosopher of liberation and humanisation. This, by large and extension, brought to the fore that Mbeki's tri-continental travel is not just a travel but a movement that constitutes the intellectual journey. Like theories and ideas, Said (1983:226) emphasised: that "people and schools of criticism travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another". This circulation of people and ideas, as they mutate and transform under different conditions of travel, captures the understanding of Mbeki whose thinking is a product of travel.

CHAPTER THREE

The political history of African intellectuals in South Africa

Introduction

This chapter applies Ntongela Masilela's essay 'New Africa Movement' and utilises his analysis of the 'New African Intellectuals' in order to foreground the political history of South African black intellectual tradition. Any study that refers to the modern African political and intellectual thought in the South African context and does not acknowledge Masilela's contribution to this scholarship is tantamount to distortion and erasure of the black intellectual tradition. Therefore, this chapter submits that Mbeki's intellectual compass possesses a rich heritage of political ideas that resonates with the black intellectual tradition of the eighteen centuries of the New Africa Movement in South Africa. Black intellectual tradition denotes not a single ideological strand but a discursive terrain within which the multiple set of philosophies, ideologies, theories ideas, and politics of African nature were articulated by African intellectuals. Intellectuals operating under this tradition engaged in various productions and practices, including questions relating to imperialism, colonisation, racism, apartheid, resistance, and liberation. This chapter aims to contextualise Mbeki's intellectual thought and practice with the black intellectual tradition in South Africa.

Black intellectual tradition

The history of black intellectual tradition can be traced and located within the New African Movement of the eighteen century South Africa. In examining this history, Masilela provides (2003, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2013) that the New African Movement started with Tiyo Soga (1862) and ended with Ezekiel Mphahlele's generation (1960). These comprised professional schoolteachers, political and religious leaders, academics, scientists, journalists, and graduates educated under the Western and European missionary churches-turned schools in South Africa. Masilela (2010:1) labels them the "New Africans, specifically New African intellectuals," referring to the idea that this generation was educated black South Africans. The reason these intellectuals "distinguished themselves from the Old Africans" is because "they were engaged with creating knowledge of modernity (new ideas, new perspectives, new

objectives, new formulations) rather than finding consolation in the old ways of traditional societies” (Masilela 2010:1).

New African Intellectuals became preoccupied with the creation of African modernity and the constant questioning and undermining of European modernity to displace it in South Africa ultimately. While modernity in Africa is traced back to the history of Arab-Muslim encounters with West Africa (Clarke 1998; Van Hensbroek 2000; July 2004), in South Africa, this came through European modernity in the names of Christianity and missionary education and was later succeeded by the introduction of Apartheid seen as necessary to bring about modernisation and development. According to Mbeki ([1978] 1998:8), European modernity in South Africa constituted a “historical injustice”. In problematising European modernity in South Africa, Mbeki places it within the problems of capitalist and class society. He amplified this point in stating: [t]o understand South Africa we must appreciate the fact ... that we dealing with a class society”. He added, “[i]n South Africa the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, are the dominant class. Therefore the state, other forms of social organisation and the official ideas are conditioned by this one fact of the supremacy of the bourgeoisie” (Mbeki [1978] 1998:9). This statement is made in his speech delivered in Ottawa, Canada, 1978. Taking a step back into the history of South Africa’s modern economy, Mbeki argued:

The landing of the employees of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape of Good Hope 326 years ago, in 1652, represented in embargo the emergence of class society in our country. And that class society was bourgeois society in its infancy. The settlers of 1652 were brought to South Africa by the dictates of that brutal period of the birth of the capitalist class which has been characterised as the stage of the primitive accumulation of capital. (Mbeki [1978] 1998:9-10).

Mbeki’s examination of the history of South Africa’s modern economy is important in that this advent triggered the emergence of black South African intellectual tradition in response to European modernity in South Africa. The New African Movement was the forum to unite educated black intellectuals and their intellectual insights to bring about African-inspired modernity in South Africa. Through utilising the historical, cultural, political and intellectual praxis “the New African intellectuals strove to bring about the entrance of the New African masses into the modern age of the twentieth century”

(Masilela 2013:1). Central to this process of transition from tradition to modernity was the: (i) acquisition of an education propagated by missionaries, (ii) conversion into Christianity, and (iii) negotiation of European civilisation, according to Masilela (2013:1). It is critical to note that the educated black intellectuals did not necessarily reject traditional in favour of modernity, but attempted to reconcile them in order to effect the transformation of South Africa.

Van Hensbroek (2000) has pointed out, for example, that, in the history of African anti-colonial struggles, African political thought came to be divided into two types of resistance in terms of “primary resistance” and “secondary resistance”. According to Van Hensbroek (2000:8), “[t]he first are the struggles of African political communities against colonial invasions and incursions” and “[t]he second are movements of anticolonial liberation that developed within the colonial context”. Central to this observation, concerning African political thought in South Africa, is the notion that educated black intellectuals derived their ideological aspirations from “Christian missionaries and Enlightenment ideas of freedom and self-determination to Africa”, according to Van Hensbroek. This point is particularly important in the next chapter (chapter four), which focuses, specifically on influence of colonial mission education on Mbeki. To concur with Clapham (1970:4), “[i]t becomes possible, for example, for political scientists to discover ideologies even in cases where the leaders concerned have made no conscious attempt to formulate them”. What this point brings to the fore is that black intellectuals who constituted the New Africans in South Africa may have been complicit in Europe colonial modernity due to the very fact that their ideological consciousness was itself the product of the European and mission education system.

For this study, African intellectuals, within the South African context, can be categorised into at least three types.

i. Old African Intellectuals

The first group is Old African intellectuals, what Falola (2001:3) termed the “traditional intellectuals/traditional elites”, consisting of kings, prophets, priests, chiefs, healers, magicians, praise poets, singers, and storytellers. Though without formal education, these people “had developed the means of creating and transmitting their cultures from one generation to the next” (Bassey 1999:15). For them, Bassey (1999:15) notes,

“[t]he system of education practiced in Africa in pre-colonial times is known as traditional education”. Falola (2001:3) point out that “[w]hile the knowledge of the ‘traditional elite’ was usually oral, it constituted the foundations of politics, it could be esoteric, and there were specialists who handled the interpretations of complex religious ideas knowledge”. Falola (2001:3-4) further argue that “[a]n indigenous knowledge system, informal and varied, existed partly to reproduce the traditional intellectuals and socialize everybody into the community”. Indigenous knowledge by the traditional people contributed into the development of society by using their natural knowledge and experience of life “to interpret reality, produce relevant histories for leaders, mediate in conflicts, and even predict the future” (Falola 2001:4). The traditional intellectuals were the first to be marginalised, and their traditional values of self-sustainability pushed to barbaric margin by colonialists in the name of bringing European modernity in South Africa.

Before the European arrival in South Africa, the traditional elite exercised considerable power and control over their subjects. Kings ruled through the wisdom and experience of kingship passed from generation to generation. Conflicts were resolved amicably, marriage was conducted, circumcision for boys and girls occurred, and the sick were healed, including the instances of rituals and rites performed based on African tradition and cultural values. African communities were self-reliant through land and farming, food and production, medicine and herbs, and even traded through buttering. Reference has often been made to the Great Kingdom of Mapungubwe as a confluence of culture, mining, and ideas which exemplifies the advancement of indigenous people at the time. As the custodian and transmitters of knowledge, kings and chiefs worked side by side with prophets and healers in their continued efforts to build better communities and protect their subjects, heal the people, and guide them through their spiritual and prophetic powers and visions. These traditional intellectuals among Xhosa Kings included Ngqika (1778–1829) and Ndlambe (died 1828), prophet-intellectuals Ntsikana and Nxele according to Mangcu. Michael Omolewa articulates how the European and Western-centric modernity had undermined and managed to displace traditional African intellectuals, in stating:

The coming of European (Western) education from the late 15th century onwards disrupted the traditional system and brought the

formal school system at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, the learning of European languages, literature, history, philosophy, as well as the science subjects, including mathematics, biology, physics and chemistry. (Omolewa 2007:594)

Masilela (2013:10) states that “[t]he demarcating point between modernity and tradition as historical choices in Xhosa history was the catastrophic Nongqawuse Episode of 1857”. It is alleged that the young prophetess Nongqawuse lied to Xhosa king of having met with the “spirits of the ancestors” whose prophecy misled the people into self-starvation and death. According to historian accounts, Nongqawuse’s millenarian prophecy of the nineteenth century misled the Xhosa people to kill their livestock and destroy all means of livelihood on the promise that the spirits of the Xhosa ancestors would rise from the dead to sweep the invading white settlers into the sea, leading to the restoration of the olden days. The story goes that after people had done as instructed the promise never happened, leading to the ‘National Suicide of the Xhosa People’ (Peires 1989; Mbembe 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a; Sithole 2014). What has tended to escape the critical analysis in the readings of the ‘Nongqawuse Episode’ is that none seems to interrogate the entirety of the story within the historical encounter of the decentring of African intellectual tradition and centring of European modernities in South Africa. In other words, this is to say the arrival of Western civilisation, Christianity, and the mission education system was underpinned by a logic of violence which had to demonise African tradition and cultural practices in order to privilege Western modernity as necessary to secure modernity in Africa.

The portrayal and depiction of the Nongqawuse in the negative light of history took place in a country where Africans are said to have no humanity but as subjects who needed the tutelage of the Europeans to know about human history. The historical interpretation of Nongqawuse, according to Sithole (2014:336), is the “history fashioned from the colonial imaginary and sensibility”. In this respect, “[t]he history is that of those who record, and the record of history is that of absolute truth, for that it serves as evidence” (Sithole 2014:336-337). In addition, the history is for those who encountered Western civilisation, of those who are Christianised, and of those who received colonial/missionary education from Europe. Contrary to the belief that Africa was a dark continent before the arrival of European modernity, African philosopher-

kings and prophet-intellectuals created the history in which the later generations of New African Intellectuals made their point of reference in writing the great history made by Africans in the history of humanity. African intellectuals who immediately denounced African culture and became Christianised as well as educated in the mission education system found themselves disparaging the indigenous culture and traditional system that sustained the communities and their wellbeing for centuries. Among them is Tiyo Soga at the critical juncture of the 'Nongqawuse Episode' in the letter he wrote to European masters; it reads:

It is really delightful to see the young people, so lately sank in the ignorance of heathenism, coming forward to avow their intention of forsaking sin & serving Christ---The invariable answer of these and others when asked why they have come to the missionary & are sad often, I am sure, touches me---'It is our sins'---A man awakened truly to the awfulness of his transgressions against God, cannot but feel sad---this is one of the characteristics of Repentance---I pray these young people, may be truly earnest & sincere---We have now a goodly number of the Kaffirs driven hither by famine & other causes---May a good work begin generally among them ... The state of the heathen around us is just now very interesting---The Kaffirs---my own countrymen---are still very careless and manifest only outward respect for the word---Sandilli swayed too much by evil advisers, I was afraid, was retrograding towards the old Kaffir habits, the destruction of which, the recent national calamities---threatened and partially effected---By a sudden impulse---one of the characteristics of a weak mind---he will again begin to take an interest in the Station & to attend the Sabbath services---He lately of his own free will---without my having made the least movement in the matter . . . Superstition had once more been at work---that some Superstition---which in the recent disasters among them, one would have thought---would present itself to all, as a hedous (sic) hateful monster ... ". (cited in Masilela 2013:10-11)

Xolela Mangcu in making sense of the divisions that emerged in South Africa among African peoples following their historical encounters with European modernity notes that some Africans submitted themselves and others did not submit to Western civilising mission. Africans were divided after the anti-colonial wars that lasted almost a hundred years between the end of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century, as noted by Mangcu. According to Mangcu (2012:279), “Africans found themselves divided between two groups: those who subscribed to the new religious and educational systems brought into the country by the European missionaries and those who rejected European ‘civilization’ as a bastardization of African culture”. Christianity came to stand for European modernity. Mangcu narrates this historical episode as follows:

To be sure, the social division started among Xhosa chiefs Ngqika (1778–1829) and Ndlambe (died 1828) who stood for submission to and rebellion against European colonialism, respectively. Aligned to both chiefs were the prophet-intellectuals Ntsikana and Nxele. Ntsikana became possibly the single most influential individual in converting the Xhosa to Christianity. Nxele led 20,000 men to a war against the British in the small town of Grahamstown. Thousands were killed and Nxele was incarcerated on Robben Island, where he died. Peires argues that, their differences notwithstanding, their attraction to their respective followers lay in their power to reinterpret a world which had suddenly become incomprehensible. “They are giants because they transcend the specifics to symbolize the opposite poles of Xhosa response to Christianity and the West: Nxele representing struggle, Ntsikana submission” (Mangcu 2012: 279-280)

This historical account is particularly important to understanding the continuing struggles of political ideology between what Mangcu refers to as ‘conservative’ and ‘radical’ modernisers. The conservative modernisers submitted to European modernity, while the radical modernisers rejected European modernity. The group that submitted to European modernity was named amaTemba, that is, Nongqawuse’s converts, and later included Tiyo Soga and his intellectual descendants who advocated for European modernity. (It is critical to note here that ‘submission’ is

applied here to denote the acceptance of an idea, be it Nongqawuse proclamation of prophecy or proclamation of European modernity by the arrival of Europeans, as well as Africans who submitted to those proclamations). The group that rejected, on the other hand, was called amaGogotya, that is, those who were stubborn and would not kill their cattle—or, so to say they rejected the European modernity. This division, even a century later, bears the distinctions between Old African Intellectuals (those who did not submit) and New African Intellectuals (those who submitted). The South African society is characterised between converters and non-converters, believers and non-believers, modernises and traditionalists, a form of dichotomy which today is pronounced more in the light of the embodiment of radical and conservative politics within the ANC.

Part of the intended aim in this historical outline is the understanding of the South African political history which came to produce New African Intellectuals, the New Africans, the black intellectual tradition, including the influencing on ANC, the anti-colonial struggle and liberation movement. Indeed, Mbeki is part of the last generation in the long history of the New Africa Intellectuals in South Africa. The New Africa Movement may have ended in 1960, but its framework continues to be part of the agenda of the modern-day ANC. As Mbeki defines his politics to be a product of the liberation movement and the example of its leaders, it is argued here that his intellectual thought exemplifies the black intellectual tradition in complete terms. Indeed, Mbeki is an extended element of the African leaders who came before him in the ANC. Mbeki's own intellectual project in post-1994 era, almost 350 years later after the demise of Old African Intellectuals, has been an attempt to reclaim the glorious African past through the call for African Renaissance and affirmation of African identity which mixes with certain universal claims of modern Western humanism, the idea of justice, peace, equality, as well as democracy.

ii. New African Intellectuals

The second group comprised of educated black intellectuals, the New African Intellectuals, consisting professional schoolteachers, priests, evangelists, bishops, reverends, political and religious leaders, academics, journalists, and graduates. The Xhosa people were first Africans in South Africa to be educated and to be included to participate in the new life experience of European modernity in South Africa. This being

so as “they were located in the Cape, the point of European penetration”, and were the first Africans “to feel the full impact of this colonial imposition” (Masilela 2009b:1). Example is Tiyo Soga (first modern Xhosa intellectual), and among his intellectual descendants, were Elijah Makiwane (1850-1928), John Tengo Jabavu (1859-1921), John Knox Bokwe (1855-1922), William Wellington Gqoba (1840-1888), Gwayi Tyamzashe (1844-1926), Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba (1850-1911), Isaac Wauchope (1852-1917), and Walter Rubusana (1858-1930), according to Masilela. As the single most recognisable intellectual and spokesman of this period, Soga enunciated shift from tradition to modernity for those who were to come after him.

Peter Walshe (1970), in tracing the origins of African political consciousness and the entrance of New African Intellectuals into the European modernity in South Africa, provides the three important aspects: (i) participation in Cape politics in around 1828, which constituted the early entrance of educated Xhosa intellectuals in Cape’s constitutional liberal tradition, (ii) Christianity and mission education, as part of participation and expectation of progressive involvement in a modern state, and (iii) economic interdependence with Negro America and tribal government. Cape politics, according to Walshe, serves as a critical element in understanding the black South African intellectual tradition. Equally important to the strengthening of African political consciousness was the role of Christian mission education, an education which provided moral principles for individual righteousness that accompanied the so-called European modernity. And Cape political tradition and Christian mission education were not only alone in moulding the African political consciousness, this included progressive modernist ideas that came from abroad by African Americans in the United States.

African Americans such as Edward Wilmot Blyden, Martin Delany, Alexander Crummell, and Bishop Henry Turner were the foremost source of inspiration in the developments of the black intellectual tradition and the struggles of African modernity taking place in South Africa. As pointed out by Van Hensbroek (2000:1-2), “Christian Abolitionist ideas combined with Pan-Negroist ideas” together with African modernity “came to Africa from the America’s with influential intellectuals like Edward Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell in the 1850s and ‘60s”. The ideological counterpart of these influential African American intellectuals became developed in those countries

where colonial presence was established first; most notably in the West African places for example. “Such import of ideas” from African American intellectuals “is then seen as the ideological counterpart of the transatlantic triangular trade system connecting Britain, West Africa and the Americas” (Van Hensbroek 2000:1). In other words, the idea of African modernity for South African intellectuals, emerged under the ideological counterpart of those educated from Britain and America according to Van Hensbroek.

Practically, all New African Intellectuals in South Africa had been educated in the Western education system or missionary schools. The establishment of the European missionary education system in South Africa and Africa generally was itself the form of European expansion but defended in the name of bringing modernity in the so-called “African dark continent” and seen as necessary to modernise African peoples and places in order to secure modernisation and development. Williams (2009:19) notes that “[t]he entry into the western tradition through the institutional structures of missionary education by black South Africans meant a certain level of social mobility but still continued to experience the effects of institutional racism”. What is termed the black South African intellectual tradition is the consciousness arising in response to the missionary education that was taught to Africans through Western constructed educational programme. As a result of coming to this consciousness, there is a response on the part of these African intellectuals that seeks to centre African ideas and de-centre Western dominance by appropriating the example of influential African American intellectuals and their historical experience of modernities of the places like Harlem in the United States.

It was Pixley ka Isaka Seme (1880-1951) who, while undergraduate student at Columbia University (in the United States) in 1903, wrote an essay titled “The Regeneration of Africa”, which ultimately would become the manifesto for the construction of African-centred modernity in South Africa. As narrated by Masilela (2010:1-2), Isaka Seme “pronounced the historical necessity of creating and forging of a complex ‘New African modernity’ whose central nature would be liberation and decolonization by challenging, contesting and decentralizing the hegemonic form of ‘European modernity’”. Seme, in conceptualising the perspective of an idea of the Africa’s Regeneration, was himself inspired by the Enlightenment ideas of freedom, civil rights, liberty, and self-determination of the African American in the United States.

As Masilela (2013:2) notes, “[w]hat impressed Seme on seeing the American Negroes in Harlem, the black neighbourhood near to Columbia University, was their unity of belonging to the black race”. In this respect, responses and actions by New African Intellectuals toward European modernity in South Africa were similar to African Americans in the United States. One common feature among these intellectual counterparts is that they were both produced by Western education system.

What impressed upon this generation of the New African Intellectuals was the idea to form an organisation in response to the formation of the Union of South Africa by the Afrikaner and English-speaking Europeans, which excluded the Africans from the South African franchise. The Union was established on 31 May 1910, consisting of Cape Colony, Transvaal, Orange Free State, and Natal. The formation of the government of the European community to the exclusion of the blacks was apartheid in its infancy stage. In the new Union of South Africa, “only white could be elected as members of parliament and only whites could vote in the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal” (Lefuo 1996:29). And as for the blacks, only a few property-owning blacks could vote in the Cape under the existing qualified franchise. In addition the Dutch and English were to be the official languages with equal status. The immediate establishment of a Union ushered in a new dispensation in the black South African intellectual tradition.

As it happened two years later on January 8, 1912, “Pixley ka Isaka Seme called for the founding of a political organization that would represent the national interests of the African people” (Masilela 2010:2), the organisation which became known today as the African National Congress (ANC). Indeed, the ANC is the creation of the New African Intellectuals and its founding members included John Langalibalele Dube (president), Plaatje (Secretary-General), and Isaka Seme (Treasurer). The organisation positioned itself to serve the mediatory role between white colonial government and ‘colonised’ Africans in South Africa. E.M Lefuo in examining the ideological position of the organisation asserts that “[t]he dominant ideology of the SANNC at the time was liberal and reformist in perspective” (Lefuo 1996:37). With reference to its 1919 Constitutional Congress, Lefuo (1996:37) notes that “the South African Native National Congress was established to be the medium of expression of representative opinion and to formulate a standard policy on Native Affairs for the

benefit and guidance of the Union Government and Parliament". In the midst of being acted upon, the organisation advocated for civil rights in articulating the ideology of liberty and equality.

Walshe (1970:1) points out that though there are several black intellectual traditions that helped in defining and centring the political thought of the ANC, from "the impact of the Christian missions and to the development of a non-racial constitution in the Cape" within South Africa, the political ideology that drew the strongest inspiration was from the United States. Indeed an awareness of the Negro struggles to foster African American modernity in the United States inspired the reactions of the New African Intellectuals in the ANC, according to Walshe. Gevisser in particular, refers to the influence that the historic writings by African American W. E . B. Du Bois and Jamaican Marcus Garvey had on the political thought and ideas of the youth league's prime mover Anton Lembede. Indeed the Seme-Lembede tradition that many years later came to inspire the likes of Thabo Mbeki, Steve Biko, and Barney Pityana came from the readings of African American W.E.B. Du Bois and Jamaican Marcus Garvey. In the context of the Union of South Africa, Walshe says the rise of political consciousness and resistant to white government and black exclusion came from the United States in stating:

These attitudes were in turn encouraged by the gradual process of economic integration, an awareness of the Negro struggle in America, and a belief that tribal political organisations had been a preparation for the process of democratic and parliamentary government in which educated Africans had a right to participate. When, in the aftermath of the South African war and at the establishment of Union in 1909, it became clear that non-racial ideals were not necessarily to predominate in Southern Africa, there was consequently sufficient awareness amongst Africans for new political organisations to coalesce and for protests to be made both to the South African authorities and to Great Britain. (Walshe 1970:1)

The key crisis of this generation is the missionary education which somewhat impacted its moral and political complacency. Though this generation can be commended for its effort in propagating African modernity and the founding of the ANC, its failure is the

conceptual absence of imagining African modernity outside European and Western-centric modernity. This point is particularly important in that this generation existed as an appendage to European colonial masters in terms of aspirations rather than master Africa's detachment from colonialism. This can be illustrated by looking at the arguments spoken by Tiyo Soga in defence of the status quo, as pointed out by Masilela in stating:

Tiyo Soga refused to point that the intervention of European modernity in Africa served to enrich Europe's economic interests. He also refused to implicate Christianity as the darker side of European modernity. Like many other generations of intellectuals who came after him, they all followed his implicit edict that African modernities were inconceivable in isolation from Christian principles. On yet another plane, Tiyo Soga argued that the horrors of European modernity should not be utilized to negate its positive contributions. He posed the question as to whether was there another path to African history other than that opened by European modernity. Also, like many of the Christian African intellectuals who followed in his wake, was not so much the intervention of European modernity per se, but rather its nature which was at issue. (Masilela 2009b:1-2 *emphasis added*)

The upshot of this imagination on the part of the New African intellectuals worked to the advantage of the Western and European interest, which resulted in the colonisation of Africans. Africans were complicit to imperial and colonial agenda, Clapham (1970) argues, “[b]y talking of rights, consent, and self-determination, deploying ideas with which the colonial government was broadly in sympathy”. Van Hensbroek (2000:2) has, for example, in relation to the West African societies, argued that African “western educated elites resisted the colonial administration by making use of the vocabulary of this same colonial power, for instance by claiming liberties, rights, democratic influence and self-determination”. In this particular space, “[t]he sociological environment in towns such as Freetown and Cape Coast included many aspects of British social life, and even the explicit political objective of the movement looks rather pro-British from our contemporary view” (Van Hensbroek 2000:2). This point is particularly important in locating the New African Intellectuals within the broader

context of Westernised educated Africans whose colonial education or missionary education motivated them toward complacency.

Moeletsi Mbeki, in analysing the New Africanism articulated and propelled by Westernised African Intellectuals, argues that their struggle was not about the upliftment of their people. According to Mbeki (2009:8), “[i]ts fight was always for inclusion in the colonial system so that it, too, could benefit from the spoils of colonialism”. In other words, they did not demand the emancipation of African societies from European domination but for their inclusion in the European colonial state so that they, too, could enjoy the privileges of the colonial state alongside Europeans. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015a:1) makes a similar point that “[o]ne distinguishing feature of the first generation of African nationalists is that they initially fought for inclusion into the colonial power structures”. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015a:1), “[t]hey used personal acquisition of modern education as a justification for demanding inclusion”. Indeed the New Africanism which produced the ANC of the time was a political by-product of Western elitism, which gestured the struggle for black upliftment but at the same time sidelined the un-Westernised (un-educated) Africans. It was only when the establishment of Union of South Africa refused to accommodate them that they formed the ANC and mobilised the black masses on the ground as foot soldiers of resistant.

Important to note in response to the critics that the Tiyo Soga’s generation was complicit to the Western imperial agenda of European expansion is that they are in fact uncritical of the contextual limitations of the period this generation lived. In fact, it is a remarkable accomplishment that Tiyo Soga’s generation was the first to engage the notion of European modernity and the struggle to construct African modernity in spite of not having the point of reference to lean on. In other words, their insight was not in response to the understanding of imperialism and colonialism, but alone inspired by the self-imagination and idea of development from tradition to modernity. The crisis of Christianity, missionary schools, and capitalism only emerged after this generation had departed, when the nineteenth century unfolded. Still, Tiyo Soga was conscious of the threat posed by the intervention of European modernity in Africa. Despite lacking the imperial and colonial experience, Tiyo Soga and his generation had anticipated that the expansion of European modernity served to enrich Europe’s economic interests, hence the need to create African modernity. The contention here is that the

Tiyo Soga generation has to be charged according to the space and condition they lived in.

Peter Walshe, in examining the formation of political attitudes in South Africa as they evolved in the early years of the nineteenth century, refers to the result of a complex set of influences in stating:

While the range of conditioning factors was to become more complex as the twentieth century progressed and several strains of thought were to develop, including a radical expectation that Africans would have to develop their own and predominant political power for the reform of society, South Africa nevertheless experienced the growth of a remarkably moderate African nationalism concerned with non-radical ideals. The factors giving rise to this ideological development were clearly present by the establishment of Union in 1910 and they continued to exercise a profound influence in later decades. (Walshe 1970:2)

It is important to restate and emphasise that Tiyo Soga (1829-1871) is the first African educated intellectual in the South African history of New African Intellectuals. Tiyo Soga was deeply engaged in the question to forge and construct the African modernity parallel to European modernity. His writings, written in both Xhosa and English, impressed upon the New African Intellectuals especially in the next century who sought to emulate him, and whose preoccupation was to make sense of the meaning and implication of European modernity in the light of the Christianity and colonial education system in South Africa. It must also be noted that Tiyo Soga, being the first educated African intellectual in South Africa and perhaps in all of Africa, did not have a point of reference when making the representation of African modernity. He expressed the idea of African modernity when it was not popular or less known on the continent, and indeed before the arrival of Edward Blyden and Alexander Crummell on the African continent.

For Tiyo Soga, the historical issue of the Black Atlantic was fundamental to the construction of African modernities. His historical vision and writings on African modernity left a profound influence on New African intellectuals such as Pixley ka

Isaka Seme, Solomon T. Plaatje and other African intellectuals of the twentieth century.

What distinguishes the New African Intellectuals that Tiyo Soga, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, and Solomon Plaatje are part of from the generation that succeeded them is precisely the ideological question in terms of the conservative and radical modernisers. Mangcu (2012:281), in comparing them, argues, “[w]hile conservative modernisers dominated the African National Congress for the first half of the twentieth century, the radical modernizers came into the ascendancy in the mid-1940s with the formation of the African National Congress Youth League”. What began as the customary practices of indigenous people working with the philosopher-kings and prophet-intellectuals to sustain the livelihood of the African communities and peoples came to be denounced by educated African intellectuals who had been Christianised and educated in the missionary schools in the name of the so-called European modernity, and this time around the European modernity was been rejected and replaced by new ideology of New Africanism which is propelled by the strand of radical modernisers.

iii. Radical African Intellectuals

The third group consisted of young radical Africans of the New African intellectuals that included A.P. Mda, Albert Luthuli, Anton Lembede, Jordan Ngubane, Nelson Mandela, Congress Mbata, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and others. This generation founded the ANC Youth League in the 1940s and was united by their adherence to the quest to replace European modernity with New Africanism. The emergence of the radical African intellectuals in the youth league effectively took control of the mother body ANC and revolutionise the organisation to the challenges of the 1950s and beyond. It was set, however that “[t]he ANCYL was never to set itself up in opposition to the mother body but rather to change it from within, to help the ANC to represent the African masses more effectively and more robustly” (Clive Glaser cited in Ngwana 2012:130). The accomplishments of this generation were the adoption of the Freedom Charter (1955), the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (1961) and the rise of Nelson Mandela as the first black president of South Africa following the victory of the ANC in the first democratic election on May 1994.

This generation took upon itself to reimagine the ANC conservative ideology into “a new ideology of ‘New’ African Nationalism that enabled the organisation to completely modernise its political imagination by adopting the Action Programme of 1949 within the New African Movement” (Masilela 2003:37). The conservative European modernity of Tiyo Soga, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, John Langalibalele Dube and others into African modernity was challenged by this generation of young radical Africans within the ANCYL. The Action Programme “articulated a different conceptualization of the dialectic between tradition and modernity that shifted the cultural movement from conservatism to some form of progressivism” (Masilela 2003:37). In terms of their ideological orientation, Masilela (2003:37) adds that “[t]hey were new a breed of New African intellectuals who did not necessarily seek to sever the relationship between New Negro modernity and New African modernity, but rather, appropriated a different constellation of New Negro intellectuals of the calibre of Richard Wright and Langston Hughes”. Indeed an ideological shift occurred within the ANC from conservatism to progressivism which would come to redefine the New Africa Movement and, in particular, the political history of South African politics and black intellectual tradition.

Xolela Mangcu, in examining the influence of the ANC on the youth league, argues that though the league was still propelled by radicalism, this did not sit well with the elder generation, which agitated for the conservative ideology. It is as a result of this ideological interference and clash that “Sobukwe later broke from the ANC completely to form the Pan Africanist Congress which was even more radical in its demands for the return of the land to black people” (Mangcu 2012:281). The main reason for the splitting, according to Mangcu, is thus:

The Pan Africanists felt that by adopting the Freedom Charter, a document which stated that the land belonged to both blacks and whites, the ANC had lost its claim to be the custodian of African nationalism. Under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe, the Pan African Congress (PAC) set the figure of 100,000 as the target for membership. Seeking to take the initiative from the ANC, the PAC led a countrywide anti-pass campaign, culminating in the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. The government banned the PAC before it could realize its membership target. (Mangcu 2012:281)

The intervention of the radical African intellectuals in the construction of African modernity was characterised by undermining the European and Western-centric modernity in South Africa with the aim to displace and replace it with African-centred modernity. Specifically, this took forms of appropriating the African American cultural movement of the Harlem Renaissance, including political protest, radicalism, protest literature and other means deemed necessary. Gevisser (2009) in examining the prevailing African political literature of the 1930s notes that the most prominent writer of this period was, among others H.I.E Dhlomo, an essayist who coined the phrase 'New African'. Dhlomo pronounced: "The New African, knows where he belongs and what belongs to him; where he is going and how; what he wants and the methods to obtain it" (Gevisser 2009:26). The New African, Dhlomo wrote, is "proud, patriotic, sensitive, alive, and sure of himself and his ideas and ideals" (Gevisser 2009:26). Indeed the 1930s was characterised by forceful intervention of New Africanism in South African struggle to displace European modernity and its replacement with African modernity. The prevailing ideology among educated Africans of the time was resistance toward Western acculturation and European assimilation.

It is important to further highlight that the black intellectual and political resistant during this period was also given impetus in response to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. Lefuo, in the context of the political development under the establishment of the Union of South Africa, notes that Afrikaner nationalism sought to strengthen white domination and black oppression. "They experienced domination by the British government, but were themselves 'racist'" (Lefuo 1996:31). Afrikaner nationalism intended to preserve Afrikaner supremacy at the expense of suppressing blacks and their cultural practices. "Indeed, they came to be seen by the African nationalist movements as its main enemy" (Lefuo 1996:31). Masilela (2013:5) argues that the ANC Youth League's Action Programme "was a response that only African Nationalism was capable of defeating Afrikaner (white) nationalism". Indeed it is during this particular period that African nationalist politics gathered new motivation; the Mandelas, the Sisulus, and the Tambos attracted angry reactions from Afrikaner nationalism. Gevisser (2009:29) notes that "African nationalism—one developed by the ANC Youth League—was an aggressive nationalism that would restore to Africans their sense of self-worth and dignity". Govan Mbeki never became the member of the

Youth League but of the New African Intellectuals, and indeed was a strong proponent of the New Africanism.

Indeed, the 1930s is the era through which Govan and Epainette Mbeki (Thabo's parents) were proclaiming the New Africanism, both educated and trained school teachers embracing modernity in their own African way. Williams (2009:19) notes that "[i]t is as a result of this experience that the 'New African' develops a new consciousness and understanding of himself or herself as a marginal subject in the civic space of colonial governmentality". Subject to the ideology of New Africanism, emanating from the African America's Harlem Renaissance, this generation openly expressed their Africanism in the spaces of the Whites. As exemplified by Gevisser (2009:26), "Govan and Epainette Mbeki came of age and came to political consciousness in this moment: began to reject, forcefully, the colonial aspirations of their own parents; they discarded the identity of the 'black Englishman'". The radical nationalism that inspired the black identity, black politics, black trade unionism, black resistant movements including poetry and music were trends that characterised the entrance of New Africans in South Africa. These practices as adopted from the Harlem Renaissance can be said to be important development toward the anti-colonial struggle against apartheid and racism in South Africa. Gevisser stresses this in stating:

Subject to both the popular culture and the political ideologies emanating from black America, the New Africans of Govan and Epainette's generation claimed urban space in an entirely new way: They danced to jazz, they experimented with hairstyles, they mixed with whites as equals, they occupied South Africa's cities not as migrant laborers but as permanent residents. (Gevisser 2009:26)

Govan and Epainette's political ideology of New Africanism is particularly important in helping to locate the political and intellectual tradition of Mbeki. Indeed, Mbeki's political and intellectual thought is product of the black intellectual and political tradition located within the context of the New Africanism in the ANC and embraced by his parents. He was part of the last generation of the New African Movement before it was ended in 1960 by crushing of the Apartheid regime. That the political ideology of the New Africanism impacted profoundly on Mbeki's intellectual and political thought is evident in his Africanism. For example, his declaration of the African Renaissance

resonates with Isaka Seme, who in 1906 said: “I am an African” and called for the “regeneration” of the African continent. As noted by Gevisser (2009:29), “[m]any years later, Thabo Mbeki would place himself squarely in this Seme-Lembede tradition: “I am an African”. In addition, Gevisser adds, “[h]is particular combination of a call for an African Renaissance and for the moral reawakening of a dissolute people comes straight out of Lembede’s mystical, prophetic writings (Gevisser 2009:29). Mbeki spoke of the need for the African renaissance, through NEPAD and AU, in part so that Africans can undertake to define themselves including the self-determination of the social, economic and political destiny, rather than be dictated upon by others.

Masilela, concerning the educational background of the generation of radical African intellectuals, posits that all New African Intellectuals had been educated in the European mission schools. He notes that (although) these intellectuals appreciated the missionary education imparted to them, eventually, they became opposed to it and resisted their process of acculturation into Westernisation and Europeanisation. Southall (2014) notes that the missionary education system was intended to make African students idolise Western values and despise African tradition. The earliest and most prominent of these was Lovedale College in the Eastern Cape, established by the United Free Church Mission in 1841. Others included St. Matthews, established by the Anglicans in 1855, Healdtown by the Methodists in 1857, and Adams College by the American Board of Education (ABE) in the 1930s, as noted by Southall. The South African Native College, Fort Hare, founded in 1916, provided post-elementary education to most of the radical African intellectuals. During the first half of the twentieth century, Fort Hare was to become a centre of black intellectual activity, with nearly all radical African intellectuals having studied there and young Africans coming into consciousness of the racial system of black repression and resistance to it.

Indeed, Mbeki belongs to the very last generation of educated black South Africans to receive the mission-education from the Lovedale College, although he did not enter Fort Hare College. He left South Africa to complete his undergraduate and post-graduate master’s degree in Britain at the University of Sussex. In South Africa, “he was schooled in the very last class to receive a mission-school education before apartheid’s Bantu Education came crashing down onto the expectations of black South Africans” (Gevisser 2009:3-4). Dismayed by the system of Bantu education, which only

trained blacks to be semi-professional and inferior to whites, black students resorted to forms of resistance in protest against white domination of blacks. Southall (2014:5) notes that “[p]reference was therefore often expressed that Natives should be restricted to industrial subjects, as academic subjects were deemed unsuitable for a ‘less developed’ or ‘backward’ race”, with only white students allowed to enrol academic courses. Discrimination in education system gave impetus in the struggle to displace the apartheid domination in South Africa. Indeed Mbeki is part of the last generation of the New African Intellectuals in the New African Movement which ended in 1960, whose role entailed the anti-apartheid struggle and liberation movement.

Lefuo, utilising Walshe (1970) and Kono (1984), argues that the rise of the ideology of the black nationalism in the ANC was in response to the Afrikaner nationalism and black’s opposition and resistance to colonialism and apartheid’s system of racism. Black nationalism, according to Lefuo (1996:33), “represent[s] the reaction of the blacks against their systematic exclusion in the modern economy and their evolutionary participation in the country’s political institutions”. It is because to the new ideology of African nationalism in the intervention of the New Africa Movement that propelled the New Africanism. It enabled the black educated intellectuals to move confidently between tradition and modernity in their own African terms. Black nationalism that emerged under the youth league during the early 1940s serves as an important backdrop against which black intellectual tradition matured to be an ideological and political tool to resist the system of black oppression. Lefuo amplifies this point in stating the principles that envisioned black nationalism:

The ideology of black nationalism is that of an outward-looking nationalism, respectful of past traditions yet based on universal principles. Government is to involve the consent of the people, and authority is ultimately to reside in the citizens of all races inhabiting the territory. (Lefuo 1996:33)

Taking a step further, Lefuo added:

Initially, black nationalism, militated itself as a loose expression of tribal consciousness not organized into a formidable force through nationalist or political organizations. During the first few decades,

tribes were resisting and opposing white domination independently, which sometimes resulted into open hostility between blacks and whites. (Lefuo 1996:33)

The development of black nationalism and belief in it by radical African intellectuals in the youth league is a major feature of South Africa's black intellectual and political tradition. Glaser (2012:8) notes that "[t]he current Youth League-led by Julius Malema likes to draw comparisons between itself and the generation of Mandela & Co., which founded the movement in the 1940s and effectively seized control of the ANC in 1949". This resonance is made in the light of the role and influence the youth league made at the 2008 ANC National Elective Conference in replacing Thabo Mbeki with Jacob Zuma as president of the ANC and South Africa. According to Glaser, the current youth league's influence is important but not as overwhelming as that of the 1940s generation. It is argued here that Mbeki's intellectual identity identifies more with the black intellectual tradition of the 1940s than with the current generation of black intellectuals. It is due to the teachings of his parents, the missionary education, the New Africanism, the tradition of the ANC, the Lembede-Seme tradition, the liberation struggle that he adhered to, and the ideals of non-racial South Africa.

While various aspects can be used to examine the intellectual thought of Mbeki, the important tradition that helps define his political and intellectual thought is the black intellectual tradition that prevailed in the New African Movement. Indeed the ideology of New Africanism has coloured him differently from other black public intellectuals in South Africa's post-1994 era. The resilience in Mbeki's intellectual persona and unique positionality in the post-1994 partly lies in the fact that he is the product of the confluence of the influences of Tiyo Soga, Isaka Seme, Sol Plaatjie, Anton Lembede, Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, O.R Tambo and others who belonged to the generations of the 1870s and the 1960s, as well as New Africanism which articulated and propelled the content and aspirations of the African modernity, non-racialism, and liberation of South Africa. That Mbeki's intellectual and political thought of New Africanism remains relevant is confirmed and given credence by many scholars (Gevisser 2009). Williams, in respect and appreciation of Mbeki's intellectual and political thought and the contribution of his New Africanism in African politics, writes:

Mbeki has emerged as a major intellectual figure in the ANC and in the formation of the 'New South Africa' and his political thought has helped to mould the nature of South African politics in the 21st Century as well as to articulate a vision for the future of the African continent. Mbeki's declaration of an African Renaissance, his contribution to the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Mbeki's musings on the nature of South African society in the post-apartheid era all speak to a rich body of intellectual and political thought that has spanned a lifetime of political activism. (Williams 2009:4)

Mbeki is an ardent proponent of a black intellectual tradition and New African nationalism. It is for this reason that his ideology of Africanism finds expression in his political leadership, speeches, policies programmes, both for South Africa and African continent, and most notably, NEPAD and AU. For Mbeki, the New African represents the past and present as they unfold into future South Africa. Unlike the current political generation in the ANCYL that denounces the political history of the past, Mbeki embodies it in all of his speeches. For example, his classic 'I am an African' speech pays homage to the past and present as black and white unite in diversity to create new South Africa that Archbishop Bishop Desmond Tutu described as the 'rainbow nation of God'. Mbeki's Africanism proclaims the common vision of South Africa's non-racial and non-sexist democracy. Europeans, the British and Afrikaners, according to Mbeki they too are Africans—they cannot be denied African citizenship in South Africa. In articulating the ideology of non-racial and inclusive Africanism, Mbeki resembles the ideology of Seme, Lembede and Mandela.

The political ideas that inform the intellectual and political thought of Mbeki are part of the black intellectual tradition and have indeed been enhanced and shaped by the political conditioning in South Africa and outside South Africa. His early conditioning was a result of the tradition of missionary education, which witnessed the metamorphic thought of political consciousness, the politics in the youth league, British education in the liberal tradition, political training in the communist Soviet Union, the tradition of ANC-led liberation movement, and African teachings during the period of exile in Africa. Thomas Ranuga, in relation to the tradition set in missionary education and the

liberal education in Britain, asserts that these traditions played an important role in terms of entrenching the concepts of peace, justice, and equality (Ranuga 1982). Indeed with the ending of apartheid, there was a shift in Mbeki's ideology from radicalism toward universal claims and politics of peace, justice, and equality. Even after he advocated universal peace, justice, and equality, the ideologies of Africanism—Pan-Africanism, Negritude, Garveyism, Black Consciousness—indeed impressed upon his thinking. Mbeki has personally insisted that he is a simple product of the teaching and example of African liberation leaders from Gamal Nasser to Nelson Mandela in his admission (for full quote, refer to chapter 1, page 8).

Adekeye Adebajo in examining the political thought of Mbeki argues that “Mbeki's political leadership must in fact be understood within an African context” (Adebajo 2016:14). Mbeki is a historical figure that reflects the extended elements and influences from Abdul Gamal Nasser to Nelson Mandela and the African political movements of the 1940s and 1950s. Adebajo is of the view that Mbeki embodies the similar identities of Kwame Nkrumah. He backed up this point in stating:

Mbeki can in some way be regarded as the present age's Nkrumah. Both Mbeki and Nkrumah believed in Africa's ancient glory and sought to build modern states that restored the continent's past. Both were renaissance men: visionary and cosmopolitan intellectuals committed to pan-Africanism and to restoring the dignity of black people whether in Harare, Harlem of Haiti. (Adebajo 2016:14)

At this point it surface to locate Mbeki's intellectual and political thought within the black intellectual tradition that forms part of the New African Movement, the New African Intellectuals, as well as modern African political thought, which is the result of the diasporic thought he acquired in exile. And this does not undermine that ANC constitute the centre of gravity in the intellectual and political thought of Mbeki. In the context of the ANC, Mbeki's thought can be located in the two traditions of the organisation—radical modernisers and conservative modernisers—that forms part of a broader history of the New Africa Movement. In working through the political thought of Mbeki, Williams (2009:*ii*) emphasises that “Mbeki's thought cannot be located solely in one political tradition and that the movement in his political ideas corresponds to the different phases of South African political history”. Indeed there has been movements

in Mbeki's thought in-between the two traditions of the ANC in terms of radicalism and conservatism during the different phases of the South African political history. Williams emphasises this point in stating:

During the struggle against apartheid Mbeki's political thought has a distinctly revolutionary Marxist character but as result of the transition to freedom there is a movement towards issues of race and culture as well as the appropriation of certain features of Marxist-Leninism in Mbeki's idea of political leadership and political practice. (Williams 2009:ii)

In the context of the current ANC, Mangcu portrays Jacob Zuma in the light of the Old Africans and Mbeki in the light of New Africans. Here, Mangcu utilises Zuma's strand of politics to define radicalism and Mbeki the conservatism in an attempt to make sense of the modern day replay of the nineteenth century. 'Zuma, a man who had never seen the inside of a classroom, is against the highly articulate graduate of Sussex University Mbeki for the leadership of the ANC' (Mangcu 2012:293). In this deployment, Zuma belongs to those who rejected (amaqaba) Western civilisation and Mbeki belongs to those who accepted (amakholwa) it. The defeat of Mbeki by Zuma in the ANC leadership contest according to Mangcu ended the dominance of the conservative modernisers and inaugurated the dispensation of radical modernisers. This ideological deployment has also seen the Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe (2006) emerging as a strong critic of radical modernisers in arguing that Zuma is a modern day Nongqause whose politics embraces a primitive religion that thrives on rhetoric and populism, and out of it comes nothing of progress but disaster alone. This is told in his *South Africa's Second Coming: The Nongqawuse Syndrome*, in which he makes it clear that he is opposed to the radical strand of the ANC and embraces the conservative ideology.

Indeed this historical deployment is important to understanding a modern day replay of the nineteenth century social and cultural wars in terms of African modernity versus European modernity and how this division is continuing to inform the political ideology of the ANC leadership. But this deployment, as from upon Mangcu and Mbembe, is not sufficient in particular to capture the movements in Mbeki's thought as his ideas constantly shift from one ideology to another. Mangcu (2012:293) criticises Mbembe

that he “reduces politics to the realm of the metaphysical’ in relation to the logic of ‘Manichean game where, on the one hand, is a uniform delusional mob defending Zuma, and on the other, a rational mob defending Mbeki”. But Mangcu’s deployment of conservative moderniser to understanding Mbeki’s ideology also suffers historical inadequacy in that Mbeki used to embrace the outward Marxist radical political ideology during his youth days and indeed advocated for political violence to bring about liberation in South Africa, and Mangcu is silent on that regard. Mbeki’s political and intellectual thought, which has been shaped and enhanced by the different phases of South African political history, is a major feature of black intellectual tradition and indeed, a critical contribution to the history of modern African political thought.

Conclusion

This Chapter employed Ntongela Masilela’s classic account of the New Africa Movement and utilised his analysis of the New African Intellectuals in order to foreground the political history of South African black intellectual tradition. The Chapter established that the black intellectual tradition is premised on the long history which dates far back to Tiyo Soga (1862) and still continuing and this time embodied and propelled in the modern day politics of the ANC (this does not exclude other Africanists organisations like Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) which continues to aspire to the political philosophies of Tiyo Soga, Sol Plaatjie, Pixley Isaka Seme, Anthony Lembede, A.P. Mda, Nelson Mandela and others in the history of New Africa Movement). In part, this Chapter focused on the term modernities in reference to European and African concepts to foreground the current ideological conundrum of conservatism-radicalism dualism in the political and intellectual discourse and the broader society. Indeed the conservatism-radicalism dualism is a historical phenomenon which provides the backdrop against which the modern political and intellectual thought can be analysed. In essence, rather than this concluded as ideological dichotomies that are polarising the nation, it is taken as part of a broader black intellectual tradition which informs the modern political thought.

Of course, this reference is made to contextualise and locate the nature and content of Mbeki’s intellectual and political thought within the black intellectual tradition. As pointed out above, Mbeki’s thought resonates with the black intellectual tradition and is indeed a major feature of the modern African political thought. It is critical to note

also that Mbeki's intellectual and political thought not only benefited from black intellectual tradition but, in turn, benefited the black intellectual tradition. In particular, Mbeki has been able to accommodate both radical and conservative strands and political constituencies in his approach toward building a non-racial, non-sexist democratic South Africa for all who live in it, black and white. This constitutes a critical contribution to the political history of African political thought, specifically in relation to the metamorphosis of black intellectual.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mbeki's ideological location: intellectual positionality

Introduction

This chapter explores the ideological location of Mbeki, and his intellectual positionality, as a backdrop against which his intellectual thought and ideas may be analysed. For this purpose, it is essential to trace and understand the historical and political circumstances that shaped and enhanced his thinking. This is done in three ways: (i) locating the political formation, (ii) locating the intellectual ideology, and (iii) the path to political power. All three have a bearing on Mbeki's thinking and hinge on the understanding of his intellectual orientation. The submission here is that Mbeki's socialisation in apartheid South Africa, his education in Britain, his training in Soviet Union, and his deployment on the African continent by the ANC had a profound impact on his politics and political thought. The ideological location of Mbeki, his intellectual positionality, is understood here as a standpoint from which he speaks and analyses the African condition as far as issues of politics, ideas, and power are concerned.

Important to note here is that this chapter is not framed in a biographical approach, which adopts historical events in sequence, but a critical engagement with factors underpinning Mbeki's thinking. As much as this chapter is framed around Mbeki the man as a unit of analysis, at the same time, it also delves deeper into understanding the environment and conditions through which he lived. As it is widely acknowledged, people are the product of their environment. It is also important to acknowledge that the intellectual and political thought of Mbeki may be convincing or not convincing depending on the ideological position from which the truth is being looked at. In a strong way, this chapter attempt to give a balanced account, for it submits that Mbeki's thinking was shaped and reshaped from different entry points and perspectives rather than a single strand.

Locating the political formation

Thabo Mbeki is a politician and public intellectual of South African origin. He is the former President of South Africa (1999-2008), former Chairperson of the African Union

(AU), and former leader of the African National Congress (ANC). Mbeki spent almost three decades in exile and played a pivotal role in the ANC's anti-apartheid struggle and the liberation movement. Gevisser (2009:1) posits that "Mbeki is, at least as much as Mandela, the primary architect of South Africa's transition to democracy and the post-apartheid state". Mbeki, in other words, is the founding father of post-1994 South Africa and the epitome of non-racial democracy. In addition, "[t]hrough the years of transition, he helped build one the world's most respected constitutional democracies in the world" (Adebajo 2016:8). As Chairperson of the AU, he mediated in the peaceful resolution of conflicts in a number of African states, including Zimbabwe, DRC, Sudan (Darfur), as well as steering the continental initiatives such as African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Mbeki is, according to Adebajo (2016:7), "the most important African political figure of his generation". For Molefi Kete Asante, Mbeki is "a distinguished African intellectual and politician" (Asante 2018:214). The political persona of Mbeki is that which is linked to his intellectual contribution. On that note, he combines the political and the intellectual in the same persona. It is in the observation of Sean Jacobs and Richard Calland that:

Thabo Mbeki is considered one of the most important leaders of his generation: In South Africa, where he served as the country's deputy president from 1994 to 1999 and as president since June 1999, as a leading African statesman, and as a spokesperson for the developing world. His words command attention in the political power centres of Washington, London, and Berlin and, whether this is intended or not, have consequences not only for his country but also for the continent. (Jacobs and Calland 2002:5)

Mbeki was born on 18 June 1942. He originates from Transkei, a region of the Eastern Cape Province in democratic South Africa, in the small village known as Mbewuleni. Mbewuleni is one of the most dispossessed rural villages of South Africa, "which the apartheid rulers defined as part of the Transkei Bantustan" and the "nineteenth-century British colonialists had named British Kaffraria" (Roberts 2007:18). The natives there and in nearby villages, throughout the years of colonial and apartheid conquest, struggled in their determination to resist the imposition of foreign control and dispossessions of land and livelihood. It is in this part of South Africa that the heroes

and heroines of the anti-apartheid struggle and liberation movement emerged—that is, the likes of Mandela, Mbeki, Sisulu, Tambo, and Hani—passing the struggle from one generation to another. As such, Mbeki can be said to be among a diminishing generation of young activists of the 1960s who grew up in this historic region and whose political consciousness was much influenced by his environment and the people around him who were fighting for their freedom.

Mbeki is one of four children (Linda, Moeletsi, Jama) of Govan and Epainette Mbeki. Govan was a leading black intellectual and activist in the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movement, founder of 'Umkhonto we Sizwe' (the military wing of the ANC), and one of the most famous political prisoners in the world, having served 23 years sentence in prison alongside Nelson Mandela. Bundy (1991:19) notes that "Govan was one of the most influential leaders of the underground structures of the ANC and the Communist Party". On the other hand, Thabo's mother, Epainette, was a member of the Communist Party in the early 1930s. According to Bundy (1991:12), she is the "second black woman in South Africa to join the party". She was a member of the ANC Women's League as well. On that note, Mbeki is "the son of freedom fighters" and "had in fact been born into the movement, which he considered nothing less than his family" (Gevisser 2009:1). Govan and Epainette were deeply involved in South African politics, the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles, as well as liberation movement, for the best part of their lives. That being so, the formative years of Mbeki's political and intellectual praxis can primarily be traced to his parents for their influence that instilled into him ideological consciousness.

Noor-Mahomed (2016:45) argues that "[b]oth Govan and Epainette understood the insecure environment in which black South Africans lived; as a result, they aimed to equip and to empower their children, to enable them to face the harsh circumstances in South Africa". Their children, including Thabo, imbibed their parents' political ideology, and they too were interested in improving the social and political condition of their time, according to Noor-Mahomed. In South Africa, during the era through which Mbeki was born and socialised, native black South Africans were stripped of their rights, treated as inferior, and dominated by European/white racist settlers who had become their colonisers. The stripping of the rights of Black South Africans did not begin with the advent of Apartheid, as some commentators seem to imagine; it

preceded Apartheid. Through the years of apartheid, Abrams (2008:28) remarks, “a series of increasingly oppressive laws were passed, making the already difficult lives of the black citizens even more difficult”. The black majority were subjected to legalised forms of dispossession, exclusion and marginalisation, including racism, exploitation and even killings, which resulted in the permanent state of black subjugation. Thabo’s parents took it upon themselves to resist the racial system of oppression, and this resistance imparted political consciousness to their children. Because of this, Thabo grew up understanding that his parents were engaged in the struggle to liberate the blacks from domination and oppression by whites and followed their footsteps.

At the tender age of 10, Mbeki was already understanding the injustice and discrimination of the racist ‘only white’ regime on the lives of the black population. According to Gevisser (2009), Mbeki, then ten years old, and his cousin Kabedi had volunteered for ANC to defy the regime. They collected the used bottles and sold them to raise the membership fee. Upon arrival for registration at the recruitment centre, they were informed they were young to join the ANC and should come back when they were grown up. As narrated by Abrams (2008:54), “[a]lthough they were sad that they were not able to join, they knew that it was only a matter of time before they’d be old enough”. In a profound sense, this accounts for the political consciousness and the longing to be part of the ANC and the liberation struggle, and this informs the period through which Mbeki lived. The young Mbeki knew that important political developments were happening in South Africa (Hadland & Rantao 2000). As Hadland and Rantao (2000:14) note, “Mbeki knew the National Party government, which won the whites-only election in 1948, had passed many apartheid laws”. These laws touched every aspect of the black people’s lives, including the Mbeki family. Hadland and Rantao (2000:14) argue that “[t]hese laws included the banning of communism, which both Thabo’s parents believed in, and group-areas laws which kept white and black people living in separate parts of town”. Furthermore, Bantu education laws which meant that black students could only receive a sub-standard education were added. Apartheid created a condition where blacks were severely restricted and the whites privileged.

Specifically, the passing of the Suppression of Communism Act (1950) meant that the political beliefs of Thabo’s parents were now illegal. Subsequent to this Act, Thabo’s

father was fired from his teaching position because of communist activities, he was an ardent communist and a leader. Under the Group Areas Act (1950), Black people could not reside in the same neighborhood as white people or share in public spaces. This Act confined blacks to live only in township or homeland areas and not wherever they wanted, a law which provoked a strong reaction within and outside the country. Apartheid's introduction of the Bantu Education Act (1953) meant that black students could only receive enough education to perform manual labour but less to equip them for professional occupations and skills similar to whites. And the meetings of more than ten people were banned under the Riotous Assemblies Act (1956), meaning that blacks were restricted from holding mass meetings or protesting for their legitimate rights in the way that is permitted today. These were superseded by the Internal Security Act (1982), which allowed the state's security forces to detain without trial, long-term imprisonment in the name of treason, and killing by shooting and hanging. In response to these draconian laws, Abrams (2008:54) notes, "Govan spent even more time teaching young people about politics and what they could do to help change the system". Thabo is asked what led him to enter politics at an early age, he responded: "[b]oth the family circumstances of my upbringing and the fact of apartheid oppression which impacted us as young people made it inevitable that... I would have to be involved... in politics and the liberation struggle" (Mbeki 2013, interview). Important to note here is the political condition of black oppression by the Apartheid system, which made it impossible not to join the anti-apartheid struggle and liberation movement on the part of Mbeki and his generation of the 1960s.

Govan is asked when his son, Thabo, joined the ANC and responded by stating that he was "born into the ANC" (Jacobs and Calland 2002:5). This answer is, however, contradicted by other accounts. For instance, Dennis Abrams says Thabo joined the ANC Youth League in 1956. Both accounts are accurate since Mbeki is the son of the ANC leader who registered his ANCYL membership when he joined the school branch at Lovedale High School in 1956. His parents had sent him to Lovedale in Alice after completing his primary education. Missionaries founded Lovedale in 1841 and was the first South African high school to admit black students. Next to it across the Tyume River Valley stand another historic centre of black education named the University of Fort Hare. Lovedale and Fort Hare became home to many of Africa's future leaders, including Thabo's own father. These institutions became the epicentre of political and

intellectual activities by bringing together the racialised and oppressed African students from across the country and the continent. These, in turn, made possible the forging of African unity and also led to the formation of the ANC.

At Lovedale, Mbeki was actively involved in student politics, serving on the executive committee of the ANCYL and the Student Representative Council (SRC). In the Youth League's Lovedale branch, he was its secretary and the organiser for student affairs in the SRC, making him quickly become popular and noticeable. As Abrams (2008:57) remarks, "[t]his brought him to the attention of many influential people in the ANC. It also brought him to the attention of the school administration". Barney Pityana arrived in Lovedale a year after Mbeki had left following a student strike and thus affirmed this testimony. "I can claim to be among a diminishing band of young activists of the 1960s who grew up under and were much influenced in our political consciousness by Thabo Mbeki. Yes, I can say that I was in awe of him" (Pityana 2018:26). Mbeki was in Lovedale when the apartheid regime passed the Bantu Education Act (1953), a mandatory education system imposed upon black students, primarily intended to keep blacks inferior to white students. Being one of the student leaders, Mbeki was expelled from Lovedale for organising the student's strike, protesting Bantu Education Act. As a result, he moved back home to continue his education through St. John's College.

The following year, in 1960, Thabo was sent away by his parents to complete his A-Level examinations in Johannesburg. This comes after he had fathered a child named Kwanda Monwabise, with an underage girl, and he was only 16 years old. Hadland and Rantao (2000:22) argued that 1960 was the year that Mbeki was "struggling" with his life. The Sharpeville Massacre had taken place, killing 69 black protestors and 18 000 arrested in the wake of the government's state of emergency. Hadland and Rantao (2000:22-23) note that "one of the first to be detained was Thabo's father, who was dragged off to jail in Port Elizabeth". With all this going on, Thabo was unable to fully focus on his matric exam, and he did poorly on his results and attained only a second-class pass. If Hadland and Rantao's (2000:23) view that 'Thabo knew how brutal the security branch could be, what methods they used to torture and interrogate political 'inmates' is indeed correct, it is inevitable not to be destructed. Like any young person, Thabo had understandably been worried about his father and surely feared for his life,

more so in the light of the widespread killings of blacks by the government's security forces of the day.

In Johannesburg, Mbeki lived with the renowned advocate Duma Nokwe, leader of ANC and a member of the underground movement, in Soweto. Essop Pahad, who had encountered Mbeki upon arrival in Johannesburg and with whom became closest friends in exile, remembers him vividly as “very politically-minded” and calm, who threw himself into the ANC's youth politics. Pahad (2022) recollects: ‘The place I met Thabo was called Macosa House, where the now-banned ANC was run by Sisulu and Nokwe, in Ferreirasdorp. This place enabled us to develop a sense of comradeship, socialising together, and opening up opportunities. I must say that from the very first time I met him, I was very impressed by his demeanour. He already had a sharp mind and already beginning to understand and analyse things in the context of the banned ANC in 1960 and the drastic actions taken by the apartheid regime against black South Africans. He used to drive Nokwe and Sisulu to meetings and gatherings in and outside Soweto in Nokwe's old car from the very first time he came to Johannesburg. He was impressive with a powerful personality, warm and very friendly, and attracted to many of the young people in the Congress Movement’. On becoming a communist, “Mbeki attended a study group led by the leading white communists Bram Fischer and Michael Harmel” (Jacobs and Calland 2002:7). Pahad also suspects that Thabo may have been recruited into the underground movement at this period:

Nokwe and Sisulu were already members of the underground Communist Party of South Africa (now SACP), so presumably had been speaking to them privately in his discussions, because they wouldn't talk publicly as SACP membership was not known. (Pahad 2022, interview)

Following the government's state of emergency and the banning of the ANC in 1960, “Nokwe and Sisulu continued to run the now-illegal ANC from Macosa House, the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) headquarters” (Gevisser 2009:70). The Macosa House at the time was the ‘home of politics’ which played a key role in keeping the movement together according to Pahad. “And because of the presence of old members of the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (ANC armed wing), formed in December 1961, engaging in quite extensive discussions about the importance of armed struggle and

the necessity for the armed struggle to take place in the country, this created among us a favourable attitude toward the Soviet Union and socialist states and especially Cuba” (Pahad 2022). It is here that Sisulu and Nokwe handed Mbeki the political task of starting a new political formation called the African Students Association (ASA). At its first meeting, Mbeki was elected the first national secretary of the ASA. “Ernest Galo was president, and when he died mysteriously while in exile in Lesotho, Thabo Mbeki was thrust into the leadership of the organisation” (Pityana 2018:26). Basically, ASA was designed by ANC to mobilise African students in black schools and universities for the now-banned Youth League, and had its stronghold at the Non-European universities such as Fort Hare University as part of its far-sighted strategy of mobilisation (Gevisser 2009; Pahad 2022). Since ASA and Transvaal Indian Congress were not banned it was possible to use these structures to make public the views of the banned underground ANC, insisted Pahad.

As the ASA leader, Mbeki travelled across the country conducting rallies for black youth, talking about the Apartheid, the ANC’s policies, Freedom Charter, the liberation struggle, and so forth. As Pityana (2018:26-27) remarks, “[i]t was then, in that context, that I first got to know him in person and, later, to attend meetings that he attended as our leader – that is, until he left the country in 1962, which brought an end to the ASA’s activism in South Africa”. Mbeki, for Pahad (2022), from the beginning was a revolutionary nationalist instead of a narrow nationalist and that is why his circle of friends in Johannesburg was much wider than just people in the ANC. Pahad does not elaborate further this claim. There is no reason to deny this claim particularly in the light of the promotion of African partnership and Africa’s development in which Mbeki’s contribution to African politics is attested. In fact, his classic ‘I am an African’ and ‘African Renaissance’ speeches bear a testimony to Pahad’s assertion of Mbeki’s Africanism (this point will be explored more in detail in Chapter Eight).

Mbeki knew that important political events were taking place in South Africa. The apartheid regime had declared itself a republic, cutting its last bond with the British Empire. The ANC had been banned and declared illegal. The regime increased repressive laws, which allowed the police to detain anyone without trial. Many of the black leaders were arrested, imprisoned and even killed. ANC’s underground *Umkhonto We Sizwe* embarking on the armed struggle. Government security forces

arrested anyone they thought was fighting to overthrow the whites-only regime. Many people had been arrested, tortured and killed by the regime. Important to note in this regard is that it is this political life that helped to inform and shape the politics of Mbeki within the context of the ANC and anti-apartheid struggle. Mbeki told the journalists of his delight in meeting Nelson Mandela for the first time, whom black South Africans regarded as their hope to freedom from Apartheid. This he said in his interview with Adrian Hadland and Jovial Rantao, published in 'The Star' newspaper:

I met Nelson Mandela for the first time in 1961. I had travelled from the Eastern Cape to Johannesburg and on my arrival received a message that he wanted to see me. I was taken aback that Mandela wanted to see me. He invited me to his house in Orlando West for lunch. We sat and chatted for a long time about a whole lot of issues, about the problems in the ANC Youth League and the youth movements in general. When I recollect that meeting, I realise how our discussion illustrated Mandela's ability to be in touch with developments on the ground. To date, I do not know how Mandela knew that I was in town (quoted in Abrams 2008:59-60).

In 1962, ANC leadership felt that time was right for Mbeki to go into exile because political events were taking a violent turn. Leaders of the ANC were now embarking on an underground struggle in an act of armed resistance to the apartheid regime. Thabo's father, Govan was one of the underground's founding members of Umkhonto we Sizwe and a part of its high command. In Port Elizabeth, he created a unit designed to perform acts of sabotage (Abrams 2008). He knew that now was the best time for Thabo to leave the country (Abrams 2008). Thabo left South Africa with a group of 26 other young black activists on the instruction of the ANC. Mbeki's life and that of other activists were in danger if they stayed in South Africa (Jacobs and Calland 2002). As remarked by Hadland and Rantao (2000:19), "[i]t was agreed by the ANC that the young leaders of the future would leave and go to school or university in other countries where they would study in peace". They left South Africa masquerading as a football team, travelling through Botswana toward Zimbabwe, where they were arrested and detained in Bulawayo for two months. They expected to be deported to South Africa to face jail. As narrated by Gumede (2007:39), "[t]he white Rhodesian

authorities intended to deport him back to South Africa and the waiting security police, but British Labour member of parliament Barbara Castle intervened after being lobbied by the ANC, and Mbeki was granted asylum in Tanzania by President Julius Nyerere". From Tanzania, Mbeki received further instruction from ANC to proceed to Britain, where he enrolled at the University of Sussex, living with the then acting president of the banned ANC, O.R. Tambo, who effectively became his mentor. This was called exile. The aim was to bring him back to South Africa when the country was finally liberated from apartheid.

Tambo had left South Africa on the ANC orders to set up a base for exiled ANC members in Britain and elsewhere. Mbeki worked part-time with Tambo while enrolled at Sussex University. In England, Mbeki's politics often appeared contradictory, according to Jacobs and Calland, and Gumede. Jacobs and Calland (2002:7), for instance, argue that "Mbeki supported the Labour Party, then led by Harold Wilson, and was critical of the New Left revision of Marxism that swept [W]estern Europe in the mid- to late 1960s. He remained fiercely loyal to the Soviet Union, which was one of the ANC's sponsors, providing it with financial and educational support, arms, and military training" (Jacobs and Calland 2002:7). For Gumede (2007:39), "Mbeki's politics were orthodox left, but his professors imprinted on him an indelible suspicion of Soviet-style central planning". Taking a step further, Gumede adds, "[i]n fact, it is clear that his enduring political principles were formed by the British Labour Party of the 1960s. Eastern European or Soviet Marxist-Leninism, let alone African socialism as practised in the newly liberated African states of the era, never again held any attraction for Mbeki". The problem with Jacobs and Calland, and Gumede accounts is the problem to read history backward. To Mbeki, for instance, the issue of ideology was not important but to align with those who supported the course of ANC, the anti-apartheid struggle and the liberation movement. Essop Pahad was also in exile in England a year later, and reconnected with Mbeki at Sussex. They became lifelong friends. In an interview with this researcher, Pahad (2022) asserted: "Our relationship was always with the Young Communist League, with the left-wing section of the Labour Party especially young people in the Labour Party, and that time in the 1960s the young liberals were a very powerful progressive force, and we worked very closely with them". It is, therefore, not a contradiction as Jacobs and Calland, and Gumede

seem to project, but a political strategy to advance the objectives of the ANC-led struggle.

Locating the intellectual formation

The intellectual thought of Mbeki has been formed and shaped by many entries and perspectives and sometimes by an unexpected combination of strange forces. Positionality denotes the ideological location from which the subject thinks, theorises, and speaks (Mignolo 1994). It also refers to the epistemic foundation or 'loci of enunciation', that is, the point of departure (Mignolo 1994). In this case, in relation to Mbeki, positionality is the historical and political context that informed and shaped his intellectual thought and ideas. In short, positionality encapsulates the ideological location—that is, Mbeki's standpoint of thinking and subjectivity. The intellectual positionality of Mbeki is important to understanding his standpoint in articulating the notions of politics, ideas, and power as foregrounded in the African condition. The starting point is the environment and socialisation—being born, bred and socialised in apartheid South Africa—that conditioned his thinking and contributed to the foundational basis of his thinking. The period he lived in Britain, the Soviet Union, and Africa has also proven to be greatly influential on his political thought and ideas.

Though located in poor and rural South Africa of un-schooled peasants, the young Mbeki grew up exposed to much intellectual discussion that took place within the Mbeki family. Being the son of Govan, one of the leading liberation activists, an intellectual and ideologically doctrinaire, created in the young Thabo a point of reference from which to begin to think intellectually. Govan was a teacher and journalist by profession with a degree in politics and psychology from Fort Hare University (Bundy 1991). Mporo (2017a:59-60) notes that "Govan was a brooding intellectual who studied and read deeply in world literatures and classical thought, Marxist literature among them and his favourite subject". Mbeki's home had a 'small, but significant' library that was filled with books, according to Govan: "[t]here were novels, the English poets, quite a few Marxist books" (Gevisser 2009:37). As such, Govan's children were exposed to this collection of books and grew up reading them. Thabo is asked about his intellectual thought and the source of influence by Gevisser, and he went straight back to his parents:

“You see, we grew up with books around the home, and whenever we were together with the parents... you could say anything, and it would be discussed.” If you are brought up with books, he believes, “you begin soon enough to understand that there are many ideas in the world, and that it’s not shameful not to know about something. In fact, it would be shameful if you didn’t try and find out.” (Gevisser 2009:37)

Thabo imbibed his father’s Marxist ideological leaning through which he made sense of the lived experiences and the miseries of the villagers of Mbewuleni as a result of the government’s apartheid laws. The imprint of this historical consciousness was visible in his early writings, underpinned by a Marxist analysis, which locates South Africa’s problems within the emergence of bourgeois society (instead of race and racism). He quoted Marx and Engels in his earlier writings. For example, ‘Why I Joined the Communist Party (1971) and ‘The Historical Injustice’ (1978) bears testimony to this point. Like Govan, the young Thabo became a voracious reader who held stubbornly to his thought and ideas, reading all collections and even his father’s own volume of critical essays. There are more similarities than differences in their personalities. Adebajo (2016:28) notes that “Thabo certainly inherited his father’s sense of dress and his eloquence and articulateness, but also his coldness and emotional reserve as well as his single-minded focus on the liberation struggle”. Similarly, as chiefly narrated by Gevisser (2009:4), “Govan, the father to Thabo, put struggle before family and taught his children to do likewise”. According to Lenin, the true revolutionary forsakes his family and class in order to join the masses he is called to lead. Thabo carried this lesson throughout his life, as well as being ideological and intellectual as his father, and remains committed to the liberation of African people.

For almost 30 years Govan’s children and especially Thabo learned to live without his parents. Govan was imprisoned 24 years on Robben Island and Thabo forced to flee South Africa to live in exile. “For a total of 28 years, Thabo Mbeki was unable to return home to his family, friends, and beloved country” (Abrams 2008:16). Literally, his family members were lost to him. “Thabo’s brother, Jama Mbeki, his son, Kwanda Mbeki, and his cousin, Phindile Mfeti, all disappeared during the apartheid era. To this day, the family does not know what happened to them” (Abrams 2008:16). Govan’s family was more of political than biological unit, lacking in emotional connection, his

children were a mere biological appendage that he called comrades. Govan is asked, for example, of how he coped with the disappearance of his youngest son, Jama, and his grandson, Kwanda, and he thus responded: “When you go into war, if your comrade in front of you falls off his horse, you must not stop and weep. You jump over him into battle. You learn not to weep” (Gevisser 2009:43). And again, he was asked of how he felt about seeing his son Thabo after almost 24 years, and he responded by saying “Not much finer than seeing the others. You must remember that Thabo Mbeki is no longer my son. He is my comrade!” (Gevisser 2009:43). It was from his father, while growing up, that Thabo learned to be strong emotionally, and had hoped to help South African to overcome its historical past of apartheid and misery.

Thabo’s ideological development was further strengthened by the environment and the condition of life in his village. Thabo’s parents ran a shop in the part of the village whose population consisted of the kind of people called ‘amaqaba’, or ‘red people’ – the people who rubbed themselves with ochre, red mud, and dressed in traditional clothes – these being the peasants who remained steeped in the traditional ways even after the colonisation of this part of South Africa. These people had never been to school and could not read or write, and were by far the majority (Abrams 2008). Instead of Western-style clothes, they wore blankets. Instead of Christianity, they believed in the African tradition. They wore blankets instead of Western-style clothes, believed in African culture instead of Christianity, and were mostly poor (Abrams 2008). On the other hand, the other kind of people consisted of ‘amakholwa’, or ‘the Christians’ – these being people who went to school and dressed in European clothes – they were small in number but rich and had a direct link to white people (Abrams 2008). Although the Mbeki family was part of amakholwa, their children grew up attached to the ‘amaqaba’ because of the shop and its location in the part of the ‘amaqaba’ population. This, essentially, means that Thabo grew up exposed to the trials and miseries of the traditional rural African society of the day. The poor and the rich binaries of Mbewuleni would later in life inform Mbeki’s (1998b) proclamation of “South Africa’s two nations” thesis.

As young Thabo became literate, he was forced into understanding the suffering of black people and the world of hardships. Many of the villagers in Mbewuleni were peasants, had not gone to school and were illiterate, unable to read letters from family

members working far in the farms and mines. And with no phone services in Mbewuleni, they relied on letters to stay in touch with their families, most of them came to the Mbeki store to be assisted. Gevisser (2009:38) notes that, “[a]s a young boy, Thabo was a letter-reader and letter-writer for the illiterate adults in his community”. His father, Govan, says his children, especially Thabo, heard about things at an age when he should not have heard them. Through this role as a letter reader and writer Thabo became “privy to all the news communicated between migrant laborers in the cities and the people they left back home: their emotional pains and marital infidelities, their physical hardships, their longings their aspirations and the impossibilities of ever attaining them” (Gevisser 2009:38-39). That is why, Gevisser (2009:7) remarks, “[f]rom a very young age, Mbeki’s response to this condition had been to sublimate all emotions, all relationships, all desires, into the struggle for liberation”. It is this childhood experience and the hardship of life that quickly introduced Thabo to the world of hardship and indeed strengthened his level of consciousness and thought.

Like any general store in the rural village, the Mbeki store was more than just a shop. It was also a place for posting letters, advice, meetings, pharmaceuticals, help and other things one could think of. And providing this letter service carried with it an unwritten rule binding the young Thabo to confidentiality. As a result, this explains the reason why Mbeki, in his political approach to this day, is a kind of leader who prefers to work secretly and get things done behind the scene. He was always secretive and this did not endear him to all sections of the ANC-led liberation movement, particularly when he carried out the ‘secretive talks’ with apartheid’s white regime, with some comrades feeling being sidelined or betrayed. In the show of this dissatisfaction, Gevisser (2009) notes that “[w]hat angered Thabo Mbeki’s detractors most was not so much that he was talking to the ‘Boers’ but that he was not talking to *them*”. Growing up, it was prohibited of Thabo and his siblings that they must say anything at all about the news contained in the letters, excerpt to their mother. The Mbeki general store also had to receive those migrant husband back in their rural world – these being people about to dies – who had been broken by the mines. The condition of life in his village, like other villages at the time, made him to be curious and to see that there was obviously something wrong with the condition of black life.

The young Thabo, who demonstrated the ability to care about this situation, spent time talking to members of the community when they came to the store. “Many evenings, friends of Govan and Ma would come to the family’s house. There, they would sit late into the night, talking about politics and the situation in South Africa” (Abrams 2008:48). Thabo, although he was still young, was often invited to take part in the discussions, impressed by his level of awareness and grasp of issues. Abrams (2008:48) notes that “[h]is intelligence was so respected that he was asked by a neighbouring chief to give advice on the government’s new cattle policy. Not bad for a young village boy only 12 years old!”. From an early age, the Mbeki children were taught to defend their views in debate, during which they developed a critical thought to understand that knowledge is important for the development of society and of young people seeking to be successful in life, which is why Mbeki took knowledge seriously. Like in any village, the message in this community, including the illiterate, was that education was important and that those who took it seriously and went to school would be successful and manage to help society. In addition, those who went to school were taught that they have an obligation to help the village to resolve its problems. These were the important lessons that were extended to every young person, and Thabo picked up these lessons, eager to succeed at school and to help the village to overcome its ills and hardships.

Mbeki, in his self-explanation, asserts that his political and liberation thought is the product of the poor masses and of a liberation movement. “I belong among the uncelebrated unwashed masses, offering no rich pickings even for the most highly talented mind reader!” (Mbeki cited in Gevisser 2009:9). Here, he was understating the fact; that to understand his political thought, all one needs to understand is the poor masses he was born amongst and the influence of liberation movement he joined as a young peer. In his “Stop the Laughter” speech, he describes himself as a simple product of the teaching and example of African liberation leaders from Gamal Nasser to Nelson Mandela (see Chapter 1, page 8).

What about educational influence? The education system that Mbeki received is missionary education from Lovedale. Lovedale is part of a colonial establishment that is located within the political and epistemic interstices finding its expression in the British colonialism. Founded by the Glasgow Missionary Society in 1841, this was the

first South African high school to admit black students including Tiyo Soga (the first black to graduate at the school). Famed 'Eton of Africa', this school became home to the creation of the black elite who aspired to European and liberal ideals. Gevisser describes this small group of educated black students the 'Black Englishmen', a generation which was able to embrace and express both African tradition and Western practice. One of the strategies of the mission education system was to maintain the hegemony of Western dominance in Africa by training a group of small Africans who are socially located in Africa and on the side of the oppressed but who embraces the Western tradition and speak like the white intellectuals on the side of colonial metropolis. Indeed, Mbeki belongs to the very last generation of educated black South African students that underwent the colonial mission education in Lovedale College before the introduction of Apartheid's Bantu education system. In 1955, by the time Mbeki passed through the gate of Lovedale, the school had been in existence for the past 150 years.

While Lovedale is popular for the many names of prominent figures it produced, less remains known of the form and content of the education system it imparted to African students and the sense of influence on them. By its form and content, the education system of Lovedale was colonial education for colonial adaption, which the Western colonialists applied to facilitate the colonisation of Africans. Xolela Mangcu (2008) has observed how the British colonialists, through missionary institutions, presided over the systematic destruction of African institutions in the colonisation process. According to Mangcu (2008:8), "British missionaries set up missionary schools with the intention of undermining local customs and rituals, which they viewed as heathen and backward". The colonial education system was central to the 'cultural degradation' of the colonisation process according to Mangcu. Cultural degradation, Pityana (1999:137) argues, "did not render people any less African, but it did make them more secretive and apologetic about practices that were African". Christianity was a means by which the African tradition was degraded and the African students dissuaded from their tradition. Barney Pityana is a former student of Lovedale and thus he testified to amplify the following.

Christianity declared some African customary practices pagan and the church was a pervasive influence on family practices. We generally

had English names which were called 'Christian', we dressed in characteristically European styles or considered African dress and language uncivilised. We battled to speak English like the Europeans did, we went to church and school and enjoyed European eating habits. The European ways of life were an abiding aspiration for many Africans. (Pityana 1999:137)

Pityana (1999) argues that the mission education system not only separated African students from their tradition, it turned them against indigenous cultural practices. According to Pityana (1999:137), “[f]inally, as a country we were separated from the rest of the continent. We hardly met anyone from other African countries except migrant workers largely separated from the rest of the community and despised by us as less civilised”. The bizarre of mission education system is what Mahmood Mamdani (1999) labelled ‘exceptionalism’, wherein black South Africans often see themselves as Europeans than Africans. It is due to mission education system. As Pityana (1999:137) argues, “[n]ews coverage about Africa, if any, was negative. There were no role models for us to emulate. It was as if we were not part of the continent of Africa. The cultural values and stereotypes were American”. Mangcu (2008:9) argues that missionary education system “made possible the forging of syncretic identities in everyday life”. He argues that the more graduates of the missionary schools such as Lovedale and Healdtown College became exposed to Western values and tasted English modernity, the more they became yearning and demanded of acquisition of Western education. This form of thinking forms part of the colonial mindset and also becomes constitutive of African students, even in the period of the post-apartheid era.

Within the colonial/mission education system is the emphasis on Western democracy, rights and equality. Duncan (2004:947) notes that “[t]hose who studied in Lovedale internalized its ethos”. The entire educational programme through “coercive agency led to and fostered the alienation of black students from their traditional lifestyle” (Duncan 2004:962). ‘Coercive agency’ denotes the process by which black students are alienated from their African tradition through religious and educational means so as to assimilate colonial Western tradition. Coercive agency, Duncan (2004:962) adds, “[i]t also excluded them from the Western European lifestyle they aspired to and created dislocated individuals and groups many of whom had been rejected by their

communities of origin". The whole purpose of setting missionary schools in South Africa and Africa generally was to "create the condition of centering of the metropolis and decentering the colony" (Sithole 2014:16). Like other missionary schools at the time, Lovedale "originated in European colonialism and was constituted by oppression destruction of traditional cultures and the imposition of Christian religion arising out of a need to impose its own self-identity" (Duncan 2004:962).

Mbeki, four decades later, is quoted in Ronald Suresh Roberts, speaking of his time at Lovedale: "they trained us to be educated natives. That is a difficult thing to be. What that does to you is that it distances you from the rest of the natives who are not educated. It brings you closer to those who are educated who are not natives" (Roberts 2007:255). It is as a result of the missionary education at Lovedale that Mbeki became educated within the discursive realm of western canon and epistemic practice. Although African students were appreciative of the privilege of colonial missionary education imparted into them, eventually they protested in resistance to their process of assimilation, acculturation, and westernisation. Kros (2010:81) states that the Lovedale riot is an act which student regarded as 'voicing the cause of the African people'. As student at Lovedale, Mbeki pointed out, we wanted: "[t]o define ourselves as educated Africans, not detached from the rest of the natives, but part of the population of natives, but educated nonetheless" (Roberts 2007:255). It is as a result of student riot at Lovedale that Mbeki was expelled for his role in organising the student protest. It is in the observation of Mbeki that "[t]he educated Africans need to lead the process of change on the continent" rather than be complicity to African problems" (Mbeki cited in Roberts 2007:255). Mbeki is part of the last generation of educated black South Africans to receive a missionary education before apartheid's Bantu education curriculum.

Mbeki matriculated at Britzius College in Johannesburg and proceeded to Britain where he enrolled for a degree in Economics at the newly established University of Sussex. In London Mbeki was exposed to the cultural and social uprising which further strengthened his intellectual thought. Mbeki's closest friends in England were the Pahad brothers, Essop and Aziz, with whom he studied at Sussex. England in the 1960s is "where some of the sharpest debates took place" (Pahad 2013:3). As Essop (2013:3) notes, "[t]hose were the days of what you could call 'uprisings of thinking'

right through Europe”. There were all kinds of students from different parts of the world belonging to the progressive forces with which Mbeki and Pahad brothers were having a lot of discussions. Essop Pahad (2022, interview) notes that the debates were always very sharp with other left-wing students especially the Maoists, the Trotskyists, the the Communists. According to Pahad (2013:3), “[i]t was a privilege to have been in exile in London at that time because I think it’s only those who were there that could have got this sort of experience we’ve got”. For us, recounts the Pahad brothers, to be in England in the 1960s was the time for the awakening – social experiments were at the height, pop music, sexual freedom, and a lot of sex were going on the campus. In the strongest way, to be there in the 1960s was to be part of a cultural and social revolution for Mbeki and his struggle peers, the Pahad brothers.

It is the battle of ideas and debate within the British Labour Party that seems to have made a strong impression on Mbeki. Essop Pahad (2022, interview) confirmed this by stating that: “So our relationship was always with the left-wing section of the Labour Party especially young people in the labour party, and that time in the 1960s the young liberals were a very powerful progressive force and we worked very closely with them”. According to Gumede (2007:40), “[i]n fact, it is clear that his enduring political principles were formed by the British Labour Party of the 1960s. Eastern European or Soviet Marxist-Leninism, let alone African socialism as practised in the newly liberated African states of the era, never again held any attraction for Mbeki”. According to this view, it is British Labour Party that exposed Mbeki to the liberal principles on construction of European welfare states and, at the same time, dissuaded his thinking from the communist path of development as practices in the Soviet Union. The question worth reiterating is—did Mbeki abandon his communist beliefs as a result of the impact and the influence of political principles of Labour Party in England? (I think its proper to put it that the privilege of being in England exposed Mbeki to liberal ideology rather than erasing his communist beliefs as Gumede seems to suggest.)

In the classroom, according to Mbeki’s official biographical sketch, “[o]ne of the greatest influences on young Mbeki at this time was the brilliant Hungarian-born Tibor Barna, professor of economics and head of department” (Mbeki 1998c:x). Professor Barna who by that time was also in exile, sat on the Hungarian Central Planning Commission for several years, defected to the West and became a forceful critic of

communism. According to Pahad (2022, interview), Professor Barna kind of opened and widened Thabo's vision and understanding of what was going on in the socialist countries. From that time on, Thabo had a much broader understanding of some of the weaknesses in the socialist countries than, for example, myself. I was very documented in my acceptance of the rules and position of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries in the world revolutionary process, according to Pahad. Principally, being in England introduced Mbeki to the liberal ideology, the workings of liberal states, and Western capitalism. But it would be naïve to suggest that the communist ideology ceased to exist in Mbeki's thinking after his time in England. In the strongest way, the privilege of studying at Sussex exposed Mbeki to British institutions, the English tradition and some of the conical texts that helped to strengthen his thinking.

It is in Sussex that Mbeki was profoundly influenced by British institutions and political culture. In the classroom, according to Mbeki's biographical sketch, he was exposed to a distinguished galaxy of British academics who sought to ensure that the young intellectuals they produced would be competent in their field of specialisation without being confined to those narrow worlds. This imposed on the students a hard-driven process of education based on the notion that students had to know enough to be able to question whether what they knew was, in fact, knowledge (Mbeki 1998c). According to Pahad (2022), because it was one of the newly formed universities in the early '60s in England, Sussex had become quite a popular university because of the way they taught. Students were made to feel free and also encouraged to be independent, inside and outside classroom. Outside classroom, Rhiannon Gooding recalls late-night pursuits in the circle of Mbeki: "Everyone would come back to our place, we'd open a bottle of Scotch, play music, and read poetry" (Gevisser 2009:90). Most often, Derek Gunby added, "we listened to music, discussed, laughed a lot, plotted and so on" (Gevisser 2009:90). Even as Mbeki loved England and read English literature in Sussex, he nonetheless remained grounded in the ANC struggle.

Mbeki identified with the tradition set by the English education system. The foundational and structural basis of English education is informed and inspired by the idea of romanticism to promote high standards of language and literacy (Tyler and Connelly 2018). The ideologies of romanticism, Tyler and Connelly (2018:644) argued,

“were important, especially in relation to the development of later British idealist philosophies of art and the philosophy of history”. The English education system lend its logic from the ideologies of romanticism, and which is why the poetry and styling are considered more important in the construction of reason. Its form and content is preoccupied with fantasy rather than theories and ideas that are related to politics of life. It is therefore accurate to say that Mbeki’s thinking incorporates element of British education system that is blended in the ideology of romanticism. English poetic expressions are more often featured in Mbeki’s varied works and articulations as a way of approaching the issues at hand. Gumede (2007:35) notes that “Mbeki was enthralled by Shakespeare while at Sussex University in the roaring sixties and never misses an opportunity to quote the great wordsmith”. According to Pahad (2022), his friends Mel and Rhiannon Gooding, and my wife Meg, all of them were studying English literature and helped him especially Mel to have a much broader understanding of literature. The privilege of being a Sussex student in England in the 1960s made Thabo far more sophisticated than his South African peers, according to the Pahad.

Furthermore, Mbeki’s sense of personality and mannerism, combined with his eloquence and articulateness, brings to the fore the elements of English socialisation. His critics now and then, Gumede (2007:35) notes that “Mbeki has deliberately cultivated a look that exudes charm and projects an image of being reasonable, composed and shrewd”. If indeed these qualities are mere imposture, as Gumede claims, why has that not changed to this day, ten years after his presidency? It is down to the fact that England left a strong impression on Mbeki. Adebajo (2016:36-37) notes that “[i]t is in England that Mbeki developed his urbane, cosmopolitan, demeanour among a diverse group of friends”. As a political image of the banned ANC and liberation movement, Jacobs and Calland (2002:8) acknowledge that “Mbeki became known for his sophistication and eloquence. He was referred to as a highly impressive individual by the business-people, diplomats, and foreigner ministry officials who were in regular contact with him”. In fact, it is as a result of the period spent in liberal Britain that there is “an ideological shift away from the revolutionary aspirations expressed in his 1978 speech, as well as an alienation from the general insurrectionary sentiment of the black majority inside South Africa” to the pragmatic approach that advocated a

negotiated settlement (Ryklief 2002:108). As a president of South Africa, his politics and leadership style resembled political pragmatism rather than anything else.

Indeed, as president and an economist by education, a major part of Mbeki's politics embraced pragmatism that accepted the global order of political economy as it is. His pragmatism meant that he accepted that the global order is constituted along the imbalances of oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiter and the exploited, the demand and the supply of human and mineral resource from the global South to global North. In his estimation, for South Africa and Africa generally to successfully counter the pressures of the neo-liberal economic globalisation imposed by Bretton Woods institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, African states needed to partner in cultural, political, social, economic rather than shying away. Paramount to this pragmatism, Mbeki, in dealing with the issues of underdevelopment and poverty in Africa, sought to negotiate a space for South African economic interests and the African continent within an imbalanced international economic system dominated by neo-liberal globalisation. Mbeki strongly believe that South Africa and the rest of the continent stand to benefit from the international economic system designed from the global South, because there is no alternative outside the current status quo, and thus believing that there is no country that can survive in isolation.

In 1969, having completed a master's degree in economics from the Sussex University, Mbeki proceeded to the Soviet Union where he underwent military and political training at the Lenin Institute in Moscow. The school was run by the Soviet state to train the generations of communists from across the world and it taught them the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideology. Although the ANC was never a communist party, but through its alliance with the Communist Party in South Africa, it was able to send its students for communist training. The Institute had been in existence since the 1920s, created by the Soviet Union as part of its imperial ambitions to control the world (Gevisser 2009). Mbeki is a part of the ANC/SACP young leaders who were sent to the Institute as part of the preparation to take charge of the leadership of the ANC-led liberation movement. Jacobs and Calland (2002:8) note that "[t]his was routine procedure for up-and-coming ANC leaders". According to Gevisser (2009:119), "one could not, of course, lead a liberation movement if one did not have military training".

Mbeki and his struggle peers needed to fulfil this training in order to be considered for leadership positions.

Unlike the British institutions that embrace the ideology of liberal democracy, Soviet Union was communist, which expressed Marxist-Leninist political ideology. Gevisser (2009:116) notes that “Sussex might have opened him up intellectually and exposed him to the workings of liberal, Western society, but his time in the Soviet Union would prepare him for actual leadership of a liberation movement”. Although, as a president of South Africa, Mbeki demonstrated an open mind toward diverse ideological forces, the imprint of his Marxist-Leninist training was visible in his leadership style. As Glaser (2010:10) points out, “‘M-L’ was visible most obviously in Mbeki’s vanguardist approach to politics and governance”. Though Mbeki never discloses the influence of communist training on his politics, but his style of organisational politics highlights his adherence to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. According to Gevisser (2009:116-117), “Mbeki’s obsession with organisational politics and his abiding faith in Leninism’s core strategic precepts” on the “democratic centralism, the assertion of tight central control over the process of transition” is what he learned at the Moscow training. Marxism-Leninism, for Glaser (2010:10), “helped Mbeki to justify his accommodation of capitalist globalisation and his commitment to fostering a black ‘patriotic bourgeoisie’”. Embedded within his politics, too, is “the communist two-stage theory of revolution” that emphasises “‘national democracy’ over socialism, stressing why the ANC should be a nationalist rather than become a socialist movement” according to Glaser (2010:10). Scientific Marxism, stressed too, in Mbeki’s analysis of class and materialism and for rebuffing the ultra-leftists. All these elements speak directly to his communist ideological training and resemble the Marxist-Leninist principle.

Among the courses Mbeki did at the Institute are Philosophy, Political Economics, Theory and Tactics, Soviet History, and Social Psychology (Gevisser 2009). The fundamental purpose of this program can be viewed the indoctrination of communist ideology and practices. As argued by Gevisser (2009:118), “[i]n reality, this was a practical course in propaganda: Students learned how to produce and disseminate underground literature”. Mbeki himself is said to have excelled in this program than the rest of students in his class especially in both coursework of theory and oral activities like public speaking. This is acknowledged by teachers and students who

says that Thabo quickly grasped the Lenin-Marxist training and lessons in short period after joining the institute, according to Gevisser. Gevisser (2009:118) further notes that Thabo was allowed to address the “Lenin Institute’s weekly assemblies far more often than most other students” making him even more popular in the Institute. He also impressed the “leadership by contributions on the editorial board of the African Communist Journal” according to Gevisser (2009:118). The privilege of Marxist-Leninist training in the Soviet Union added to his education from Britain at Sussex University, would provide Mbeki with a well-rounded knowledge of both the Western and Eastern worlds and allowed him to maintain a diverse intellectual identity.

Students at the Institute had the privilege of access to a huge library covering a vast amount of literature ranging from books, speeches, non-fiction, novel, scholarly works, magazine, poetry works, newspapers and so on. Ndlovu (2020:21) notes that “[f]or instance, relying on this Library, Mbeki had the possibility to read: a vast amount of literature about the then ‘Sino-Soviet dispute’, the views of Soviet literary critics about such matters as the Shakespeare plays; and, the then 800-year old epic poems by the Georgian poet, Shota Rustaveli, entitled ‘*A Knight in the Tiger's Skin*’”. Mbeki valued this knowledge imparted to him, for it taught students to learn to work together in order to overcome the challenges of oppression and development confronting nations. Books at the Lenin School, Mbeki elaborated to Ndlovu (2020:21): “fundamentally help weld humanity into one interdependent whole, across political and other boundaries!”. It is here that Mbeki’s thinking was strengthened beyond a theory of liberal democracy at which the world order is built; that is, Marxist at which the students were taught at the school exclusively in the Soviet Union harboured a different view of the world.

Essop Pahad, who was with Mbeki at Sussex and later at the Lenin School, attests that ‘Mbeki had a capacity to think out of the box... and in the much broader vision. Guys like us we were very narrow and perhaps too documented’ (Pahad 2022, interview). From my own experience, says Pahad, ‘as I went later to the party school, what the party school did to him, was, it enlarged and broadened his understanding of the science of Marxism-Leninism and that required strong reading. Thabo’s excellence in all the courses offered at the school and what it did for him was introduced him to a number of very important Marxist writings that were not as popular amongst people like me. For example, he once said to me: have you read ‘The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It’ by Lenin and I said no, and he said: ‘go and read it if you want

to understand what we should do with the economy in South Africa and what the Soviet Union had to do but did not because Lenin died'. And another thing is that he was able to interact with other students in a way that he was really impressive according to Pahad. 'His own lecturers were also very impressed by him at the party school' according to Pahad. True to Pahad, Mbeki had the capacity to think outside the Marxism-Leninism indoctrination. At the Lenin School Mbeki remained a doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist, but after his time at the Institute he was never a fervent Marxist, and thus embraced all ideologies of liberal, communist, socialism, and Black Consciousness for so long it helped to attain the desired national objectives.

The benefit of being at the Lenin School further exposed Mbeki and his struggle peers to the political situations in other parts of the world. This taught him to take seriously the importance of international solidarity in the struggle against Apartheid and other forms of human oppression. As stressed by Ndlovu (2020:21), "a great benefit of the Lenin School was that it helped further to expose South African revolutionaries to situations in other countries elsewhere in the world, and thus further empowered them in terms of understanding their internationalist responsibilities". Having the students from across the different parts of the world at the Lenin School surely added to the benefits of understanding the world beyond one's own country. Pahad (2022) confirm: "And here we learned much greater understanding of the difficulties and challenges faced by people fighting oppression, and in the case of Iraq we knew that the oppression was worse than even in South Africa in the way the Iraqi regime was treating its people from Iraqi communist parties and other progressive forces". Perhaps this might explain part of the reason the ANC government took a foreign policy decision to isolate the Israeli Government in solidarity with Palestine according to which the international solidarity looms large on the history of the ANC-led alliance.

There is, however, a view that the entire experience at the Lenin School was mere propaganda sold to South African students. Gevisser, for instance, points out that while Mbeki and his peers from South Africa "had almost all their needs catered" for, behind the scene was the harshness and terror that the locals were exposed to daily. As Gevisser (2009:119) argues, "political prisoners continued to be subject to inhuman incarceration, and there was a marked increase in censorship, surveillance, and the ostracism and exile of those few who dissented". The independent thinking in the Soviet Union was not tolerated according to Gevisser. However this claim is refuted

by Mbeki in response to Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, saying he “was unaware and had no knowledge that the School could at any time obstruct interaction between South African comrades and the ordinary Soviet citizens as a means to stop the latter from sharing their honest views about their own country with the South African comrades” (Ndlovu 2020:21-22). Mbeki thus elaborated:

In this regard, I am not suggesting, in any way, that our hosts sought to manage our interaction with the Soviet public in such a way as to produce a predetermined outcome, invariably a positive view of the USSR. However, I am arguing that my own ‘unguided’ excursions, at least into Moscow, communicated the same message to me – that the Soviet population had complaints about their country but supported the social system it represented. (Mbeki cited in Ndlovu 2020:22).

Taking a step further, Mbeki elaborated that the Institute taught him and fellow students the fundamental lesson that, as revolutionaries and leaders of the liberation movement, they have a responsibility to organise the oppressed people to fight to free themselves. He stated:

honestly to communicate to the masses of our people the message that they have a responsibility to liberate themselves; to conduct ourselves as leaders of the struggle, in a manner befitting the leaders of our national democratic revolution; and, to help provide the direction to the national liberation movement what had to be done to ensure the victory of the national democratic revolution. (*Ibid*)

Mbeki does not agree with the idea that the Lenin School fed the students communist propaganda in order to dissuade them from the liberal ideology and to get them enthralled with the communist path of development. Mbeki, speaking to Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu in this interview, his view is that the Institute indeed succeeded as a political school in achieving its set goals of teaching and helping the oppressed people to liberate themselves, because:

... it had a clearly defined mission and purpose; it attracted students chosen specifically to access the defined syllabus of the School; it had

the necessary complement of teachers effectively to address the syllabus of the School; it had a library which contained academic texts which would support the syllabus, in all languages; it had sufficient flexibility to help empower each of the students at the School to confront the challenges in their own countries; it encouraged its students to understand that the most effective exercise of leadership required that the leaders must generally be well-educated, and open minded enough to understand the imperative to act in a manner consistent with available human knowledge, outside the parameters of ideological belief! (Mbeki cited in Ndlovu 2020:22).

The scholars and commentators who fail to emphasise the effect of the Soviet Union on Mbeki, perhaps due to their one-sided reading of Mbeki from liberal literature, generally claim that communist ideology does not hold attraction to Mbeki's ideology. This point, for instance, is to be found in the claim by William Mervin Gumede when he said: "Eastern European or Soviet Marxist-Leninism, let alone African socialism as practised in the newly liberated African states of the era, never again held any attraction for Mbeki" (Gumede 2007:40). This, of course, is blatantly untrue. The near silence on Mbeki's communist leaning as claimed in this regard comes closer to suggesting that Mbeki's time in the Soviet state did not bear to inspire his thinking, especially as a president of the post-apartheid South African government. As a deputy-president and later a president of South Africa, having the privilege and in-depth knowledge of the Soviet Union and the benefits the South African government stood to achieve from it, Mbeki engaged in a series of high-level discussions with the Russian government counterpart in an attempt to create the bi-lateral relations on scientific and aspects. Mbeki told Ndlovu about the visits to Russia and what his government was aiming for:

I visited Russia, when I was still Deputy President of South Africa. It was an official visit. And a number of things were discussed there during my official visit. For instance, we needed to import some of the highly skilled people from Russia to South Africa people in the Science and Technology field and scientists, like those who had become unemployed there with the collapse of the Soviet Union. But focusing

on skills that we would need here in South Africa. We established a relationship with the Russian Academy of Sciences, to link up with a similar body here, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). It was before the National Research Foundation (NRF) was formed in 1999. For instance, there were members of the Russian Academy of Sciences who had done sterling work focusing on the recovery of gold from unused mine dumps, like you have here in the mining region of South Africa. They had actually developed a new technology; they were saying to us: you don't know how much gold is still there, in the mine dumps, which you can recover with the new technology. And they wanted to share that technology with us through this cooperation with scientists from the Russian Academy of Sciences, to do that with their counterparts in the CSIR. You had South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Soviet Union, who are principal producers of platinum and the platinum group of metals. (Mbeki cited in Ndlovu 2020:27).

It is against this backdrop that the Soviet Union still hold attraction to Mbeki with equal significance it had before. Vladimir Shubin, a Soviet-based writer and author of the 'ANC: A View From Moscow', does in fact testify to the effect that Mbeki, after his time at the Lenin School and before South Africa's transition to democracy, was a regular visitor in the Soviet Union. In one of these visits for instance, Shubin explains (1999), Thabo arrived at the Kremlin meeting with the Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev, accompanying the then leader of the ANC Oliver Tambo on 4 November 1986. According to Shubin (1999:307), "Tambo and his colleague wanted the USSR to strengthen its position and maintain a higher profile in Southern Africa, and not leave the field to the Western powers". Even after the passing of Tambo, Shubin continues, Mbeki supported the Gorbachev-Tambo resolution, believing that the United States and United Kingdom had a 'hidden agenda' in South Africa. The problem with some commentators is to read history backward, fixing Mbeki into the ideological world and ignoring that his actions have always been informed by the ANC position, which is why is important to read Mbeki's actions along the line of strategy and tactics of the ANC.

After undergoing training in the Soviet Union, Mbeki was then posted to the African continent, shuttling between a number of countries. It is here that Mbeki developed his Africanism and the sense of belonging to the African continent. The engagement with African history—black literature, black music, black art, black theatre, black poetry—deepened his appreciation and also inspired his ideology of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. Adebajo (2016:8) notes that “Mbeki was critically shaped by the two decades he spent in exile in Swaziland, Botswana, Nigeria and Zambia between 1971 and 1990”. Here, Nigeria especially was particularly important to Mbeki in terms of intellectual growth. “Not only did Africa’s largest country provide him with an example of black self-assertion and cultural authenticity, but he also forged an enduring relationship with the military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo” (Adebajo 2016:8). In essence, Mbeki’s Africanism and the idea of promoting peacekeeping on the continent, are part of the African socialisation and the commitment he has on the continent. In a strong way, his leadership indeed contributed to the formation of pan-African institutions like the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa’s development (NEPAD), Peer Review Mechanism (PRM), as some of the initiatives which points to the direct influence of the period spent in Africa. Though having shuttled between several countries in Africa, the one country that seems to have had a profound influence on Mbeki is Nigeria.

Mbeki is asked about being posted by ANC to Nigeria and the experience of living in Nigeria, and he said: “Nigeria reaffirmed ‘its total commitment to our cause’... ‘Our struggle is theirs’” (Gevisser 2009:158). In Nigeria, Mbeki felt embraced and closer to his real African roots. Whereas those in South Africa did not have that exposure to the African continent due to severe restrictions by apartheid laws; for Mbeki in Nigeria, there was openness and exposure to meet with different people to exchange views and ideas with them. According to Mbeki, Nigeria’s importance to him was “exposure” as he puts it: “a very different *African* society. . . . It doesn’t have this big imprint of colonial oppression. It’s something else. Very different from here. You get a sense that you are now really being exposed to the real Africa, not where *we* come from” (Gevisser 2009:158). The music of Fela kutu is another element that Mbeki highlighted in his appreciation of Nigeria. It is clear from the above that Mbeki regards Nigeria as a very important formative experience of his African ideology and the sense of Africanism.

Another important factor that profoundly contributed to the growth of Mbeki intellectually is the tradition within the ANC. Paramount to this tradition is the peoples-orientated style of leadership which carried and expressed humility and sympathy toward people. It is the tradition set by the earlier leaders of the ANC who came before Mbeki, from Chief Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, to Oliver Tambo, that Barney Bityana (2018) referred to as the 'servant leadership', referring to the way these leaders were able to express a human face even under the conditions of apartheid repression which does not permit love or sympathy. Mbeki himself admits that he is a product of the teachings and examples of the servant leaders of the ANC who came before him. He is the "man of tradition" according to Lucky Mathebe. Mathebe (2001:*vii*) notes that "[e]verything he learned in exile grew out of what I refer to as the 'institutional tradition' of the ANC". This entails the education, training, mirage, and leadership, which were all decided for him by the ANC. According to Mathebe (2001:*vii*), "Mbeki does not have a distinct identity except as defined by his tradition. He holds strong views about the institutional tradition of the ANC and he does not hesitate to express them with a great deal of vigour, eloquence and courage". Because Mbeki's politics and leadership have been constituted along the institutional tradition of the ANC, this has prompted him to structure his thinking in a way that represents the tradition and values of the ANC. Even as he travelled the world, his thinking is grounded in the ANC and thus constitutes his centre of gravity.

Mbeki offered South Africa a brand of thought leadership that was consistent with the values of the ANC. Pityana (2018:32) notes that "[h]aving been so much a part of the ANC from early life, his leadership ideals were built on his intimate knowledge of the ANC at home before the organisations were banned, in exile under very adverse conditions, and back home during sensitive and trying times". Speaking of the impact and the influence of the 'company of the gods' that Mbeki had the privilege to meet, Pityana (2018:32) points out that: "[h]e had mentors by whom he was parented within the ANC, an organisation steeped in tradition and a culture of hierarchies". For example, the role of Tambo in nurturing Mbeki's politics and leadership is important to note. Tambo mentored, guided, and protected Mbeki. Gumede (2007:36) notes that "Tambo himself had a great ability to put a human and friendly face on the ANC, and Mbeki learnt this art at the feet of the master". According to Gumede (2007:36), "[h]is diplomacy, style and ability to win over enemies are all traits that Mbeki acquired by

osmosis during many years of accompanying Tambo. He also learnt to mimic Tambo's speaking style, the way he played with his hands, the way he paused between sentences". So, during these years in Africa, under the mentorship of Tambo, Mbeki became more mature as a politician and a theoretician with an appreciation of the ANC tradition and teachings of the great leaders of the African liberation movement.

That Mbeki was born in the ANC and the liberation movement is accurate, everything he knows is largely because of the ANC, and thus important to locate the nature of his politics and political thought. Upon being recalled as President of South Africa by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC, Mbeki accepted the resolution of the organisation and announced his resignation by reinstating the values that had been inculcated in him from his family and through more than fifty years of activism within the ANC movement. It is important, however, to also note that the ANC tradition is made up and shaped by the characters and wisdom of individuals of different personalities acting independently of their ideologies and worldview. On that note, Mbeki not only learned from the ANC but also made a huge contribution to what the ANC is today.

Raymond Suttner, in examining the formation of intellectuals within the ANC-led South African liberation movement, identifies the SACP's political education program as an important component that speaks to the influence and the formation of intellectuals in the liberation movement. The communist program, Pahad (2022) recalls: "I think did have an impact on Thabo's thinking because they were few but very well organised, they were very sharp, they understood politics and also Marxism". Adebajo (2016:42) notes that "[t]he SACP was home of many of the South African liberation movement's intellectual elite, and Mbeki was therefore attracted to it both ideologically and intellectually". As the 'think tank' of the ANC, it "had a glorious tradition of radicalism, and for close to a century produced some of South Africa's most enigmatic African leaders, such as JB Marks and Moses Kotane" (Gumede 2007:34). Kotane, an important figure of the communist party and the ANC, attests that the communist education program had a major influence on the formation and development of his intellectual capacity (Suttner 2005). According to Suttner (2005), the communists played an important intellectual role in the ANC through the training of members both inside and outside South Africa in order to equip them better in the world of exile and

repression in which they found themselves. “Many who passed through these schools became acquainted not only with the written word in general, but Marxist texts” (Suttner 2005:127). It is important therefore to contextualise and appropriate some elements of Mbeki’s thinking to the tradition of political education.

The path to power

Mbeki’s path to power also needs to be discussed in order to understand the backdrop against which his thinking of power may be analysed. Gevisser (2009:1) notes that “Mbeki is, at least as much as Mandela, the primary architect of South Africa’s transition to democracy and the post-apartheid state”. He played a pivotal role that led South Africa to independence and later succeeded Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa. According to Gevisser (2009:1), “his story provides a key to South Africa’s turbulent past, its complicated transition to democracy, and its somewhat perplexing current politics”. On that note, Mbeki’s analysis of power is informed not by theory but by existential phenomenology, which constitutes an original contribution to his idea of power. Mbeki found himself in the struggle for power both at the personal and collective levels of the ANC. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:11) states that “being a nationalist leader became a terrain of contests because it was linked with power”. According to Mathebe (2001:10), “[i]t is a truism that leaders everywhere in the world mobilise power in pursuit of their narrow ideological goals”. Mbeki is no exception in this case; as much as he played a pivotal role that led South Africa to independence, he also had personal ambition for power.

The role that Mbeki played in the anti-apartheid struggle and the liberation movement that delivered the independence on 27 April 1994 was itself contested by such political figures as Chris Hani, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Jacob Zuma. A close reading of their auto/biographies tells the history of their role in the anti-apartheid struggle. Those opposed to Mbeki’s heroism have tended to elevate Hani, Ramaphosa and Zuma above Mbeki through claims of contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle. The idea that seems to come out of these auto/biographies is that of political actors who feel cheated by history and political practice of Mbeki. This argument is held by those in support of Hani, Ramaphosa, Zuma and not Mbeki as a deserving leader of the ANC-led liberation movement and a president of South Africa. For instance, Gumede (2007:35) notes that “i]n the process of elbowing out Ramaphosa, Mbeki had amassed

sizeable and influential backing”. Other ANC heavyweights who fell victim to Mbeki’s ‘ruthless political manoeuvres behind the scenes’ is Tokyo Sexwale and Mathews Phosa according to Gumede. “Heavily bruised politically, Ramaphosa, Sexwale and Phosa all quit active politics and went into business” (Gumede 2007:35). Political ‘manipulator’ is the term used by Gumede to describe Mbeki as a political actor who deployed any strategy necessary to capture and hold onto power for himself.

The view that Mbeki rose to power by combination of birth luck and ruthlessness tends to downplay the qualities which he possesses. Gevisser is also of the similar opinion, that Mbeki has been the ANC’s Crown Prince from the day he joined the liberation struggle, as if Mbeki did not prove himself or possess the leadership qualities. The idea that Mbeki obtained the military and political training at the Soviet Union is seen as mere appendage according to Gevisser. It is in the observation of Gevisser (2009:119) that “Mbeki had been earmarked for leadership, but one could not, of course, lead a liberation movement if one did not have military training”. Gevisser ignores even the very fact that Mbeki was being elected to the leadership positions he held before and during exile, as well as in post-apartheid contests, instead of being thrust un-elected. As noted by Ndlovu (2018:1656), “Mbeki did not climb the ladder of SACP leadership during the early 1960” as Gevisser tends to imagine, “he was a focused university student at the University of Sussex, a leader of ASA and the ANC Youth League and Student’s Section”. Mbeki’s speech before the delegation of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid in London, a few days before the sentencing of the Rivonia convicts, serves as a testimony to his intellectual insight and quality of leadership. It is believed the speech spared the convict’s lives. Instead of the expected death sentence, they were handed life imprisonment on Robben Island (Jacobs and Calland 2002). The speech is titled “The Historical Injustice”. Hani remarked: “Wow! It was like Marx had been reincarnated and was writing about South Africa. *Incredible!*... When it comes to political analysis, the Mbeki boy has no peer” (cited in Gevisser 2009:168). It is not clear the reason why Gevisser and others like Gumede choose to ignore these important evidences which clarifies why Mbeki was ahead of his struggle peers.

The question of whom Mandela preferred to be his deputy has been widely speculated. Jacobs and Calland (2002:10) notes that “Mbeki was seen to be a ‘safe pair of hands’,

given that he was a confidante of Tambo (whose judgement Mandela trusted) as well as a hard-working person with experience of governmental affairs". The senior African liberation leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere recommended the choice of Mbeki when consulted by Mandela. Former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo who had the opportunity to encounter the young Mbeki, had the following to say: "[m]y first impression of the young Thabo at the time was that he was clear-minded, bright and smart young man. He knew what he was talking about and he was committed" (Obasanjo 2016:35). Former President of Botswana, Ketumile Masire, who also met the young Thabo at the time, attested: "[h]e was young but wise and mature beyond his age. He impressed me. He was a ball of fire, and ultimately became a sort of foreign minister for the ANC" (Masire 2016:65). The view that arises here is that everybody who met the young Thabo was impressed by his qualities. Gevisser (2009:119) notes that, at the Lenin Institute in Moscow, "Mbeki had been impressing SACP leadership by his contributions on the editorial board of the African Communist". It seems that it is those who never engaged Mbeki in person who tends to make miscued analysis, while those who had the privilege to meet and talk to him have a clear analysis. The defamation and character assassination of Mbeki is unsurprisingly happening in a country where African thinkers and leaders are under attack, and this time even from black scholars on the liberal mainstream/political right.

The claim that, had it not been for the luck of birth and political manipulation on the part of Mbeki, the likes of Hani, Ramaphosa and Zuma would have been ahead of Mbeki in leadership is untrue as far as testimonies are concerned. Even the white representatives of the apartheid regime were by far left impressed by Mbeki upon meeting him as the head of exiled ANC delegation. Willie Esterhuyse, a Professor of Pilosophy at Stellenbosch University, sent by Apartheid's president P.W Botha for the meeting with Thabo Mbeki, recalls: "[m]y first impression of him? 'Friendly. Charming. Serious. Controlled. Attentive to what was being said. Glints of humour in his eyes...". Jacobs and Calland (2002:8) note that "Mbeki was referred to as a highly impressive individual by the business people, diplomats, and foreign ministry officials who were in regular contact with him" (Jacobs and Calland 2002:8). Media profiles of the period found him to be "pragmatic, rational, scholarly, and, above all, urbane" according to Jacobs and Calland. Although a stern proponent of Western pragmatism and a

globalist, Mbeki was also a traditionalist and progressive Africanist who romanticises the great African past.

Chris Landsberg makes a remarkable observation that the problem of anti-Mbeki commentators arises from a view of wanting to 'box him in ideologically'. Landsberg (2016:508) observes that "labels like 'liberal', 'conservative', and 'radical' do not do justice to understanding Mbeki". This is because his thinking incorporates various strands; that is, it harbours a worldview that was informed and shaped by different perspectives, including liberalism, constructivism, realism and radical Marxism. Daryl Glaser notes that Mbeki is "a man who wanted, above all, to get things done, even if that meant deserting his movement's socialist dogmas or his predecessor's feel-good rainbowism" (Glaser 2010:9). According to Landsberg (2016:508), "Mbeki was a man who paid a heavy price for originality and political innovation in an alliance that was often committed to old-style, rigid ideological strands". It is confirmed that Mbeki's rise to power was a combination of intelligence and hard work. From a young age, Pahad (2022) recalls: "[h]e already had a sharp brain with a warm personality and his capacity to analyse the situations was then already well advanced. Anybody who was in the struggle at that time appreciated him, both his peers and elders". The view that he ascended leadership due to the luck of his birth is not true. It was by his own intelligence combined with determination, commitment and discipline that endeared him to the ANC/SACP leadership, qualities which his detractors choose to ignore.

As the ANC was preparing to come into power before 1994, Mbeki and Hani competed for the position of deputy president to Nelson Mandela. "Separated in age by only ten days, they had been at Lovedale together, and were to be rivals and competitors all the way until Hani's murder by right-wing assailants in 1993" (Gevisser 2009:121). According to Gevisser, Hani matched Mbeki both intellectually and politically, and was even liked by many struggle peers within the SACP and 'Umkhonto We Sizwe' than Mbeki who was perceived to be lacking in military leadership. Adebajo (2016:43) notes that "[s]ome military cadres vowed never to be led by him, though many, including Chris Hani, had great respect for his intellect". A Lovedale teacher Zweliyanyikima Vena recalls that: "You could never identify Mbeki's role. Now, it was different with Chris Hani, because Chris was political-minded; he would go out and oppose something. But Thabo kept quiet. He just worked behind the scenes. That's what we

liked about him. Through his quietness and deep thoughts, we were able to plan something with him constructively, and it will hatch out when it's ready" (Gevisser 2009:53). Indeed it was Mbeki, working behind the scene and getting the job done, which endeared him to the top ANC leadership like President Oliver Tambo. As much as Hani was popular within the alliance, it does not seem that the movement's leadership trusted him more than Mbeki. His untimely death in 1993 robbed South Africa of the opportunity to know the answer, the rest is mere speculation.

According to Gumede (2007:33), "[b]efore his untimely death, Hani had all the ANC big hitters punting for him. He was the protégé of legendary SACP chairman Joe Slovo, and internal kingmakers such as Winnie Madikizela-Mandela". Added to this, Gumede explains, "[t]he powerful security network built up by the ANC in exile was at his disposal, he was revered by the radical youth, and he was gifted with a natural charm, charisma and intelligence". The idea that emerges from Gumede is that, had it not been for his assassination, Hani would have become a deputy president ahead of Mbeki. It is difficult to be sure if Gumede is correct in this prediction. One is tempted to remind Gumede that it is Mbeki who was chosen to be President Tambo's mentee and later confidante and entrusted with key responsibility to represent the movement. Hani himself fumed that "he would have loved the academic opportunities afforded to Mbeki" according to Gevisser (2009:121). As to why Mbeki was preferred ahead of Hani is more likely to be the case of political situation at the time, ANC leadership recognising that the situation needed 'brain' instead of 'gun'. Mbeki told Gevisser that "the thinking of people like Chris Hani 'would revolve around the military struggle', because that was all they were involved in", whereas "some of us would have been exposed to broader things, to the entire scope, really, of the struggle" (Gevisser 2009:201). Perhaps had the ANC opted for an approach of armed struggle, Hani would have been an ideal choice ahead of Mbeki, where his command military skills would have been required.

Also, during this period, a clash of ideas was taking place within the ANC alliance itself. While Hani and many other important leaders such as Joe Slovo were pushing for the persecution of armed struggle, Mbeki and Tambo believed that discussions and negotiations were necessary to bring about peace and democracy in South Africa. After all, Mbeki reasoned, years of armed resistance had brought no results, instead

irrecoverable crisis in those countries which underwent armed revolution. In keeping with his political pragmatism, Mbeki was among ANC leaders who believed the Umkhonto We Sizwe did not possess sufficient military strength to defeat the South African Defence Force. Despite the mandatory United Nations' sanctions imposed, South Africa's regime still had sufficient weapons from Israel and France. As Zunes (1999:141) notes, "[t]he government was manufacturing its own tanks, mine-clearing vehicles, missiles and even napalm and nerve gas". Adding to that, "South African forces were being trained by the highly effective Israeli counter-insurgency units", according to Zunes (1999:141) who argues that "[n]o guerrilla movement could hope to combat such a powerful armed force on its own territory effectively, especially when South Africa's preparedness for such an attack was considered". In Mbeki's analysis, and correctly so, the apartheid's defence force was by far too powerful to be defeated by military means, to which Tambo agreed and made it the subject of discussion in the ANC. A key question can be posed as to why did the apartheid's presidents P.W Botha and F.W De Klerk agreed to initiate the negotiation? According to Lodge (2012:36), "[a]mong National Party leaders there was a growing realisation that sanctions and foreign credit restrictions would harm an economy which had more or less stalled since 1980". Although the ANC could be contained militarily in regime's perspective, several other considerations prompted the decision to negotiate. For example, Lodge (2012:37) notes, "the government had no hope of winning the kind of support from black South Africans that would enable it to rule without coercion". Instead, there was a growing sentiment within the National Party government that the collapse of the Soviet Union at the time means that ANC is without support of communist governments, meaning they would be negotiating with a weakened opponent from a position of strength. According to Lodge (2012:37), "De Klerk and his cabinet allies were also encouraged by the prospect of assembling a powerful coalition of white minority-based parties and black conservative groupings, including the Zulu nationalist Inkatha movement". The idea that the Inkatha was a potentially effective rival to the ANC was known to Mbeki. Unlike Hani who pushed for the persecution of the armed revolution, Mbeki calculated that the movement stood no chance to win and saw the prospect of negotiation as the opportunity which ANC could capitalise on.

According to Pahad (2012, interview), Mbeki's capacity to analyse the situations was well advanced, anybody who was in the struggle at that time appreciated him, both his

peers and elders. Pahad is asked for his view on the prospects of the ANC-led South African negotiated settlement? He replied: *Thabo is also one of the first to see the importance of the negotiations. It was very difficult at that time to say it because you'll be regarded as a sell-out, but he understood it, and worked on it to trying to convince ANC especially the underground Umkhonto We Sizwe. At the same time he also understood that the ANC needed to project itself in a different way and he started meeting with the South African generals, and because he was so smart, clever, personable, and wonderful personality they found him convincing.* According to Pahad (2022), "the view that Mbeki became a leader due to birth luck as son of Govan Mbeki is not true, it was himself by his own intelligent that endeared him to so many people including Tambo". In my view, Pahad (2022, interview) argues, "Comrade Tambo is the greatest South African that has ever been produced in the history of South Africa." According to Pahad, Tambo understood the very tremendous qualities of Thabo. "Because of his breadth of reading and depth of understanding, you could already tell that Thabo is going way ahead of the others". The idea that emerges here, as alluded to by Pahad, is that Mbeki had the capacity to read the situations better than the rest of his struggle peers, and it is for this reason that Tambo preferred him ahead of others.

As much as Tambo was impressed by Mbeki's qualities, it is also apparent that Mbeki's own politics was moulded by the leadership qualities of Tambo. Tambo travelled with Mbeki to important meetings as his right-man, including the return to Africa from Europe. According to the 'Biographical Sketch of Thabo Mbeki' (1998c: *xii*), "[d]uring these years he matured as a politician and a theoretician with an appreciation of different forms of art and culture". Through his abilities and sheer determination, as well as an understanding of the movement, Mbeki deservedly got rewarded and was thrust into a leadership position when he started working as assistant secretary of the ANC's Revolutionary Council in Lusaka in 1971. In 1975 he was elected to the NEC. Three years later he became political secretary in the office of then ANC president, Tambo. As a political secretary, he was Tambo's right-hand man, confidante, speechwriter, and closest adviser. That, Mbeki became Tambo's right-man at a very young age does not surprise Pahad. For example, Pahad (2022) recalls that, "with speech writing, Mbeki could study the Irish revolutionary... and honed his skills as a writer". Pahad continues: "[b]ut because he was always broadening his own knowledge and understanding, he was able to become comrade Tambo's main

speechwriter, and the only one that comrade Tambo could not change. It was very difficult to write speeches for comrade Tambo". It was during this period that the 28-year-old Mbeki also became a leading member of the SACP, the intellectual heart of the ANC alliance, rising to its central committee along with Chris Hani. He became the ANC's Director for Information, moving up to head the organisation's international affairs in late 1980s.

There is some dispute as to why Mbeki left the Communist Party's politburo – Mark Gevisser, for instance, claims that the difficulties of his relationship with Joe Slovo and those close to him such as Chris Hani, pushed Mbeki out of the Communist Party. According to Gevisser (2009:121), "[t]he relationship between the two men was fraught with intellectual competition and riven by ideological mistrust, but at the heart of it was a personality clash". For Pahad (2022), "Mbeki did not resign from Communist Party, instead; he became less active in its meetings and thereby stopped renewing his party's membership". This has been a subject of much speculation, and only Mbeki knows the truth. What seems to have been a case, however, is that the collapse of the communist governments by the 1980s had a role in Mbeki's decision, rather than it having to do with Slovo's relationship or otherwise. As alluded by Pahad (2022), Mbeki had a talent to analyse the situation (balance of forces) much better than his struggle peers in the movement. Lodge (1993:67) notes that "Mbeki made a vital contribution to developing the ANC's relationship with the Swedish government, which during the 1980s became a major source of funding". In other words, for Mbeki it has never been about ideology but advancement of the ANC's struggle. As Glaser (2010:9) notes, "Mbeki was (is) a *pragmatic ideologue*" who also "maintained connections with Black Consciousness, Swedish social democrats, American liberals and, later, the white South African establishment". The Swedish government was important in helping to aid the exile ANC after the collapse of USSR whereas the Black Consciousness had influence inside South African politics, a reason Mbeki felt that the ANC should reach out to BC members as potential political allies. This understandably endeared Mbeki to leadership but also made him a target of hatred to his enemies.

As a head of international relations, he acted as the political image of the ANC in exile, acting as a point of contact for the foreign governments and the head of states, orchestrating the international support for the anti-apartheid campaign and sanctions.

It was on this role, on the instruction of Tambo and the ANC, that Mbeki was commissioned to conduct the diplomatic talks. In this role, Gevisser (2009:4) notes, “Mbeki persuaded even Reagan’s America that the ANC was an organization of freedom fighters rather than terrorists”. It is argued that Mbeki’s diplomatic abilities “even eclipsed the South African government’s department of foreign affairs in the breadth of its foreigner contacts” (Jacobs and Calland 2002:8), given the rise of the movement’s profile in contrast with the economic sanctions that began to be imposed on the apartheid regime. It is during this period that Mbeki was meeting with the representatives of South African white population – politicians, business leaders, academics, journalists, community leaders and lobby groups – isolating the apartheid regime from its own constituency. In the process of these ‘secretive talks’, Mbeki attracted criticisms and personal attacks that he was selling out the movement. According to Gevisser (2009:205), for example, “Chris Hani was furious when he found out, at an ANC leadership meeting on February 22, 1988, that Mbeki was absent because he was meeting with Afrikaners in the English countryside”. To Hani, and majority opinion, Mbeki was “selling out” the movement to the white bourgeoisie.

In the ‘Hani Memorandum’, a controversial document written and signed by Chris Hani and six other members of the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in 1969, Mbeki is accused of arbitrarily making decisions for the ANC Youth League, such as the revolutionary International Youth gatherings, without consulting the relevant structures of the organisation. In the statement, Hani (1969) argued that “[t]he farce of the Bulgaria ANC Youth delegation should never be repeated and those responsible should acknowledge the mistake they made”. This criticism lies on Mbeki alone, not the leadership that chosen him to take charge and lead the delegation, and Mbeki is here accused of not consulting the Youth League’s structures on matters affecting the youth. Hani’s charge of Mbeki can be said to be, as far as ‘Hani Memorandum’ is concerned, that which is fraught with controversy and jealous. Mbeki’s charge of the Youth League in Britain is said to be pushing the imperialist agenda and his role is likened to that of the false revolutionary. Hani’s argument here goes in stating:

The Youth of South Africa is not located in London or in any European capital. We therefore take particular exception to the appointment of certain students as leaders of the ANC Youth. Thabo Mbeki who went

to London on a scholarship sponsored by NUSAS is a leader of ANC bogus Youth Organisation. We are convinced that the ANC leadership in Exile is according better treatment and attention to the students. This attitude and practice has had a disastrous effect of diverting many would-be revolutionaries into the academic field. We feel that it is high time that the M.K. personnel which is in fact the core of our Revolution should be given the best treatment by virtue of having volunteered with their lives to give the supreme sacrifice for the Revolution. (Hani 1969)

The message that comes out of this statement is that of a young radical who feels cheated by the political decisions of the organisation. Hani's personal ambitions to be ahead of Mbeki in regard to leadership rank in the movement cannot be ignored. It is imperative to argue that Hani does not dismiss the fact that Mbeki possess intellectual and political qualities. Instead the contempt arises from the processes and decisions by the leadership that made him to feel sidelined, and special preference being given to Mbeki, as far as this memorandum is concerned. According to this memorandum, Hani further argued the following:

Another disturbing symptom is the glaring practice of nepotism where the leadership uses its position to promote their kith and kin and put them in positions where they will not be in any physical confrontation with the enemy. The sending of virtually all the sons of the leaders to universities in Europe is a sign that these people are being groomed for leadership positions after the M.K. cadres have overthrown the fascists. We have no doubt that these people will just wait in Europe and just come home when everything has been made secure and comfortable for them playing the typical role of the Bandas and others (Hani 1969)

As easily as some critics may argue that Mbeki is not revolutionary, and others attribute his rise to leadership to favouritism by Tambo, others have come forward in defence of Mbeki's obvious qualities. For example, *The Thabo Mbeki I Know* is a collection of testimonies featuring the responses of people who either worked with him or encountered him in a professional capacity. The people who know him, as already pointed out above, say he was sophisticated and eloquent. The diplomats,

businesspeople, foreign ministry officials, and journalists who were in regular contact with him say he was highly intelligent and impressive, describing him as 'pragmatic, rational, scholarly, and, above all, urban' (Jacobs & Calland 2002:8). In a strong way, he was seen as "the epitome of racial accommodation" in a racially fragmented South African society (Mathebe 2001:6). According to Mathebe (2001:6), "Mbeki represented the opposite of a belief that saw political virtue in violence, insurrection and the ideology of communism – this is a belief which drove fear into the hearts and minds of those who considered the ANC a 'terrorist' organisation". In a critical view of his openness, he demonstrated an open mind toward diverse ideological forces, for instance, Afrikaners, Black Consciousness among young black intellectuals, Inkatha movement, reaching out to all of them. The role that Mbeki played within the collective ANC leadership, which delivered the post-apartheid, democratic and non-racial South Africa, speaks for itself.

There is an argument among some critics that Mbeki, despite his key role in convincing the regime to agree to negotiate, was still not popular within the ANC as compared to Hani or Ramaphosa and that his leadership was imposed on the movement alliance by Tambo. Gumede (2007:36) points out that "[u]nder Tambo's protection, Mbeki was untouchable, even when he regularly outraged powerful sections of the ANC by making policy statements without consulting the movement's rank and file. Anyone with lesser protection would have been disciplined, demoted and pushed into the political wilderness". It is also said that notwithstanding his Tambo connection, Mbeki lacked a strong base from which to bid for leadership, especially that of deputy president. He is also criticised for being too distant with structures of the ANC and the masses: 'he was seldom seen at branch meetings' (Gumede 2007:36), something which Hani, Ramaphosa and Zuma regularly did. This claim is made to justify that Mbeki was helped by Tambo to climb the ladder of leadership rather than by his own credentials. As Adebajo (2016:57) argues, "[t]hrough his closeness to Tambo and the trust that his political mentor had in him, Thabo was levered, he even manoeuvred himself, into a powerful position". Is this a correct assessment? After all, Mbeki demonstrated and proved his understanding of the movement, populism was never his trait as much as Hani, Ramaphosa and Zuma were also lacking in some aspects of leadership; history proves that he is one of the best leaders ANC has ever produced.

Mbeki's greatest achievement, among others, was convincing the apartheid regime to agree to negotiate the peace talk with the ANC (as part of a collective on ANC mandate). His critics, however, think this was as easy as given, but that is not the case. For instance, P.W Botha, then apartheid's president, mistrusted the ANC relationship with SACP and, as such, was prepared for war. Brits (2008:36-37) notes that the "[k]nowledge that Mbeki never preached Soviet socialism or its Eastern European equivalent, nor African socialism, probably pacified business leaders and enabled them to talk to him". F.W De Klerk, after Botha suffered a stroke, found Mbeki's pragmatism and assurance to be convincing. Secondly, Mbeki's achievements was transforming the ANC to adjusting from being a banned liberation movement to legal political organisation. As argued by Williams (2009:56), "[o]ne of the fundamental issues that arose in Mbeki's thought during the early 1990s as a member of the state apparatus is the need to transform the practice of politics in South Africa". In Mbeki's assessment, the culture of intolerance and violence had to make way for tolerance and democracy. It is among these contributions and a proven record of commitment, determination, intelligence that Mbeki was chosen by Mandela as his deputy—heir.

Mbeki was the deserving leader of the ANC and president of South Africa from 1999 until 2009. As deputy-president, Mbeki's considerable influence dominated the entire Mandela's presidential tenure and the democratic experience, proving his intellect and leadership qualities. He was a *de facto* prime minister according to some (Gevisser 2009, 2010; Glaser 2010; Pottinger 2009; Pityana 2018). Pityana (2018:17) notes that, "[i]n that capacity, he played a huge role in the effective oversight of government and was central to the restructuring and shaping of the new government". Through the years of transitional government, he helped formulate the coordinates of South Africa's foreign policy and its market-orientated policy. Mandela told the journalists that Mbeki was "very talented and very popular, and if the ANC elected him (for the president), I would feel that they had made the right choice" (cited in Calland & Jacobs 2002:11). Though not the tradition within the ANC for the president to choose his successor, Mandela's opinion was in admiration of Mbeki's qualities. Deservedly, "[a]t its December 1997 conference, the ANC appointed Mbeki the new party leader, thus effectively anointing him as the next South African president after general elections were held in 1999" (Pottinger 2009:1). In understanding the magnitude of Mbeki's

contribution, it is important to place him not only in the political history of the ANC but also on African and global context. For example, the formations of AU, NEPAD, APRM, as well as IBSA and BRICS are some initiatives bearing his name.

In his post-presidency era, Mbeki's name continues to set the national and global agenda from the global South perspective and also pace debate. He is still involved in peace-making efforts in Africa, recently headed a United Nations panel to investigate illicit financial flows out of Africa, and also acting as a public intellectual and critic responding to various issues inside and outside South Africa. His name adorns public buildings and programmes, making him omnipresent in South Africa. Some of these include the Thabo Mbeki Foundation in Johannesburg, and the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute, now upgraded to the Thabo Mbeki School of Public and International Affairs, the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library and Museum, all set up at the University of South Africa where he is the current Chancellor. In a strong way, Mbeki continues to influence the political and intellectual agenda even after his retirement from public office. As argued by Landsberg (2016:509), "[h]e demonstrated the difference between positional and strategic leadership, and the fact that one could continue to influence agendas without the formal trappings of power". What is beyond doubt is that Mbeki is the primary architecture of the post-apartheid state, according to Gevisser and an important political and intellectual figure of his generation of African leaders.

As easily as some critics have described Mbeki's politics and leadership style as repressive, others have labelled him a dictator who wanted to turn South Africa into 'another' Zimbabwe and himself Robert Mugabe. This claim arises in the light of having failed in his ambition and attempt to stand for a third term as president of South Africa. As much as Mbeki would have been South Africa's first president to run three terms, but constitution legalises it; and therefore, if anything is wrong it must be the constitution itself and not Mbeki. Pityana (2018:26) rightly notes that "[d]uring his nearly fifteen years in public office in South Africa, he was at the receiving end of some of the most vicious attacks and negative reporting. The kindest of those was that he was an enigma, impenetrable, and lacking in common touch. He was presented as a philosopher-king who was out of touch with his own people". According to his most notable critic, Xolela Mangcu, "Mbeki has been a great disappointment" and was far

“removed from the experiences of South Africans” (Mangcu 2008:139). “The African Renaissance was better articulated in foreign capitals than in the rural villages and urban communities in South Africa” according to Mangcu (2008:139). In his politics and philosophy of post-continentality, Mbeki resisted narrow nationalism, instead championing the struggle for pan-Africanism and humanity beyond borders.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the aim was to determine and establish the ways in which Mbeki’s intellectual thought was influenced and shaped by socialisation and different entry points and perspectives. Indeed Mbeki’s intellectual orientation—that is, his socialisation in apartheid South Africa, the liberal education in Britain, the Soviet’s communist training, and African experience and the ANC—is a combination of different strands. In effect, Mbeki’s travel of the world is not just the travel but travel that constitutes an intellectual agenda, in that this travel constituted the epistemic and ideological growth on the part of the thinker. For instance, during the era of apartheid, the young Mbeki embraced the revolutionary aspirations of communist ideology, but due to his education in liberal Britain, his thinking adopted elements of political pragmatism, and the imprint of communist training from the Soviet Union were clearer in his leadership style which lends from Leninist’s principles of organisational politics and vanguard approach. Thus Mbeki left South Africa as a young angry comrade vowing for revolution, but as a result of the transition to post-1994, there is a movement in his thinking to issues of peace and stability, nonracialism and nation building. Important to note is that, even as he journeyed the world, Mbeki’s force of gravity was always the ANC. His travels and learnings were anchored by the ANC in the anti-apartheid struggle and liberation movement.

CHAPTER FIVE

Thabo Mbeki—"I am an African"

Introduction

This chapter examines and explores Thabo Mbeki's "I am an African" speech and its contribution to the advancement of African identity in post-apartheid South Africa. If there is a speech that made history in South Africa is this one by Mbeki, delivered on the occasion of the adoption of the country's final Constitution on 08 May 1996. "The speech is unique because it outlines a new concept of national identity for South Africa and creates a sense of belonging by making references to South African history" (Makoro 2018:7). The speech is specific to the context of South Africa and is used by Mbeki in an attempt to unite the different races and ethnicities found in South Africa into a one nation. In the speech Mbeki unpacks the historical and political processes that ranges from colonialism, racism, apartheid, dispossession, and resistance that contributed to the construction of apartheid South Africa. His attempt to advance the inclusive notion of African identity constitutes an act of liberation aimed towards reversing the historical and political processes that created apartheid South Africa. Mbeki's speech is acclaimed as one of the greatest speeches both locally and globally, from which some commentators have been likened to Martin Luther King Jr. That being said, the speech has enhanced Mbeki's reputation as one of the greatest African political leaders.

In this chapter the aim is to re-read the speech in the light of the final Constitution adopted in 1996. Specifically, this entails the ways in which the speech has indeed been fundamental to defining the Constitution, reconciliation, and nation-building. The speech is examined as a backdrop against which the political idea of post-apartheid South Africa can be understood. In addition, this argues that the speech must be read as part of the broader vision that dates far back to Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Anton Lembede operating under the black South African intellectual tradition and the African National Congress. Lastly, the current ongoing debates in response to this speech are attentively analysed in an attempt to establish whether or not the current state of post-apartheid era is perceived as success or failure by South African public and the continent generally.

Mbeki and African identity

Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech delivered on behalf of the ANC at the adoption of South Africa's democratic Constitution on 8 May 1996, forms part of his own thinking and the attempt to unite all South Africans through the inclusive notion of African identity. Mbeki made a concrete expression of post-apartheid South Africa as defined by a common African identity rather than race. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:149), "Mbeki's definition of an African clearly reflected his slant towards issues of commitment to the African cause of liberation as part of a process that created Africans". His speech engages the South African nation in a broader context of the long history of Africa's struggles for liberation and humanisation. It is premised on the Constitution whose idea embraces humanity for all regardless of race, gender, and historical past. In this regard Mbeki asserts:

The Constitution whose adoption we celebrate constitutes an unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender or historical origins. It is a firm assertion made by ourselves that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. It gives concrete expression to the sentiment we share as Africans, and will defend to the death, that the people shall govern. (Mbeki [1996]1998a:34)

Indeed, the notion of post-apartheid South Africa in Mbeki's analysis is based not on blackness, skin colour, or historical origin but emphasises African identity toward the creation of a new South Africa. For Mbeki, the European settlers who instigated the extreme injustice through colonisation and apartheid are Africans too. The Indian migrants, the Chinese merchants, to all of them, South Africa is their home, and like the indigenous peoples of this continent, they too are Africans. Mbeki's emphasis is premised on the notion that diverse peoples of South Africa unite to create a rainbow nation. This further note that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black people and whites. The most important emphasis in this regard is the notion of African inclusivity together with attempt to make post-apartheid South Africa part of the broad idea of the continent. Mbeki reflecting on what it means to be an African, notes:

I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still, part of me. In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture a part of my essence. The stripes they bore on their bodies from the lash of the slave master are a reminder embossed on my consciousness of what should not be done. (Mbeki [1996]1998a:32)

Above all, Mbeki's speech pays homage to the great African leaders and warriors of the past — heroes and heroines — whose resistance to colonisation, racism, apartheid and land dispossession have made it possible for this attainment of freedom. Mbeki honours the Khoi and San, the soldiers and patriots that Hintsa and Sekhukhune, Cetshwayo and Mphephu, Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane led to battles. The generation of Nongqawuse — they whose god-gifted talent made them target of jealousy and humiliation — has left a permanent mark of reference in our mind. Beyond South Africa, Mbeki acknowledges the African victories of Ethiopian and Ghanaian peoples whose triumph inspired South Africa's own struggle for freedom. In this regard Mbeki ([1996]1998a :32) attests: “[b]eing part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that – ‘I am an African’”. In this emphasis, there is a noticeable political commitment to the continent in Mbeki's attempt to keep with the African histories. In a way, Mbeki's emphasis “is grounded in the general goals of the anti-colonial political tradition. There is a focus on the importance of memorialising Africa's history of struggle against colonialism and apartheid and the commitment towards the renewal of the continent” (Williams 2009:65).

Africans in South African have fought the longest liberation struggle on the continent that began from 1912 and ended April 1994. They fought against the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the establishment of the Republic in 1921, the introduction of Apartheid in 1948, and throughout the protracted years of black racism by white domination – all of which excluded the Africans. The national liberation struggle Africans to have the right to define themselves, including the right to self-determination for their own political and economic destiny. This has been marked by several anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles characterised by deployment of

different ideological strands and sometimes a combination of strange characters. These political forces ranged from the Pan Africanist Congress that propelled 'Africa for Africans', the Black Consciousness Movement that emphasised blackness as a form of black emancipation, the Inkatha Freedom Party for Zulu nationalism, and the ANC that expounded the non-racialism. African nationalism became a framework within which the African peoples united and the national liberation struggle was articulated. South Africa had many political and ideological strands from which to choose. As it happened, the strong liberal tradition within the ANC, dating back to the Cape liberal tradition right through to the Freedom Charter of 1955, meant that the ANC would espouse non-racialism as a defining concept of a post-apartheid nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). As narrated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a:72), "[i]t was the power of the liberal civic conception of citizenship that influenced Thabo Mbeki to deliver his widely quoted 'I am an African' speech that sought to define South African identity as a cosmopolitan one rather than a nativist one". The country's post-1994 constitution enshrines that South Africa belongs to all living in it regardless of race.

Since its pronouncement in 1996, Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech has been defined as South Africa's affirmation of African identity and celebrated across the social, political and cultural spectrum. The speech is popular to such that it prefaces many topics and themes across the continent in an attempt to keeping with Mbeki's own title of the same. For instance, as noted by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009:105), "I cannot think of another [speech] that has become part of the African experience to the same degree of pregnant inclusiveness as Thabo Mbeki did in his 1996 address to the national assembly: 'I am an African'". In the similar observation by Mahmood Mamdani: "'I am an African', one of the most remarkable political documents of the 20th century" (Mamdani 2016: *xxxiii*). If anything, the general public impressed by this speech do so in admiration of poetic expression and emotions within which the speech is articulated. Such a notion of finely crafted words of poetry unfortunately tend to conceal other important aspects of speech. Indeed the tendency in some section of society has been to interpret the speech singularly as poetic at the erasure of the political. Reading the speech from a singular 'poetic' standpoint is tantamount to not understanding it in its entirety. In particular, this puts a premium on the selection of words or grammar used by Mbeki rather than focusing on the political appeal of the speech.

In Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) volume, a speech is constituted by three interconnected elements which can be applied in this regard for a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. The first is the *stylization* in the form of portrayal or representation of a subject being studied, that is, artistic production of speech. Secondly, the speech is made of what Bakhtin termed *skaz* or parody which conveys the narrative or subject of discussion among its audience or public. And thirdly, most important, is the dialogue in the form of compositionally expressed caricature. Mbeki's speech, as argued above in this regard, is more admired for its styling. It is seen and read at the level of the poetry—that is, its styling and artistic form is considered more important by its readership. This form of engagement and interpretation at the level of styling misses the fundamental elements which are highlighted in the speech itself. As such, this reduces the speech to the mere 'well-constructed' poetry as opposed to the document that makes a serious political appeal. In its narrative history of South Africa and the affirmation of inclusive African identity, Mbeki, was seeking to reconnected the South African peoples with the cultural and political history of Africa.

Affirmation of African identity is informed by Mbeki's Africanism, the concept that highlights a profound influence on him. Mbeki's Africanism, which brings to the fore his appeal of African identity for post-apartheid South Africa, can be traced back to the history of black South African intellectual tradition finding its roots in the New Africa Movement and the African National Congress. Mbeki, in articulating the speech, was simply echoing the words expressed by the founder and former leader of the African National Congress, Pixley ka Isaka Seme. Seme had, as a young student at the Columbia University in the United States, called for the "regeneration" of the African continent. "I am an African, and I set my pride in my race over against a hostile public opinion" (Seme 1906:143). In addition, Mbeki was affirming the Africanist ideology of cultural Africanism by another prime mover of the ANC Youth League, Anthon Lembede. While Seme called for the renewal of Africa and the restoration of African humanity, Lembede's Africanism pronounced Africa's cultural affirmation, self-assertiveness, pride, self-reliance, and return of land. Nearly 100 years later, Mbeki places himself in this black South African intellectual tradition. The Seme-Lembede tradition can be seen as an important influence on Mbeki's Africanism. Both Seme and Lembede, like Mbeki, were also concerned with preserving the African identity. Their point of reference was Tiyo Soga, regarded as the father of cultural nationalism and

the black South African intellectual tradition among black intellectuals in South Africa (Mangcu 2016).

It is clear in this regard that Mbeki, in articulating the speech, was reaffirming the long-standing agenda of the ANC, which had been articulated by his predecessors. The speech by Mbeki must be read in the broader context of black South African history. That way, it places the meaning and purpose of its intent in the concrete historical context. That being said, the speech is not some poetry that Mbeki just woke up and decided to write for himself. Mbeki's cultural affirmation of Africanism and the Africanisation of post-apartheid South Africa can be found in the most important documents of the ANC and the speeches of his predecessors. In 1906 Seme had first articulated the vision of a unified and developed continent. Central to Seme was the construction of an African ideology within which to articulate and express the African identity. Indeed, for Mbeki the affirmation of African identity is in keeping with the ideals of Seme and the ANC. Mbeki referred to himself, like Seme, as African. Seme in affirming his Africanness in the first paragraph of 'The Regeneration of Africa' attested:

I am an African and I set pride in my race over against a hostile public opinion. Men have tried to compare races on the basis of some equality ... The races of mankind are composed of free and unique individuals. An attempt to compare them on the basis of equality can never be finally satisfactory. Each is self. My thesis stands on this truth: time has proved it. In all races, genius is like a spark, which, concealed in the bosom of a flint, bursts at the summoning stroke. It may arise anywhere and in any race. (Seme cited in Magubane 1999:32)

Taking a pure Africanist standpoint, Seme asked his audience as he presented the speech to the university's public speaking competition to judge Africa in itself as opposed to comparing it to European civilisation. The reason was that comparison of a common stand as dictated by laws of nature is simply impossible, according to Seme. In this regard, Seme proceeded to state:

Come with me to the ancient capital of Egypt, Thebes, the city of one hundred gates. The grandeur of its venerable ruins and gigantic

proportions of its architecture reduce to insignificance the boasted monuments of other nations. The pyramids of Egypt are structures to which the world presents nothing comparable. The mighty monuments seem to look with disdain on every other work of human art and to view [sic] with nature itself. All the glory of Egypt belongs to Africa and her people. These monuments are the indestructible memories of their great and original genius. (Seme cited in Magubane 1999:32)

As such, the concept of an African in Mbeki's speech has a long history in the cultural and political tradition of the ANC, an organisational fort from which the question of identity and liberation is articulated. It is as result of the influence of Seme and Lembede that the ANC is able to rearticulate the notion of an African. Mbeki's conception of 'an African' as embraced within the ANC is useful for situating his assertion of 'I am an African'. Within the history of the ANC is the black South African intelligentsia who were educated in colonial missionary schools as well as universities – Tiyo Soga being the first black Christian minister and first black graduate from University of Glasgow – whose colonial educational exposure meant that their focus is on certain claims of Western freedom, equality, rights and so on as propagated in the colonial metropolis. These educated blacks perceived themselves as New Africans, specifically to distinguish themselves from the un-educated Africans, but also to defining themselves on their own terms away from the definition of African as constructed by colonialist. This generation was able to move between African tradition and Western modernity by virtue of race and acquisition of modern education. Indeed, embracing both African tradition and Western modernity enabled this generation to redefine the new cultural identity, which was neither African nor Western but incorporated both identities toward the creation of inclusive African identity. It is from this historical fact that Mbeki's assertion of 'I am an African' can be traceable.

The 'I am an African', which includes the white South Africans, was first used informally in public by Mbeki in 1987 at the meeting in Senegal with a group of white South African Afrikaners to discuss the possibility of new South Africa. Mbeki, taking the platform to do the introduction, said: "My name is Thabo Mbeki. I am an Afrikaner" (Gevisser 2009:104). In this regard, Mbeki collapsed his own identity of blackness as defined by race to embrace the idea of an African identity which is based on the notion

of common humanity and shared struggles in Africa. In a way, Gevisser (2009:194) argues, “Mbeki’s two assertions —‘I am an Afrikaner’ in 1987 and ‘I am an African’ in 1996—book-ended Mbeki’s own mission to knead South Africa’s two dominant and adversarial nationalist traditions into one common civic identity”. As such, the inclusive notion of African identity gave concrete expression to the sentiment shared among whites and blacks as both belonging in South Africa (notwithstanding rhetoric). The ANC took seriously the undertaking that it needed to liberate and rehumanise rather than dehumanise the white South Africans in order for the Africans to be seen by the world as having been the originators of the new South Africa and the non-racial democratic dispensation. As narrated by Mbeki after the meeting with whites: “It was probably the most honest, direct and comprehensive explanation of the ANC’s positions ever given to people outside the organisation” (Gevisser 2009:194).

In Seshego Makoro’s analysis of the speech, the assertion that ‘I am an African’ enabled Mbeki to sell his ideology to the public and have them look up to him as their leader in that regard. Thus ‘I am an African’ deliberately appeal to the sentiments of the public. The term ‘African’ is the same as ‘Afrikaner’ when called in Dutch, which means that Mbeki’s concept of African is inclusive of Afrikaners. In this regard, Makoro (2018:39) argues that “Mbeki cleverly builds his identity out of both the African and Afrikaner communities in South Africa and attempts to make both parties feel relevant, accepted, and embraced under the ANC leadership”. The constant use of the word African, for Makoro (2018:39), appeals that “[w]e are the same, whether Africans or Afrikaners. There is no need for Afrikaners to feel alienated or marginalised”. As it happened, the speech was embraced by all South Africans – the whites, blacks, whites, Indians, Chinese – as it successfully attempted to be all-encompassing and inclusive. One of the important sentiments that persist to this day is that everyone wants to feel accommodated as a South African, and indeed Mbeki’s speech has made that effort.

Mbeki, in emphasising the notion of non-racialism and non-sexism, seeks to invoke the idea of freedom, human rights, and equality, which the Constitution is premised upon. Adebajo (2016:8) observes that “Mbeki played an important part in helping to build one of the most respected constitutional democracies in the world”. In Mbeki’s analysis, the South African Constitution affirms the values of human rights, freedom,

and equality. In this regard, Mbeki regard the Constitution as enabling the peaceful co-existence and mutual respect among the citizens of the land. According to Mbeki, the South African Constitution affirms the rule of law whereby citizens are treated as equal before the law – regardless of race. For Mbembe and Posel (2005:284), South Africa's Constitution offers the "politics of hope" in terms of "dealing effectively with the spectres of the past". Through the Constitution, South Africa has been able to condemn the black racism, oppression, and dehumanisation. The Constitution of South Africa, according to Mbembe and Posel (2005:284), comprises of "a myriad of laws aimed at undoing the legacies of oppression and racialized inequality, initiatives of memorialization, policies designed to empower those 'previously disadvantaged', along with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission". Although it is presented as one of the world's best constitutional democracies, this does not mean that post-apartheid South Africa is not without the difficulties of racism and inequality.

Sheckels (2009) regards Mbeki as a highly effective motivator. According to Sheckels, Mbeki used three strategies to sell his 'I am an African' ideology and convince the South African public to look up to him. The first strategy is his stylisation of American President John F. Kennedy through strategic gradual shifting from first-person singular to first-person plural pronouns. For example, while 'I am an African' is articulated from a critical lived experience of Mbeki, its meaning also finds expression and relevance across the South African public. The strategy in Mbeki has been the use of terms with resonance. "Mbeki crafted the narrative to promote reconciliation by inviting audience members to recognize their common identity as African" (Sheckels 2009:320). Secondly, Mbeki carefully uses the pronouns that create a point-counterpoint such as "I" and the "We", that is, the first-person singular pronoun to the first-person plural pronoun. This strategy creates a blend where he and his audience are grammatically united. In emphasising the notion of African identity regardless of race, Mbeki is ultimately embracing white people as Africans. And thirdly, Mbeki uses the Constitution as a form of breaking with the past involving the apartheid history of the peoples of South Africa. According to this, apartheid is the history, and the Constitution defines the new South Africa.

It is in the critical assessment of Makoro that Mbeki through his 'I am an African' speech qualifies to be likened to Martin Luther King Jnr. According to Makoro (2018:7),

“[t]he speech makes Mbeki a renowned and skilful public speaker associated with the likes of Martin Luther King Jr”. This comparison is made in admiration of the written quality of ‘I am an African’ speech and its mode of articulation that is similar to the one used by Martin Luther King Jr in his own speeches. King’s own speech ‘I Have a Dream’ delivered 28 August 1963 is widely regarded as one of the world’s most “transformative and influential” speeches which “helped create the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, ending racial segregation in the United States” (Makoro 2018). In this regard, Mbeki’s speech is perceived to bring memories of Martin Luther King. “Mbeki’s speech is unique because it outlines a new concept of national identity for South Africa and creates a sense of belonging by making references to South African history” (Makoro 2018:7). Like King, Mbeki’s speech has been acclaimed as one of the greatest speeches both locally and globally. Mbeki in articulating this speech wanted to help South Africa towards the reconciliation and nationhood, a speech which has made him be likened to King.

Seedat, Suffla, and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) argue that central to Mbeki’s speech is mobilising the inclusive notion of African identity as a way of promoting inter-racial relations. Essential to this process is ‘humaning’, that is, “a fluid process of life-in-the-making with others beyond racialisation, and it is unlike humanisation that is predicated on fixed understandings of human” (Seedat *et al.* 2021:451-452). According to them, humaning (their own term for it) means to imagine possibilities of life “beyond the logics of coloniality and white supremacy and regressive nativist thought”. In their analysis, the idea of humaning in South Africa is traced back to the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 when the idea of the post-apartheid South Africa was adopted. In addition, Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy which advocated ‘collectivist relational ontology’, the Sobukwe’s articulations of ‘anti-racist ontology’ influenced by Pan-Africanist thought can be considered the other forms of humaning interventions in the political history of South Africa. That said, ‘I am an African’ is handy with these strands of early interventions of humaning in South Africa. “The adoption of the South African Constitution in May 1996 is a more recent example of an intervention aimed at reconstitution of the political that connected with the quest for humaning, albeit perhaps implicitly” (Seedat *et al.*, 2021:452). What is implied here is that Mbeki’s speech succeeds on the efforts already laid by others before him, which

means the notion of African identity is regarded as a case of collective accomplishment.

Although Mbeki appeals for reconciliation and the radical break with the past, he does not shy away from unmasking the white racism and dehumanisation of blacks, a situation which has created white superiority and black inferiority, even in the post-1994 era. This has been the everlasting legacy of the apartheid system. For Mbeki, the new South Africa must not just be about the transition from apartheid to democracy, but has to be human-centred in advocating for human rights and social justice for all. In this regard, Mbeki (1998:34) argues, “the dignity of the individual is both an objective which the society must pursue, and is a goal which cannot be separated from the mental wellbeing of the individual”. Mbeki, in emphasising the importance of the Constitution of South Africa, attested:

It seeks to create the situation in which all our people shall be free from fear, including the fear of the oppression of one national group by another, the fear of the disempowerment of one social echelon by another, the fear of the use of state power to deny anybody their fundamental human rights and the fear of tyranny. (Mbeki [1996]1998a:34)

For Mbeki, the important part around which the Constitution is written and must be seen to be performing that part is co-existence and protection of human rights. According to Mbeki, the Constitution is placed right at the centre of South Africa’s nation-building project, and this also respond to both the reconciliation and transformation. In its form and content, the Constitution makes reference to development and reconstruction as a measure to redressing the apartheid’s racial and socio-economic imbalances. According to Mbeki, in emphasising the priorities of Constitution on issues related to opportunities, stated:

It aims to open the doors so that those who were disadvantaged can assume their place in society as equals with their fellow human beings without regard to colour, race, gender, age or geographic dispersal. It provides the opportunity to enable each one and all to state their views, promote them, strive for their implementation in the process of

governance without fear that a contrary view will be met with repression. (Mbeki [1996]1998a:34)

President Nelson Mandela referred to the adoption of this Constitution as ‘the long walk to freedom’. President Mandela, the most famous political prisoner in the world who endured 27 years imprisonment on Robben Island fighting for the freedom of black people, avoided vengeance and preached the message of racial reconciliation and democracy. President Mbeki, for a total of 28 years, was forced into exile, and the entire family was lost to him. Through the years of transition, Mandela and Mbeki hoped to inspire the nation and the continent to overcome the history of colonialism and apartheid past. According to Adebajo (2016:8), “Mbeki played an important part in laying the foundations for a post-apartheid state and establishing what would become one of the most respected constitutional democracies in the world”. This said, Mandela and Mbeki are the key architects of post-apartheid South Africa and its Constitution that emerged as an embodiment of humanism opposed to logic of racism and oppression, to this extend Mandela declared that he was prepared to die for cause of human rights. Seedat *et al*, emphasise the following in relation to Mbeki’s ‘I am an African’ speech:

Mbeki also locates that determining moment of adopting the Constitution as integral to the ‘Long March to Freedom’, which he traces back to the first colonial encounter of the 1600s in which the KhoiKhoi and the San people opposed domination by the Dutch occupiers, and connects that moment to the dislocation of people of Malay ancestry who were forcibly shipped from the East to the Cape by the Dutch, and the battles waged by traditional chiefs against British rule, as well as the struggle for freedom against colonialism across the African continent. (Seedat *et al*, 2021:246-247)

When Mbeki (1998:34) declares “[t]he Constitution whose adoption we celebrate” he is speaking from a standpoint that privileges the black citizens who were deliberately excluded from social and economic development for decades. The apartheid parliament and its racist constitution intended to illegalise, delegitimise and silence the black demands for social justice and democracy (Seedat *et al*, 2021). As Seedat *et al*, (2021:455), “[t]he apartheid parliament promulgated laws that naturalised racial

segregation and economic exploitation, and the psychological dispossession of the country's black majority". In this regard, Mbeki articulated the existential reality of South Africa and then went beyond the myth of reconciliation and the rainbow nation by touching the issue of transformation. Seedat et al, (2021:455) notes that "Mbeki's iconic speech is also indicative of a noticeable shift from Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu's ahistorical 'ecclesiastical' branding of the new post-Apartheid as a 'rainbow nation' to a poetic, yet very historically nuanced articulation, of the nation". If there is a president of South Africa who presided over the most complicated and difficult period in post-apartheid era is Thabo Mbeki. While Mandela and Tutu promoted the ideals of reconciliation and rainbow nation, Mbeki had to deal with the more difficult task of transformation. These demands are well expressed by Theodore Sheckels in stating:

Whereas the Mandela presidency was a celebratory one for both an African population that had attained full political rights and a racially diverse nation that had avoided conflagration, the Mbeki presidency had to deal with tensions both within the nation and within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. Put simply, the Mbeki presidency had to balance the aspirations of the nation's Black African majority against the need for the economic resources and expertise of the White minority. In addition, the Mbeki presidency had to effect a transition from the ANC as revolutionary group with a quasi-Communist ideology to the ANC as a dominant political (Sheckels 2009:319)

Gillian Hart makes a similar observation with respect to the shift in Mbeki's focus from President Mandela's project of the rainbow nation towards the persistent economic racism affecting society. In this regard, Hart argues:

In the mid-1990s discourses of non-racial national unity were ascendant, exemplified in the language of the 'rainbow nation,' and the towering moral authority of Nelson Mandela. Since the late 1990s, the picture has become far more complex, as the power bloc led by Thabo Mbeki has shifted images from rainbows to the African

Renaissance, positioning the ANC at the front of battles against racism. (Hart 2002: 32–33)

Therefore, Mbeki's speech can be read as an attempt to reconcile South Africa into one nation – both in political, cultural, social and economic terms – coming from apartheid's violent past and at the same time trying to advocate for the better future of all South African citizens. As narrated by Seedat *et al*:

It was a period when the majority population in particular, buoyed by the outcome of the country's first democratic elections, attached their hopes and aspirations for a better life to the government's transformation agenda, animated in the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP). The RDP was in effect the policy framework of the ANC-led Government of National Unity (GNU). This transformation agenda concentrated on improving the quality of life of all, changing the political, social and economic relations, and democratising state structures. The RDP prioritised job creation, social housing, electrification, provision of social services, redistribution of cultivatable agricultural land, and basic education. The RDP was viewed as the instrument through which to accord substance to the Bill of Rights, which was entrenched in the South African Constitution. (Seedat et al, 2021:456)

It should be noted that the project of the post-apartheid state regarding the constitution including truth and reconciliation and a stance on non-racialism and non-sexism inspired by the notion of a rainbow nation and Mbeki's own 'I am an African' has not been without controversy. For instance, Xolela Mangcu, a South African columnist, made his frustration known at the back of Mbeki's two terms as the leader of the country. To Mangcu (2008:139), "Mbeki has been a great disappointed" when "he had the potential to be one of Africa's great leaders and a true visionary for South Africa". The African Renaissance, Mangcu (2008:139) argued, "was better articulated in foreign capitals than in the rural villages and urban communities of South Africa". Mangcu accused Mbeki of spending more time outside the country and honouring international invitations than he did interacting with the poor blacks in South African communities. Mangcu offers the exile experience as a possible reason for Mbeki's

distant relationship with ordinary South Africans: 'I don't think Mbeki has made an effort to understand this society in all its complexity' (Mangcu 2008:139). To Mangcu, Mbeki led the country with an exile-mindset which lacked physical engagement with the real conditions. This criticism lies on Mbeki alone and not the collective ANC on whose behalf Mbeki presented the reconciliatory speech. In addition, Mangcu is reading history backwards or perhaps deliberately overlooking the context in which Mbeki's speech was made, thus a period of euphoria when the country was celebrating the advent of democracy.

Mangcu does not interrogate reality in its entirety, but to him, Mbeki is all things gone wrong. In another account Mangcu's personal attack takes the form of situating Mbeki's political ideology to the early conservatism of the ANC founder—Seme—who is said to have presided over the most disastrous decline of the ANC. In this regard, Mbeki is presented in the negative light of Seme and not his progressive politics, which gave birth to the ANC. According to Bongani Ngqulunga in this regard:

Pixley ka Isaka Seme is an ambiguous historical figure who has been praised for the outstanding speech that he delivered in 1906 as a student at Columbia University, and condemned for his lacklustre presidency of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1930 to 1937, which nearly killed the ANC. (Ngqulunga 2019:137)

This criticism is made in response to the perceived failures of the ANC government to deliver on the Constitutional promises of reconciliation and transformation. So far, there has been reconciliation favouring whites, and transformation on the part of blacks remains on the agenda. A political scientist, Ibbo Mandaza, has warned that the political idea of reconciliation is a noble idea, but it cannot be regarded as an ultimate settlement of the conflict. As is currently the case in South Africa, blacks reconciled with white people in good faith but are now feeling cheated in the absence of transformation.

For Southern Africans in particular, there is still hope for those – and there are many – who feel cheated by the kind of reconciliation exercises that accompanied the formal end of white settler colonialism

and apartheid in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. (Mandaza 1999:78)

Taking a step further, Mandaza highlighted the dangers of reconciliation that only sought the exchange of reconciliatory gestures and handshakes while leaving colonial structure uninterrupted. In this regard, Mandaza attested:

However, the real danger of such reconciliation exercises as we have so far witnessed in Southern Africa is not that the murderous butchers of yesterday have been set off scot-free in a number of hearing cases involving the deaths of so many patriots, including women and children. Firstly, it has to do with the individualisation of colonialism and apartheid, the reduction of one system of oppression and exploitation to the mere requirement that such individual representatives of white settler colonialism and/or apartheid as the unrepentant Ian Smith or P.W Botha be held accountable for the abuse of human and democratic rights – and of reconciliation and social justice – from both power and class relations, away from the imperatives of resolving the national question, namely the political, social and economic questions which were inherent in white settler colonialism and/or apartheid, and in pursuit of which resolution the struggle for national liberation was waged. (Mandaza 1999:78)

Mandaza is absolutely correct on this observation. However, what needs to be reminded is the political context or reason for which Mbeki's speech 'I am an African' was articulated. Specifically, the speech was intended to mobilise the inclusive notion of African identity among whites and blacks following the country's transition from apartheid to democracy so that indeed South Africa becomes a non-racial and non-sexist society. Taking a leaf, for example, from what Mbeki said after meeting a group of white South Africa youth: *A few days ago, I had the privilege to meet a delegation of a section of the leadership of the Afrikaner youth of our country to hear their views about the future of our country. During the course of that meeting, they made a statement as pregnant with hope as it was elegant in its rendition. Here is what they said: 'Yesterday is a foreign country – tomorrow belongs to us!' Of course, they were speaking of South Africa. They spoke of how our country's transition to democracy*

had brought them their own freedom; of how their acceptance of themselves as equal citizens with their black compatriots defined apartheid South Africa and its legacy as foreign to themselves; of how South Africa, reborn, constitutes their own heritage (Mbeki 1999: xiv). What this attest to, and also brings to the fore, is the notion that the dream of building nationhood has indeed been accomplished.

If anything, South Africa, like most African states in what Mbembe termed the postcolony, is simply experiencing the problematics of unfulfilled liberation complicated by myths of independence as terrain of emancipatory freedoms such as reconciliation (but with no transformation/black ownership of land and economic control). Mbembe (2001:16) argues that “the post-colony has no identifiable essence, no markers for predictability and is very unstable”. One way to analyse the current problems of national identity in South Africa is political and ideological differences that date back to the period of the national liberation struggle and even in the post-1994 era that has been ongoing. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a:64) argues, “[t]he issue of ideology was never settled at any one stage of the until the achievement of independence in the 1990s”. For example, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a:64) adds that “[m]any liberation movements, including even the openly Afro-radical PAC of South Africa, were largely forced to project the non-racial civic strand as its ‘public transcript’ while retaining the nativist strand as the ‘hidden transcript’” for the convenience of the ANC’s non-racialism. Others include SACP, BCM, IFP, all harbouring different competing ideologies towards the idea of the envisioned nation, democracy, economy. This means the making of post-apartheid state survived by swallowing the bizarre mixture of different political forces and competing ideologies that have continued to provoke the ANC-led project of reconciliation. Beneath the noble idea of reconciliation to unite South Africans through the concept of African identity, the resulting has been devastating. Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues this notion as follows:

South Africa, whose post-apartheid leaders Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki articulated the philosophies of ‘ubuntu’ (African humanism) and the African Renaissance, was engulfed in embarrassing xenophobic violence in May 2008 that shocked the continent. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:25)

Dunton (2003:572) notes that “ANC partners such as the SACP and COSATU have warned against a tendency on the part of Mbeki and fellow Africanists ‘to exaggerate the possibilities of a continental renewal – or to associate such a renewal with relatively superficial events’ at the expense of the neglected and African working class”. Dani Nabudere notes that the manner in which an Africanist ideology was adopted by the ANC government was ‘reactionary’ to the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) rather than a genuine commitment to pan-Africanism. In this regard Nabudere wrote:

On the face of it, the deployment of this concept was also aimed at adopting the Africanist ideological stance in view of the fact that the ANC as a ‘non-racial’ organisation had tried to depict pan-Africanism, which was advocated by the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) of Steve Biko, as ‘reactionary’. This ‘non-racial’ political stance was especially addressed to the white moderate-to-liberal constituency and the South African Communist Party’s (SACP) political line, given the fact that both formed part of the democratic alliance against apartheid. Even the Africanist faction within the ANC had long been on the defensive for pursuing what was conceived to be a racial approach in the struggle against apartheid. (Nabudere 2006:11)

According to Nabudere, ANC was effectively pushing a double agenda. On the one hand, it adopted Africanist ideology as a strategy to neutralise the PAC and BCM and to appease the South African black public well as the continent, and on the other hand, to act as a buffer to calm the fears of the white population. Brits (2009:35,36) argues that ‘although a stern exponent of non-racialism as entrenched in the ANC’s Freedom Charter, Mbeki recognised, for instance, the influence of Black Conscious Movement especially among young black intellectuals and although he had reservations about the racial exclusivism of the movement, he thought that ANC members should reach out to BC members as potential political allies. According to this, the ANC has always embraced the non-racial stance. Nabudere (2006:11) argues this point by saying “[t]his ‘non-racial’ political stance was especially addressed to the white moderate-to-liberal constituency and the SACP political line, given the fact that both formed part of the

democratic alliance against apartheid". Indeed in the light of all these reactions to Mbeki's speech, it is clear the issue of national identity is complicated by ideological differences that were never settled at any stage of national liberation struggle, which today is haunting the post-1994 dispensation.

Landsberg and Kornegay are sympathetic to the ANC and in defence of Mbeki. They argue that Mbeki's African-centred agenda was disrupted by broader global backdrop which led to "the reversal in the fortunes of Africanism" (Landsberg and Kornegay 1998:4). To them, the collapse of the Soviet Union dealt the ideological blow for Mbeki and the government's prospect of economic redistribution in the country. In this regard Andrews (1999:80) argues that "even though the accepted political rhetoric had for decades been that the new South Africa would embrace socialist principles, the limitations posed by the new global economic order put paid to this idea". Given this global setback, Andrews (1999:80) stresses, "[t]he new South African government recognised that the euphoria of political transformation would be enormously deflated if the economic status quo were not modified". According to Nabudere (2006:11), "[t]his is why Mbeki in his 'I am an African' speech tried to demonstrate that non-racialism and Africanism, which were hitherto considered rival political ideologies and tendencies, were not incompatible after all!". In this regard Nabudere observes:

Nevertheless, the Africanist constituencies, both within the ANC and those outside it, continued to view this combination as a convenient cover for the maintenance of white and Indian privileges over the mass of the African people, but a new world in which a few black bourgeoisie would be 'empowered' to join the privileged. (Nabudere 2006:11)

For Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the way forward to the question of African identity and/or who is an African need to be confronted head-on, especially given the problematics of xenophobia and the racist nativism that even led to the formation of the Native Club in 2006. If there is a topic that provoked controversy in South Africa, is the formation of the Native Club under the heading of 'Where are the Natives?'. While President Mbeki declared in parliament that the initiative was not his brainchild, there is little reason not to disagree. For instance, its founder, Sandile Memela, was a government spokesman, and the chairman Titus Mafolo was an adviser to the president. At the

same time, the Club was partly funded by the South African Department of Arts and Culture, and based at the Africa Institute of South Africa, as well as being too close to the ANC. Another reason to believe the Native Club was President Mbeki's idea, is when he took a purely Afro-radical position to raise critical issues about the near absence or silence of the radical black voices in South Africa. Mbembe (2006:4) reacted: "[a] real danger for South Africa today is that the country may be sliding back into a situation where, once again, the language of racial destiny becomes so all-encompassing as to render impossible other ways of connecting the various fragments of the nation". On the other hand, for Seepe (2004:39), "[i]f anything, these debates [on who is an African or not] are part of a deliberate ploy to derail us from engaging pressing social and economic concerns facing this country". In this regard, Seepe argued:

Having said this, it should be noted that President Mbeki's latest pronouncement that "Afrikaners are Africans" is consistent with the now celebrated "I am an African" speech delivered on the occasion of adoption of the country's final constitution in 1996. It was during this occasion, that upon hearing themselves unexpectedly accommodated in the defining statement that the Tony Leons, De Klerks and the Constand Viljoen declared themselves as Africans. (Seepe 2004:39)

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:25) argues that "[t]he definition of African-ness through the consciousness of being African is [problematic]' in the sense that 'it is too fluid to the extent of embracing anyone expressing any sort of interest in African affairs". Seepe's point of departure is that the white media capitalised on Mbeki's notion of Africanness/African identity over race, ignoring the intention and context in which the president's speech was made. According to Seepe (2004:39), "[i]t is our contention, that if the speech is stripped of emotions, poetry, political rhetoric and expediency it displays so many contradictions that it ultimately does not make sense". Thus the speech would be found wanting when subjected to the rigour of academic, intellectual and conventional scrutiny. All these reactions are made in response to Mbeki's 'I am an African', and these reactions are indeed provoked by many various factors depending on the political and ideological positionality in which one is located. On the one hand, for the white minority, the concept focuses on reconciliation, and on the

other, for the blacks, it begs the fundamental question of transformation. To concur with Seepe, Mbeki's notion of African identity is specific to the South African context and therefore its reading outside this context is prone to suffer conceptual anxiety or misrepresent the African-centred definition of Africanness.

Dani Wadada Nabudere in assessing the deployment of 'I am an African' concept in public by Mbeki on behalf of the ANC notes the following two points:

Thus the current usage of the concept is Janus-headed. On the one hand, it reflects the mainstream political elite concern in South Africa for an African national identity against the background of an alienating apartheid system, which tried to depict South Africa as being part of the European continent socially, politically and culturally, which tried to depict South Africa as being part of the European continent socially, politically and culturally. (Nabudere 2006:11)

At the same time [on the other hand], it also expresses this political elite's concern with its role in the age of globalisation and their relations with the corporate sector, which was being strengthened by the forces of economic globalisation process ideologically. (Nabudere 2006:11)

President Mbeki and his predecessor President Mandela, for Mamdani (2016: *xxxiii*): the challenge these leaders faced was huge. First to reconcile the racial difference of blacks and whites so that the dream for the creation of a united and non-racial South Africa is achieved. Second to address the legacy of apartheid system which has created the racial and socio-economic equality where whites have the luxury of privilege and blacks are severely poor and underdeveloped. This point is used by Mamdani to expand that indeed Mbeki's 'I am an African' advocated for reconciliation on the basis of inclusive African identity, and also it was Mbeki who advocated for transformation through his 'Two Nations' speech. The two speeches read together, for Mamdani, they give a comprehensive account of Mbeki's promises and challenges of the new South Africa. In this regard Mamdani notes that Mbeki's critics took each speech on its own, wrenched from a larger context, and painted him either a born-again neo-liberal who had capitulated to powerful vested interests, or a radical demagogue

setting up a minority against the majority. To Mamdani, those who criticise the 'I am an African' and its pursued project of reconciliation do so because of their failure to read it along with the 'Two Nations' as the response to the first speech.

Mamdani asserts that each of these two speeches was articulated in the political context of where the country was at the time. In this regard Mamdani argues:

The promise was articulated in 'I am an Africa', one of the most remarkable political documents of the 20th century... Its focus was on the future: Would yesterday's settlers be today's migrants, citizens of the new de-racialised South Africa, or will they be flushed out of the colony, like the *Pieds Noirs* in Algeria, to make way for a racially cleansed independent country? ... South Africa, Thabo was saying, will take a road different from Algeria, another famed settler colony at the Northern end of the continent. The consequences will be enormous for both the native and the settler. It was a grand vision, Lincolnesque, fitting for a statesman at the helm of the new South Africa. (Mamdani 2016: xxxiii-xxxiv)

Taking a step further, Mamdani highlights the context and the thinking behind the articulation of the 'I am an African' in stating:

If building a shared future was the promise of the new South Africa, its challenge was the realisation of social justice for the vast majority who had been forcibly excluded from this common journey until only yesterday. This stark history had given rise to two nations, the subject of second speech ... Whereas in 'I am an African' Mbeki had 'described being South African fundamentally in historical terms', 'Two Nations' was finally coming to grips with 'the difficult but inevitable challenges posed by white class privilege'. (*Ibid*)

After all, Mbeki does not shy away from the commitment that reconciliation had to be accompanied by transformation. Even in his post-presidency era, Mbeki continues to set the agenda for the need for transformation – committing to the ideal that South Africa must be reconciled from apartheid and also transformed in economic terms. In

this regard, Mbeki even noted that “[a] major component part of the issue of reconciliation and nation building is defined by and derives from the material conditions in our society which have divided our country into two nations, the one black and the other white”. In Mbeki’s own admission South Africa has achieved reconciliation, but without transformation, the project of liberation remains incomplete. Indeed the ‘I am an African’ can be considered to have inspired the process of reconciliation. The paradox, however, is that those with economic power (whites) to make transformation a possibility are unwilling to join hands. For Mbeki, the black people who agreed and embraced the spirit of reconciliation did so not because they were fools but because they felt that both themselves and whites stand to gain from the reconciliation and transformation. The ‘I am an African’ and ‘Two Nations’ speeches are testimony that Mbeki is committed to both reconciliation and transformation. This is alluded by Mbeki himself when he said: “[o]ccupying the centre stage in this regard are the twin concepts of reconciliation and transformation”. So, the notion that only reconciliation was a priority and transformation was not on the agenda is unjustified.

Barney Pityana observes that Mbeki was at the receiving end of some of the vicious attacks and reporting. Because he was a man of principle, he did not try too hard to please and stood his ground in arguments to defend the truth against populism. According to Pityana (2018:26) “[f]or all that, he did not easily endear himself to any detractors who, unable to argue and debate intelligently, took to character assassination”. Indeed this point is linked to the very arguments that Mbeki has been making on why the ANC pursued reconciliation instead of popular demand for the persecution of apartheid perpetrators. In this regard, Mbeki argues that the desire to create a non-racial and common South African nationhood has been a position of the ANC for many decades. As attested above by Pityana, Mbeki was a man of principle who served the ANC ideals with commitment, it is apparent the detractors who could not succeed in convincing him otherwise resorted instead to personal attacks. In this regard, Mbeki attests:

Of enormous importance in this regard was the fact that throughout the decades of its existence, the liberation movement had consistently and unequivocally espoused the principle of non-racialism and a common South African nationhood, even in the face of the harshest

form of racial tyranny and racist bigotry and insult that the apartheid system was capable of. (Mbeki [1996]1998a:62-63)

In Mbeki's reactions, the ANC understood that in order to achieve the dream for creating a non-racial and non-sexist society the national reconciliation had to be prioritised toward becoming a nationhood. That means, in other words, had the post-apartheid government not embarked on the programme of reconciliation South Africa would be left exposed to endless conflicts and wars in pursuit of vengeance. "Without that reconciliation, the conflict and the war from which nobody would profit would never come to an end" (Mbeki [1996]1998a:62-63). Indeed, what has happened in the recent past across the continent becomes a counterpoint to the reality similar to the book of Mahmood Mamdani (2001) that he titled *When Victims Become Killers*. Indeed, in thinking about what has happened in Rwanda, for South Africa to avoid the similar regression effects of vengeance meant that its process of becoming a nation had to be located within the context of reconciliation. Mbeki's thoughts on the need for reconciliation and non-racial South Africa are grounded in his 'I am an African', articulated from the ideals of the ANC seeking to become the advocates for humanity on the continent. Indeed, the moral appeal of 'I am an African' is a central part that is holding South Africa together, albeit the enormous challenge of transformation.

From the perspective of Mbeki and the ANC, South Africa has the capacity that enables it to unite the divided peoples of Africa. It is necessary to recall that the historical formation of the ANC has its origin in the church. This enabled it, at the period of the country's transition, to pursue reconciliation rather than vengeance. As expressed by the Chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africans have a big role to play in affirming the notion of humanity and helping African societies understand the essence of human life. According to Tutu, even in the face of the harshest forms of discrimination and abuse that the apartheid system was capable of, Africans have demonstrated the notion of what it means to be a human through the spirit of reconciliation. It is in this understanding that Desmond Tutu stated that:

With the eyes of the world on this country ... the people of South Africa initiated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, eschewing revenge and violence in favour of truth and forgiveness and,

ultimately, the reconstruction of our country. As a result, South Africa today stands as a model of merciful justice; of what can be achieved when enemies choose dialogue over violence. (Tutu cited in Brankovic 2013:55)

Pityana has observed that post-apartheid South Africa is not what it used to be before 1994 during the apartheid era, largely inspired by the humanist ethos of the ANC leadership. To Pityana, Mbeki offered South Africa a brand of leadership and inspiration that was consistent with the values and ideals of the ANC. According to Pityana (1999:138), “[w]hat has changed is that the African people of South Africa are more assertive about being African, more critical and discerning and therefore discriminating about European and American models that are being thrust upon them”. Pityana commends Mbeki, along with Mandela. According to him, they held this country together during the darkest days of an uncertain future. In his assessment, “Africa has been coming of age in South Africa in quiet and unobstructive ways” (Pityana 1999:138). Indeed, in affirming the critical values of humanity, South Africa has become a reference point not only to African societies seeking to overcome their indifferences and conflicts but also to the rest of the world. As argued by Mamdani (2015:61), “[i]f Nuremberg has been ideologized as a paradigm, the end of apartheid has been exceptionalized as an improbable outcome produced by the exceptional personality of Nelson Mandela”. In this regard, the making of the post-apartheid state in South Africa affirms the values of humanism and international human rights.

Mulemfo praises the leadership of Mandela and Mbeki for their important role in helping South Africa achieve a peaceful democracy and national reconciliation. Mulemfo (2000:16) argues that “[f]rom its democratic elections, South Africa has made its mark in working for reconciliation and nation building”. Mulemfo disagrees with the notion by some that Mbeki articulated his Africanisation speech better on foreigner capitals than in his rural villages of South Africa. Mulemfo (2000:26) argues that “Mbeki’s continental dream has so far not led him to put more emphasis on the continent than on his country”. In this regard Mulemfo asserts that Mbeki’s affirmation of his Africanness—the ‘I am an African’ presented on behalf of the ANC—demonstrates not only his strong Pan-Africanist belief and deep attachment to his motherland (South Africa), but it shows also how painful it is to think about what

happened when black people were dispossessed of their land and subjected to racism and discrimination. To Molemfo, Mbeki is a true Africanist who put South Africa in his heart but is neither racist nor nativist. Molemfo argued:

Mbeki's strong attachment to South Africa has demonstrated his position that he is an African in South Africa first and an African in the continent second ... Despite the fact that South Africa is still going through the implementation process of a strong democratic culture, it is necessary to state that African countries have many lessons to learn from South Africa. For instance, the fact that Mandela did not stand for another term of office is a clear example that has taught many African leaders that power is not eternal. (Mulemfo 2000:16)

To sum up this debate, it is fair to conclude that only a few people understood Mbeki's speech's context and purpose. Most commentators miss the fact that 'I am an African' speech was an attempt by Mbeki on behalf of the ANC to adopt a national identity which would accommodate all peoples of race into a single nation. The speech can be regarded as a rallying call to all South African citizens of different races, cultures, languages, religions, and ethnicities to unite under one flag. For this purpose, the ANC has indeed proclaimed in the country's coat of arms: "Diverse People Unite". The national brand of a 'rainbow' nation serves as testimony to that effect. Theron and Swart (2009: 153) correctly noted that "[n]owhere on the continent has this politics of identity been more prominent than in South Africa, during the pre- and post-apartheid eras". The politics of identity in South Africa is understood by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009b:1) to be "a form of evolution of African consciousness belonging to a common race, with a common heritage including long years of defensive measures against white domination". South African history has long been written without due regard to the role of the Africans. Mandela summed the adoption of the country's non-racial Constitution as a 'long walk to freedom'.

The issue of common African identity, which has been advanced politically, was meant to advance reconciliation. Although there were many who objected to this political idea by the ANC, especially those aligned to radical Africanist movements such as Pan-Africanist Congress and the Black Consciousness, ANC espoused both the non-racial Constitution and reconciliation. Because the ANC, since its foundation in 1912,

envisaged the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa, in which black and white could coexist as one nation, this meant any form of a new South Africa had to be located within the spirit of reconciliation. The narrow or exclusive ideologies of nationalism had to make way for the inclusive notion of an African identity which was not racial but accommodated all South Africans regardless of race. Indeed, the non-racial Constitution had come to express the notion of reconciliation in the immediate post-apartheid agenda. In particular, the non-racial Constitution is at the very core of constructing the common nationhood for post-apartheid South Africa. The ANC's belief in this regard arises from the view that Africans can stand out as having been the originators of what is today considered a successful non-racial and non-sexist post-apartheid society.

Mbeki's attempt to unite post-apartheid South Africa through the notion of African identity rather than race or historical origin contributes to the construction of nationhood. But despite this effort by Mbeki to define post-apartheid South Africa through the inclusive notion of African identity, the question of who is a true South African continues to re-emerge, threatening both the Constitution and the notion of a rainbow nation. As argued by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:13), "[a]t the centre of South Africa are ethnicities that have all been struggling to be South African". In this regard what being South African is subject to contestations. To Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:13), "South Africa can be best described as a 'contact zone'", that is, "a space in which peoples of different ethnicities – who were geographically and historically separated – came into contact and established ongoing relations". Ndlovu-Gatsheni amplifies this notion as follows:

South Africa is a country characterized by layers of competing and complex identities. The first layer consists of various black ethnic groups that experienced colonial conquest, colonization and apartheid domination. Examples include the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, San, Khoi Khoi, Suthu and other identities. The second layer consists of 'colonial-racial subjects' who came to South Africa as part of a long imperial/colonial history. Examples include the English, Afrikaners, Indians, Malay, and Chinese. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011:13)

Mbeki's attempt to unite these various identities into one South African nation must be read through his speech. Seedat (2021:459) notes that "[h]is rendition of history is a form of reminding all South Africans how they became Africans". The adoption of the Constitution on whose behalf Mbeki speaks must also be seen as an attempt to contribute toward the non-racial strand of African identity for South Africa. In particular, the Constitution is adopted to be the basis for reconciliation and for the emergence of nationhood premised on the notion of common citizenship. In respect to Mbeki's speech, it deserves praise more than criticism, for it has inspired the notion of reconciliation and nationbuilding, as well as created the space for the South African society to debate issues of transformation and social justice at the back of reconciliation. And it is important to emphasise that Mbeki's speech is not the Constitution, so Mbeki cannot be blamed for the current political and socio-economic problems confronting post-apartheid South Africa.

Furthermore, Mbeki's speech is important in that it brings to the fore the critical contribution of black South African intellectual tradition that led to the formation of the African National Congress and the post-apartheid state of democracy. The post-apartheid state informs the dream and aspiration that many South Africans fought for and even sacrificed their lives for, so that blacks and whites can co-exist together as one South African nation. It is upon reading this speech that important names of people and ethnicities in the political history of South Africa are brought back to the national memory. It is in this observation that the speech is in critical dialogue with South African past, present and future, and also highlights the intellectual contribution of Mbeki in South African public and political life.

Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that the purpose of 'I am an African' speech by Mbeki was to endorse the adoption of the country's final Constitution on 08 May 1996. The speech was written and presented by then deputy president Mbeki on behalf of the African National Congress, a ruling party in government. This chapter argued that the speech attempted to define the post-apartheid South Africa as defined by African identity rather than race, gender or historical origin. In this regard the speech is considered an act of liberation aimed at deconstructing the historical and political processes of colonialism, racism, apartheid that constituted the construction of

apartheid South Africa. In addition, this chapter argued that the speech is part of the broader historical vision of the African National Congress that was inspired by Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Anton Lembede operating under the black South African intellectual tradition. As such, Mbeki in articulating the notion of African identity and self-assertiveness and pride as well as non-racial and non-sexist South Africa is placing himself in the Seme-Lembede tradition.

What was also engaged in this chapter is the debate by South African public in response to the speech in the light of the current state of post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard three observations were made. First is the ongoing tendency to define the speech singularly as poetic and beautiful with finely crafted grammar and the emotions. The upshot of this observation tends to ignore or exclude the political appeal that the speech is intended for. Secondly, the South African public especially blacks are disappointed by the Constitution for failure to transform the South African society economically. Specifically, this disappointment arises from the view that the Constitution has only delivered the part of reconciliation in favour of white people, but no transformation as far as black condition is concerned. To Sipho Seepe and Xolela Mangcu, the criticism lies on Mbeki alone, whose 'I am an African' speech brings and bears to defend the Constitution. According to them, Mbeki's speech is devoid of political truth, arguing that it assures white fears and avoid black injustice. And thirdly, it has been argued that a fair assessment of Mbeki's speech must take into consideration the political context in which the speech was articulated – thus the period when the country was buoyed by euphoria of post-1994 democracy. In addition, it argued that 'I am an African' must be read together with 'Two Nations' speech in order to fully understand Mbeki's intellectual engagement with the South African post-apartheid national project.

CHAPTER SIX

Mbeki's political idea of post-apartheid South Africa

Introduction

This chapter explores the political ideas of Mbeki in an attempt to understand the making and unfolding of the post-apartheid state in South Africa. The chapter comprises four parts: (i) South Africa: A Year of Democracy, (ii) Our Common Vision: A Non-Racial and Non-Sexist Democracy, (iii) South Africa: A Workable Dream, and (iv) South Africa: Two Nations. These topics feature in the political writings of Mbeki and they have a bearing on the understanding of the political idea of South Africa. They are examined in depth detail to bring to light the understanding of the issues at hand. The focus includes a critical interrogation of the concepts in which the post-apartheid state is [re]formulated using Mbeki's perspectives. This also entails whether or not the perspectives and ideas of Mbeki are indeed fundamental in advancing the understanding of post-apartheid South Africa. Essentially, this chapter informs the thrust of black public intellectuals as far as the intellectual contribution of Mbeki is concerned.

South Africa: A Year of Democracy

South Africa is regarded as the post-apartheid state following the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. The first democratic election that took place 27 April 1994 is where the apartheid regime made way for democratic government that featured political freedoms like black political administration led by Nelson Mandela (first black president of South Africa), the liberal constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Freedom of Expression, all-race elections, including the launching of Human Right Commission (HRC), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Black Economic Empowerment, as some of the things which informs the successes of the post-apartheid state.

In his speech entitled '*South Africa's first year of democracy*, Mbeki ([1995]1998a:60) expressed that the post-1994 transition "has been one of new challenges and exciting developments, starting with the moving inauguration of Nelson Mandela and president

of the democratic Republic of South Africa and the installation of the rest of the Government of National Unity”. This remark comes in the wake of the country’s transition from apartheid to democracy. The idea of racial segregation by the architects of apartheid in South Africa was itself a direct inspiration from German Fascism and deliberately intended for the race domination of whites over blacks, according to Mbeki. Indeed, that is what the apartheid regime achieved through the racial system of apartheid – where blacks were denied equal rights, freedom and subjected to explicit racism and oppression, while white minority was privileged. “As we marked our first anniversary of democracy, we hoped that our victory had helped to bring to its final close a period of history when it had been possible for racists to seize power, impose a system of racial and ethnic domination on the peoples, and engage in the crime of ethnic cleansing” (Mbeki [1995]1998a:60). Mbeki cautioned his audience that, although the country has gained the independence, it faces a daunting task to overcome the system of apartheid:

As a country and a people, one year after our emancipation, we continue to be confronted by the challenges of overcoming the legacy of the system of apartheid which imposes on our country: (a) racial and ethnic divisions, antagonism and mistrust, (b) gross racial, gender and geographic imbalances in terms of distribution of wealth, income and opportunity, (c) terrible levels of poverty, (d) a stagnant and malformed economy, (e) a largely illegitimate machinery of state, and (f) national budget locked into minimal capital outlays, being swallowed up mainly by consumption of expenditure. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:60-61)

One of the important issues that arose in Mbeki’s analysis of apartheid is that it imposed a system of racial and ethnic domination on black people, and central to this political system was the idea of white domination. As Hill (1997:71) puts it, “[a]partheid South Africa was a society over-determined by race and racism”. According to Sithole (2011:4), “the dominance of white oppression and exploitation of blacks created a situation where the oppressor has the luxury of choice, while the oppressed are severely restricted”. As such, the historical fact of apartheid system is the white enrichment and black exclusion. This, in consequence, meant the future establishment

of democracy and freedom for all South Africans was set up to fail. Indeed, the immediate problems that arose after 1994 were from the legacy of apartheid. In Mbeki's analysis, the important part of the agenda of the ANC before 1994 was liberation and independence. Therefore, once in political power, would shift attention to issues of transformation. It is understandable that, as the longest liberation movement on the African continent at that period fighting for the liberation of black South Africans, ANC needed to prioritise the important task of independence.

The essential consideration in Mbeki's analysis of post-1994 democratisation draws from understanding the negotiated settlement of South African conflicts. Indeed Mbeki is part of the leadership that negotiated on the part of the ANC and is best positioned to shed light on the deal and proportions agreed upon. Adebajo (2016:7-8) notes that "[b]etween 1990 and 1994, during the negotiations for a political settlement, Mbeki played an important part in laying the foundations for a post-apartheid state and establishing what would become one of the most respected constitutional democracies in the world". Mbeki argues that the most important part in the process of moving South Africa towards the establishment of peaceful and democratic dispensation was to ensure that all groups feel accommodated in 'new' South Africa. In Mbeki's ([1995]1998a:61) analysis this meant the need for "co-operating among its main political and social players" especially ANC and National Party. Mutual cooperation opened the possibilities for "trust" and a "culture of compromise" (Lawrence 1994:8). The embodiment of mutual trust "embraced a culture of deal-making" (Atkinson 1994:36). In addition the important part that necessitated the negotiation was because both parties had reached 'armed equilibrium' in which both parties had to find another way forward to resolving the conflicts. In this regard, Mbeki reflected:

The necessitate to proceed in this manner resulted from the fact that neither of the main belligerents in the struggle for the future of our country achieved its principal goal of completely defeating the other. The ruling forces of apartheid failed to defeat and destroy the movement for national liberation and democracy. for their part, the latter did not succeed to overthrow the apartheid regime and seize power from it. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:61)

The important part of Mbeki's analysis is that the path to the negotiations became possible once the apartheid regime and ANC reached the stalemate of 'armed equilibrium', both realising that they could not achieve their objectives by means of carrying out violence. Mbeki reflecting on this stalemate, says this was very much the victory on the part of the ANC-led liberation movement in weakening the regime, forcing it to concede that it could not defeat the all-round liberation struggle and guarantee the long-term security of the white population. In this dilemma, it had no choice but to accept to negotiate. For Mbeki, the more prolonged the refusal of the regime and its continuance to resort to means of repression only served to draw even larger numbers of black people into the liberation struggle. The important point Mbeki is making here is that however brutal, the regime would not hold indefinitely. The armed equilibrium, for Mbeki ([1995]1998a:61), "created a new, dynamic and unstable equilibrium which necessarily had to be addressed within the context of its own specifics". In Mbeki's assessment, the prospect of unstable equilibrium further obliged the regime to seek to negotiate. In this regard, Mbeki is arguing that the regime understood that even if it continued to resist change, eventually, it would be defeated and be obliged to surrender with incalculable consequences. To avoid consequences, it accepted to negotiate the peace agreement as the only way through which it could sacrifice something in order to avoid losing everything.

As it happened, the unbanning of the ANC, SACP and PAC and the release of political prisoners in 1990, including Nelson Mandela, after 27 years of incarceration, marked a turning point in the political history of South Africa. The negotiation forum called the Convention for a Democratic South Africa was established in 1991 after an agreement, the National Peace Accord. The purpose of CODESA was to focus on "negotiations of political transition and the formation of a non-racial democracy" (McKinley 1997:103). Johnson (2003:321) notes that "[n]ational liberation movements of southern Africa were compelled to adopt an insurrection approach to change, given the nature of colonial/apartheid regime and the impossibility of meaningful engagement and change through legal struggle". In addition, for Johnson (2003:321), "[d]ecolonisation, in previous Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique in the mid-1970s, Zimbabwe in 1980 and Namibia in 1990, and democratisation in South Africa in 1994, brought to power anti-colonial liberation movements that took control of the state machinery and reorganised themselves as political parties". As such, the process of

decolonisation in South Africa led to the replacement of racist apartheid with the new dispensation of non-racial democracy.

An important element in Mbeki's analysis is that the ANC, as a main party of blacks and a government in waiting, needed to make the shift from being a liberation-centred movement to a democracy-centred organisation. This meant it had to discourage the use of political mobilisation and violence and their replacement with politics of compromise and coexistence. As argued by Mbeki ([1995]1998a:62), "throughout the process of negotiations, political violence in the country continued with varying intensity, and the negotiations themselves occasionally came to a halt, only to resume when it became clear that the equilibrium achieved at the beginning continued to hold". Marc Maharaj asserts this point in stating: "In the country, many Mass Democratic Movement activists disapproved of talking to the enemy" (Maharaj 2008:22). In this regard, Maharaj adds, negotiations became a new terrain of struggle and site of contestation. After the post-1994 transition, ANC was faced with an enormous challenge to unite the country that had been divided for more than 350 years. In this regard, Mbeki notes:

In our case, the stage for such deliberate and conscious co-operation was set both by the process of negotiations, which resulted in an agreed process of transition to democracy, and the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU), which drew into a coalition government the main political players identified as such by the first democratic elections of 27 April. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:61)

One of the important points in Mbeki's analysis is that the ANC government advocated the ideals of building an inclusive South Africa through the establishment of the consolidated democracy. Throughout the years of post-apartheid transition, the ANC-led GNU focused on ushering reconciliation and promoting the idea of nonracial democratic society. President Mandela became the foremost spokesperson of reconciliation in South Africa. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015b:305) notes, "[a]s the first black president of South Africa, Mandela practically and symbolically made important overtures to the erstwhile white racists aimed at hailing them back to a new, inclusive, nonracial, democratic, and pluriversal society known as the rainbow nation". In the strong way, the years of GNU "developed mutual trust, discounted questions of

political power, and agreed to an Interim Constitution allowing the new democratic government – predictably headed by the ANC – to commence instituting its political programme” (McDonald 1996:221). In this regard, Mbeki attests:

In the Interim Constitution we entrenched basic rights and liberties, national unity and equality, the rule of law, accountability and transparency of government, and freedom of expression and association. Our reintegration into the global community has normalised our relations with our neighbours in Southern Africa and presented new opportunities and challenges in the international trade.
(Mbeki 1998b:82)

The ratification of the Interim Constitution to the final Constitution, just after launching TRC, attests to the notion of mutual trust. Mbeki, reflecting on the nature of the compromise reached in the ratification of the Constitution, argues that the most important part of building an inclusive government is that all groups need to feel accommodated to build the ‘democratic political stability’ in South Africa. This may sound polemical, but it seems that compromises on the part of ANC were to take on board the white fears, thereby neglecting black interests and aspirations. As argued by Marais (1998:245), “part of the political objective of the immediate post-apartheid years was to manage the fears of white minority” and, to a lesser extent, “change on the part of the black majority”. The transition is very much consistent with what some critics label “elite transition” (Bond 2000:1), referring to how this transition was focused on the interests of the few at the exclusion of the majority. As argued by Sithole (2011:3), “[a]s an elite project, the national liberation struggle underwent embourgeoisement and systematical liberal disciplining which culminated into a negotiated settlement”. However, it is the result of the elite transition that made South Africa’s transition to post-apartheid unique. In this regard Mbeki says the major priority of getting through the negotiations was to achieve the central goal of the formation of democratically elected government of South Africa.

In Mbeki’s analysis the prospect of free and open democracy would entails both the advantage and disadvantage as part of inevitable situation that people need to contend with in democratic spirit. In anticipation to what was to happen in the context of GNU , Mbeki stated:

I believe that even now, as the country develops in the context of a negotiated and agreed settlement, led by a GNU, we must expect that elements of co-operation and competition will continue to characterise the relations among the main players in our society. This is an observation that we can quietly easily substantiate from both a theoretical and an empirical basis. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:62)

To detractors and critics of the ANC-led government Mbeki stated:

We are, therefore, happy to advice this audience that it should not be stampeded to read crisis each time the elements of competition among the leading players in our society assert itself, even as these players continue to participate in the process of deliberate and conscious co-operation that we have spoken of. (ibid)

Taking a step further, Mbeki argued:

To take this matter one step further, the argument remains yet to be substantiated as to why and under what conditions the majority parties participating in government would find it in their interest to withdraw from government, go into opposition and deny themselves the possibility to share the accolades for the success of the process of reconciliation and development which will, inevitably, make South Africa a better place to live for all its citizens. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:62)

McKinley (2000:2) notes that ANC, as a result of transition from apartheid to post-apartheid, “has become one of the primary advocates of liberal democracy on the continent”. Mbeki’s thought on the need to build a political stability and a long lasting democracy emphasised the important element relating to the fundamental question of reconciliation and transformation. For Mbeki if the country needed the reconciliation to create and promote racial harmony, it needed also transformation to address the social and economic inequalities created by apartheid. Concerning reconciliation and national unity, Mbeki attested:

Taking all these factors into account, it became obvious that national reconciliation and national unity indeed had to belong among the principal results of the resolution of the South African conflict. Without that reconciliation, the conflict and the war from which nobody would profit would never come to an end. It would never be possible to embark on a programme of reconciliation and development. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:63)

In Mbeki's analysis, the launching of TRC is commendable, for it helped to reconcile the nation, avoiding a potential situation where black victims of apartheid would seek revenge on whites. Mbeki further argued that transformation, too, has to be partnered with the process of reconciliation to ensure there is a balance on both sides. "Reconciliation that merely sought to reassure the former rulers by forgiving them their sins and legitimising them their positions of racial privilege could never be sustained" (Mbeki [1995]1998a:63). Indeed, reconciliation without transformation amounts to incomplete liberation. In this regard, Mbeki argued:

... reconciliation had to be situated within the context of a vigorous process of transformation. As an example, political reconciliation among the contending political forces could only be achieved on the basis of the transformation of the political order, creating the conditions in which the formerly disfranchised could participate as equals in the new dispensation, while the formerly enfranchised lost their exclusive control of political power. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:63)

For Mbeki, the process of transformation defines a broad project of nation-building and inclusive development. As Mbeki (1998:63) argues, "[i]f you consider the breadth and depth of the transformation project on South African society as a whole, then you will understand the enormity of the challenges we face to transform South Africa into what our constitution describes as a non-racial and non-sexist country". This is so because, as Mbeki elaborated:

The process of transformation must encompass everything else in addition to the political, including the economy, the public service, the security organs of the state, education and the social services, the

language issue, access to resources for the promotion of arts and culture, and so on. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:63)

It is in this context that Mbeki advocated for a non-racial and non-sexist post-apartheid South Africa through reconciliation and transformation. For Mbeki, the post-apartheid government had to deal with the question of reconciliation and transformation as a dialectical concept – two sides of the same coin. Williams (2009:62) argues that “[f]or Mbeki the imperative of transformation was a critical component of maintaining the political stability of a free South Africa”. The importance of Mbeki’s presidency is indeed evident in seeking to bring about the realisation of non-racist and non-sexist South Africa through policies of social and economic transformation. Williams (2009:62) notes that “[w]hile reconciliation was an important step in unifying warring factions, the most pressing need was to deal with the material deprivation of the black majority”. Central to the priorities of government under Mbeki’s administration has been to deracialise the state through black empowerment. In this regard, Mbeki attests:

A distinct feature of the practice of democracy in the country has been the serious attempt to involve the people in governance as an expression of what has been described as a people-driven process, to help ensure that we achieve and maintain a national consensus with regard to all major elements of our transformation. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:65)

Broadly speaking, the ANC government was no different from other national liberation movements in seeking to transform society after seizing power. Almost all African liberation movements in the continent prioritised the political independence and pursued the economic freedom later. This is implicit in Kwame Nkrumah’s dictum: ‘seek ye political freedom and the rest shall be added unto it’ (cited in Mazrui 1993:105). As argued by Mazrui (1993:105), “[w]hen he said that, Kwame Nkrumah was convinced that political independence was the key to all other improvements in the African condition”. Johnson (2003:321) argues that “[s]ocial transformation in southern Africa has been shaped and constrained by, among other things, its history of settler colonialism and the anti-colonial nationalist movements that fought against it”. The slow pace of transformation is a key feature of Mbeki’s analysis of the dilemma

facing South African society. For Mbeki, a genuine attempt to create a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa had to deal with the fundamental question of social and economic transformation. Indeed, part of Mbeki's analysis deals with the issues of race and racism in South Africa, which need to be dealt with in order to ensure the process of transformation materialises.

Our Common Vision: A Non-Racial and Non-Sexist Democracy

South Africa's Constitution proclaims that "diverse people unite", white and black, to form the 'rainbow nation'. The concept 'rainbow nation' was coined and inspired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe the post-apartheid South Africa after the first democratic elections in April 1994 and the coming together of many people of different races. Tutu stated: "They tried to make us one colour: purple. We say we are the rainbow people! We are the new people of the new South Africa!" (Tutu cited in Wonke 2015:1). That said, the idea of a rainbow nation can be regarded as a national symbol of unifying the diverse people of South Africa. It informs the undertaking of the post-1994 government to consolidate the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist society. In his address to the National Assembly on 22 September 1994, Mbeki stated: "We assume it to be true that whatever might separate us as different parties, our loyalty to our country's Constitution binds us to the common vision of the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist democracy" (Mbeki [1994]1998:88-89).

The creation of a non-racial and non-sexist society can be seen as an attempt to address the race issue in post-apartheid South Africa. Mangcu (2014:39) notes that "[the first contact of white and black in South Africa occurred under conditions of colonisation". Racism and discrimination manifested in the legalised apartheid and segregation laws. In Apartheid South Africa, Sithole (2016a:26) notes, "race was made the organising principle and racism as the operating logic". This means that from 1652 until 1994 South Africa was a country of two nations, described by Mbeki as black and white. The creation of a non-racial and non-sexist democracy finds expression in the ideals of reconciliation and a rainbow nation. The transformation of South Africa into a non-racial and non-sexist society can be found in the Freedom Charter and the Constitution. In this regard, both declare, among other things, "that South Africa belongs to all who live in it" (Freedom Charter, 1955) and to "ensure that South Africa will be a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist state" (Constitution of the

Republic of South Africa, 1996). It is on the basis of these important documents that post-apartheid was imagined and consolidated into non-racial and non-sexist democracy.

South Africa's Constitution expresses the notion of social cohesion, reconciliation, rule of law, equality, freedom of expression, peace and cooperation as well as transformation and development as some of the things that inform the country's nation-building project. This includes the emphasis on social and economic opportunities for all South Africans regardless of race and sex, as measures to facilitate and accelerate the national transformation. Mbeki ([1994]1998:89) states: "our country's constitution binds us to the common vision of the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist democracy". Mathebe (2001:139) argues that "[t]his erasing of issues of race could be explained by the fact that for many South Africans issues of race are potent metaphors of the apartheid past". Indeed in the statement and character of the post-apartheid state, there is an attempt to move away from the history of apartheid and to consolidating the non-racial and non-sexist democracy. In this regard, Mathebe asserts:

Consequently, politicians and religious leaders set out to hold South African society together through these 'inclusive' ideals of national reconciliation and rainbow nation. These concepts were said to be representing 'collective conscience' of society because they sustained its common morality. Further, the uninterrupted transition to a political 'miracle' and the forging of nationhood through the concepts of national reconciliation and the rainbow nation created the perception of South Africa's exceptionalism. They offered an explanation of how it had come about that this society had gone past a civil war or a possible race war and other unforeseen political instabilities posed by elements of the right wing and the military. Therefore South Africa's sense of nationhood of South Africanness was forged through putative property not from the past but from the present, that is, through these concepts. (Mathebe 2001:139)

In Mbeki's analysis, the prospect of a negotiated settlement and the establishment of the Government of National Unity meant that whites and blacks must work together to

achieve a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Mbeki reflecting on the important part to create a non-racial and non-sexist democracy, noted that action is more important than words. In the words of Fanon (1963:207), “the [government] may well speak in the moving terms of the nation” but what is more important “is that the people who are listening understand the need to take part”. Mbeki spoke of the commitment required in order to build a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Challenging those in government, black and white, Mbeki ([1994]1998:89) said: “[w]e must assume it to be true that all of us volunteered to serve in the capacities in which we serve because we thought we could contribute a little to the creation of the humane society which must surely be the purpose and definition of good governance”. For Mbeki, the notion of governing the country together bears the responsibility that those in government must work to deliver the mandate of government as far as uniting the society is concerned.

We are at the beginning of the protracted process that will lead to the creation of that society. Each one of us, as individuals and as parties, has a contribution to make. We are all entitled to expect that when the record is tabulated, we shall each be judged as having been joint architects in the making of a glorious future. Whether that will, in fact, be the case for each one of us, time shall, without mercy, make its own finding! (Mbeki [1994]1998:89)

To combat racism and discrimination, there is a need to understand the structures that make these racial elements remain intact. In other words, the success of the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist society in South Africa depends on the extent to which racism and discrimination are dealt with or uprooted to ensure there is change. Race makes the infrastructure of racism remain alive even in the post-apartheid period. Scholars have long argued that racism is deeply entrenched in South Africa. Sithole (2012:10), for instance, argues that “racism mutates its melanin (the pigment that gives skin its colour) to adapt itself to the socio-political condition of the context it finds itself”. In this form, Sithole (2012:10) adds that “[r]acism tends to change its form in order to create and re-create blackness in order to sustain itself”. Indeed, to declare that racism has ended on the basis of illegalising and condemning it in constitutional terms does not mean it stops existing. Thus racism and discrimination still exist and operate under

the propagation of a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Sithole notes the basis in which racism does manifest and operate under the post-colonial setting:

This is done in multiple implicit ways. In contexts where people declare that race does not exist or where racism is condemned, racism usually occurs in an institutionalised form. In this form, the logic of its operation is hidden but continues to give effect to racism. However, paradoxically, the effect will be declared not to be racism, because it is effectively normalised and institutionalised. Fanon sees racism is a systemic form of oppression of a people which is justified to such an extent that it remains a part of reality. (Sithole 2012:10)

South Africa's non-racial and non-sexist stance is based on the notion that under the Constitution, racism is declared illegal. Suttner (2012:22) argues that "[w]hen we try to understand non-racialism, we are not simply dealing with a clause of the South African constitution or a word whose meaning is obvious". Thus non-racialism is inextricably linked with the notions of freedom, rights and equality and the Constitution has the mandate to support the course of non-racialism. Suttner (2012:22) argues that "[t]he way we interpret these terms [non-racialism and Constitution] will determine whether or not freedoms grow ever larger". In Mbeki's analysis to deny the existence of racism makes it harder to addressing the question of non-racialism. For Mbeki the experience of racial inequality is rampant in South Africa. The point of drawing on Mbeki's analysis is that racism remains deeply entrenched in post-apartheid South Africa. The continued emphasis of racism in Mbeki's analysis means that the previously racialised sections of society or blacks remain marginalised even in the setting of a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. As narrated by Ngesi (2020:65), "Mbeki was therefore of the view that it had to be extirpate" in order to ensure that the dream to create a truly non-racial and non-sexist society materialises. For the persist racism still confronts South Africa and stands in the way of creating a truly non-racial and non-sexist society. In the same speech to the National Assembly, Mbeki stated:

Despite the welcome reality of the existence of our democratic and non-racial legislatures and executive structures, the fact is that the society over which we exercise the powers of government is one that is deeply enmeshed in its past. To take it forward, we must extricate it

from that past of race and gender discrimination and oppression, of the marginalisation of its youth and of inadequate care and concern for the needs and demands of the handicapped and of our mature citizens. (Mbeki [1994]1998:89)

As this parliament and as the government that is drawn from among its members, we must measure the success efforts by the process we record in building the non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and humane society which the constitution mandates and oblige us to create. (*ibid*)

This, in other words, means that notion of freedom that comes as a result of the creation of non-racial and non-sexist democracy must be lived rather than propagated. It is easy to propagate the notions of non-racialism, non-sexism, a better life all and so forth, but what matters is action and change. Concurring with President Mandela, Mbeki ([1994]1998:90) stated: “We desire that the public service should be dedicated to serving the public good, that it should be composed in a manner that reflects the make-up of our society”. The reality of South Africa is that the untransformed apartheid state limits the capacity of government over national project and also reduces the chances to create a non-racial and non-sexist society. The point here is that most post-colonial African states, as Gibson (2003) argues, always take the easy option of political power and leaving the colonial structures untransformed. Most African governments preside over untransformed states, which is why racism continues unabated, since neither seek to transform. It is the same in the case of post-apartheid South Africa: “[t]he reality is that the public service like so much else in South Africa society, continues to reflect our apartheid past” (Mbeki [1994]1998:90). In the words of Sithole (2012:157), “[i]t is this imagination which results in liberation being an illusion, since it intends only to reform the colonial infrastructure, instead of dismantling it”. As such, there is a need to target the colonial structures and to end racism in definite terms. Change is painful, but it must be done to transform society. In this regard, Mbeki argues:

The pursuit of non-racialism and non-sexism demands that it should be changed [the public service]. We must of necessity build this into our thinking and our comprehension: that change cannot be carried out without pain to some. The replacement of a white, male director-

general by one that is black and female may indeed be an unpleasant experience to the outgoing incumbent. But the question must be asked: How else shall we reproduce a representative leadership of the civil service if we do not go through such processes? The question must also be asked: When will it be right time to begin these processes? And With what speed should they be executed? (Mbeki [1994]1998:90)

One of the important points in Mbeki's analysis is that the notion of non-racialism and non-sexist democracy must not be used to silence the debate on the experience of racial discrimination and inequality. As argued by Sithole (2011:8), "[t]he hegemony of the discourses in the post-1994 downplay race in the quick chase for nonracialism as if there are no problems that are confronting blacks who are trapped in the black condition". South Africa, in its post-apartheid vision of non-racial and non-sexist democracy, is trying to move away from its racist apartheid, but such an attempt is made unattainable by forces of racism. The most problematic part about the debate on racism is that those who oppose to transformation essentially wants to suppress the debate. The popular argument is that racism is a thing of the past or that talks of racism will take the country back. As pointed out by Mbeki ([1994]1998:90), "[w]e must also guard against the elevation of such concepts as stability and continuity to the position where they become guiding beacons which leads us nowhere except to the maintenance of an unjust status quo". Racism functions well under the discourse of emancipatory politics and the non-racialism which dismisses the existence of racism.

That discussion of racism will put off the investors is not only denialism that racism persists but also encourages the continuation of racism. Indeed, it is not only rhetoric but also problematic in that it is not sensitive to the conditions affecting the black majority, who are screaming for transformation. In addition, those resistant to the transformation necessary to realise the non-racial and non-sexist democracy tend to resort to negative images, often based on selective evidence, to argue a false perspective regarding the impact of race and racism on economic development. Mbeki amplifies this point by stating:

Similarly, the phenomenon of uncertainty should not be imposed on our thinking as a scarecrow that frightens us away from embarking on

a journey of change. all genuine change must, by definition, produce uncertainty. But without change all social organisms atrophy and die. In our case the absence of change will inevitably lead to a destructive exploitation. (Mbeki [1994]1998:90)

Race denialism blinds the view that the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist democracy is an attempt to break or depart from apartheid to post-apartheid. To acknowledge that racism or racial inequality, poverty and unemployment, which continues to target the black South African society, did not end in 1994 opens possibilities in which racism can be dealt with in fundamental terms. Instead, giving away the social grants and RDP houses is what the current dispensation is using to explain away the complaints of racism. For Mbeki, racism must not be tolerated, and for the post-apartheid to transform into a truly non-racial and non-sexist democracy, there must be commitment to build the country together. Racism must not only be criminalised but must be ended indefinitely. There is a consistent failure to account for the structures of racism. Freedom, equality, rights and so forth are a mere propagation to silent the screams for transformation and also to pretend that the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist society is underway. There has been a consistent failure to transform the structures of racism and the conditions of black life. Mbeki reminded the National Assembly in stating:

Similar observations can and should be made about property relations in the country. The House needs no educating about the yawning and unacceptable race and gender inequalities in our country with regard to distribution of wealth, income and opportunities. It is self-evident that the objective we pursue of non-racial and non-sexist society cannot be achieved outside the struggle to address these disparities. (Mbeki [1994]1998:91-92)

In the estimation of Mbeki, the existence of racism needs to be ended in order to make way for the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist society. Ngesi (2020:65) notes that “[r]acism then became a common thread that ran through Mbeki’s speeches”. Mbeki, for Ngesi, was not afraid to raise critical issues affecting society. Indeed Mbeki stood his ground in speaking truth to power. His argument is simple: if South Africa needs a non-racialism and non-sexism democracy, it also requires transformation. Ngesi

(2020:94) asserts that “[i]t may be contended that Mbeki demonstrated the appreciation of what was expected of him as President, in terms of the Constitution, as he paid particular attention to the creation of a non-racial South Africa”. For Mbeki, the vision for the creation of a non-racial South Africa is a noble idea, but there should not be black people still discriminated. As such, Mbeki wanted all South Africans to be treated equally and no race had to be treated as more important than the other. For Mbeki the creation of non-racial and non-sexist democracy must also improve the quality of life of all the South African citizens. The notion of non-racial and non-sexist democracy tends to be used by the advocacy of liberal discourse to sidestep the crucial point of racism that is at the heart of the calls for transformation.

South Africa: A Workable Dream

For Mbeki ([1995]1998b), the political idea of post-apartheid South Africa is “a workable dream”. In his keynote address to the Business and Finance Forum on Europe-South Africa held in Switzerland on 27 June 1995, Mbeki told the members gathered at this forum that the defeat of the system of apartheid in 1994 and the triumph Rugby World Cup earlier in 1995 were not just events but the unfolding of a ‘dream’. For Mbeki, this dream is happening in an African country that is said to have no future. In Mbeki’s analysis, there was a time African continent was a theatre of human catastrophes that included colonisation, apartheid, bad governance, violence, lack of development, and hunger on mass scale. For Mbeki, the African recent past seemed that the African dream would forever be deferred. In this regard, Mbeki attested:

And yet the millions of Africans throughout our continent continued to dream of peace and stability, of democracy, of respect for human rights, of freedom from hunger and ignorance, of a future where the continent would no longer be the object of humanitarian assistance and the charitable attention of the rest of the world. (Mbeki [1995]1998b:47)

For Mbeki, the victories of post-apartheid South Africa were not about the victory of South Africa alone but of the rest of the continent. “What has happened in South Africa in recent past says to our continent, including the peoples of South Africa themselves,

that this is indeed a workable dream” (Mbeki [1995]1998b:47). As it has happened, South Africa won another two Rugby World Cup in 2007 and 2019 and also hosted football FIFA World Cup in 2010, a success which an African country can ever be imagined of in the eyes of the Westerns. For Mbeki, post-apartheid South Africa has proven to the rest of the world to be a country which is alive with great potential and possibilities. It suffices to say that Mbeki’s leadership was what South Africa needed during this period, and indeed he demonstrated an appreciation of what was expected of him as President. He promoted the government’s idea of the creation of a non-racial South Africa. But Mbeki did not shy away from raising critical questions relating to the issues of racism and the need for transformation.

In thinking about the unfolding of a South African dream, Mbeki states that the post-apartheid has to move beyond the theory to transform the lives of ordinary people, especially those from the historically disadvantaged groups. Thus it has to transcend the concepts of reconciliation and the rainbow nation to become a lived experience on the part of black South Africans. As argued by Mbeki ([1995]1998b:47), “[f]or this dream to have full meaning, however, and indeed for it to be fully workable, it has to address itself to the total objective of all-round human fulfilment”. While the concepts of reconciliation and the rainbow nation alongside the non-racial and non-sexist South Africa as part of the process of building post-apartheid South Africa, these needed to be coupled with the fundamental question of transformation in relation to the conditions of black majority. In this regard, Mbeki ([1995]1998b:47) stressed: “[i]t has to relate to the creation of enough jobs, the provision of basic formal education to the majority, the construction of enough clinics, the drastic reduction of the high rate of unemployment, the provision of houses to the homeless, and the establishment of a clean and healthy environment”. In the analysis of Mbeki the blacks need access to basic things like land, economy including healthcare, education, education in order to survive. In this respect, South Africa has to create social stability, personal security, and maintain peaceful relations between itself and the rest of humanity, according to Mbeki.

For Mbeki, the democratisation process of post-apartheid into being ‘a workable dream’ meant that there had to be a stern focus on critical issues affecting the nation. The two main areas of emphasis are the consolidation of democracy and transformation. In the estimation of Mbeki, these interventions are important in order

to create a sense of shared destiny and a social and economic transformation of the entire fabric of life in South Africa. The important part in the estimation of Mbeki ([1995]1998b:48) is that “any form of development which is not accompanied by the transformation of the fabric of life would only help to entrench and widen distortions and disparities created by apartheid”, which, in this case, the government is fully cognizant. Indeed the establishment of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is aimed to support the realisation of transformation. (Whether or not the RDP achieved the transformation is a subject for the next section). For Mbeki, when the ANC came into government, it made its priorities the consolidation of democracy and the transformation in order to make South Africa ‘a workable dream’ – a dream which was agreed upon and supported by all organisations in parliament.

Admittedly, the South African post-apartheid government is no exception to the rest of the post-colonial states emerging from colonisation and apartheid in seeking to tackle the two-stage project of democracy and transformation. As argued by Adesina (2020:1), “[t]he aspiration is borne out of the humiliating experience of colonial conquest, the optimism of the immediate post-colonial era, the need to create autonomous spaces within the global order, and to enhance economic transformation and human capability”. These countries were engaged in the process of “catch up” as Thandika Mkandawire aptly describes, referring to the need to be on socio-economic par with the rest of the world. Mkandawire (2011a:7) note that “development and the ‘catch up’ aspirations driving the continent are not foreign impositions but part of Africa’s responses to its own historical experiences and social needs”. Indeed, the key objective of post-apartheid government was to address the legacy of apartheid in order to realise the dream of transformation and development in South Africa. For Mbeki, it is important that South Africa work with the rest of the region in this regard, for it can offer many possibilities on the common problems affecting them. This he emphasised in stating:

We also situate the task of reconstruction and development within the broader context of the Southern Africa region and the world. we have already joined the Southern Africa Development Community – largely because we are convinced that the time has arrived for the region to join hands, as equals, in the reconstruction and development of the

region as a whole in order to offer its people a better standard of life, social stability and peace. We are also currently negotiating the Southern African Customs Union which provides border-free trade across the five southernmost countries of the region, namely South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Namibia. (Mbeki [1995]1998b:50)

In Mbeki's estimation, the importance of co-operation among the Southern Africa Development Community can enable the member states in the region to tap into each other's strengths to addressing own limitations and deficiencies. This statement is clear, and that is to open the Southern Africa region to the prospect of opportunities and possibilities among the member states. Inherent within the overall statement is that the problem facing the Southern Africa region is the lack of co-operation that is impeding regional development. In this regard, Mbeki appealed to the region by stating:

I want to state with all humility, and within the context of equality and mutual respect among the countries of the Southern Africa region, that South Africa possesses some advantages which can make it act as a bridgehead of development in the region. For instance, our geographical location on the southernmost tip of the continent, with seaports on both the Indian and the Atlantic oceans, afford our country the possibility to function as a bridge in South-South trade and general socio-economic interaction. It also provides the possibility of bringing together, in a mutual way, the aspirations of the developing world (especially Southern Africa) and the technological and financial capacities obtainable in the developed economies of the world. (Mbeki [1995]1998b:51)

Mbeki's pursuance of the Southern Africa region to prioritise social, economic and political co-operation is part of the broader South African Foreign Policy focusing on the advancement African continent. The central part of Mbeki's analysis is an emphasis on the post-apartheid government working with the rest of the region and the continent on thinking through the challenges of developing and transforming the conditions of the poor and underprivileged. In conclusion of his speech, Mbeki

([1995]1998b:51) stated: “a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa is indeed a workable dream”. It is this attempt at thinking through the potential of post-apartheid South Africa that Mbeki steered the rest of the African continent toward the political and economic renewal of the African continent. (Whether or not South Africa has succeeded in realising this dream is not the focus here). The dream of a new South Africa and the liberated African continent is the political idea that feature in the important documents of the South African national liberation movements including the ANC, PAC, AZAPO, and Black Conscious Movement.

South Africa: Two Nations

Speaking on the opening of the debate on ‘reconciliation and nation building’ on 29 May 1998, Mbeki remarked that South Africa is a country of ‘two nations’—that is, one white and prosperous and the other black and poor. Mbeki’s characterisation of South Africa as a country of two nations can be found in his “South Africa: Two Nations” speech. Magubane (2001:30) notes that “Benjamin Disraeli first used the metaphor of ‘Two Nations’ to describe the ‘condition of England’ in the 1840s”. Magubane utilising Disraeli’s thesis stated: “The want and distress that afflicted hordes of the lowest and worst of the urban poor had constituted them into what was tantamount to two nations. The poor were forced to live in wretched conditions, which they had learned to call home” (Magubane 2001:30). In the same, Mbeki’s two nations characterise the racial and socio-economic imbalance that defines the state of post-apartheid. Mbeki’s analysis of the post-apartheid society shows existence but not co-existence. For Mbeki, South Africa is a society dominated by race — thus, race operates as a determinant for inclusion and exclusion. In this regard, Mbeki attested:

One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for the persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility to exercise their right to equal opportunity, the development opportunities to which the Constitution of 1993 committed our country. (Mbeki 1998b:71)

Taking a step further, Mbeki notes the second and larger nation, in stark contrast to the first nation. He asserted:

The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation. (Mbeki 1998b:71-72)

Mbeki's articulation of the two nations has not been without controversy. Many scholars and critics, notably on the political right, have disparaged the speech as a mere obsession with race. Olivier (2003:820), for instance, argues that "the speech is fuelled by Mbeki's obsession with race and his propensity to play the race card to support his case". According to Olivier, race is a recurring theme in Mbeki's political philosophy. For McKaiser (2010:190), "Mbeki essentialised race in his engagement with South Africa" and "gave race-conscious transformation a bad name". Herman (2011) accused Mbeki of polarising South Africa into black and white nations. This is made by comparing Mbeki with President Mandela, whose political leadership is said to have embraced reconciliation and social cohesion in South Africa. When President Mandela retired to be succeeded by President Mbeki, Herman (2011:18) writes: "[t]he degree of polarization that followed is hard to imagine for an outsider". If read closely, what is tacitly implied by these accounts is that race is an issue which was supposed to have been buried in the past. This further implies that race is not relevant since there is non-racialism, and that being said, race in Mbeki's two nations is a mere obsession that does not take the country forward. These critics even go to an extent of rejecting the existence of racism as if the economy is not coloured white.

Sithole (2014a:327) states that Mbeki's two nations speech "articulated the existential reality of South Africa, and it digressed from the myth of the rainbow nation by touching the fault line of the nation—that is, the scandal of race". Though regarded as the rainbow nation, post-apartheid state remains a country of two nations as propounded

by Mbeki. The blacks are the political majority and poorer in economic terms, and white constitutes a minority but in economic terms are in the economic mainstream. The notion of a rainbow nation and non-racialism can be regarded as an illusion since the black majority remain marginalised and excluded from the whole project of social and economic transformation. For there to be a rainbow nation and the non-racialism as propagated by the hegemonic discourse of liberal advocacy, racial and socio-economic imbalances found in the dispossession of land, economy, and humanity should be addressed. As argued by Sithole (2011:13), “[t]he black condition must not symbolically vanish but vanish in realistic terms. Economic freedom, reparations and justice must ensure that collective goods by people to benefit not a few black elite”. Thus there should be no existence of blacks and whites but co-existence. Denialism does not help. Mbeki is correct. South Africa is a country of two nations that are characterised by two different levels of economic development.

Mbeki, in articulating the “two nations” speech, was of the view that if the country needed “political reconciliation, it also needed social justice” (Mamdani 2016: xx). According to Mbeki (1998b:72), “[t]his reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of the racial, gender and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitutes the material base which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations”. The theorisation of Mbeki’s two nations is around the white privilege and the black deprivation – two races in South Africa characterized by different economic development levels. Mahmood Mamdani provides that the racial and socio-economic inequality in South Africa reflects ‘the legacy of apartheid’. According to Mamdani (1999:126), “[t]his legacy needs to be thought through as threefold: socio-economic, political and ideological”.

The socio-economic legacy is summed up by a single fact that, [for instance]: If white South Africa were a country on its own, its per capital income would be 24th in the world, next to Spain; but if black South Africa were a separate country, its per capita income would rank 123rd globally, just above the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Mamdani 1999:126)

Mamdani referencing Professor Ali Mazrui's speech in Cape Town relating to the 1994 compromise: "You wear the crown, we'll keep the jewels" (Mamdani 1999:126). South Africa's two nations, for Mamdani, has "[o]ne nation that lives as if is in Spain, the other as if is in Congo". Indeed though South Africa is in constitutional terms a non-racial and non-sexist society, in reality it is not, but a country of white and black nations. The emancipatory transition of post-1994 was about how to move from apartheid to democracy and also the consolidation of the liberal Constitution, but this did not depart from the colonial state. For Sithole (2014a:329), "South Africa is, therefore, in the post-1994 era constitutionally one country, and its polity is the sum total of diverse South Africans who happened to be born of exceptionalism and the imperatives of social cohesion through reconciliation". The Constitution in its liberal form and content is not only being used to protect the status quo of the economic system, but to propagate the false notions of non-racialism and non-sexism. "Therefore, this rhetorically disqualifies in advance whatever narrative that suggests that there are cleavages, divisions, differences and fault lines" (Sithole 2014a:329). What is clear is that the logic of this operation of racist encounter does not change, it is long been part of South African society. Thenjiwe Mtintso emphasises the South Africa's logic of 'two nations' as follows:

South Africa's history has been shaped by injustice, oppression, discrimination and exploitation with all their consequences of inequality and prejudice. The colonial and apartheid regimes created a system that not only dispossessed black people of social, economic and political power and rights but also controlled, brutalised and dehumanised them. Black people in general and Africans in particular were reduced to subhumans and the apartheid regime thus institutionalised racism. This 'Colonialism of a Special type' was unique in that the coloniser lived side by side with the colonised within one country. (Mtintso 2001:31)

The construction of separate development in South Africa can be traced as far back as the colonial/racist encounters of 1652. As argued by Mbeki (1998b:72), "... the inheritance of a country of two nations [...] is as old as the arrival of European colonists in our country, almost 350 years ago". The 1913 Land Act and the Apartheid Act from

1948 were not the beginning of the construction of separate development as the liberal narrative seems to suggest, but rather; these are continuations of racist arrangements that started in 1652. Of course, 1913 and 1948 legalised the white and black separation of developments and institutionalised, naturalised and normalised the landlessness and dispossessions of blacks. As amplified by Baines:

The construction of a white South African identity was predicated on the control of the apparatus of state and privileged access to resources by the white minority. This white minority consists of two main ethnic groups of European origin (English and Afrikaans) both of whom defined themselves primarily in contradistinction to the 'other', the indigenous population. But they also distinguished themselves from each other through adopting a different standpoint to the 'other' (Steyn 1997:9). The narrative of 'whiteness' which informed the construction of white identity meant that race became a salient social category in South Africa. (Baines 1998:2)

Taking a step further, Baines explains how the separate development was further strengthened under the policies of apartheid. In this regard, Baines argues:

In the apartheid era successive Nationalist governments promoted an exclusive Afrikaner ethnic nationalism, as well as a broader white nationalism. Nationalist Party ideologues propagated a particular vision of South Africa as a multiracial (sic) society. They justified separate development policies in terms of primordially-conceived ethnic differences. This had the effect of collapsing individual ethnicities into white and black, us and them. This promoting of racial consciousness over other significant cultural markers was clearly a narrowly-defined form of nation building. (*Ibid*)

It is still unimaginable that the separate development remains unresolved in the post-1994 era. Magubane (2000:32) notes that "[i]n South Africa, despite legal end of white rule, racial oppression, class inequalities remain deeply rooted". Indeed, although South Africa underwent the transition to the post-apartheid state, its present is in close bond with the apartheid. Because this post-1994 democratisation was achieved

through a negotiated process, Magubane (2000:33) argues, “it means that forces arrayed against the strategic objective of creating a truly non-racial, democratic, non-sexist and united South Africa still hold important positions”. It is clear the ANC government is left fuming by the deception act of its white counterpart in resisting the transformation of blacks through control of the economic system, land dispossession and black deprivation despite having committed to the creation of social and economic transformation during the negotiations. As argued by Magubane (2000:33), “[t]heir preoccupation with preserving their still intact privileges tested Mandela patience, who described their whining as ‘pessimism of armchair’”. White resistance, with regard to the economic transformation, is what has led Mbeki to lambast that “we are not one nation, but two nations. And neither are we becoming one nation” (Mbeki 1998:72). In this regard, Mbeki argued:

This reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of the racial, gender and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitute the material base which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations. And neither we are becoming one nation (Mbeki 1998b:72)

For Mbeki, post-apartheid South Africa is a country of the two nations organised along the race as a consequence of apartheid. Mbeki, in analysing the consequences of lack of transformation to post-apartheid society, notes:

It follows as well that the longer this situation persists, in spite of the gift of hope delivered to the people by the birth of democracy, the more entrenched will be the conviction that the concept of nation-building is a mere mirage and that no basis exists, to enable national reconciliation to take place. (Mbeki 1998b:72)

In Mbeki’s (1998b:72) estimation, “the breadth and depth of the transformation that needs to be undertaken is enormous”. For transformation of post-apartheid society is an important step in unifying South Africa’s two nations. The unification of South Africa is therefore important to maintaining political stability and peace. Mbeki admitted to the problems of political intolerance and crime among black South Africans that he

believed were growing because of the lack of change in the material conditions. Indeed in most post-colonial societies where economic inequality persists, the result is a high crime level and in some other instances, racial conflict or white-targeted violence. For Mbeki (1998b:69), the creation of the economic and material transformation would go a long way to strengthen the “commitment to promote non-racialism and non-sexism” as it relates to the people’s expectations of a free South Africa. Throughout the two nations speech the Constitution is what bind Mbeki to the pursuit of reconciliation and transformation. Indeed there is an urgent need for transformation to make the Constitution a possible reality. In this regard Mbeki stated:

We are interested that, as a people, we move as rapidly and as consistently as possible to transform South Africa into a non-racial country. We are interested that our country lives up to its constitutional commitment to transform itself into a non-racial society. We agree interested that together, as South Africans, we adopt the necessary steps that will eradicate poverty in our country as quickly as possible and in all its manifestations, to end the dehumanisation of millions of our people, which inevitably results from the terrible deprivation to which so many, both black and white, are victim. We are interested that we must deal with our political past, honestly, frankly and without equivocation, so that the purpose for which most of us agreed to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are achieved we are interested that our economy responds to the call of rally to a new patriotism, as a result of which we can all agree to a common national agenda. (Mbeki 1998b:69-70)

Rahman (2009:4) asserts that Mbeki’s two nations speech, which himself delivered a month before his inauguration as president, ‘set the tone for his presidency’. There is a sense that Mbeki was annoyed at the lack of transformation when delivering the speech. It is therefore justifiable that Mbeki used this occasion in raising the pertinent issues affecting the post-apartheid society. Mbeki articulated this speech at the time when there is growing concerns about the highest levels of racial and socio-economic inequalities, and transformation is non-existent. Mamdani, in relation to President Mandela and President Mbeki, observes that “[t]he challenge this generation of

political leaders faced was huge: to dismantle the legacy of a regime that had been the bulwark of minority racial privilege for centuries, and in its place to build the political, social and institutional foundations for a new South Africa” (Mamdani 2016:*xix*). The untransformed nature of post-apartheid fresh from the apartheid state appeared to Mamdani as a dilemma that would test President Mbeki’s leadership. In this regard Mamdani attests:

How do you respond to the long-suppressed aspirations of the black majority, but at the same time do so without stoking the fear of the minority? If the country needed political reconciliation, it also needed social justice. The challenge was not to avoid one but two possible pitfalls: on the one hand, to reconcile without embracing the bitter legacy of apartheid; on the other, to pursue justice without turning it into a vendetta, a project of revenge. (Mamdani 2016:*xix-xx*)

It is the observation of Mamdani that Mbeki’s vision of post-apartheid South Africa can be read from the two separate but related speeches: ‘I am an African’ speech and ‘South Africa: Two Nations’ speech. Mbeki’s ‘I am an African’ speech came at the period when the euphoria of political freedom and independence had engulfed the South African society. This speech touches on the issues of creating a non-racial and a non-sexist Constitution with a view to uniting the blacks and whites in post-apartheid society. The speech quintessentially provided the basis for reconciliation and social cohesion. And ‘South Africa: Two Nations’ speech appears at the period when the people’s expectations of a free South Africa and promises of freedom are not coming. This period is captured by what Mark Gevisser called “a dream deferred”, referring to the crisis of expectation “because of the slowness of change”. In a teasing statement, Mamdani sums up the centre in Mbeki’s speeches: “If the country needed political reconciliation, it also needed social justice” (Mamdani 2016:*xx*). In this regard, Mamdani notes:

Eventually, his critics on the left and right came together in a single chorus, claiming that in addressing the two questions at separate times, he was moving from one extreme to another: those on the left claimed he had embraced reconciliation in the absence of justice, and those on the right accused him of turning to the question of justice for

demagogic reasons, Mugabe-style, so as to turn the demand for justice into a racial vendetta. (Mamdani 2016:xx)

This of course, is unsurprising in the country in which the black's expectations of a new South Africa are met with white racist denialism. Ngesi (2020:65) notes that "[w]hile Mandela's presidency was predicated on nation-building and reconciliation, Mbeki's was, in large measure, underpinned by South Africa's socio-economic transformation". There is a view that President Mbeki was not happy with his predecessor President Mandela whose approach to reconciliation pampered whites. The fact that Mbeki delivered the two nations speech at the inception of his presidency comes close to proving this claim. As Matshiqi (2014:14) observes, "[w]ith the benefit of hindsight, one is tempted to argue that in this speech Mbeki was signalling the departure from Mandela's conception of reconciliation". According to Matshiqi (2014:14), "Mbeki's conception of reconciliation was that it would not happen unless the material conditions of those who were oppressed during apartheid changed substantially". The differences between Mandela's and Mbeki's political practice has been widely debated. In Mbeki's discussion on reconciliation and transformation, Daniels (2006:45) argues, "there is much that is pessimistic". Suffice to say that Mbeki was frustrated with what he perceived as white betrayal, who were offered amnesty and immunity through truth and reconciliation for crimes of apartheid but, in turn, are reluctant to contribute to the transformation of black society. In this regard, Mbeki asserts:

We are neither impressed nor moved by self-serving arguments which seek to suggest that four or five years are long enough to remove from our national life the inheritance of a country of two nations which is as old as the arrival of European colonists in our country, almost 350 years ago. (Mbeki 1998b:72)

The post-apartheid state embodies the "logic of repetition without difference" that Frantz Fanon (1963) propounded – it foregrounded in the persistence of material condition. Such repetition makes the post-apartheid state to be problematic since it emphasises to reform under the untransformed structure and system of apartheid rather than overhaul it. As far back as 1964, Nelson Mandela problematised the South African state by stating: "South Africa is the richest country in Africa, but it is a land of

extremes and remarkable contrasts” In South Africa, Mandela (1964) argued, “the whites enjoy what may well be the highest standard of living in the world, whilst Africans live in poverty and misery”. This, Mandela continued, is informed by the control of land, economy, property, the quality of education, healthcare, infrastructure, and almost everything is privilege to whites people, whilst in contrast black South Africans have none of this. Half a century later this is the same reality currently obtained in the post-apartheid era. Gibson (2011:5) argues that “post-apartheid, with its bipolarity, on the one hand, represents itself to the world as a successful free and open democracy, a rainbow nation, where everyone can prosper from free-wheeling markets while, on the other hand, represented by images of permanently conflicted and suffering nation”. The racial and socio-economic imbalance of the post-apartheid has further been reinforced by globalisation and the policies of liberalisation, and increased the marginalisation and exclusion of the blacks away from economic participation.

Fanon’s characterisation of Manichean colonial society applies with much sameness and exactness to what the post-apartheid society is. Fanon (1963:38) notes, “[t]he zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity”. In this regard, Fanon describes the definitive features that differentiate the town of the settler (white) from that of the native (black), and he thus asserts:

The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about ... the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easy going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners. (Fanon 1963:39)

On the other side, Fanon continues, stands the native’s town in contrast to the settlers' town:

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill

fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. (Fanon 1963:39)

In the South African context of the post-apartheid state, for example, this reality lay bare in the striking contrasts between Sandton and Alexandra. The two towns are situated in Johannesburg next to the O.R Tambo International Airport, only separated by the M1 highway. Arriving at Sandton is quite different from arriving at Alexandra. “Sandton, the richest area in South Africa and Africa itself, is here that most of South Africa’s billionaires reside, with the leafy suburb of Sandhurst alone housing 36 multimillionaires” (Nyapokoto 2014:4). Sandton expresses the life of white privilege—business and residential parks, luxurious mansions, expensive cars, nightclubs and casinos, Gautrain station, executives and professionals, tight security control, cleanliness, and many other modern developments and innovations. Sandton is a modern affluent urban area with the level of economic development of the first-world countries themselves. People here spread out in Ferraris, Porsches, Lamborghinis, Mercedes Benz, and BMWs. On the other side of the M1 Highway is Alexandra, “one of the poorest areas in South Africa” (Nyapokoto 2014:4). Alexandra is an informal settlement of shacks and hellish life with no adequate housing, schools, roads, electricity, sanitation, and recreational centres. It is a place with nothing to hide the tragic reality of a hellish existential experience – bare violence, the criminals, the beggars, the prostitutes, and the hobos, are all found here. Here, the black condition, in general, is a life of grief and mourning—rape and murder are normalised as part of everyday life. Sandton and Alexandra reflect the two different existential realities, which affirms that South Africa is indeed a country of two nations, with no possibility of social co-existence, albeit in the state of reconciliation.

The post-apartheid state, in general, is a society characterised by racial and socio-economic inequalities. Sandton and Alexandra, Sithole (2014a:333) writes, “being the chief example among many at the micro-political level, the nation in its broader terrain

constitutes this reality at a macro level”. Despite this bare reality, the advocacy of a liberal discourse has taken upon itself to explain away the fact of racial inequality and the urgent need for transformation by arguing that there are black billionaires who live in urban areas like Sandton as if, similarly, there are whites living in Alexandra. It is in the observation of Sithole that having a few black middle-class in Sandton or Alexandra does not alter the structure of privilege and poverty. As Sithole (2014a:333-334) notes, “[b]lacks who are in Sandton would continue, like their white counter-parts, to feed the exploitation machine by the sweat and blood of those who are in Alexandra”. And, the fact that they are in white spaces, does not absolve them from being at the receiving end of the racially marked structures that confront the blacks. The difference between whites and blacks who live in Sandton is that the former is characterised by the control of ownership of the economy while the latter is dependent on the appendage. This explains why blacks who become bankrupt are most likely to return to the township whereas the white counterpart would remain in their urban settlement.

What Mbeki’s speech brings to the fore is a longstanding colonial and apartheid structures which continues to [re]produce the white privilege on the one hand, and black dispossession on the other. Hana Horáková contends that Mandela’s reconciliatory display, although it demonstrated the non-racialism and was convincing for the moment, but it was not enough in the long run. The problem, Horáková (2018:104) argues, “was that his exemplary, lived, humanistic non-racialism was not anchored by any searching and rigorous analysis of the structural legacies of apartheid and how to confront them”. Indeed the land, economy and wealth are all controlled by whites, and as such, this reinforces white dominance over blacks. There is no black monopoly capital, but let alone the white monopoly capital. This indicates that the economic structure is white in South Africa. Unemployment, poverty and hunger feed on black life. The defeat of apartheid regime has not ended the struggle for racial equality. According to Mbembe (2008:6), “[p]ervasive material inequality between whites and blacks coexists with formal legal equality”. The ownership and control of the economic system remain with white monopoly capital. This entails, as Mbembe (2008:6) notes, “preferential procurement of goods and services”. Declaring the apartheid unconstitutional and unlawful does not mean the structure of apartheid will just disappear. To suggest the government has achieved the transformation on the

basis of empowering the few blacks through BEE is misleading, and at worse, blasphemous. In the speech, Mbeki exposes the scandal of post-apartheid society and its political reforms – that it failed to resolve the structural imbalances.

The key challenge of South Africa has been to create a ‘one’ South African “nation” (Horáková 2018:95). Though the post-apartheid era is considered the creation of the new society, it has not resolved the conditions of the black majority in relation to the and economic transformation and the restoration of human dignity. As Horáková (2018:97) notes, “the questions of nationhood and identity are inextricably linked”. That is, the quest to become a nation should be informed by the instances where transformation is realised in actual terms rather than merely spoken of it. There cannot be a nation when one racial group is dominated by the other economically, which is the reality current obtained in the South African domain. It takes more than flag freedom, elections, symbols and reconciliatory gestures which cannot address the question of existential condition of the blacks. There need to be a political action in relation to the transfer of social and economic programs aimed at creating the opportunities and possibilities for the marginalised end excluded groups. For South Africa to become a one nation, there must be transformation in terms of social justice and economic freedom that places the black majority in control of the economy, the land, the wealth, including means of production. If not, South Africa will remain a country of two nations in one, which is what it is and has always been in economic and social terms.

In its current state, South Africa can be best described as the ‘contact zone’ between two nations (or more) which are using the same constitution (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011). According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:13), a ‘contact zone’ denotes “a space in which peoples of different ethnicities - who were geographically and historically separated - came into contact and established ongoing relations”. In such a state, in relation to South Africa, the ongoing relations are characterised by conditions of racial binaries that lay bare in the racial and socio-economic realities. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:13) argues that “[a]t the centre of South Africa are ethnicities that have all been struggling to be South African”. The one nation is white and rich, and the other is black and poor, according to Mbeki. Both Mbeki and Ndlovu-Gatsheni note that this binarism has its origin in the apartheid past and still continues to haunt the making of the post-apartheid

society. The post-apartheid society continues to be a country of two nations consisting of the black group (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Sotho, Venda, Tsonga, Indians) and the white group (English and Afrikaner). The latter group, the white, succeeded in dominating the black group, and this domination has its expression on the social and economic front. Mbeki's Manichean conceptualisation of a nation implied that all inequality is race-based (Horáková 2018:104). Becoming a nation, Mbeki asserts, requires equilibrium in terms of reconciliation and transformation – where there is equal participation in the economy.

It has been reported by several surveys, among others, United Nations and World Bank reports that South Africa is the most unequal country in the world. As Keeton (2014:26) writes, "South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world". There is little to suggest that post-apartheid is a better state than the apartheid state insofar as the black condition is concerned. This is because, during the era of apartheid black people were open to racism, segregation and inferiorisation in their open and bare forms. In the post-apartheid, they remain marginalised and excluded from the whole project of humanity in relation to the social and economic transformation and development. Many black South Africans are still trapped in the circle of poverty, unemployment and inequality. As argued by Meer (2005:104), "[t]here is little empirical evidence that South Africa is moving away from its position as one of the most unequal societies in the world". The reality is that the notion of a rainbow nation that builds on non-racialism is a myth forced as reality. The advent of post-apartheid democratisation did not do away with the racial binaries and its racialised socio-economic inequity withstanding. The post-apartheid state is continuing exactly where the apartheid ended that is, the logic remains the same and this time under the black government led by the ANC.

The problem of South Africa is and has always been race more than anything else. All other forces, such as globalisation and its capitalist economic system, build on the infrastructure of race. Following Latin American theorist Anibal Quijano (2000:533), "what is termed globalisation is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of race" where white is at the apex of racial hierarchy and blacks at the bottom of ladder. Quijano (2000:533) argues that "the fundamental axis of globalisation "is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of

race". The point here is that there is an attempt in some sections of society which tend to explain away the fact of race as a determinant of wealth and poverty according to which the South African society is organised. Race erasure, for example, is evident in Webster and Adler's (1999:347) referral of South Africa to be "one of the world's most unequal capitalist systems"; the notion that dismisses race by arguing that the problem lies with capitalism. According to them, South Africa is adapting to the new international economic order, which creates the challenges of unequal distribution of goods and services. Webster and Adler are not alone in this regard. Gavin Keeton and Bill Freund argue the same in terms of centring capitalism and de-centring race. Both Keeton and Freund attribute South Africa's transformation challenges to the forces of globalisation by arguing that South Africa does not exist in a vacuum but in a competitive global system characterised by the domination of the global North and the exploitation of the global South, resulting in deep inequalities. Whiteness functions well under the power of denialism. South Africa is suffering what Sithole (2014a:331) defines as a "political economy of divestment in one race and overinvestment in the other".

Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine and explore the political idea of post-apartheid South Africa using Mbeki's thoughts and ideas. It is clear from the chapter and the perspective of Mbeki that the making of the post-1994 state has been consistent with the dream and aspiration of the ANC to build a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. However, the unfolding of such a state is a contradiction and chapter seven (next chapter) provides an in-depth analysis of this contradiction as bemoaned by Mbeki. As the last country to be freed from colonisation and apartheid, post-apartheid South Africa is hailed as one of the most successful constitutional democracies in the world. It presents itself to the world as a non-racist state and a rainbow nation where everyone can enjoy economic freedom and participation. Post-apartheid South Africa, as submitted by Mbeki, is an idea that the ANC has struggled and fought for in order for blacks and whites to co-exist as one nation. However, as chapter seven shows, this political idea is far from the truth, and Mbeki is the first to acknowledge its challenges.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mbeki's thoughts and ideas on post-apartheid South Africa

Introduction

In this chapter, Mbeki's ideas are explored and discussed in relation to the five topics which feature in his varied works. The first topic is the national agenda, and it relates to the question posed by Mbeki—Is There a National Agenda – and Who sets It? Secondly, Mbeki is famous for his critique of racism. This topic analyses Mbeki's perspectives on racism and debates the relevance of his analysis for a deeper understanding of the issues related to racism in post-apartheid South Africa. The third theme is the 'native' question, focusing on the black intellectual project under President Mbeki. Fourthly, this includes the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Specifically, this interrogates whether or not the BEE contributes to the success or failure of the ANC government. Lastly, Mbeki's thinking includes the notion of women's emancipation, a topic discussed in this chapter to determine the extent to which the post-apartheid state has progressed thus far with this question. These topics feature in Mbeki's thinking and are articulated in his varied works. The purpose of deploying these aforementioned aspects in this chapter is to foreground the nature of Mbeki's intellectual thought and perspectives, as they hinge on the understanding of the post-apartheid state.

Is There a National Agenda – and Who Sets It?

The starting point in Mbeki's ([1995]1998c:104) chapter on the "national question" poses a series of fundamental questions. Is there a national agenda around which the whole country should unite? If there is, the question arises: Who set that agenda? If there is not, the question remains to be answered: Who shall set that agenda? What then is meant by a national agenda? "Our national agenda is described as a programme for reconstruction and development" and is also known as "the reconstruction and development programme (RDP)" (Mbeki 1998:104). The racial and socio-economic imbalances that were inherited from the system of apartheid are the most important issues for the RDP in an attempt to transform the South African society.

Mbeki's speech 'Is There a National Agenda – and Who Sets It?' dated 17 March 1995, thus asserts:

This programme contains various objectives, which include achieving sustained economic growth, meeting the needs of the people, redressing the racial and gender imbalance we have inherited from the system of apartheid, transforming the state machinery, and creating the institutions and vehicles we need to ensure a better life for all. (Mbeki [1995]1998c:104)

In Mbeki's analysis, the RDP informs the national agenda and sets the goal of the government. In this regard, Mbeki ([1995]1998c:104) attests: "In that sense, it would therefore be correct to say that there does indeed exist a national agenda around which the whole country is united" This is known that RDP is the brainchild of the ANC, but its content and aspirations originated from its alliance partners and the organisations in the broader civil society, and endorsed by the democratic government in 1994. As such, Mbeki's thoughts on the national agenda and the RDP are the position of the ANC and its alliance partners, not entirely his position. When the ANC ascended to power in 1994, it promised to prioritise the reconstruction and development of the 'poor' blacks through the national transformation. RDP was seen as an important tool for the advancement of the set objectives of inclusive transformation by the ANC government. As argued by Mbeki ([1995]1998c:105) "[t]o address the racial imbalances we have inherited from the past means a commitment to the creation of a non-racial society". RDP became the most important tool for the ANC government to build the 'new' South Africa.

For Mbeki, the RDP, with regard to the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist society, is the most important element of the national agenda. With respect to the commitment to non-racialism and non-sexism, Mbeki attests:

To create a non-racial South Africa must mean that we do everything in our power for the upliftment of the black majority that was oppressed and discriminated against, so that this majority is brought to a position of equality with the white section of our population. Let me explain

here that we are using the word 'black' to include Africans, coloureds and Indians. (Mbeki [1995]1998c:105)

Affirmative action is among the instruments used towards the national reconstruction and development initiative. "By affirmative action we [mean] a process which would focus on the preparation of the disadvantaged majority to catch up with the advantaged compatriots". In this regard, Mbeki ([1995]1998c:106) attested: "[a]mong other things, this must mean the creation of possibilities for that majority to obtain such education and training as would give them the capacity to compete for jobs as directors-general in the public service, as university professors, as judges, as financial managers in the large corporations, as generals in the National Defence Force, and so on". According to Mbeki, these are among the set of initiatives relating to the national agenda. The empowerment of the blacks has been at the centre of affirmative action, and Mbeki's ideas on this subject are consistent with the position of the ANC government. Ngesi (2020:65) argues that "[a]s the country's President, Mbeki had to be at the forefront of this struggle [to bring about the black transformation". For Ratuva (2013:219), "[f]or the new generation of leaders affirmative action was a necessity if the injustices of the past were to be addressed in order to build a more stable future". Despite the noble idea to create a non-racial society, it seems not everyone agreed to transformation. In this regard, Mbeki argues:

It should now be clear that there will be some among us who will begin to say that, whatever may be said about the objective of the creation of a non-racial society, they will not accept that this can be described as part of a national agenda which enjoys the support of everybody in the country. This would affect both individuals and sections of various communities who might feel that the pursuit of the objective of a non-racial society discriminates against them and therefore does not deserve their support (Mbeki [1995]1998c:106-107)

Mbeki's contempt arises from the view that the white minority who hold a different view or are opposed to affirmative action as a tool to achieve the creation of a non-racial society, essentially seek to suppress the idea through ownership and access to the media. They support the creation of a non-racial society but in a paradox; do not want black transformation. Through ownership and access to the media, the whites are able

to set the national agenda and pace debate. White ownership means that they are able to control the content and edit the views in order to advance their narrative. Mbeki's point is explained by Lucky Mathebe's three arguments associated with media. First, the media set the frame or parameters in which South Africans discuss the subject. Second, the media is the teller and maker of the story. And thirdly, media is the main source of the dominant perspectives and ideas in society. Mathebe (2001:*xii*) regard the "news narrative generated by media" as essentially "a product of some propaganda". For Moyo (2016:9), "[e]xamples of agenda setting can be seen in South Africa", for instance, "in how news media writes". White control of media, for Mbeki, undermines the government's capacity to set or promote the national agenda. Media, as argued by Mona (2012:48), "they act as gatekeepers". This means the position of the whites is to enjoy privileges of reconciliation and non-racialism and fight anything to the bitter end that seeks to transform the society. Media is then used as a tool to frame the government in the negative light (pessimism) and the liberal agenda in positive light (optimism). That said, the role of media is gatekeeping. According to Mona:

Gatekeepers are able to control the public's knowledge of actual events and facts by letting some stories pass through the system, keeping others out or presenting them differently from the way the source intended (this does not only happen to government stories). It is this power – to determine what goes through and how it is presented – that enables the media to set the agenda. The audience also learns how much importance to attach to a news item from the emphasis that has been placed on it within the media. (Mona 2012:48)

Mbeki ([1995]1998c:107) reflecting on the political agenda of the media that dictates the national narrative "seeking to diminish the moral weight and the legitimacy of the process of creating a non-racial society" notes that the public is informed of affirmative action "by describing it as an 'Africanist' project". As an 'Africanist' project it is presented as formed by some factions within the ANC for reasons which have to do with power politics rather than an idea emanating from a broader society and endorsed by a parliament. In the words of Sithole (2012:21), "[s]uch rhetoric, though it is a lie, is

something that is turned into a truism which is regarded as blasphemous to oppose, and whose merits may not be questioned". Mbeki amplifies this point as follows:

The public in general is also encouraged to come to the determination that this matter has been put on the agenda merely by a self-seeking political faction which has as much a right to be listened to, or not listened to, as any other political faction. (Mbeki [1995]1998c:107)

The fundamental question posed by Mbeki stand: Is There a National Agenda – and Who Sets It? And by extension, what are this agenda's concerns? As argued in this regard, instead of the people's democratically elected government to set the national agenda, the dominant narrative in the society as framed by media sets the motion of agenda setting. In other words, the dominance of white media determines and dictates what goes into the national agenda through controlled national narrative. Justin Bradshaw, for instance, says the views consistently promoted by whites is reconciliation and non-racialism — "[t]his usually manifests itself in the creation of relationships with the black minority for the purpose of being identified as antiracist" (Bradshaw 2014:6). Indeed the mainstream is dominated by an idea that race is no longer an issue, a view strengthened by the government that pronounces 'all' South Africans regardless of race as 'Africans'. For Sipho Seepe, this definition of African does not include whites. "These debates are part of a deliberate ploy to derail us from engaging pressing social and economic concerns facing this country" (Seepe 2004:39). African identity and non-racialism thus become a tool for liberal whites to think that they know what is best for blacks. Steve Biko diagnosed this problem a long time before 1994 by stating:

Thus in adopting the line of a nonracial approach, the liberals are playing their old game. They are claiming a "monopoly on intelligence and moral judgement" and setting the pattern and pace for the realisation of the black man's aspirations. They want to remain in good books with both the black and white worlds. They want to shy away from all forms of "extremisms", condemning "white supremacy" as being just as bad as "Black Power!". They vacillate between the two worlds, verbalising all the complaints of the blacks beautifully while

skilfully extracting what suits them from the exclusive pool of white privileges. (Biko 1987:21)

The near absence of black economic transformation on the part of white opinions appealing to non-racial South Africa is a scandal that exposes the white lie. In their insistence on reconciliation and non-racialism, the whites want to protect white privilege. Whites have nothing to do with the idea of building a new South Africa except to protect the status quo of the economic system or their ill-gotten wealth. In other words, reconciliation and non-racialism are essential only when white interest matters, and that is why the Constitution is emphasised, but not the part of transformation. On the other hand, the government advocates for transformation because it is elected by the people, meaning it serves the national interest. Mbeki ([1995]1998c:108) amplifies this point by stating: “the issue of the deracialisation of our society or the creation of a non-racial South Africa is indeed a critical matter on our national agenda”. For Mbeki, this commitment to the realisation of the creation of a non-racial South Africa means that the transformation must be prioritised. Perhaps the government must build or expand its media capacity to communicate national matters rather than outsourcing this function. In this regard, Mona argues:

The starting point in determining whether government should create its own media is to question whether citizens have access to the information/content currently generated by government. (Mona 2012:47)

Indeed there can be no doubt that the citizen does have access to the government information. For example, government information is published on government gazette and can be found on government website. What is concerned is that these often attract less attention from citizens. One of the advantages the media has over government’s gazette is news packaging and making news available instantly. In this regard Mona argues:

Government must make an unambiguous decision on whether it wants to contest this power or give it up to the commercial media. At the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), we favour an approach where government pushes past the traditional

media gatekeepers and communicates directly to and with the people, while using the commercial media where it can. This approach is already being used through our limited portfolio of products (Vuk'uzenzele, Public Sector Manager magazine and SA News Agency). (Mona 2012:48)

Overall, the debate relating to the government and media over this political subject is convincing and not convincing, depending on the side that one takes. ANC government is not without its controversy. Penelope Andrews emphasises how the government find itself caught in contradictory political and economic actions. Andrews (1999:81) regards the government's programme of affirmative action as "a device for co-opting the black bourgeoisie". According to Andrews (1999:82), "[t]he paradigm of affirmative action is a limited one, incorporating the demands of discrete minorities who continue to make claims on the majority because of their outsider and minority status". On the other hand, Tangri and Southall (2008: 699) "criticised BEE deals for enriching a small number of ANC figures". In this instance, these comrades serve the interests of the ANC in exchange for wealth accumulation through BEE tenders. Affirmative action, as argued by Ratuva (2013:219), "is countered by the argument that 'it was a facade for the perpetuation of inequality'". For Seepe (2004:84), "any attack on the ruling party regarding its glaring failures is seen, however legitimate, as an attack for transformation and as a disguise defence of white privilege". Through rhetoric transformation, argues Mangcu (2008:101), now and again a critic of Mbeki, "leaders such as Robert Mugabe and Thabo Mbeki are able to get away with this manipulation of race". What this debate brings to the fore, in relation to the government and whites, is that both are two sides of the same coin whose actions are against the transformation. This, however, does not absolve that the mandate to set the national agenda rests with the democratically elected government (at least on paper).

It is worth noting that the debate which broke out between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Mbeki in 2004 headlined "The Sociology of the Public Discourse in Democratic South Africa". On 23 November 2004, Archbishop Tutu delivered the second Nelson Mandela Lecture, using the platform to reflect on pertinent issues relating to democracy under the ANC government. In the speech, Tutu asked: 'What

have we achieved?' Tutu was critical of the ANC government, which has tended to be dismissive of the TRC. In this regard, Tutu argued:

Almost everywhere else in the world you go it is held in the highest possible regard and considered to be the benchmark against which other such endeavours will now be judged. Yes, it was flawed – so are almost all human enterprises. But it was a remarkable institution, for many had thought that the advent of a black led government would be the signal for an orgy of revenge and retribution against whites for all that black people had suffered through all the injustices and oppression from colonial times to the exquisite repression of the apartheid years. (Tutu 2004:30)

Taking a step further, Tutu (2004:30) argued that “[w]e want our society to be characterised by vigorous debate and dissent were to disagree is part and parcel of a vibrant community”. He referred to the members of the ANC as “unthinking, uncritical, kowtowing party line-toeing” with so many of them “cowed and apparently intimidated to comply”. Tutu continued: “I fear that the party lists have had a deleterious impact on people even if that was not the intention. It is lucrative to be on a party list. The rewards are substantial and if calling in to question party positions jeopardises one’s chances to get on the list, then not too many are foolhardy and opt for silence to become voting cattle for the party”. According to Tutu, the members of the ANC are not prioritising the national interest but the ANC. There is the absence of open debate on the issues affecting the society because some, including the President of the Republic, “want to pull rank and to demand an uncritical, sycophantic, obsequious conformity’ shying away from debating ‘HIV/AIDS views of the President’” (Tutu 2004:32). In his capacity as an independent thinker, Tutu was raising the issues he felt are supposed to inform or be debated on the national agenda rather than be avoided or dismissed with silence.

Writing as the President of the ANC and the country, Mbeki answered Tutu’s points of criticism through the email newsletter *ANC Today* which is sent out weekly to anyone who subscribes electronically. He agreed with the Archbishop that many people from different political formations and civil society should be included in the national debate regarding the country's challenges. Mbeki (2004) stated: “I fully agree with this appeal and hope that many of us will participate in this multi-issue discussion”. He continued:

“One of the fundamental requirements for the rational discussion suggested by the Archbishop is familiarity with the facts relevant to any matter under discussion, as well as respect for the truth”. He further pointed out that for South Africa to “determine its agenda, all of us must educate ourselves about the reality of South Africa today, internalise the facts about our country, and respect the Truth”. In this regard, he said: “It would be good that those who present themselves as the greatest defenders of the poor should also demonstrate decent respect for the truth, rather than indecent resort to empty rhetoric”. The response made by Archbishop (29 November 2004), resulting in a limited response by the President, was that: “Thank you, Mr President, for telling me what you think of me, that I am: A liar with scant regard for the truth, and; a charlatan posing with his concern for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed and the voiceless”. This debate was then joined by general public, notably politicians, supporting whose view aligns to their political ideology. At the heart of the Tutu-Mbeki Debate lies the broader issue of who should set the national agenda. As observed by Mteto Nyati (7 December 2004), as he weighed on the Tutu-Mbeki Debate, in stating:

In South Africa the fight is really about who sets the national agenda. Should it be the African National Congress (ANC) or should it be the white elite? On the one hand the black majority government believes that it has a mandate to set the country's priorities. On the other hand the white elite believe its role is to provide thought leadership to the black majority. However, this group's real interest is to protect its wealth and lifestyle. This tension manifests itself in many ways.

The transformation project in our country constitutes one of the most complex contemporary challenge processes confronting any society in the world. Necessarily, it will therefore continue to provoke an intense political and ideological conflict – a healthy contest of ideas – as different schools of thought contend both to interpret this reality and suggest how the new South Africa should respond to the changing actuality it will continue to face.

The challenge intellectually to define the future of our country has been and will remain as demanding and bruising as has been the continuing challenge practically to change South Africa into a

democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous homeland for all our people. In both objective and subjective senses, the contest will neither be polite nor pretty.

One of the important concerns raised in Mbeki reflecting on the debate about the issues affecting the South African society is the fundamental question of race. He has refused to be silenced from speaking about race even when he is accused of 'playing the race card'. As noted by Ngesi (2020:68), "[i]t became commonplace, especially from the opposition parties, to accuse Mbeki of 'playing the race card'". This racist arrogant attitude which seeks to irrationalise and silence President Mbeki and to shy away from the scandal of race and white racism, is evident, for instance, in Jeffrey Herbst's commentary. "President Mbeki responds to criticism by playing the race card ... President Mbeki frequently resorts to the language of class and racial struggle to lash out at his critics" (Herbst 2005:94). Mbeki made it clear that he would not surrender talking about race for as long it affects the society. He argued that neither himself nor the media have the right to set the national agenda alone. In his critical stance on the defence of truth and democracy, Mbeki called for the public debate and intellectual engagements on critical matters of the national agenda rather than leaving this important task to the media controlled by one section of society—Whites. In this regard, Mbeki attested:

It would make an important contribution to the evolution of a national consensus on so fundamental a matter if such an open debate took place, with each party or political organisation stating where it stands with regard to this issue. Such a discussion will have to go beyond general and ineffectual statements and focus in a forthright manner on what it is that we have to do to achieve the national and urgent objective of progressing towards a non-racial South Africa. (Mbeki [1995]1998c:108)

Taking a step further with regard to the question, Who set the national agenda? Mbeki added:

[T]his debate should also bring in the public at large, utilising all representative organisations, including non-political ones, from within

which our people as a whole can state their own view on the matter we have been discussing. We are, in other words, calling for the involvement of civil society in this and other debates of national importance, so that it too becomes part of the process of setting the national agenda. I further believe that institutions such as university should join this debate to make their own learned contribution to the making of our country. (Mbeki [1995]1998c:108)

In Mbeki's estimation reflecting on this matter, if South Africa can proceed to adopt this approach of consulting all South Africans regardless of political affiliation and race or gender, it will succeed in setting the national agenda which has the support of the majority, if not the entire population. What Mbeki is arguing for here is the national agenda that speaks for all South Africans, as opposed to the current situation where white minority decides what is good and bad for other groups. Indeed in an atmosphere of democracy, unlike the apartheid, all groups have the right to self-determination and self-destiny, including political and economic independence. For Mbeki, the national agenda premised on the opinions of all racial groups is consistent with the spirit of creating a non-racial society and addresses the important challenge of creating a non-sexist South Africa. "It must be a fundamental element of the definition of our democracy that the people shall govern!" (Mbeki [1995]1998c:110). The struggle to agree on the national agenda and the priorities that must be set in the agenda is ongoing, polarising South Africa into two nations of black and white.

How to end the nightmare of racism

The question of race and racism constitute a spectre that continues to haunt South African even in the period of post-apartheid era. If there is a President of South Africa who made his thought on racism to be known is Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki confronted racism head-on and, of course, made himself enemies in the process. While Mandela's presidency was premised on reconciliation so that whites and blacks could co-exist as one nation, Mbeki pursued socio-economic transformation. Mangcu, one of Mbeki's critics, admits that Mandela left it to his successor Mbeki to tackle the issues of racism that were uncomfortable to raise in the post-1994 era. Mangcu (2008:35) states that "[r]acial transformation, not racial reconciliation, became the watchdog of Mbeki's agenda". For Mbeki the biggest problem to attaining the transformation in South Africa

is racism. According to Ngesi (2020:65), “Mbeki was therefore of the view that racism had to be extirpated. As the country’s President, he had to be at the forefront of this struggle. Racism then became a common thread that ran through Mbeki’s speeches”. As a matter of fact, Mbeki was here dealing with a global pandemic that has been a longstanding issue in the construction of the colonial/modern world and human and social relations.

Mbeki ([2000]2001a:119) argues that “[r]acism has been a fundamental organising principle in the relations between black and white in South Africa, ever since Dutch immigrants settled at the Cape of Good Hope”. In exposing the violence of racism in its various forms and manifestations, Mbeki calls for it to be condemned and uprooted in society. In the main, Mbeki’s engagement with the question of racism arises in part because of the following concerns:

First: the practice of racism is both anti-human and constitutes a gross violation of human rights. Second: as it has been practised through the centuries, black people have been the victims of racism rather than the perpetrators. Accordingly, what we have to deal with is white, anti-black racism, while giving no quarter to any tendency towards black, anti-white racism, whether actual or potential, as well as anti-semitism. Third: racism is manifested in a variety of ways, these being the ideological, existing in the world of ideas, and the socio-economic, describing the social, political, economic and cultural power relations of domination and discrimination against the victims of racism. Fourth: for many centuries racism has been a fundamental defining feature of the relations between white and black, a directive principle informing the structuring of these relations. Fifth: the legacy of racism is so deeply entrenched that no country anywhere in the world has succeeded to create a non-racial society... Sixth: global experience stretching over a long period of time, demonstrates that the creation of a constitutional and legal framework for the suppression of racism is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to end this violation of human rights. (Mbeki [2000]2001a:117-118)

Mbeki calls for the end of racism and racial division by means of combat and its replacement with a genuinely non-racial society. For Mbeki ([1996]1998b:112), “[w]hile recognising and cherishing the colour, race, language and cultural diversity of our country, we must nevertheless see to build out of that diversity one nation which shares a common sense of patriotism”. Mbeki sees racism as part of everyday life in South Africa which limits the prospects of freedom. In this regard, Mbeki argues that “[w]e have to battle with and against the legacy of racial division and conflict which has characterised the South African society almost from the beginning of the period of our country’s settlement by European peoples”. One of the important points in Mbeki’s analysis is that the enduring structure of apartheid and the ideologies of racism in the post-apartheid era means that racism persists. Mbeki laments that racism persists because of the lack of honest conversations about racism in South African society. Often when the subject of racism is debated, it is discussed in a manner that is apologetic to white sensitivity or the claim of racism is simply dismissed in quick defence of non-racialism.

What makes racism harder to discuss in open national debate is that it is often subtle, silent and hidden, making it even harder to uproot. As argued by Mbeki ([2000]2001a:117-118), “racism is manifested in a variety of ways, these being the ideological, existing in the world of ideas, and the socio-economic, describing the social, political, economic and cultural power relations of domination and discrimination against the victims of racism”. Mbembe (2008:6) concurs that “[t]he discourses through which South Africans represent race relations are changing. Racism no longer seems to reside exclusively in yesteryear’s economic and social settings; instead, it seems to be migrating into the realm of privately held beliefs”. Mbeki argues that the discussion about racism has not heralded a positive atmosphere in South Africa. To concur with Mbeki, the most frustrating part about this discussion is that those who oppose the transformation essentially suppress the debate. Their popular line of argument is that debate about racism will take the country back than it should take the country forward. In this regard, Mbeki argues:

It is perhaps natural and should be expected that some among us will complain about why we thus continue to recall the past. After all, it is sometimes said: Have we not ended the system of apartheid? Is it

now not time that we speak of the future rather than persist in recalling a painful past which is best forgotten, rather than kept alive by constant reference by those who have nothing original to say? (Mbeki [1996]1998b:112)

Often it is argued that debate about racism is a sensitive issue that cannot be engaged at this point of the infancy stage of democracy since it will destroy the gains of national reconciliation or hold the country back. What takes the centre stage is the notion of non-racialism and the myths of a rainbow nation imposed on powerless blacks who are being acted upon by powers that be. It is also argued that race and racism are issues that were supposed to have been buried in the past because that might very well encourage racial conflict. But, in paradox, this narrative is silent on the status quo of racism which continues to privilege the white minority and excludes the black masses. This narrative does not in any way provide a clarity on how the racial and socio-economic inequality and entrenched ideologies of racism can be addressed to ensure that transformation is achieved. The notions of non-racialism and the so-called birth of a happy rainbow nation, though, is a lie, is something that cannot be challenged, and its logic may not be questioned either. There is no alternative as far as the current status quo is concerned. In this regard, racism is defended under the illusions of non-racialism and the rainbow nation as if there are no blacks excluded from access to the national economy.

Mbeki's ([2000]2001a:115) contempt arises from the view that "those who point to the persistence of racism in our country are themselves [accused for] racism". Even Mbeki stand accused of inciting racism and is labelled as racist. It has been argued, for instance, in the commentaries of now and again critics of president Mbeki that Mbeki's views on race and racism are akin to reverse racism. For example, McKaiser (2010:190) said Mbeki is a race essentialist: "someone who essentialised race in his engagement with fellow South Africans". McKaiser (2010:190) states, "Mbeki gave race-conscious transformation a bad name and undid the good work of his earlier years". For Mangcu (2008:122), "the departure from non-racialism as the language of life of the ANC also has something to do with the experience of exile for Thabo Mbeki. Exile can induce in people a heightened sense of longing as well as resentment against those who drove them away from home". In addition, Seepe (2004:67)

commented with sarcasm: “[w]hat happened to Mbeki’s all-embracing notion that ‘everyone is an African’?” Taken together, all these remarks suggest there should not be a debate on racism, including the status quo of racism which left the blacks landless and without economic control, should not be engaged since this amounts to reverse-racism. In this regard, Mbeki ([2000]2001a:115-116) argues that “[t]hose who propagate affirmation action are accused of seeking to introduce reverse racism, or, more directly, resort to anti-white racism”. While acknowledging the socio-economic inequality which informs the post-apartheid society, race denialists argue that the means to addressing this is not by blaming racism but the equitable distribution of goods and services to society.

In a strong show of resistance against national transformation, some privileged whites with dual citizenship in South Africa and Europe resorted to emigrate. These are whites who claim that they suffer the reverse-racism by black government. Most of them emigrated to countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, where most historically originated from. Their claim is that they cannot be part of the ANC-led government, which seeks to revenge them for apartheid past, and that they would rather take their skills elsewhere. A case in point is testified in the report of the Southern African Migration Programme by Jonathan Crush. *Brandon Huntley, a former resident of the Cape Town suburb of Mowbray, emigrated to Canada claimed to have been physically attacked a number of times since 1991. He claimed all these attacks were racially motivated, because his attackers used derogatory racist epithets including “settler”, “Boer”, and “white fuck.” Huntley had not reported any of the incidents to the police, arguing that the police were incompetent and racist and would do nothing when a white person was attacked. The state’s supposed “failure to protect” meant that he had a legitimate claim to refugee status in Canada (Crush 2012:4).* According to this report, Crush reported that the core elements of the allegations of racism included the following assertions:

that all Black South Africans hated white South Africans; that the country was experiencing “reverse apartheid; that black South Africans have “no regard” for the lives of white South Africans; that most violent crimes are committed by black against white South Africans; that the police will do nothing about the crimes committed

against white South Africans; that white South Africans are undergoing a form of racial genocide; and that there is systematic discrimination against whites in the workplace. (Crush 2012:2)

It is on record that post-apartheid society had never experienced the racial war under the ANC government, but already white South Africans claim this to be happening. Whites would throw up their hands in despair whenever the public deliberations on the issues relating to racism are discussed. Race denialism makes it harder to uproot racism. On the other hand, the government is under pressure from the overwhelming majority of black South Africans who demand that the country needs transformation for blacks to have economic freedom and economic access with their white counterparts. Economic racism lay bare in white privilege and black deprivation; that is, whites and blacks are at the two different levels of economic development. The former enjoys the ownership and control of the economy while the latter is cruelly exploited. While during the era of apartheid, racism was legalised in constitutional terms and enforced in broad daylight, in post-apartheid is illegalised but continues to manifest in structures of society that gives effect to economic racism. It is this racially marked structure which continues to reproduce economic racism and is defended by whites and black liberals alike to ensure the status quo of the economy remains uninterrupted for so long as they benefit from it.

The discourse of race denialism is pervasive to such an extent that some even blame the socio-economic inequality on class in the quick defence of non-racism. This goes by saying that the real problem in South Africa is poverty, which can only be addressed through economic growth and job creation, more than it has to do with racism. This claim is made in a quick attempt of wanting a colour-blind poverty and a colour-blind intervention to pretend that racism does not exist. The claim that South Africa's problem is class rather than racism is corroborated in the writings of various white scholars. Seekings and Natrass (2005), for instance, argue that post-apartheid South Africa is a society over-determined by class structure dating even back to the arrival of capitalism in 1600. According to them, "[t]he affluence of white South Africans was based not on continuing racial discrimination but rather on the enduring legacy of past discrimination" (Seekings and Natrass 2005:300). For Roger Southall (2014), emanating from apartheid is class structure and is consequential to post-apartheid

state. He blames the ANC's unproductive "affirmative action whose implementation, it to be noted, is often operationally difficult to separate from deployment", which effectively has widened inequality and failed to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor (Southall 2014:656). South Africa is, in crude terms, a racist society still plagued by the racism of divestment in one race and overinvestment in the other. Of course, this is the very racialised binary that both privilege and dispossession, class and inequality, enrichment and exploitation feed off each other.

The popular argument among racial blackmailers is that there is a black government and an increasing number of the black middle class in the post-apartheid state, meaning the scream of racism is dismissed as a blatant lie. In addition, this narrative argues that poverty, unemployment and inequality are more to do with the failures of service delivery by the ANC government than with racism. While these comments are correct to the extent that the politics of corruption and self-beneficiation is rampant in the ANC government and indeed do not transform the national economy, but this argument against racism is complicit with white privilege, which feeds on black exploitation. The argument that the country requires distributive justice as the single answer to all injustices is itself denialism that race influences the scarcity of goods and services. If the problem is indeed the lack of distribution as it tends to be argued, why then is the white neighbourhood not disadvantaged the same way as the black township? It is rare to come across the white neighbourhood in protest of service delivery.

In a desperate attempt to shift attention from racism, the race denialists argue that perhaps white South Africans have to think of themselves as Africans. The argument is that whites' assertion of an African identity can necessarily assist in isolating racism and consolidating one national identity. This argument is evident in Sally Matthews, a white scholar at Rhodes university, whose argument centres on the white adoption of African identity rather than black transformation. In making this argument, Matthews (2015:113) argues that "[o]ne of the many consequences of the dismantling of apartheid is the need for a re-evaluation of the way in which white South Africans fit into South Africa". That being said, if whites shall embrace African identity, "no one would identify as 'white' or 'black' or any other such category, rather; such categories would cease to exist entirely", according to Matthews (2015:113). It is this form of the

erasure of race that has resulted to the dispossessed debate that focuses on the question of whiteness rather than black racism as a point of departure. This brings to light the manner in which the debate about racism is explained away and silenced under the mask of rhetoric which propagates non-racialism and a fake rainbow nation.

Mbeki bemoans that race denialists find in their way to make false claims against those who speak out against racism. Mbeki ([2000]2001a:116) observes that “[s]ome assert that the description ‘racist’ is merely an epithet used by unscrupulous politicians, in an effort to mobilise black constituencies to support them”. As much as race can be used by some politicians for the advancement of narrow political interests and populism, this does not mean that racism is non-existent. The most perplexing part about this argument is that as Mbeki ([2000]2001a:116) argues, “so it is said, we ended apartheid and therefore racism when we became a non-racial democracy in 1994”. Not only is this a rhetoric, it is also problematic in that it explains away the existence of racism in quick defence for non-racism, as if the wealth of this country is not controlled by the white capital, with some few black elite included. As Sithole (2011:4) rightly argue, “[d]eclaring apartheid unlawful and unconstitutional does not mean that the racially marked infrastructure and entrenched technologies of racism will just end when the black political administration like the ANC assumed power”. The racial oppression of the blacks is ongoing, and this time racism operates through institutional and structural means. In relation to the structures of antiblack racism, blacks who are excluded and marginalised from the whole project of transformation in post-apartheid often ask for basic things like housing, jobs, wages, education, service delivery and even sanitation.

Despite being declared a post-apartheid state, it is clear that South Africa is still a racist state, wherein the white privilege and black exclusion have created a situation where the former enjoys the luxury of privilege and the latter is severely restricted. There has never been a radical break with a racist system of apartheid, which constantly changes to suit the current socio-economic condition under the post-apartheid state. For instance, under the era of apartheid, blacks were open to racism in its crude form and in the post-apartheid era, they find themselves marginalised and excluded from the whole project of humanity as far as social and economic development is concerned. Mbeki ([2000]2001a:119) states that “[r]acism has been a fundamental organising principle in the relations between black and white”. According

to Mbeki ([2000]2001a:119-120), “[t]he social and economic structure of our society is such that the distribution of wealth, income, poverty, disease, land, skills, occupation, intellectual resources and opportunities for personal advancement, as well as patterns of human settlement, are determined by the criteria of race and color”. Black-led government lacks the political imagination and the capacity to overhaul the structure of racism, meaning that racism persists uninterrupted in post-apartheid society, and this makes it harder to accomplish transformation. When racism became illegalised in 1994, it assumed the structural and institutional form to hide its operation: “In this form, the logic of its operation is hidden, but continues to give effect to racism” (Sithole 2012:10). This, therefore, creates a situation where there would be those who complain about racism and those who deny its existence.

What is clear is that those who seek to suppress the debate about racism “are those who benefitted from centuries of colonial and apartheid racial domination” (Mbeki [2000]2001a:116). This includes black liberals who constitute the gatekeepers of white capital, whose intention is to defend the current status quo or economic racism for so long that they stand to benefit from it. In this form, black liberals are content with the role of being gatekeepers of white capital or, in fact, of the racist economic system other than to confront it. As argued by Mbeki ([2000]2001a:116), “the privileged do not want this discussion because they want to maintain their privileged positions at all costs”. This means their interest is wedded to capital rather than transformation. Many of black liberals are a product of the white system, having been socialised or educated in a white set-up or being co-opted in white capital. More often, they tell the blacks there is no future in the past, to be tolerant of one another and to embrace democracy. Their insistence is that South Africans should celebrate the happy rainbow nation and the peaceful co-existence of blacks and whites. Black liberals speak freely from the comfort of privilege, which is why they are devoid of political radicalism in their engagement with the issues of racism affecting blacks.

Race denialists are those in denial that racism still exists in South Africa. They claim that racism is illegalised in the country’s Constitution. This denialism is predicated on the notion that South Africa is a non-racial and non-sexist democracy. As a non-racial and non-sexist society, South Africa is said to offer equal opportunity for all, regardless of race or gender. For instance, Achille Mbembe says that South Africa, since the first

democratic elections in 1994 and the coming into power by the black government, is no longer what it used to be. According to Mbembe (2008:5), “[t]oday, there are significantly more blacks in the middle and upper classes today than there were twenty years ago”. He argues that today there are more black female entrepreneurs, many of them even “own more than one luxury vehicle, home and can afford to send their children to private schools and buy them cell phones”, as far as Mbembe (2008:5) is concerned. To Mbembe, racism and exploitation of farmworkers are often isolated incidences. Mbembe and fellow racial blackmailers seem to understand racism only when a black person is insulted by a white and are complicit in structural racism. Through erasure and distortion, race denialists have created a discourse which condemns the screams of racism. It is in such a state that the racialised blacks have no capacity to articulate the “grammar of suffering” (suffering that cannot be spoken) (Wilderson III, 2003:230). This explains the silence and the reality of the racialised blacks in South Africa, whose experience of racism is hard to tell since they are devoid of language to complain, a condition which is created by the very discourse of race denialism.

Racial mobilisers can be described as those who promote the discourse of race and racism. Their ideology can either be one that combats racism or reinforces it. Mbeki speaks against racism because it is an antithesis of transformation. Mbeki ([2000]2001a:116) argues that the “privileged do not want the discussion about racism because they want to maintain their privileged positions at all costs”. Mbeki says the privileged exhibit their work in order to convince the poorer and the rest of society that their wealth is earned through hard work. In so doing, whites can turn around to say: “what is being complained of does not, in fact, exist, except for isolated incidents” (Mbeki [2000]2001a:116). Their intention is to counter complaints of racial privilege and economic discrimination. Race denialists also dismiss the complaint of racism by arguing that apartheid ended in 1994. For Sithole (2012:62), “[r]acial mobilisation was prevalent in the era of Thabo Mbeki and was used as a deliberate strategy to disengage relevant criticism”. The likes of Christine Qunta, Sandile Memela and Ronald Roberts were Mbeki’s intellectual sympathisers, who often engaged in the politics of labelling those who challenged Mbeki’s view on racism, according to Sithole. Sithole’s view harbours the notion that Mbeki cannot be trusted to champion the struggle against racism.

Race transcendence is the discourse of race which advocates for post-race or thinking beyond race. Proponents of race transcendence argue for a society that embraces sameness for all people regardless of race or gender. In this regard, it would be argued that the problem affecting society is no longer about race but something else to do, perhaps with the lack of government service delivery. Political corruption, incompetence and nepotism are common responses given. While corruption is rampant in government and it prevents development, racism is a far greater problem affecting the entire fabric of life in South Africa. Liberals hold that the post-apartheid era has transcended race, meaning it is defined by notions of freedom, equality and rights. South Africa is said to be post-racial, but the black majority is subject to discrimination in social and economic terms. In this regard, the articulation of non-racism and non-sexism is still part of the political discourse on racism and gender discrimination despite the end of apartheid. To Mbembe and Posel, South Africa is gradually overcoming race, if not already transcended it, through the government's programmes and projects that are put into place. They argue:

South Africa has attempted to do so on many fronts: the constitution itself, a myriad of laws aimed at undoing the legacies of oppression and racialized inequality, initiatives of memorialization, policies designed to empower those 'previously disadvantaged', along with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. None of these enterprises has been flawless, and each creates new sites of contestation. Yet, they remain crucially important in a global arena ridden with violent conflict and a search for stable and peaceful solutions. They each entail practices of historical acknowledgement – at many levels and in many different spheres of life. Without these, it is surely impossible to transcend a politics of denial and, linked to that, a politics of resentment and perpetual victimhood. (Mbembe and Posel 2005:284)

Mangcu (2015:1) argues that “to embrace different racial realities is to acknowledge and integrate different South African experiences”. Mangcu calls for a joint culture involving the white and black experiences as a measure to counter racism. The joint culture referred to here is racial syncretism that can be taken to build a non-racial democracy. Steve Biko warned a long time ago that what the proponents of race

transcendence are proposing is in simple terms 'integration' and that it would not address the problem of racism in South Africa. In this regard Biko asserted:

The integration they talk about is first of all artificial in that it is a response to conscious manoeuvre rather than to the dictates of the inner soul. In other words the people forming the integrated complex have been extracted from various segregated societies with their inbuilt complexes of superiority and inferiority and these continue to manifest themselves even in the 'nonracial' set-up of the integrated complex. As a result the integration so achieved will be a one-way course, with the whites doing all the talking and the blacks the listening. (Biko 1978:21)

Biko has indeed been proven to be prophetic almost four decades after his death. He was correct about the negative participation of white and black liberals in the formation of new South Africa. "These are the people who argue that they are not responsible for white racism and the country's 'inhumanity to the black man'" (Biko 1978:21). That said, the political idea of non-racialism did not convince Biko that it would end the racism, but as a measure to cover up the racism. Sithole (2012) is of the view that the proposition of unifying the nation under the banner of non-racialism is a noble proposition, but it is lacking in clarity. Thus it does not take into consideration the question of psychological and material reality. Sithole (2012:59) argues that "even though the issue of race can be avoided by calling for non-racialism, or diluted through a politics of transcendence, race still haunts post-1994 South Africa". Blacks are in need of social and economic freedoms as the means to transform their existential condition. Non-racialism means nothing to the blacks if it is not accompanied by social and economic opportunities essential for transformation.

Mbeki calls for an honest conversation around the issues of racism from the standpoint of the blacks who are at the receiving end of the exclusion and oppression. Mbeki perceives the denial of race as a discourse of racism by those in the position of privilege, wherein denialism is mobilised to obstruct reality. The voice of the masses of this country is silenced in the national agenda since the privileged, through their capacity of capital and control of communication channels, are the ones who dictate what content and information to be included in the national agenda. Let it be said that

the poor blacks have nothing to say; they are mere objects to those who own and control the economy, regardless of what the Constitution says. Mbeki ([2000]2001a:116) argues that “the Whites have been empowered by the establishment of the democratic system to believe that they have the democratic right, openly and legitimately, to set this national agenda”. It is apparent that Mbeki has a feeling of resentment toward the Constitution. The notion of nonracialism and economic prosperity for all people is what binds Mbeki to believe the Constitution has somehow failed the blacks. He may be disappointed that most whites failed to demonstrate equal commitment to the ideals of the Constitution.

Mbeki and the ANC want the Constitution to have an anti-poverty and anti-apartheid texture as part of the resolve to end the dominance of racism. For Mbeki, the moral currency that has to do with the country’s Constitution is eroded and misused by liberals to protect their privilege rather than advance the nation-building project. The notion of non-racialism and a happy rainbow nation can be regarded as rhetoric as there is nothing tangible to celebrate in the post-1994 era, except, of course, for the flag independence, which is conflated with existential freedom. Mbeki also appeared to problematise TRC, including CODESA, saying although these stand as national monuments in the political history of South Africa, their victories do not speak to the black aspirations in terms of economic freedom. As Mbeki ([2000]2001a:116) argues, “our process of national reconciliation has been somewhat of a charade”. This arises from the view that only the victims of apartheid responded to the call to forgive and the perpetrators of racism offered nothing in return.

Mangcu, who claims to speak truth to power, argue that race needs to be transcended in order to build a non-racial democracy. To Mangcu, South Africa is stuck in the mindset of race because of Mbeki, whose leadership had nothing to offer the country except for exaggerating race. According to Mangcu (2008:125), “Mbeki’s behaviour gives a sense of someone who feels betrayed – betrayed by white liberal and business community who feted him with lavish reception when he came back from exile and by the black intellectuals who failed to come to his defence during his troubled relations with the media and the white society more broadly”. The problem with Mangcu on Mbeki is the tendency to be personal to the point of even contradicting himself. For instance, Adekeye Adebajo, in relation to Mangcu’s criticism of Mbeki, observes

emotions and personal attacks rather than intellectual engagement. Adebajo argued: “the public attacks against Mbeki by his critics such as Xolela Mangcu and Justice Malala were of a personalised and emotional nature, and often lacked subtlety and substance”. In contradicting himself, Mangcu (2008:136) wrote: “I would not for one moment fault Mbeki for taking on the difficult task of confronting a challenge of racism head-on. He was absolutely right in his argument that there would be whites fearful of change”. In self-defence, Mangcu asserts that his criticism of Mbeki is because Mbeki uses race to defend the government’s failures. In that case, Mangcu ought to commend Mbeki’s stance on racism and criticise his government’s wrongs rather than colouring every word Mbeki said as wrong or lie.

Another problem in Mangcu’s commentary is the tendency to misread and therefore misrepresent the truth as spoken by others. He tends to ignore the context in which things are spoken and also his habit of reading history backward. Mangcu (2008) posits that white racism towards blacks does not matter, but what matters is blacks to sustain their own integrity regardless of white actions. He argued: “[i]t did not matter much that white South Africans did not reciprocate that gesture [reconciliation], and instead chose their own kind of denial. It mattered for black people’s own healing, and it mattered for the stability of the country” (Mangcu 2008:134). What Mangcu is advocating is the country’s development at the exclusion and oppression of the blacks. He criticises Mbeki in particular, who decided to see reconciliation for what it was not. Those who seek to combat racism, like Mbeki, are attacked, and honour is given to those who protect the discourse. When Mbeki takes to defend the unfounded claims against himself in court or fires politicians found in acts of corruption, he is accused of “shutting down dissenting voices” (Mangcu 2008:148). Mangcu resorts to attacking Mbeki the person rather than engaging the related issues of racism as debated by Mbeki.

In Mbeki’s analysis, the culture of racism must be defeated in order to make way for the creation of a genuine non-racial democracy. Mbeki does not agree with the view that discussion on the question of racism should be paused and continued in future. He says the more prolonged the waiting will exacerbate the social and economic instability that is already inflicting havoc and pain on the black community. Blacks who are at the receiving end of racial discrimination and dehumanisation, marginalisation

and exclusion are within their right to demand an immediate change in relation to their miserable condition of racism. For Mbeki, the structure of racism in South Africa was created with a deliberate intention to keep the black majority in poverty and the white minority to always remain the superior group. In this regard, Mbeki argues:

The social and economic structure of our society is such that the distribution of wealth, income, poverty, disease, land, skills, occupations, intellectual resources and opportunities for personal advancement, as well as the patterns of human settlement, are determined by the criteria of race and colour. (Mbeki [2000]2001a:119)

For Mbeki, the prospect of ending racism has to be approached from the perspective of the racialised blacks rather than its perpetrator. More (2011) argues that, in a situation where freedom is given rather than expropriated by force, it often translates into nothing more than just a simple gesture, for the racist ideology remains. Utilising David Freeman, Mbeki argues that whereas racism is understood by blacks as condition of exclusion, unemployment, lack of money, lack of housing, lack of choice, lack of protection, for whites' racism is not a condition but an action, or series of actions, inflicted on blacks by them. And by the way, white people are proud to be at the superior position of this racial hierarchy and feel entitled to decide on the black man's aspiration. It is, therefore, for this reason that Mbeki argues that racism can be understood and ended by the terms and conditions set by the blacks themselves. The difficulty of discussing racism under the terms set by those who created it is that their ideology of whiteness does not seek to fundamentally uproot racism but to conceal or transcend it through the mask of non-racialism. It is as a result of this obscurity that proponents of nonracialism refuse to see the link between race and black poverty.

In Mbeki's analysis, the question of racism cannot be avoided under the guise that it will destabilise society. It is implied in particular by liberals that South Africa should focus on the future rather than persist in recalling the apartheid and its system of racism. To them, what is keeping racism alive is the constant referral to racism by blacks. As a matter of fact, the creation of a non-racial society is impossible in a country of a racially advantaged minority and a racially disadvantaged majority, according to Mbeki. Mbeki ([2000]2001a:120) is of the view that the struggle against

racism must be “aimed at ending the relationship of dominant-and-dominated, as between white and black, and achieving equality among all South Africans, in all spheres of human life and activity”. White dominance and black oppression have created a condition where the former is characterised by privilege and superiority, whereas the latter suffers from an inferiority complex, loss of dignity, and loss of self-pride. In Mbeki’s estimation, South Africa and its people can end the spectre of racism by deliberately and consciously undertaking to discuss race as a problem rather than pretend that racial discrimination does not exist.

On this matter, the South African government, especially the Mbeki administration, made its priority the racial and socio-economic transformation. The controversial Black Economic Empowerment was aimed as part of affirmative action toward the transformation. By racial and socio-economic inequality here is meant the huge imbalance in income, wealth and opportunities between whites and blacks, which is the legacy of apartheid and racism that continues to characterise South African society. Although the BEE is rightly criticised for politics of corruption and nepotism among the political elite, its purpose is pivotal to promote transformation and development. It may very well be that those against the BEE see it as a threat to the dominance of white capital and therefore find ways to portray it as regressive. South Africa remains a divided nation, between whites and blacks who are at two different levels of economic development and between those who defend the status quo of social relations and those against it. The question of racism became a topic that dominated Mbeki’s presidential period and South African society broadly.

Where are the ‘natives’?

For many African intellectuals, academics and journalists, the activist intellectual leadership displayed by President Thabo Mbeki in engaging issues intellectually came as a relief. In doing so he is not only wrestled intellectual power from the traditional white liberal establishment, he created and reclaimed also the intellectual space for all South Africans. While the process of reclaiming intellectual space was viciously and robustly contested initially, it was marked by a dramatic retreat within the white liberal establishment.

Unfortunately, a similar intellectual withdrawal plagues African scholars and intellectuals. (Seepe 2004:46)

If there is a topic that provoked a furious reaction in the post-1994 political discourse, it is the 'Native Question'. This comes after President Thabo Mbeki posed a question: 'Where are the Natives?'. Delivering the Second Oliver Tambo Lecture on 11 August 2000, organised by the NIEP, Mbeki titled his speech 'Ou Sont' Ils, En Ce Moment - Where Are They Now?'. Mbeki ([2000]2001c:81) paid tribute to OR Tambo and said he was a "noble African". Mbeki deployed this lecture to compare the high moral standing of the erstwhile black intelligentsia with the current black intelligentsia. Mbeki bemoaned that post-1994, in relation to black intellectuals and petit bourgeoisie, is suffering the cultural and identity crisis by alarming what he referred to as the native question. Mbeki made this point to call for the return to the source of yearning, nativism, as a standpoint from which to resolve the native question. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000:143) define 'nativism' as "[a] term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society". The native question seeks to resolve to the regression effects that have pervaded black intellectualism.

Mbeki became president of the country and dedicate a significant part of his term to the native question. The Mbeki presidency made the native question its major priority, and was committed to resolving this as part of the national question. Thandika Mkandawire notes that the national question revolves around three key issues: (i) asserting one's humanity, (ii) the acquisition of independence, and lastly (iii) maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of the new state (Mkandawire 2009:132). Many postcolonial African societies are revisiting the national question so as to contend and grapple with the persistent challenges of globalisation in Africa under the twenty-first century. They are reimagining the national question as a continuing struggle in the search for the liberation and resolution of the problems and impositions of the 21st Century. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008b:2) argued, "[s]ince colonial conquest, definition of African destiny fell into the hands of colonial masters and the public discourse was shaped and determined by colonial imperatives rather than African concerns and interests". When Mbeki delivered his sensational assertions, "I am an

Africa” and “African Renaissance”, the statement was clear that South Africa was no longer a business as usual for the hegemonic discourse of neo-liberal project.

Mbeki’s intellectual project propelled the quest to reimagine the national question – thus, he wanted issues of race, identity, and knowledge to be considered as far as the native question is concerned. For example, the starting point towards resolving this question took the form of launching the intellectual initiative known as the Native Club in 2006. The Native Club was founded under the banner of “Where are the Natives? The Black Intelligentsia Today”. While President Mbeki declined in parliament that the initiative was not his brainchild, there is little reason to suggest that this was not a government initiative. Its founder, Sandile Memela, was a government spokesman, and that chairman, Titus Mafolo, was an adviser to the president. At the same time, the Club was partly funded by the South African Department of Arts and Culture, and based at the Africa Institute of South Africa, as well as being too close to the ANC. Another reason to believe the Native Club was President Mbeki’s idea, is when he took a purely Afro-radical position to raise critical issues about the near absence or silence of the radical black voices. Mbeki asserted these sentiments when calling out for the vibrant black voices, and he said:

There seems to be a paralysis of thought or withdrawal from an open engagement of the burning issues of the day among important section of our population, which is difficult to explain... Clearly, the black intelligentsia, including those who work in University, needs to ask itself whether it is discharging its responsibilities to itself, to the country and to the students for which it should set an example by its own activity and conscious social engagement. (cited in Seepe 2019:95)

It is clear from here that the launching of the Native Club was made in response to the flippant question heeded by President Mbeki ‘Where are the natives?’. According to the Native Club’s website, the Club is defined as “a public initiative” whose prime objective is to mobilise and consolidate the South African intelligentsia (black intellectuals and petit bourgeoisie) as a critical social force to contribute to national discourse on political, socio-economic, and cultural issues (Masango 2009:1). The Club’s key areas of concerns included the issues of representations of identity, culture and the repositioning of black people and their narratives in the post-apartheid

discourse. As an Afro-radical strand, this uses the same strategy and approach to undermine and decentre the apartheid ideology of neo-liberalism and its replacement with the strand of nativism that privileges African native question. Rory Carroll, for example, pointed out that the Native Club's use of the word 'native' is reclaimed from Apartheid and is used here as a 'badge of honour'. Under Apartheid the word 'native' was an insult, a way to describe and demean black people (Carroll 2006). Mukelani Dimba said the restoration of the term "native" is a part of claiming our heritage (Carroll 2006). It was deployed in the Club's name to rehumanise and to promote African identity. On 3 May 2006, the Native Club's website outlined the following objectives:

To contribute to the on-going process of cultural decolonization of the South African people and the country; to eradicate apartheid and colonial mindset; to enhance the self-affirmation of South African people; to protect and promote the indigenous languages, cultures, tradition, music and writers; to add impetus to the efforts of moral regeneration; to promote a culture of critical thinking through reading, reflection and debates; to utilize indigenous cultures, knowledge and values to advance nation-building; and to contribute to national discourse on socio-economic, political and cultural issues. (Native Club 2006)

The Club, in this decolonial approach, was informed by the quest to counter the hegemonic discourse of the neo-liberal ideology. At the heart of the problem that exists with the neo-liberal strand is that it essentialises the Western-oriented discourse and practices in general. The results of this have been the steering of a national government that is alienated from African peoples and the schools and universities producing Westernised graduates who are culturally and epistemologically alienated from Africa. What is currently existing in South Africa is the ideological confusion informed by a neo-liberal inspired ideology which blinds blacks, including government policymakers, to see it as salvation for national problems. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008a:62) notes that "South Africans in the immediate wake of apartheid's collapse became obsessed with neo-liberal ideologies centred around democracy and rights". The consequence of this was a cultural dislocation and identity crisis which South Africa to this day seems to be experiencing. It was within this context that the founders of the

Native Club sought to create this initiative to facilitate the debate on African-inspired imagination. What is profound about the Club is that it existed in opposition to the neo-liberal discourse. According to its founders, the Club engaged in what they termed an “effort to promote black heritage” and resistance to neo-liberal ideologies on democracy, economic policy and knowledge production (Carroll 2006).

The Native Club also justified its existence as a forum for black intellectuals to partake in community regeneration projects as a critical intervention needed to balance the injustices of apartheid which had led to cultural divisions and marginalisation. In this instance, the Club’s approach was striving towards the restoration of African dynamic cultures and/or re-centring of the African cultural heritage as a strategy for reconstruction and socio-economic development. As Tsoabisi Pakiso Ensley Tondi (2004:1-2) explains, “the alienation and marginalization of African cultural values and traditions by the designs and practices of colonialism and apartheid have resulted in the distortion and disorientation of some of the most fundamental aspects of the culture of the colonized”. The Club pronounced this objective as follows:

Furthermore, the legacies of our past has been the detachment of many leading black people from the cultural processes that are central to nurturing good values, ethos and morals as well as programmes that help to build leadership in poor and marginalised communities and ensure that there are role models. (cited in Masango 2009:1)

According to its proponents, the Club is the ‘third pillar’ of the national transformation project that focuses on ‘cultural transformation’ to “explore and promote African identity” (Andreasson 2010:2). In this instance, its chairperson Mafolo pointed out:

Many South Africans would readily seek to locate our transition somewhere between the existing dominant global ideologies ... and adopt a negative stance towards anyone suggesting the indigenisation of our revolution. In part, this is because both in apartheid-colonial education and propaganda as well as in the general teachings of the liberation movement there was, at worst, the denigration and, at best, the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems. (cited in Andreasson 2010:2)

Taking a step further, Mafolo added:

Accordingly, the body of knowledge as represented by Ubuntu would generally be regarded as part of nativist thought that can only drag our country backwards. Those who attempt to articulate Ubuntu are dismissed as anachronistic idealists... Even comrades that are agnostics and materialists respectfully acknowledge Christianity, Islam and Judaism as religions, but see African belief systems as superstitions. Accordingly, we should look no further for colonised minds that need, as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o says, decolonisation. (cited in Andreasson 2010:2)

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:73) notes that “[t]he Native Club was also poised to engage in a systematic and intellectually thought-out critique of the neo-liberal ideology that was seen as maintaining and buttressing apartheid-induced gross material inequalities”. According to this view, there is need to understand the neo-liberal democracy in the light of the global capitalist system that carries an irreversible process which needs to be navigated carefully by those in the global South. It is a truism that within the global context of the South African democracy, “neoliberalism has emerged as a hegemonic political and economic project” (Taylor 2002:34), aiming to further perpetuate the already existing crisis of African identity and dispossession. As Taylor (2002:34) pointed out, neoliberalism has obvious intense implications for nations like South Africa that have deplorable structural inequalities”. In fact, it can be argued that the hegemonic project of neo-liberal democracy is dictated upon by market logic rather than fulfilling egalitarian aspirations. Titus Mafolo, in relation to South Africa, “firmly believed that neoliberalism is inimical to the objectives of transformation and national reconstruction, at least in terms set and determined by the historically marginalised sections of our society” (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:73).

Eddy Maloka, a co-founder of the Native Club, pointed out that the idea of this Club is rooted in the broader national democratic project of the revolutionary traditions and practices of Pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness, and African Renaissance. He argued that these “traditions” and “the Native Club” continue to be “key part of the post-apartheid intellectual agenda” (Maloka 2013:10). According to Maloka, the Club’s agenda is part of the effort to reclaim the African identity and black heritage from the

forces of colonialism and apartheid. Maloka described the Club as a patriotic initiative for South African intellectuals and African intelligentsia toward reviving and repositioning the continent. To Maloka, the Club's initiative is informed by:

The idea of an Africa that is a sleeping giant forced into its condition by colonialism but was now about to wake up and rise to claim its place in history, has evolved with time, taking different shape and form in the process, depending on circumstances. (Maloka 2013:10)

Maloka also defended the existence of the Club, arguing that it would also look into knowledge production. He said that the 'native question' had to be addressed also through knowledge production (Maloka 2013). It has been pointed out, for example, in the writings of various scholars that the South African scholarship is largely dominated by white academics and black scholarship is ignored (see, for example, Duncan *et al*, 1997; Jansen 2003; Nyoka 2017; Seepe 2019). As Jansen (2003:11) explained, "black intellectuals do not enjoy the same access to leading publishing houses and resources as do white intellectuals". Nyoka (2017:11) concurs that "the writings of black sociologists hardly feature in the reading material in many departments of sociology in South Africa". While academic racism is a historical construction of apartheid's Bantu education, it is been reinforced by neo-liberal-inspired education. Seepe (2019:94) argued, "[w]hat prevails is basically apartheid in action without apartheid in name". He was crystal clear that "[f]ailure to escape the apartheid designs and machinations can be traced to the failure of the intellectual project in both society and South African universities" (Seepe 2019:94). Maloka noted that the Club brings to attention the gross inequalities in the racial distribution of knowledge production in South African academy. According to Maloka, the "battle-cry [is] to address the legacy of apartheid in the knowledge production sector" (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008a:73). Academic racism is not just a South African problem but also in global South countries generally. As amplified by Jansen:

White intellectuals are dominant within universities and are still the dominant voices in research, in public performances, on international platforms and in artistic forums. White intellectuals continue to dominate and sustain the powerful knowledge networks that sustain white authority in all kinds of productions. (Jansen 2003:11-12)

Titus Mafolo pointed out that the transformation of the South African state is premised on the three pillars—namely; politics, economy, and culture. Giving details of the first pillar, politics, Mafolo argued that since 1994, the political transition has advanced rapidly. Mafolo wrote that: “[t]he apartheid political edifice has been largely dismantled with most of the laws that underpinned the system repealed and the many apartheid structures replaced with democratic institutions” (cited in Van Wyk 2009:41). Mafolo proceeded to note that “the second pillar, the economy, poses more difficulties than that of politics”. He argued that “Twelve years after liberation, the economy is still firmly in the hands of whites, most of whom continue to resist the transformation of the economy and had to be dragged into the process of economic change through legislation” (cited in Van Wyk 2009:41). Therefore, Mafolo concluded by pointing out that though there are laudable interventions in the economy, much remains to be done to transform the economy, to be in line with the national imperatives of transformation. Given the challenges of transformation that the post-apartheid society is experiencing, the Club justified its existence as a forum for black contribution in the national consensus.

Mbeki took an Afro-radical stand at the *Inaugural lecture of the South African Parliamentary Millennium Group* in 2006 to remind his audience of “[a] certain continuum in the global perspective on or of Africa [which] makes it inevitable that we look back into the history of this continent” (Mbeki 2006:234). He historicised the history of the continent and the misplacement of African history by the Western colonialists and historians. He said the colonialists and European historians ascribed racism to black Africans by presenting the Westerns as the makers of history in Africa and the blacks as subject of Western discovery. As observed by Mbeki (2006:234), “[i]t was this European racism and attempts to deny Africans any capacity to build great civilisations that made to declare that Africans had no history”. He argued about how Europe mobilised racism to distort, deny, and erase African history in order to claim superiority in the historical and global scheme of things. Mbeki romanticised the great African history and civilisation made by the ancient Africans, including how the Egyptians invented the art of writing that led to the emergence of the modern alphabets and how the Malian civilisation reached its pinnacle when Timbuktu became the intellectual confluence of ideas, languages, cultures, and a trading hub. Mbeki also pointed out the civilisations of Nubia, Aksum, Mapungubwe, and Great Zimbabwe and

proceeded to remind his audience about the dangers of liberal inspired reforms which [re]create conditions of decentring African history and centring Western history and knowledge.

The deployment of Native Club to resolving the 'native question' has not been without controversy. In fact, the formation of Native Club as a presidential project has seen Siphoo Seepe (2001, 2004), Xolela Mangcu (2008), and Achille Mbembe (2002) emerging as the foremost critics of President Mbeki. For instance, Seepe (2001) sees the forum of black intellectuals as "a point lost in Mbeki's version of race". He says "this is not only politically divisive but has the effect of entrenching disunity" (Seepe 2001). Seepe is dismissive of Mbeki's focus on the issues of racism, saying it is not about race but a way of silencing his critics. In this instance, Mbeki's presidential project for intellectuals is explained away as a mere gathering of insiders who support one's cause. Seepe (2001) argued, "[i]f Mbeki really were an intellectual he would surround himself with the best educated and most intelligent people. Instead, he has sidelined guys with brains like Pallo Jordan, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Matthews Phosa in favour of loyalists". Seepe (2001) is dismissive of Mbeki's leadership, lamenting that: "[w]e can already see the increasing centralisation of power, which is a threat to democracy and transparency". Seepe went as far as likening Mbeki's leadership with that of Africa's leading despot Mobutu Sese Seko. He argued, "[d]riven by insecurity and obsession with control, Mbeki and Seko ensured that administrators and Cabinet ministers are kept on the move from post to post so that he could establish a firm power base" (Seepe 2004:169). Here, no one held a position in government other than through presidential grace. Seepe also asserted that he does not subscribe to the notion of African solutions for African problems, arguing instead that "[w]e should seek the best solutions, wherever they come from" (Seepe 2001). Reading from this criticism, it is clear Seepe sees Mbeki's intellectual project as not about (re)cultivating a vibrant black intellectualism but a drive to consolidate power for himself.

On the other hand, Xolela Mangcu (2008) is a severe critic of nativism and the Native Club. Mangcu lamented the political shift towards what he terms "racial nativism", away from the non-racialism that informs Nelson Mandela's 'rainbowism', and holds President Mbeki responsible for it. Mangcu is of the view that racial nativism was at the heart of Mbeki's strategy to rule. He argues that Mbeki constructed "the idea that

the true custodians of African culture are the natives” (Mangcu 2008:2). This claim further goes that “even among those who participated in the liberation, the truest natives are those who are on the side of Mbeki’s government” (Mangcu 2008:2). Mangcu charges Mbeki for essentialising race as an exclusive licence to speak or banish those with opposing views. According to Mangcu (2008:3) “Mbeki’s concept of nativism stands in stark contrast to the approach that allows all citizens to be heard and welcomes vigorous and open debate on issues”. Taking a step further, Mangcu disparaged the proponents of the Native Club, arguing that: “[o]ftentimes the nativists invoke Pan Africanist leader Robert Sobukwe or Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko to explain political behaviour” (Mangcu 2008:3). Mangcu says founders of the Native Club misunderstood Sobukwe’s and Biko’s racial exclusivism. He says these were never race essentialists, pointing out that theirs was a political strategy to contest white supremacy. A key crisis in Mangcu is clear in the sense that he dismisses racial nativism without being critical of white capitalist system that is decentring and excluding Africans in their native country.

Similarly, African nativism is engaged in what Achille Mbembe (2002) labelled as ‘faked philosophy’. As a faked philosophy, nativism is said to have given rise to the conventions of Afro-radicalism and Afro-Marxism. These dogmas and doctrines thrive ‘on the power of the false’ (Mbembe 2002:629). Through constant repetition, these were eventually imposed on common sense to the point that they are now accepted as African discourse in general. Mbembe (2002:629) contends that these “[a]s dogmas and doctrines repeated over and over again rather than methods of interrogation, they have led to a dramatic contraction and impoverishment both in the modes of conceptualizing Africa and in the terms of philosophical inquiry concerning the region”. He says the central object of African nativism is identity, both in its political and cultural dimensions, to which the falsehood of the native question is propagated. Mbembe makes it clear that he is in opposition to the narratives of African nativism. Hence he disparages them as mere Afro-radicalists and Afro-Marxists conventions. Mbembe argues that African leaders are holding Africa backward, and called upon them to go beyond nativism by engaging in a polemical deconstruction of history. He argued that African leaders operate under a racist paradigm of nativism, making them reproduce the discourse of racial oppression.

The criticism here goes further to these controversies that do not seem to interrogate the reality of South Africa in its entirety. The native question articulated by Mbeki has provoked commentators such as Mbembe to liken it to the fatalistic “Nongqawuse syndrome”. Mbembe (2006) defines “Nongqawuse syndrome [as] the name for the kind of political disorder and cultural dislocation South Africa seems to be experiencing”. According to Mbembe (2006), “[t]he Nongqawuse syndrome” is also “a populist rhetoric and a millenarian form of politics which advocates, uses and legitimises self-destruction, or national suicide, as a means of salvation”. Mbeki in articulating the native question is here compared to the nineteenth-century prophet, a 16 years old girl named Nongqawuse, who said the departed ancestors told her that if people would kill all their cattle, destroyed all their food and did not sow crops for the future, the departed ancestors would arise from the ashes and all the whites would be swept into the sea. As such, the stored grain was thrown away and no further work was done. Days passed and nights fell but the resurrection of the dead never took place. Mbembe sees nativism as the modern day Nongqawuse syndrome. He is dismissive of Mbeki’s Native Club project, saying it is fatalistic—that is, misleading South Africa towards self-destruction. For the mere fact that Nongqawuse is simply dismissed as a fatalistic prophet, understandably so because she is a Black subject, does this not suggest that Thabo Mbeki and the Native Club are being read and theorised through the negative perspective of African history or from imperialist neo-liberal standpoint of thinking?

Mkandawire (2005) pointed out that the limits of African nativism, its dangerous discourse of reverse oppression, is a problem that African citizens had to contend with. In this case, for instance, Mkandawire referred to the example of Africa’s leading despot: “[a]n Idi Amin of Uganda could go on a murderous rampage in his own country and still chair the OAU” (Mkandawire 2005:12). Fellow African leader as Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, similarly, “embraced violence as a pillar of governance” to the extent that “Mugabe’s regime unleashed ethnic violence on the minority Ndebele-speaking people of Matebeleland and the Midlands regions” and still get “to chair the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:1-2). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:184) observes, “President Robert Mugabe, often brags about having degrees in violence and he punches the air at political rallies to emphasize the agenda of violence as a solution to the political

question in Zimbabwe”. The case of Adi Amini and Robert Mugabe exemplify the limits and dangerous discourse of African nativism, and this makes it not very different from colonial tendencies. That nativism was to become a problem in post-colonial African societies was cautioned a long time ago by Frantz Fanon (1963) when he stated that:

From nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism. These foreigners are called on to leave; their shops are burned, their street stalls are wrecked, and in fact the government... commands them to go, thus giving their nationals satisfaction. (Fanon 1963:156)

This is the reality currently obtained in South Africa under the black government led by the ANC. The spate of xenophobic attacks targeted at foreign African nationals (mostly Zimbabweans) speaks volume to the reverse discourse of racism and black hatred. To Sithole (2011:12), “[i]t is this repetition that signal and brings to bear the betrayal of liberation which is managed by the black comprador bourgeois who capture the state power, manage it and fail to fundamentally change it in line with the aspirations that informed liberation”. Ndlovu-Gatsheni sums this point as follows:

South Africa, whose post-apartheid leaders Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki articulated the philosophies of ‘ubuntu’ (African humanism) and the African Renaissance, was engulfed in embarrassing xenophobic violence in May 2008 that shocked the continent. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:25)

In defense of nativism, its proponents argue that criticism of the Native Club is nothing but an effort to sustain the current status quo of the neo-colonial system. Tendayi Sithole makes an important point that “there is a silence regarding the institutions that public intellectuals are attached to and/or the companies that fund them” (Sithole 2012:121). And do these thinkers speak independently from these institutions? He says “South Africa has a large number of think tanks in Africa, and some of them were already present in the apartheid era” (Sithole 2012:121). In this list, Sithole mentions the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Centre for Policy Studies, the South African Institute of International Affairs, the Helen Suzman Foundation, and the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. Due to their apartheid foundation, these

institutions subscribe to liberal ideology and do not allow for Marxist, pan-Africanist or black consciousness ideologies. The reason is simple; their role is to defend the status quo in favour of the white minority or to ensure the sustainability of white monopoly capital. The argument here is that most black critics of the government are attached to these institutions, and rarely criticise the white institutions or white economic domination. Sithole (2012:121) notes, “[t]hese think-tanks host, employ, consult and provide a forum to black public intellectuals”. This should easily explain Mangcu’s and Mbembe’s attack of Mbeki’s native project since are both attached to these institutions.

Benita Parry (2004) defends nativism as a process of rediscovery towards restoration of African identity and cultural loss on the part of the (ex)colonised subjects. She argues that nativism is one of the ways that the African subjects use to reclaim Africa by deconstructing imperialist and colonialist oppression. Parry criticised postcolonial studies for their tendency to irrationalise nativism as a reverse discourse rather than emancipatory ideology. To Parry, nativism lend memory and thinking from colonialism as its categories of thought to influence its imaginings of liberation. As Mamdani (1996:147) puts it, “[i]t is a basic contention that the form of rule shaped the form of revolt against it”. It also uses the memory of colonialism to unmask and expose the racial binaries that are at the basis of colonial inequality. As (Parry 2004: 40) explains, “[n]ativism emerges from this milieu of the psychology of colonialism as a reverse-discourse seeking to subvert and undermine colonial ideologies through mobilisation of decentred African identity and culture”. Parry defends this point in saying that nativism has its drama in colonialism – it seeks to decentre the colonial narrative and its replacement with African ideology and tradition.

In the same argument, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008a:53) wrote: “[m]y key argument is that dismissing nativism as fake philosophy and as anti-racist racism is too simplistic and runs roughshod over the key contours of this phenomenon”. He says the dominant tendency among scholars has been to dismiss nativism as reverse racism and as fatalistic populist millenarianism for the baseless reasons. These dismissals, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008b) explains, are “[d]espite the fact that the phenomenon of nativism is noticeable in the narratives of African liberation thought right from Garveyism, Ethiopianism and Negritude to African Personality and African Renaissance”. Added to this, the most frustrating part about the debate on nativism is that those opposed to

it essentially wants to silence the debate. The claim that nativism is fake philosophy and a reverse discourse sidestep the crucial point at the heart of the native question. The history of South Africa is the history of African dispossession, and at the centre of the native question is about addressing such problems of dispossession. Thus nativism merely seeks to make a historical sense of African dispossessions with the context of the post-apartheid state. It cannot be that the native question is simply dismissed as fake philosophy and a reverse discourse whereas the status quo of dispossession, which left blacks landless is left to continue unresolved.

What Mbeki strongly advocated for through the intellectual project is self-reliance and self-determination as black Africans. For the past 500 years, as earlier mentioned, African destiny continues to be shaped and determined by colonial imperatives rather than African concerns and interests. Mbeki ([2000]2001c:82) argues, “[t]his racism has defined us who are African and black as primitive, pagan, slaves to the most irrational superstitions and inherently prone to brute violence”. He says that even in the period of independence blacks are denied the freedom for self-determination. The post-apartheid is a one-sided narrative, as Biko (1978:21) puts it, “with the whites doing all the talking and the blacks the listening”. This adds to the fact that blacks have lost the right to self-determination and are also without grammar to articulate their struggle and aspirations. All this has been the everlasting legacy of colonialism and apartheid which today persists through the discourse of neo-liberalism. This oppressive state, Mbeki ([2000]2001c:82) argues, “[i]t has left us with the legacy that compels us to fight, in a continuing and difficult struggle, for the transformation of ours into a non-racial society”. The condition of dehumanisation, depersonalisation and humiliation in which Africans in South Africa find themselves into is not by accident. It is a condition created by white imperialists for those whose humanity is not valued—Africans. As Mbeki ([2000]2001c:82) argues, “[s]uch crimes against humanity as slavery, colonialism and apartheid would never have occurred unless those who perpetrated them, knew it as a matter of fact that their victims were not as human as they”. Important to note here is that the native question, as articulated by Mbeki, is not about Europeans, colonialists, or white people, but Africans and their political destiny.

The most problematic part about the debate on Mbeki’s intellectual project is that those who oppose it essentially seeks to suppress this debate. Detractors are also not a

match to Mbeki in that their criticism lies on Mbeki alone and not the issues at hand – they are “playing the man and not the ball”. Taking the debate to his detractors, Mbeki posed the following questions:

How many black people have moved above the poverty line? How many black people are employed and unemployed? How many young black people are matriculating with exemptions in mathematics and the sciences? How many black people are skilled and have attained professional qualifications? How many black people occupy managerial positions in the public and private sectors? How many black people have gained access to land? (Mbeki 2005)

Mbeki in responding to the claims that the ANC-led government under the banner of nativism is engaging in the reserve discourse of racism, posed the following critical questions:

Are our policies resulting in the impoverishment of our white compatriots? How many white people are employed and unemployed, especially in the context of our policies? How many young white people are matriculating with exemptions in mathematics and the sciences, especially in the context of our policies? How many white people are skilled and have attained professional qualifications, especially in the context of our policies? How many white people occupy managerial positions in the public and private sectors, especially in the context of our policies? How many white people are landless, especially in the context of our policies? (Mbeki 2005)

Mbeki challenged the intelligentsia, both black liberals and whites, to engage on these fundamental questions in an honest manner. He bemoaned that in South Africa “there could never be permanent peace” while beneficiaries of apartheid “with smiling faces, searched for an opportunity each to secure superiority” over the historically oppressed African victims. Mbeki’s disdain arises from the frivolous denialism of black liberals and whites who, because they are part of the mainstream economy seek to protect the status quo by means of suppressing the debate on the native question. He condemned the acts of combat by the means of criminalising and silencing those who

hold a different view or speak out against the mainstream narrative. Mbeki ([2000]2001c:84) protested, “[h]ow, then, do we respond to this reality that those who occupy many dominant positions in the society to which we belong, define us as a problem and behave towards us as to a problem, as the unwanted!”. This attitude comes to bear a “colonialism of a special type” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:84). In this case, blacks who are at the receiving end of dehumanisation are made to feel guilty that their condition is self-imposed, and they are also blamed for engaging in the quest towards self-liberation.

Mbeki pointed out the major challenge that black intelligentsia and petit bourgeoisie face in their role of public representation and national influence. They “face the challenge to overcome class limitations” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:89). Thus, they “are identified both by their national interest and their class interests” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:89). It is such “class interest” that “drive them to seek an accommodation with the colonial power, and therefore the bourgeoisie of the 'mother country'” (Mbeki 2001:89). A collective term for this class is the national middle class. It is known that many post-colonial African societies continue to feature a small black middle class often connected to the ruling elite and the poor masses, and it is through the ruling elite that this class can extract what it requires for its benefit. The opulent culture of materialism reduces this class to the position of being the mere spokespersons of the capitalist system. As a result, the black middle class have no political imagination to address the nation beyond the framework of the capitalist template. This means that this class is content with an intermediary role of a capitalist manager rather than a revolutionary role. Because they are reduced to mere managers, this means that they have no control or ownership of the economy other than to ensure the status quo is uninterrupted. Frantz Fanon emphasises this notion as follows:

Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. (Fanon 1963:152-153)

Mbeki, in articulating the native question, is, in fact, and at the same time, engaging with the realities and dilemmas of society under which the black intellectuals exist and operate. Mbeki argues that the role of the intellectual is to represent truth – this means “speaking truth to power”, as propounded by Siphso Seepe in the light of the problems affecting society. Intellectuals must possess the “power of thought” together with the “capacity to open the way to a new future”. And most importantly, he says intellectualism must advance progressive truth rather than pessimism. This description pronounces a type of “black intellectual that our country needs” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). South Africa needs vibrant black voices “[t]o help overcome that which continues to be dehumanising to the majority of our people” (Mbeki 2001:93). He added that “our intelligentsia should work on the issue of the restoration of the pride, the identity and the self-confidence of the African majority” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). To him, honest public intellectualism can help South African society to overcome its difficulties, as well as inculcating “value system that respects life” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). It is in the understanding of Mbeki vibrant black intellectualism is consistent with the idea of resolving the native question. On the purpose of the black intellectuals, Mbeki stated the following:

This intelligentsia must engage with vigour the critical issues of the transformation of ours into a non-racial and non-sexist society, understanding that the realisation of these goals will be a defining feature of fundamental social transformation of our country to which many of us claim to be committed. (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93-94)

Mbeki called upon the black intellectuals to look at the history of South Africa “from within rather than from outside”. And on the understanding of the centuries-old problems affecting the society—from historical colonisation, apartheid racism, dispossession, cultural destruction, identity crisis, to loss of humanity—a black intellectual should pose a question – what is it that “we” need to do in order to create the new South Africa. He added that “[t]he difficult struggle to accomplish this goal must also pre-occupy our intelligentsia, joining hands with their counterparts throughout Africa and the African diaspora” (Mbeki [2000]2001c:94). Resolving the native question is a critical matter facing the society, that is, in itself it has possibilities to help national government achieve transformation, equitable development and also

agrarian society together with re-creation of authentic non-racialism and a rainbow nation. A black intellectual with no interest to the native question becomes a burden to society.

Coming to the opposite side and the dilemma that faces the black intellectuals to perform a progressive role of public representation, Mbeki disparaged the tendencies of materialism and populism by saying that this attitude does not help society overcome its problems; and by the way, the self-serving intellectualism is rampant in South African society. Mbeki ([2000]2001c:94-95) pointed out, “[i]t may be that it is the fashion of the day to define the height of intellectual creativity as the passion and consistency with which the modern South African intellectual criticises the government”. This is known that many black intellectuals, especially liberals, have adopted the tendencies of populism rather than a truism. Their ability to ‘speak truth to power’ is compromised by the interests within the white capitalist system. Sandile Memela (2020) pointed out that black scholars in university spent a lot of time criticising the black government rather than supporting it to achieve its national mandate. To Memela, their criticism of black government stems from wanting accolades and promotions in the white-dominated universities. Mbeki insisted that black scholars be patriotic and assist the government to achieve its national agenda rather than constantly criticising it.

Another dilemma surrounding black intellectuals in the public discourse is the position of remaining silent. Black intelligentsia and particularly in academia have been largely silent in terms of the role of universities in addressing the challenges facing the society. To amplify this, Jansen thus asserts,

The first thing that strikes one is the silence of black intellectuals on most of these concerns. From one crisis to the next, the voices of leading intellectuals, with or without expertise in the relevant fields were simply absent. (Jansen 2003:12)

Mngxitama (2010) criticises the black intellectuals and writers for being silent on the issues of race and transformation. This, by the way, is not silence in terms of not speaking but silence in terms of not wanting to be seen as radical or too political. The silence of black intellectuals is linked to the fact that black writers are not asking the

tough questions on the issues of land and economy. Mngxitama (2010) is of the view that this silence is of black intellectuals yearning to be incorporated by white capital since pointing out racism will make them to be sidelined. He added that black intellectuals always provided a paradox when answering pertinent questions affecting society because of fear of being marginalised. Thus, their views are aligned to the dominant liberal narrative to ensure they remain in the 'good books'. This reinforces Mbeki's ([2000]2001c) view that many black intellectuals are self-serving – that is, they are not helping out the government and the country to overcome its problems. Sithole (2012:148) amplifies this view in the light of the fact that “[i]n most post-liberation states, intellectuals want to maintain the status quo, and do not want to appear too political”. Mbeki refers to such intellectuals as a burden to society if their thinking is not aligned to the public interest.

But then again, it would be hypocritical to ignore the fact that black intellectuals exist and operate in the volatile society. Thus, black intellectuals are criticised for remaining silent and, at the same time, are attacked for speaking truth to power. Jansen elaborates on this point as follows:

The vocation of the intellectual in South Africa has fallen on hard times. Persons are under attack, reputations are muddied and lives are even threatened. Courageous voices have been severely attacked by politicians, academics and the general public for daring to pose uncomfortable questions about health, education, warfare and the presidency itself. (Jansen 2003:11)

Sipho Seepe alluded that black intellectuals have always played their role in speaking truth to power around critical issues in South Africa. This is in relation to the commentary submissions made on issues of land reform, economic transformation, health, education, service delivery, women empowerment, governance, and other issues of national interest. In speaking truth to power, Seepe (2004:53) argues that intellectuals are serving the country “and responding to President Mbeki’s invitation for black intellectuals to participate in the public discussions in our country”. He added that the role of the public intellectual is not only about “singing sycophantic praises” (Seepe 2004:54). Thus, it is about the public representation of truth –criticising government failures, giving credit where is due, and producing new thought and ideas.

Seepe's (2004:54) disdain arises from the view that "[i]n discharging this responsibility, which at times takes the form of being critical of government's policies, we have evidently exposed ourselves to some virulent personal attacks". He concluded by saying that those who criticise the black intellectuals for being silent in the public discourse do so because "[t]he burden of intellectual and academic life are rarely seen in full measure" (Seepe 2004:54).

Mbeki ([2000]2001c) calls for black intellectuals and academics alike to be more activist in their approach rather than just being technical. He says an intellectual must possess the 'power of thought' together with the "capacity to open the way to a new future". And most importantly, he says intellectuals are noted for their ability to pursue progressive truth rather than pessimism. This description pronounces a type of "black intellectual that our country needs" (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). South Africa needs vibrant black voices "[t]o help overcome that which continues to be dehumanising to the majority of our people" (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). He added that "our intelligentsia should work on the issue of the restoration of the pride, the identity and the self-confidence of the African majority" (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). In Mbeki's view, honest public intellectualism can help South African society to overcome its difficulties, as well as inculcating "value system that respects life" (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93). It is in the understanding of Mbeki vibrant black intellectualism is essential for the quest of resolving the native question. On the role of the black intellectual, Mbeki elaborated:

This intelligentsia must engage with vigour the critical issues of the transformation of ours into a non-racial and non-sexist society, understanding that the realisation of these goals will be a defining feature of fundamental social transformation of our country to which many of us claim to be committed. (Mbeki [2000]2001c:93-94)

A question should be asked in the manner that Jonathan Jansen has posed it: where does the loyalty of the post-apartheid black intellectual lie? Jansen does not elaborate further on this point. But it is clear that many black intellectuals under the current black dispensation find themselves in a state of moral and political dilemma about how to respond to the new conditions under a black government. Jansen (2003:12) observes that "[t]here is a patriotism that is expected, even demanded, from those who are supposed to understand the struggles and support the projects of the emerging state".

This has created a condition where these intellectuals lack what Siphos Seepe refers to as the capacity to “speak truth to power”. Seepe (2004) urged black intellectuals to avoid getting too close to the government and the ruling elite, arguing that such intellectual risks become biased. But then again, the dilemma of black intellectuals is that outside government, there are rarely opportunities to make money. It is a truism that, taken together, all these factors contribute to the understanding of the discourse of black public intellectualism. Important to note in this regard is the fact that Mbeki’s call for the native question is in part so that a dilemma facing black intellectuals and petit bourgeoisie can be attended to.

Black Economic Empowerment

A starting point in this regard is the Archbishop Emeritus of the Anglican Church Desmond Tutu’s criticism of President Mbeki’s policy position on BEE. This happened when Archbishop Tutu delivered the second Nelson Mandela Foundation Lecture on 23 November 2004. Three questions contributed to this criticism. First of these was when Archbishop Tutu said in the Lecture: “What is black empowerment when it seems to benefit not the vast majority but a small elite that tends to be recycled?”. He asked the second question, “Are we not building up much resentment that we may rue later?”. Lastly, the Archbishop argued: “It will not do to say people did not complain when whites were enriched. When was the old regime our standard?”. The archbishop also called for vigorous public debate, arguing that BEE needs to be questioned. In this regard, he said members of the ANC have become “[u]nthinking, uncritical, kowtowing party line-toeing” with “many seemingly cowed and apparently intimidated to comply” (Tutu 2004:32). What is presented here is that (i) BEE is Mbeki’s strategy to gather support internally, (ii) ANC members do not question the BEE for the fear of losing their jobs in government, and (iii) members are passive and submissive. The criticism lies on Mbeki alone, who in this case is president of the country, and not BEE reality itself. What is presented here is BEE as Mbeki’s brainchild rather than of ANC.

BEE has been a programme of the ANC-led government since 1994. After the transition to democracy in 1994, the ANC created the BEE as a political strategy to increase the participation of the previously excluded and disadvantaged African groups, and in particular blacks, in the economic mainstream. As Ramaphosa (2007:v) attests, “[t]he process of BEE is a core driver of social and economic transformation

for the benefit of all South Africans”. BEE as a concept emerged in the early 1990s under the focus of the reconstruction and development process. As Mbeki (1998:137) explains, “[t]he broader framework is the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)”. RDP is the policy anchor on which the ANC aspects of reconstruction and development processes are spelt out. It is important to underline the fact that the broader idea of reconstruction and development and black economic empowerment dates even back to the commitment of the ANC in the Freedom Charter document in 1955 which states that:

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be re- stored to the people; The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; All other industry and trade shall be con- trolled to assist the well-being of the people here they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.
(Freedom Charter 1955)

In 1998, Mbeki criticised the slow progress of the economic transformation in the country’s redress and development process. This he pointed out in his capacity as deputy president of the country when delivering the Address at the opening of the debate on “reconciliation and nation-building” on 29 May 1998. In this speech popularly known as ‘Two Nations’, he argued that “our answer to the question whether we are making that requisite progress towards achieving the objective of nation-building, as we defined it, would be: No!” (Mbeki 1998:71). This assertion as made by President Mbeki, “and more general accusation that BEE was simply enriching a small number of well-connected politicians and business people in the context of persistent poverty, eventually led government and business to re-package the concept as ‘broad-based BEE’” (Ponte *et al* 2007:934). The repackaging and the efforts by President Mbeki’s government were to ensure that BEE is handled to serve the black people in general and that the wealth of the country is equitably distributed. Ramaphosa (2007:v) states that “[b]road-based BEE is a crucial tool not only to strengthen our democracy but, crucially, to work towards the achievement of the socio-economic rights contained in the Constitution”. As it can be seen that it is almost three decades since the departure from the apartheid but there appears less evidence that BEE has

achieved its set objectives. Black masses remain excluded from benefiting from BEE, as political elite is using it to benefit itself, and this does not transform the national economy.

What is contributing to the failures of BEE? The popular argument is that BEE was set up for failure by the neo-liberal economic system. Nigel Gibson, for instance, contends that the ANC had no alternative to BEE but to implement neoliberal economic policies adopted from the 'Washington Consensus' (Gibson 2001). Gibson says the absence of debate about alternative economic reform was itself a set up for BEE failure. As he puts it, "[u]nder the pressure of 'unity' alternative ideas became dangerous" (Gibson 2001:379). The notion that there is no alternative is popular in the ANC and within its alliance partners (COSATU and SACP). In this regard Mbeki (2006a) did caution this mistake in saying that "we would be making a fatal mistake if we decided to depend on the market to correct the disastrous economic outcome born of 350 years of colonialism and apartheid". BEE has been framed by some as a means to silence the calls for nationalisation as envisioned in the Freedom Charter. Malikané (2011) argues that "[t]he idea of giving groups of black people ownership over critical aspects of the economy is a diversion from the Freedom Charter". He says this mistake arises from a view that BEE, which is a programme of democratisation of ownership and control is contrasted with the Freedom Charter, which calls for de-racialisation of the economy. By others BEE has been portrayed as a programme that is created for the inclusion of black elite within the global capitalist economy rather than it being as a programme to increase the participation of black people in the economic mainstream.

For argument's sake, a close reading of Mbeki in the article titled "Our Duty to End Poverty" comes to suggest that BEE was created in tandem with "international discourse". By international discourse is meant the practices that are influenced by forces of "globalisation, liberalisation, deregulation, and the information society or information superhighway" (Mbeki 1998d:275). This goes to suggest that BEE has entered into the vocabulary of international discourse. Mbeki amplifies this view in the light of the fact that BEE is part of the international context as it attempts to respond to and addressing issues of transformation and development together with challenges of hunger and poverty. These aspects do not only manifest in international and global

dimensions but also manifest as part of the economic-political discourse within national boundaries. Mbeki amplifies this by saying:

...these represent the international context in which all of us have to work to eliminate poverty in our countries, to improve the quality of life of the millions of our people, to close the gap between the rich and the poor – both internally and universally – and to attain sustainable rates of economic growth and development. (Mbeki 1998d:275).

Mbeki says the international discourse originates from the developed countries of the global North. And this in itself reflects the imperatives of economies and the levels of these countries' development and serves the purpose of enriching them. In this regard, Mbeki pointed out the fact that “our own success as developing countries in terms of the upliftment of our peoples cannot be achieved in conditions of autarky or self-contained development within our national boundaries or regions” (Mbeki 1998d:275). He says that national transformation by developing countries cannot be achieved through opting out of the process of globalisation. The question that arises, as Mbeki put it, is what intervention the developing countries can make to ensure that the problems of the poor masses get to be addressed? For this reason, the imagination of Mbeki, in relation to the BEE in this case, was itself consciously shaped and informed by international imperatives of development. To amplify this, Gevisser (2009:117) argues that “Mbeki’s attempt to apply such notions to democratic, twenty-first-century South Africa would be marked, most of all, by his faith in a newly empowered black bourgeoisie, and in the way, he would try to develop the post-apartheid ANC into an elite cadre of trained change agents rather than a mass movement”. Gevisser’s point is very much convincing in that Mbeki wanted the formation of a black bourgeoisie class that would rival the white monopoly capital.

Mbeki’s (1999b) BEE position embraces “the formation of a black capitalist class, a black bourgeoisie”, for the de-racialisation of the economic ownership. He characterised South Africa as a white dominated capitalist economy, and pointed out that the government needed the BEE programme to strengthen a black capitalist class in order to address the goal of deracialisation within the context of the property relations. Mbeki argued that poverty and wealth in South Africa continue to carry the racial hues between black and white. In relation to this, Mbeki (1999b) argues that the

struggle for transformation “must include the objective of creating a black bourgeoisie”. The potential of BEE bears “the possibility of the emergence of successful and therefore prosperous black owners of productive property” that is “consistent with a realistic response to the real world” (Mbeki 1999b). Mbeki suggested that South Africans, in relation to the BEE implementation, needed to think and act in a manner that is consistent with the constitutional mandate to create a non-racial society where all people are able to participate in the economy freely. Mbeki also justified the emergence of a black bourgeoisie as a necessary step to strengthen a black capitalist class, whose presence within the economic mainstream will be part of the process of the deracialisation of the economy and society. In this regard, he mentioned the successful cases of countries like Malaysia and Singapore, whereby empowerment movement is helped by the government, both in terms of funding and opportunities.

At the time of independence from Britain, the Malaysian state adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP) deliberately aimed at uplifting Malays (Freund 2007). Parallel to apartheid South Africa, colonial Malaysia was once a country of ‘two nations’ that were characterised by two different levels of economic development. The first group comprised British and Chinese Malaya (settlers) who had been the minorities but very wealthy and economically superior in the mainland, and the second majority group of Malays (natives) were located mostly in the rural areas with no business access and opportunities. The independence of Malaysia, in response to this ethnically-defined plural society, formulated NEP in order to “disrupt the ethnic-economic order that had characterised colonial development” (Freund 2007:665). As Freund (2007:665) notes, “Malays were favoured to various degrees in terms of state procurement, tendering processes and the licensing of businesses and targets were set in terms of the Malay share of ownership on the Stock Exchange”. The result of this NEP was the creation of a very wealthy ethnic Malay business elite which itself plays a decisive role in the economic development of the Malaysian state. The South African equivalent of the NEP is BEE. In the light of Malaysian experience, NEP continues to be a point of reference for the ANC insofar as the BEE experiment, which has not yielded results is concerned.

Some commentators and critics, however, have contested the question of whether or not the government should carry this process of embourgeoisement forward. For

instance, Shubane (2007) makes an argument for the “capital concentration” approach as a deliberate attempt toward what he refers to as the “creation of a black business class”. In this regard, the formation of a black business class would enable “a balanced class structure” within the terrain that is dominated by white capital (Shubane 2007:162). Without a black business structure, in Shubane’s view, this will leave BEE exposed to the economic system and the market of white capital. What is presented here is that BEE must not be given to per individual but, instead, be used to build the black business structure from which the aspirant blacks can build a business. Shubane (2007:163) argues that “[i]n facilitating the creation of a business class, though, the state should take considerable care that is not captured by business interests seeking their own sectional advantages”. At present black people do not have a business structure to speak from but, on the other hand, whites do. The economic system in South Africa is white, including the market and corporate sector, and is named white monopoly capital. To Shubane, BEE is prone to fail for so long it is set on the economic system created by white monopoly capital. Given the dependency syndrome that appears to be a nature of the BEE elite, BEE within the black business structure would indeed help to build black business capacity, and Shubane must be lauded in this regard.

On the other hand, Blade Nzimande states that “[t]he test of BEE must be about development and transformation” (Nzimande 2007:184). He says the current patterns of distribution and accumulation in the broad-based BEE scheme are perpetuating narrow BEE rather than promoting genuine broad-based BEE. BEE, to Nzimande, for it to be productive, has to be placed within the broader project of national transformation. Nzimande says he supports the government’s empowerment of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and doing away with privatisation in order to retain these as state entities, wherein the BEE could become a public investment. As Nzimande (2007:184) explains, “[i]t is within the context of a state-led, overarching industrial and developmental strategy that BEE should be implemented”. He says the BEE is the most essential programme needed to drive the development and transformation project but the problem is that it is not being properly located in its broader political and economic context. The emphasis seems to limit this to resolve the racial and socio-economic imbalances created by a system of apartheid, important as it is, thus tends to reduce it to the bare minimum while losing focus on its potential to achieve

both transformation and development affecting the nation. Nzimande's assertion is problematic in the sense that it is essentially arguing for the current status quo. Unlike Khehla Shubane, who makes the case for BEE to be located within a black business structure that is independent of government and private sector, Nzimande wants the state to remain a custodian of BEE. The problem with this is that it will benefit only a handful of the politically connected elite, as is currently the case. If the state custodianship will lead to job creation, as Nzimande suggests, why is this not the case currently?

The ANC in the post-1994 era run what Moeletsi Mbeki (2007) refers to as 'two economies'—black economy and white economy. Mbeki says this stems from the fact that there were two Codesas – Codesa I and II. He says the Codesa I was about the public deliberations on the transfer of political power from white to black (without economic freedom), and Codesa II was secretive in that it sought economic deals between the white bourgeoisie and representative of the black middle class. In fact what came out of Codesa II is partnerships of economic nature between ANC members and white bourgeoisie capitalists, which in itself created what is referred to as economic oligarchy. Mbeki (2007:222) points out that “the economic oligarchy at Codesa II offered BEE” as a bribe to the representative of the black middle class. In this case, “BEE entailed wealth redistribution from the economic oligarchs to the black upper middle class” (Mbeki 2007:222). The black elite was co-opted in exchange for it to maintain the status quo as far as white economic control is concerned. In this case, the black elite is offered BEE in order to facilitate white interests, and these interests are at the expense of the black majority. As with most societies globally, and throughout history, economic oligarchs use their dominant position in society to protect and advance their interests. In present-day South Africa, economic oligarchs have created a black elite characterised by over-reliance on the system of capitalism. The BEE is the latest device among many that economic oligarchs invented to capture the political elite, and it has proven to be successfully working to strengthen capitalism.

Tendayi Sithole regards BEE as a brainchild of Thabo Mbeki during his presidency and deems its creation as a scapegoat of class which presents a crude contradiction. According to Sithole (2014b:343), “[t]he existence of the BEE class changed the landscape of capital ownership, which was in the hands of white minority and blacks

having to gain access to such landscape without destabilising it". BEE accumulation by the black elite hides the fact that racism persists, as there are blacks who are similar to whites in terms of economic class. Sithole's criticism of Mbeki, in relation to the creation of BEE, arises from the view that this privileges class and ignores race. To Sithole, BEE blinds the reality of race in that transforms a handful of black elite into multi-millionaires while it excludes the black majority who are in need economic reform to escape hunger and poverty. Despite the existence of the BEE class, Sithole (2014b:343) argues, "[t]he dualism of old South Africa still exists where still there are townships, RDP houses in the middle of nowhere, slums and shacks". Since BEE is the brainchild of Mbeki, Sithole (2014b:343) further argues, "[i]t, therefore, means that Mbeki is part of the problem since South Africa continues with the political infrastructure that keeps white economic power and its oligarchy intact". Sithole's argument is problematic in the sense that it does not reflect truth in its entirety. BEE is not Mbeki's creation as Sithole seems to suggest; thus, it existed before Mbeki became president.

What has tended to limit the scope of this discussion is the thinking that BEE is the post-1994 phenomenon. As Mangcu (2007:3) exemplifies, "[t]he ANC government's BEE builds on pre-existing process of embourgeoisement". BEE is part of the development of a black business that has been there throughout the history of the black middle-class date, even to the previous century. One of the pioneers of BEE, Siphso Maseko (2007), thus advises readers to look at the BEE formation as the historical process of the black bourgeoisie. Maseko says the black bourgeoisie has always been there, historically, it is only that it was largely small relative to the white colonial bourgeoisie. Moeletsi Mbeki locates the origins of the ANC government's BEE to the "black middle class that dates back to the 1830s when the British eventually realised they could not crush Xhosa without forming an alliance with other African tribes" (Mbeki 2007:219). As a result, the British identified the three groups, namely; Amafengu (or Fingoes), Gqunukwebe, and Khoisans, as military allies to subdue the Xhosa kingdom. In return for military support, the British shared the captured land and cattle with these African allies. "The British also introduced their black allies to the ways of the modern capitalist world of that time" (Mbeki 2007:219). Out of all these emerged South Africa's black middle class under the auspices of the British. The post-1994 is where the mantle was passed to the black middle class, which underwent elite

pact with colonial bourgeoisie resulting into embourgeoisement that featured faked political freedoms.

The role of capital[ism] is problematic in most liberal democracies, and the BEE programme in the post-1994 era is a case in point. Thus BEE is problematic since it is always seen as confronting the racial and socio-economic imbalances created by the system of apartheid, but the truth seems to be the opposite case. Nothing is said about BEE independence, in so far as its linkage to capital-ism is concerned. Thus there is silence regarding the institutions that bankroll BEE, if any; and whether it is funded by government or otherwise. Most people believe that BEE is an invention of ANC government and this is not entirely true. For instance, Mbeki (2009:66) points out that “BEE was, in fact, invented by South Africa’s economic oligarchs, that handful of white businessmen and their families who control the commanding heights of the country’s economy, that is, mining and its associated chemical and engineering industries and finance”. Mbeki backs up this point to say:

The flagship BEE company, New Africa Investments Limited (Nail), started operating in 1992, two years before the ANC came into power. It was created by the second-largest South African insurance company, Sanlam, with the support of the National Party government-controlled Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), a state-owned industrial investment bank created in 1940. The formation of Nail was soon followed by the creation of Real African Investment Limited (Rail), sponsored by mining giant Anglo American Corporation through its financial services subsidiary Southern Life. (Mbeki 2009:66-67)

In this regard, Mbeki says the BEE is bankrolled by white companies based inside and outside South Africa. A small group of the black elite within ANC is also incentivised by these companies to buy them to sustain the neo-colonial system—white monopoly capital—which these companies live on. As Mbeki (2009:67) notes, “[t]he object of BEE was to co-opt leaders of the black resistance movement by literally buying them off with what looked like a transfer to them of massive assets at no cost”. These massive assets Mbeki adds that “[t]o the oligarchs, of course, these assets were small change” relative to the return on investments they were making. BEE did not bring

about racial and socio-economic transformation in post-1994 South Africa, but instead; it merely transformed a few black faces into multi-millionaires overnight. To amplify this, Ndlovu-Gatsheni testifies the following:

A few black people were able to take advantage of favourable state policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Affirmative Action (AA) to climb up the social and economic ladder into the middle stratum/middle-class status. Examples include Cyril Ramaphosa, Patrice Motsepe, Irvin Khoza and others termed the 'black diamonds.' These people were used by dominant white groups to counter accusations of racial discrimination and to hide continuations of racial discrimination. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011:14)

This suggests that there is a need to re-think the BEE and that the notion of black elite cannot be relied upon. This means the white economic oligarchs of South Africa used the BEE to bribe and capture the black elite, and these, in return, are playing a major role in ensuring that the status quo remains the same. Mbeki says that the BEE was intended to achieve a number of objectives, and these include the following:

Wean the ANC from radical economic ambitions, such as nationalising the major elements of the South African economy, by putting cash in the politicians' private pockets, packaged to look like atonement for the sins of apartheid, that is, reparations to black people in general; provide the oligarchs with eminent and influential seats at the high table of the ANC government's economic policy formulation system; allow those oligarchs who wanted to shift their company's primary listings and headquarters from Johannesburg to London to do so; give the oligarchs and their companies the first bite at government contracts that interested them; and protect the oligarchs from foreign competition while opening up the rest of the economy, especially the consumer goods and manufacturing sector, to the chill winds of international competition. (Mbeki 2009:68)

After apartheid, BEE was widely touted as a much-desired outcome of the post-1994 era that would uplift the black masses and bring about economic transformation, but

in the light of the above-mentioned problems, it is turned out to be a fatal blow. BEE is fatalistic since it does not transform the national economy. In that case BEE must be scrapped since it gives the impression that the process of transformation is unfolding, whereas this is a mere cosmetic change that benefits only a few black elites at the detriment of the whole nation. The emergence of BEE has not transformed the economic conditions of the ordinary black masses. As can be seen, corruption of selling BEE in the ANC government is rampant, and this increases the gap between the rich black elite and poorer black masses. The accumulation of BEE tenders by the black elite is pervasive, but this is fatalistic as it does not create wealth for the whole nation. With the wealth that comes with BEE tenders, the black elite displays the opulent lifestyle of materialism to sell the image of black emancipation. Sithole (2014a:88) argues that BEE is a wealth “which does not benefit the masses, as it circulates only in the hands of a few”. Mbeki laments the BEE in saying that:

In fact, it strikes a fatal blow against the emergence of black entrepreneurship by creating a small class of unproductive but wealthy black crony capitalists made up of ANC politicians, some retired and others not, who have become strong allies of the economic oligarchy that is, ironically, the caretaker of South Africa’s deindustrialisation. (Mbeki 2009:61)

To understand the character of black elite, it is essential to re-read the role Frantz Fanon ascribes to the “native” bourgeoisie. According to Fanon (1963:53), “[t]he native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor”.

The “native” bourgeoisie in Africa is the creation of colonial civil service. These were local servants who became part of colonial system or local agents whose role was to transport the message between the colonisers and the natives. According to Fanon (1963:7), “[t]he European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite”. Following the declaration of independence on the continent, these “natives” moved up the socio-economic stratum to occupy the positions that were left by the colonialists in the colonial economic structure. As Fanon (1963:52) wrote: “[w]e have seen that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler—not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler”. This generation is known today as the black elite who are mostly political entrepreneurs and tenderpreneurs, and often

connected with the ANC. It is, therefore, characterised by economic ambition which has nothing to do with the transformation of the society other than compromise the prospect of economic development. Unlike the colonial bourgeoisie, which the native bourgeoisie has replaced, the latter is characterised by a stamatic dependence. Thus, black elite has no ownership or control of the means of production, it exists and operate as managers of capitalist system. The black elite plays an intermediary role between the local economy and the metropolis. This is much the character of the black elite in South Africa. Fanon elaborates this point as follows:

Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. (Fanon 1963:162-163)

Among Fanon's concerns with the nationalist bourgeoisie is not only its character of betrayal, nor that it fails to invest in the national economy, but also its state of dependency. Since BEE entails wealth distribution from the white economic oligarchs to the black elite, this promotes the hegemony of dependence. Unlike the white economic oligarchs who own large asserts, the black elite is the bunch of unproductive, rich black politicians and ex-politicians who are wholly dependent on the white capital. Fanon (1963:175) ascribe the term "greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster" to describe the nature of the black elite. To concur with Fanon, the black elite is not a true bourgeoisie since it is characterised by a state of dependency. Because the BEE is bankrolled by the white oligarchs, the black elite has to become agents of white monopoly capital by ensuring that the status quo remains uninterrupted. It is through their accumulation of the BEE that the black elite exhibits its wealth on behalf of the black nation. The impression is therefore given by this class that transformation is happening or has taken place. As a result, this creates a serious condition of economic neglect and exclusion that are part of the black majority.

Of course, this whole argument against the BEE is itself contested by proponents of BEE. For example, Eric Mafuna, a founder of the Black Management Forum (BMF)

that founded BEE, pointed out that BEE has changed the economic landscape of post-1994 South Africa. Mafuna refutes the argument that BEE has failed when it comes to addressing the economic inequality created by a system of apartheid. In many criticisms directed at BEE, Mafuna (2007:33) wrote: “[t]here is a failure to acknowledge the business achievements of black people”. He also dismisses the notion that BEE is benefitted only a handful of black faces, usually politicians connected to the ANC, saying it has facilitated the entry point for many black businesses. As Mafuna (2007:33) argues, “BEE is conceived in a manner that suggests that black people have had no involvement with business other than as workers”. This further goes to argue that the BEE stake cannot be given to the blacks who have not created a thriving business in the past. What is presented here is that potential BEE applicants must demonstrate a successful track record of the past and also have existing assets in order for them to be considered. It is this very form of thinking that makes BEE a failure since it fails to acknowledge the fact that the system of apartheid created a situation where white business thrives through government subsidies, while blacks were excluded. It is also ridiculous that blacks must have assets in order for them to get BEE. The fact that blacks have no assets is a result of the socio-political arrangement of the apartheid system. It is clear that the BEE was created with no black upliftment in mind. While its name carries black tag this in practice exclude blacks through technical reasons.

Gill Marcus, *et al* (2007:228) pointed out that “[t]he challenge that BEE, as practised so far, has been elitist and of benefit to only a minority, with little impact on the economic transformation or the majority of the population”. They argue that BEE needs to reform from being a ‘gatekeeper’ to creating a condition where it lives up to its Constitutional mandate. This arises from the view that it limits black business participation to always being a junior partner to the white business. Central to their argument is that “BEE's current approach is driven by the white capitalist in the interests of promoting an elite, as distinct from being part of a broader transformation and development agenda” (Marcus, *et al* 2007:229). Offering BEE tenders in exchange for patronage is tantamount to corruption and defeats the whole purpose of BEE's constitutional mandate. According to this mandate, BEE is required to create an “effort to ensure meaningful inclusion of black South Africans in the economy, particularly with regard to ownership, the creation of opportunities for new entrants,

and the filling of executive positions” (Marcus, *et al* 2007:227). As can be seen from these reactions, denialism does not assist in dismissing the fact that BEE has failed in its constitutional mandate.

Turning back to Mbeki, he accepted Archbishop's challenge in the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecturer for an open rational debate involving as many people as possible where to disagree is part and parcel of a vibrant community. Mbeki sharply denied the assertion that BEE is benefiting a small elite that tends to be recycled within the ANC. He said: “[t]he Archbishop has never been a member of the ANC, and would have very little knowledge of what happens even in the ANC branch” (Gitay 2009:12). Mbeki backed up his statement by pointing out the report constituting the conclusion of an agreement between a private South African consortium and private foreign owners of Telkom. According to this report, Mbeki (2004) said some of the beneficiaries were the women members of the South African Democratic Teachers Union, the nurses’ union Denosa, including the women's advocacy groups. He argued that critics needed to understand that BEE in South Africa takes place through two separate processes – one private and the other public, and any discussion therefore should take this into account. Mbeki continued to point out that black elite under criticism had made progress through private funders rather than funded by the government. Turning to Archbishop, he said are some in South Africa who do not want the truth to be known about what government and the public sector as a whole are doing to implement broad based BEE. In this regard, he emphasised the need to speak truth by saying:

We must avoid the resort to populism and catchy newspapers headlines that have nothing to do with the truth... One of the fundamental requirements for the rational discussion suggested by the Archbishop is familiarity with the facts relevant to any matter under discussion, as well as respect for the truth. ...internalize the facts about our country, and respect the truth... It would be good that those who present themselves as the greatest defenders of the poor should also demonstrate decent respect for the truth, rather than indecent resort to empty rhetoric (cited in Gitay 2009:141).

What Mbeki is arguing for in relation to the BEE primarily is not about the technical approach for distribution but for the need to make BEE workable. He wants BEE to

achieve its envisioned national objective of economically uplifting the previously excluded black groups as a deliberate effort to create transformation. Its interpretation, Mbeki (1998:70) pointed out, must be “a common fight to eradicate the legacy of apartheid” in order “to give meaning and concrete expression to the effort to build a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa”. The central objective of BEE in Mbeki’s articulation is towards achieving nation-building. Mbeki is here using the example of post-war Germany with which the German people treated the process of national unity and reconciliation. He says their seriousness, among other things, is reflected by the extraordinary volume of resources which the richer, developed West Germany transferred to the poorer and relatively underdeveloped East Germany. In so saying, Mbeki is arguing for the case of BEE, that it should be driven in the same light as a reform meant to uplift the historically oppressed blacks. This was the case during German’s unification. Mbeki (1998:74) thus posed a question: “[a]re the relatively rich, who as a result of apartheid definition are white, prepared to help underwrite the upliftment of the poor, who are a result of an apartheid definition are black?” The answer is no, and the reason is that BEE is treated by ANC as its financial scheme for the distribution of patronage rather than as a national resource of transformation.

The emancipation of women

That African women are marginalised and excluded from the whole project of post-1994 in terms of equality, and social justice is undeniable. The question, in fact, is no longer about whether or not the struggle of feminism has any relevance to South African society but to what the emancipation of women should feature. The notion of non-sexism as expressed in the Constitution is not yet realised beyond a small number of female ministers in parliament, and for the non-sexist society to be realised, there needs to be women emancipation in critical numbers. This means that women empowerment must not just be symbolic or gesture but must be persuaded in practical and realistic terms. For example, programmes of affirmative action such as Black Economic Empowerment and employment equity by the government must ensure that women are prioritised to benefit in critical numbers and not just a few black women. So far there has been a consistent failure to bring about the emancipation of women as a measure to counter male dominance in South Africa.

McFadden (2016) observes that the question of women emancipation features high in Mbeki's agenda of national transformation. While acknowledging that there has been a consistent failure to address the women question in South Africa and the continent generally, McFadden still recognises the contribution that Mbeki has made in this regard. "I am nonetheless among the first to acknowledge that Thabo Mbeki stands head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries in terms of pushing for and defending the programmes and policies that have enabled some black women in South Africa to get beyond lives of survival and to become part of the middle classes" (McFadden 2016:522). Indeed, Mbeki has, in his various works, reiterated the need to prioritise black women in particular when it comes to the government's programmes on transformation and development. He advocated for the empowerment of women on both private and public management, business and entrepreneurship as an important measure to contribute toward the creation of a non-sexist society.

Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261) argues that "[t]he progress we make towards the attainment of a democratic society can only have full and deeper meaning if it is accompanied by significant progress in the struggle for the emancipation of women". The question of women emancipation in Mbeki's critique arises from the view that there is a near absence of women voices in the mainstream narrative of South Africa. Whether they are unwittingly or deliberately excluded is open to debate, but the fact remains that South Africa has not had a woman president, for example, and why? South Africa, rather than it declared a non-sexist society it should be called something else since the women majority are excluded, and the record speaks for itself. Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261) amplify this to say that: "I believe that we should accept the proposition that we must measure the success of progress towards social transformation by advances we make in the struggle for non-sexiest society". The near absence of women's narrative on issues affecting society suggests that black women are recognised only by femininity and not by contribution to knowledge, leadership and other qualities they bring to society. There is a consistent dominance and reliance on male opinion than female, something which informs the patriarchal society, which is what South Africa is in its propagated notion of non-sexism.

The exclusion that African women in South Africa and across the African continent face also tells that the struggle for the liberation of women is not complete. Oyèrónké

Oyěwùmí (1997) has, in her book, directly confronted the silencing of African women in the Yoruba society of Nigeria. Within this community which existed in the pre-colonial history, [m]otherhood was the most valued institution in Yorubaland” (Oyěwùmí 1997:75). In this society, women were not just mothers but carried out the important role of being early childhood teachers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017:52) emphasises this point to say “[t]he ‘primary’ teacher in the African indigenous education system was the mother”. What is emphasised here is the role of what Oyěwùmí called ‘maternal ideology’. Equally so is the role of grandmothers as important storytellers of history, passing knowledge of their generation to the next (young) generation, as a form of nation-building. As Oyěwùmí (1997:75) argues, mother-child dialogue created the “birth-order” that constituted “more socially significant point of reference”. Oyěwùmí’s intervention is important in that it helps to re-think the women question in the light of the nation building in South African context.

The contention here is that the struggle for women emancipation, in relation to South African situation, constitutes a national question in that the role of women in post-1994 society remains unresolved. This struggle has been failed or betrayed by the ANC-led liberation movement, and by post-1994 order. As Webster and Mawbey (2017:9) explains, “[w]ithin the liberation movement, the priority was seen as the antiapartheid struggle, which was rooted in a two-stage theory of social change – and this meant postponing the issue of gender equality”. This essentially means that “the specific problems facing women were seen as secondary to and contingent upon national liberation” (Webster & Mawbey 2017:9). Both men and women fought in the same struggle for national liberation that delivered the country from the oppressive system of apartheid, yet women have nothing to show for their freedoms as far as gender equality with male counterpart is concerned. As Feroza Adam similarly argued: “[a]fter having struggled together with their men for liberation, women comrades found their position had not changed” (cited in Meer 2005:36). The women struggle for liberation and emancipation is continuing in that only the anti-apartheid struggle was achieved but gendered relations and exclusion of women is still ongoing in post-1994 state.

South Africa is itself in the period of post-apartheid, but women are in the state of apartheid since their struggle for emancipation is still ongoing, and this time is against the black government which marginalises and excludes them from being national

priority. This then makes the notion of non-sexism an illusion since the structure of patriarchal domination remain intact. In this regard, Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261) concurs in stating: “[i]ndeed, we should measure the progress towards a democratic transformation by the progress we record in the struggle for gender equality”. The reality concerning the condition of post-1994 South Africa is that the notion of non-sexism is yet to materialise in practical terms beyond the constitutional rhetoric which gives the false impression that the project of women emancipation has been achieved. As such, it is an insult to women that the post-1994 state is a non-sexist society whereas they are inferiorised in social and economic terms. There needs to be a genuine women emancipation for there to be a non-sexist society, and this should be seen in realistic terms beyond the Constitution which propagates what is not there and giving the false impression that the women struggle is being attended to. Mbeki’s articulation serves as a testimony to the fact that the post-1994 state is still far from realising the emancipation of women. The post-1994 and its non-sexism is a pretention because its logic of emancipation is faked – that is, reforming apartheid on the basis of women exclusions and male domination.

The emancipation of women is linked with the need for economic rights, social justice, ownership, and self-reliance. This is consistent with the true meaning of a liberated society, wherein women become the drivers of society. According to Mbeki, there is a need to incorporate women in society in line with the ideas of the constitution. To him, the post-1994 state is not fully non-sexist to recognise and include women as equal partners and decision-makers. That said, women are perceived as subjects rather than citizens with equal rights and a capable intellect. The extent of gender-based violence is a testimony to the male-female relations or power network. As alluded by Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261), “[t]he road we still need to travel towards the attainment of a democratic and fully non-sexist society can be measured by the frightening scale of women abuse and domestic violence”. The extent of gender-based violence suggests that women and children are seen not as equal humans in the literal sense but as subjects that can be acted upon, including being raped and murdered.

The gender-based violence is a widespread problem in South Africa, and the general target of this violence and abuse is black women and children. Gender-based violence is “violence that reflects the existing asymmetry in the power relations between men

and women and that perpetuates the subordination and devaluation of the female as opposed to the male” (Rico 1997:8). This definition further asserts that “[t]his violence exists within the framework of the patriarchy as a symbolic system that engenders an array of day-to-day practices which deny women their rights and reproduce the existing imbalance and inequity between the sexes” (Rico 1997:8). In the light of the gender-based violence in South Africa, Mbeki amplified:

Statistics which quantify this scale of human anguish and suffering is, by any standard, impermissible. It is estimated that roughly 30 per cent of all the cases of violence reported to the South African Police Services (SAPS) are domestic in nature. One out of every four women is either physically, emotionally or sexually abused by her male partner. An average of 15 000 cases of child abuse is reported to the Child Protection Unit of the SAPS every year. (Mbeki [1995]1998d:261)

The gendered social relation of violence creates a condition of what Maldonado-Torres (2007:255) refers to as ‘killability’ and ‘rapeability’ – that is, the naturalisation and normalisation of murder and rape. This is a condition currently obtained in the post-1994 era, where murder and rape are inscribed in the bodies of black women. Gender-based violence, which takes various forms has moved from the realms of inferiorisation and exclusion to becoming a figure of abuse and subjugation. In this case, the life of black women is not taken as human life but a life that can be dictated upon or taken at will. Both killability and rapeability are part of women's essence. In this regard Maldonado-Torres argues:

The Black man is depicted as an aggressive sexual beast who desires to rape women, particularly White. The Black woman, in turn, is seen as always already sexually available to the raping gaze of the White and as fundamentally promiscuous. The Black woman is seeing as a highly erotic being whose primary function is fulfilling sexual desire and reproduction. To be sure, any amount of ‘penis’ in both represents a threat. But in its most familiar and typical forms, the Black man represents the act of rape – ‘raping’ – while the Black woman is seen as the most legitimate victim of rape – ‘being raped’. Women deserve

to be raped and to suffer the consequences – in terms of lack of protection from the legal system, further sexual abuse, and lack of financial assistance to sustain herself and her family – just as black men deserve to be penalized for raping, even without committing such an act. Both ‘raping’ and ‘being raped’ are attached to Blackness as if they were part of the essence of Black folk, which is seen as a dispensable population. Black bodies are seen as excessively violent and erotic, as well as the legitimate recipients of excessive violence, erotic and otherwise. (Maldonado-Torres 2007:255)

In South Africa, “one out of every four women is either physically, emotionally or sexually abused by her male partner”, according to Mbeki. As Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261-262) argues, “[i]n order to fully exorcise the body of society of this cancer, it is important to address political, constitutional, social, cultural and economic conditions which give rise to this decease”. In Mbeki’s analysis of this pandemic, it is not enough to limit the focus to specific case or individualisation since women are oppressed as a group based on gender. According to Mbeki: “[m]ore often than not, rape and child abuse are committed by people who are known to the victim” (McFadden 2016:522). The point here is that the abuse of women is not an accidental occurrence but a pandemic that targets women in general and blacks in particular, who are seen as easy targets in that they constitute the absence of human agency. From this perspective, one of the important contributions of the Mbeki government was of putting the issue of gender equality and the women’s question at the centre of the national programme for transformation and development. He has been and continues to be emphatic against gender discrimination. Women are targets of men, but this abuse cannot be seen as victimhood when they complain, largely because it is hidden in structural violence.

Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261) argues that “[t]he scale of violence and abuse against women and children demands that we give full appreciation to the fact that this form of appreciation is a human cancer which affects all sectors and all levels of society”. In this regard the violence against women also points to the location of power and the dynamics that are embedded in gender relations within the South African society. Gender-based violence is about power and how it is exercised. A loss of women’s

dignity and power is something which should be restored. As such, Mbeki ([1995]1998d:261) argues, “the struggle against women oppression and child abuse should be situated within the broader struggle for political, constitutional, social, cultural and economic emancipation”. The society that should come into being is one where the notion of non-sexism is lived in the form of equality, freedom, and justice rather than propagated. And women should break away from patriarchal domination to take control of their destiny. As Meer (2005) notes, many black women are desperate to enter into the new dispensation and to claiming their space as a new generation. A new lease of life should not be one where women are forced into an uneasy and abnormal coexistence but a society where there is mutual recognition and reciprocal respect as far as the stance of non-sexism is concerned.

Shireen Hassim (2006) argues that women are oppressed as women and that women have to organise as women to pursue a question of social justice. She argues for the notion of focusing women attention to political organisation and civil mobilisation that speaks for women’s emancipation. Their demand must be on empowerment and economic freedom, and not only for gender equality as far as Constitution is concerned, but as part of real life that must be afforded to all women. According to Hassim, the notion of gender equality and the non-sexism which is advanced by liberal democracy must not be seen as the end of the women’s struggle but, instead, the beginning of women struggles in it. As Hassim (2006:931) argues, “[a]t the very least, any desirable form of democracy must encompass the civil and political rights advocated by liberalism, the socio-economic freedoms at the heart of socialism, and the cultural freedoms envisaged by feminism”. To her, women’s struggle must be located within the broader struggle for feminism and be influenced by it, not only by democracy. Feminism as a liberal-inspired women’s movement, petitions for women to play role in the influence of the state and the decision-making in parliament, legislation, political, and judicial systems—including government’s policies and programmes in a way that produces a fair outcome for women emancipation.

Let it be said that the question of women’s emancipation is derailed from the top level of political leadership and governance. It is a combination of the patriarchal ANC government and its corrupt leadership that does not want to see confident and independent African women taking charge of their political, economic and social

destiny. This is essential in a country where black women have no privilege to self-determination, but a privilege which is afforded only to male by the power of patriarchy. This has created a condition where there is a self-imposed duty by male to dictate the life that must be lived by women. This oppositional stance to women emancipation has to be intervened and brought to an abrupt ending. There is a need to create space for women emancipation outside the limits of the current status quo. Meer amplifies this view in the light of the SACP and ANC's resistance to women's leadership to say that:

Like COSATU women, ANC women found resistance from men in the ANC to their calls for increasing the numbers of women in ANC leadership. In 1990, there were no women among the six national office bearers of the ANC, and women made up only 18 per cent of the National Executive Committee (NEC). The ANC Women's League (ANCWL) raised this as a problem at the 1990 ANC Consultative Conference, and got the male leadership to agree in principle that affirmative-action measures needed to be considered... Although senior ANC male leaders agreed to support the proposal, they did not actually do so. At the 1991 conference, ANC women found themselves isolated, and their proposal rejected. The reply that came out was that women were not ready to lead, that there were few women of leadership quality, and that women must prove themselves. Angry, disappointed, and let down, ANC women told the conference that similar arguments had been used by the apartheid. (Meer 2005:40-41 *emphasis added*)

The ANC-led government, under pressure to respond to the legitimate calls for women's empowerment and gender equality, had passed the quota legislation. Also called 50/50 as is popularly known, "[t]he legislation strives for 50 per cent female representation on the executive bodies of all organisations" (Hills 2015:153). This legislation was passed in response to the near absence of women's participation in the key decision-making structures in both public and private sectors. However, understanding the emancipation of women primarily in terms of increasing the women's appointments in key offices is not the solution to advance the agenda of non-sexism and gender equality. As Hassim (2006:933) argues, "[t]here is an implicit

assumption in quota campaigns that increasing the number of women in office will enable women to have influence over decision making in regard to national budgets, policy priorities, and the ideological direction of government policies, skewing these in ways that would redress inequalities". This understanding is constrained in the sense that it does not take into account the structure that creates and maintains the male domination and female oppression. There is a need to study and understand the structure that gives life to male domination and female oppression in order to provide effective solutions to the problems faced by women.

In Mbeki's estimation, the transformation of society is a foremost precondition towards the creation of a genuine non-sexist society. In other words, it is not possible to achieve women's emancipation within a society whose social structure is defined by patriarchal domination. The Constitution and the rule of law must play a key role in ensuring that their respective principles seek to privilege the position and status of women in society. In fact, Mbeki says his government took a lead in its Constitutional and political mandate for the advancement of the objective of the emancipation of women. The establishment, for example, of the Ministry of Women and Children and the Gender Equality Commission serves as testimony to this effect. These institutions are founded on the women charter of the constitution that gives expression to the vision and aspiration of South African women. Mbeki says the government in this regard is also guided by the United Nations Women's Charter for Effective Equality, adopted by women's organisations at their National Convention in 1994.

Mbeki contends that the empowerment of women does not only succeed when is promoted in the United Nations and the government's Constitution. He says this empowerment must be accompanied by both economic freedoms and social justice for the ordinary women in the rural areas. These are things such as education, skills and information so that they can participate meaningfully in the economic and social development opportunities that are available in the urban areas, according to Mbeki. Mbeki ([1995]1998d:262) argues that "[e]conomic discrimination against women is one of the important conditions which rise to women oppression and women abuse". He, correctly so, points out that the condition where women are institutionally placed in the situation of economic subordination and the men are perceived as the sole provider of family livelihood perpetuates the situation of economic and social oppression of

women. For this to change, Mbeki argues that there must be an increase in the participation of women in the economy, through the strengthening of the government's BEE tender process, for instance. This responsibility must be extended to the private sector in the procurement of their services through regulated means, taking the necessary measures to promote, mentor and empower businesswomen. This can be done to overcome the economic subordination and the overreliance of women on men. The emancipation of women means that there should be social justice and economic freedom where women majority are placed at the apex of economic control and command the ownership of means of production.

Mbeki ([1995]1998d:263) contends that “[o]ne of the greatest challenges facing our democracy is the need to cultivate a civil society imbued with and capable of promoting a social ethos which places human interest at the centre of its outlook”. Put simply, a society that must emerge out of this troubled so-called ‘non-sexist’ democracy should not be one where gender equality and non-sexism are propagated. Instead, the notion of a non-sexist society must be seen in the upward mobility of women in the form of social and economic emancipation. There need to be radical reforms beyond the pretensions of the non-sexist Constitution. There is a fallacy that creates a pretension that the women’s question has been resolved on the basis of propagating the notion of a non-sexist society in the Constitution. This is still far from occurring as the post-1994 society is not informed by social justice and gender equality which are themselves informed by true liberation. The society that must emerge out of the current state should be one which converges around a shared interest in the prospects of freedom, justice and equality for all, regardless of gender and sex. This is a society that breaks with the institutionalised and naturalised notions of difference and builds on the values of sameness as a community of mankind. For this to materialise, Mbeki ([1995]1998d:263) says, “[o]ur society needs a democratic culture which is dynamic, always ready to insulate itself from social degeneracy whilst learning and assimilating the best out of human achievement and civilisation”. Integral to this project is where there is instance of debate about ideas and knowledge beyond gender.

Although the ANC government has delivered a record-breaking failure on the women question in the light of the statistics of women abuse and exclusions, Mbeki is nonetheless the champion of the struggle for women emancipation from gender

discrimination and abuse. He consistently argued for the prioritisation of women and children at the centre of the nation-building in South Africa and the African national project in the continent. It can be argued that Mbeki's effort has also 'created new openings and possibility for black women to become members of the middle classes in various ways, as businesswomen, intellectuals, professionals and educators' as the record speaks for itself (McFadden 2016:522-523). As observed by Mbembe (2008:6) earlier in this chapter: "black female entrepreneurs, some blacks have more than one luxury vehicle. They own more than one home and can afford to send their children to private schools and buy them cell phones". Preference for procurement of goods and services was given to black women-owned enterprises as the rule. However, since his retirement from office the government's response to the women's question has slowed down, if not abandoned, except that those in power today are merely propagating the question of women emancipation and not actioning it.

Conclusion

This chapter explored and discussed Mbeki's thinking in relation to (i) the national agenda, (ii) how to end the nightmare of racism, (iii) the 'native' question, the Black Economic Empowerment, and (v) the emancipation of women in order to bring to the fore the intellectual contribution of Mbeki's thought and ideas in the understanding of the post-1994 South Africa. What is clear in relation to Mbeki's analysis in this chapter is that South Africa, though regarded as a post-apartheid state, its present is still a close bond with its apartheid past. In Mbeki's analysis of the South African situation, there is more protest and appeal regarding many things that are not going as anticipated by the ANC government and the national democratic movement. Indeed, declaring South Africa as the post-apartheid state does not do justice to the truth the country finds itself in today; it is a country which is still far from becoming liberated as far as black condition is concerned.

The national agenda, for example, is itself a discourse dominated by the interests of the white minority rather than a national consensus representing the views and aspirations of the whole nation. The nightmare of racism applies that black exclusion and oppression persist as a problem that did not end in 1994 when the country gained independence. Although blacks constitute a political majority in South Africa but are in economic terms marginalised, with a white minority in control of the economic

mainstream. It is clear to Mbeki that South Africa is still a society defined by racism, where whites are in economic control and blacks are excluded and subject to poverty. Mbeki sees racism as a barrier which prevents blacks from accessing the economy, something that reflects the legacy of apartheid. The 'native' question in this chapter brings to the fore Mbeki's argument in response to the persistence of white racism. Mbeki, in articulating the 'native' question, is reviving the issues that inform the national question. Broadly speaking, the national question centres on the issues relating to the conditions of black people and their struggles for identity, citizenship, ownership and self-determination. The struggle to become a nation (not a state) is still ongoing, according to Mbeki.

This chapter also discussed the Black Economic Empowerment as critical intervention aimed toward the empowerment of black entrepreneurs or black businesses. Specifically, it argued that despite the BEE's noble idea to foster transformation and development to square blacks with whites, it has regrettably contributed profoundly to the politics of corruption and nepotism, which is rampant in the ANC government. Indeed the politics of self-enrichment do not transform the national economy for the benefit of the nation. Lastly, this chapter included the question of the emancipation of women as featured in Mbeki's thoughts and perspectives. This argued that, despite the failures of the ANC government to advance the women's national question, Mbeki nonetheless prioritised the emancipation of women through his government policies and programmes. The record speaks for itself that Mbeki is the most successful president in democratic South Africa, whose effort contributed immensely to the emancipation of women. This chapter, of course, is not a conclusive account of South Africa but an attempt to understand the unfolding of the post-apartheid state through the lens of Mbeki.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mbeki and Power

Introduction

This chapter uses Mbeki's thoughts on (i) liberation and post-1994 democracy, (ii) the struggle continues, and (iii) toward a new politics, to foreground the notion of power in South African politics. The concept of power is deployed to determine whether the post-apartheid state is liberated or betrayed. The question of power in South African politics is a contentious one. Whilst ANC claims to be in power, there is rarely anything to show for such power. This chapter reveals that the unfolding political life of post-1994 state is not the vision Mbeki had articulated in the early years of the country's transition to post-apartheid era as deputy president of South Africa, and it examines the vision he had for South Africa. Mbeki's thoughts during this period expressed optimism evident in his 'I am an African' speech toward building a new South Africa, but as a result of a lack of transformation, there is a shift towards issues of race and racism in his 'Two Nations' speech. In Mbeki's thoughts, the only means to building a new South Africa is through the transformation and the consolidation of democracy. The chapter concludes by arguing that South Africa, instead of being declared a liberated state, should be seen as having the potential to be liberated, since blacks remain powerless.

Liberation and post-1994 democracy

We must, by liberating ourselves, make our own history. Such a process by its nature imposes on the activist the necessity to plan and therefore requires the ability to measure cause and effect; the necessity to strike in correct directions and hence the requirement to distinguish between essence and phenomenon; the necessity to move millions of people as one man to actual victory and consequently the development of the skill of combining the necessary and the possible. (Mbeki [1978]1998:8-9)

Mbeki, in discussing the purpose of the anti-apartheid struggle, in his speech “The Historical Injustice”, dated 22 February 1978, referred to the idea of liberation that is at the heart of the South African struggle. It is a subject of debate whether or not the transition to post-1994 democracy indeed translated into genuine liberation. Mbeki, in the same speech, noted that genuine liberation is possible if there is a clear understanding of the forces of apartheid (racial, political, social, economic etc) around which the black people are oppressed. That way, it would be possible to remove the apartheid state and replace it with a liberated state – a liberated state comes into being through the liberation that translates into tangible freedom, justice and equality. In this regard, Mbeki argued the following:

All this becomes attainable if we have succeeded to discover the regularities of social development, if we have studied our own society critically and in depth to discover the interconnections, the dynamic links that knit together and give direction to what might at first appear to be a chaos of facts, incidents and personalities thrown up by this particular society. For, to repeat: Out of nothing, nothing comes.
(Mbeki [1987]1998:9)

One of the crucial issues in Mbeki’s analysis of the South African problem in the context of apartheid South Africa is class. In this regard, Mbeki ([1987]1998:9) argued: “[t]o understand South Africa, we must appreciate the fact and fix it firmly in our minds that here we are dealing with a class society”. It is important to note that young Mbeki’s political thought was profoundly influenced by communist ideology in his understanding of the South African problem of apartheid. Indeed, it is as a result of being a member of the Communist Party, a think-tank of the ANC, that Mbeki based his understanding of apartheid South Africa on class analysis rather than race and racism. The African Communist journal of the SACP provided Mbeki in the 1970s with the essays on Marxist-Leninist readings on the revolutionary question of liberation, from which his conception of liberation was profoundly influenced. In the Marxist-Leninist political theory, two crucial concepts are capitalism and class, or capitalism and its relationship with class, and this discards the notion of race and racism. The dominance of communist ideology within the ANC had a major influence on the ANC-led liberation movement’s conception of liberation, and so did to Mbeki. This explains

why the ANC defined its struggle as anti-apartheid and not liberation, because it was about combating the apartheid rather than liberating the oppressed blacks. The question of anti-apartheid and liberation, to some extent, explains the ANC indifference with PAC which advocated for the land expropriation and economic control beyond independence. Mbeki's communist leaning is amplified in his reading of apartheid:

In South Africa the capitalists, the bourgeoisie are the dominant class. Therefore the state, other forms of social organisation and the 'official' ideas are conditioned by this one fact of the supremacy of the bourgeoisie. It would therefore be true to say that in its essential features South Africa conforms to other societies where this class feature is dominant. (Mbeki [1987]1998:9)

Taking a step further, Mbeki referred to the history of capitalism and class in South Africa and how these categories reinforced the apartheid South Africa. In this regard he argued:

The landing of the employees of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape of Good Hope 326 years ago, in 1652, represented in embryo the emergence of class society in our country. And that class society was bourgeois society in its infancy. The settlers of 1652 were brought to South Africa by the dictates of that brutal period of the birth of the capitalist class which has been characterised as the stage of the primitive accumulation of capital. (Mbeki [1987]1998:9)

Mbeki's reading of the South African problem of apartheid as class rather than race and racism, means that what South Africa gained on 27 April 1994 was political independence (independence without liberation). Thus it gained what can be correctly termed the liberal democracy. The political reform of the post-1994 government only illegalised apartheid and declared the country a non-racial and non-sexist society, but this did not depart from the structure of racism and its operating logic of discrimination. The ongoing struggles for decolonisation across the country (decolonised curriculum, free access to education) waged by black students, and calls for economic transformation by black professionals, is testimony to the persistent racism. It is,

therefore, argued here that the communist 'workerist' definition of class society rather than race and racism misled the ANC liberation movement. It is because of this misconception that the ANC in its negotiated settlement, pushed for political independence and not liberation. The problem of South Africa is and has always been race and racism; the rise of capitalism and class feeds on the structure of race and racism. Indeed, in his 'two nations' speech delivered after the failed project of reconciliation and a rainbow nation, there is a noticeable shift in Mbeki's politics from class to issues of racism and transformation.

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) examined the factors that influenced the imaginings of South Africa's transition to post-1994 democracy, away from dreams and aspirations of liberation having been hijacked by both white and black liberals. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the negotiations involving the ANC-led liberation movement and the representatives of the apartheid became obsessed with liberal-inspired ideologies centred around democracy and rights in the immediate collapse of the Soviet Union. For example, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:62) argues, "[t]he drafting of the South African constitution was informed by a context of triumphalist post-Cold War thinking". This happened at a time when there was no alternative to the triumphalist United States-inspired liberal democracy. It was during the period described by Francis Fukuyama as 'the end of history and the last man', referring to the defeat of the Soviet Union by the United States, which inaugurated a new world order. Captivated by the euphoria of this new world order, the ANC leadership adopted the liberal democracy that steered South Africa toward an emancipatory state, a state which became obsessed with Western values of non-racialism, non-sexism, and common citizenship under the rainbow nation. The post-1994 democracy came as a reaction to new world order led by the United States and promoted across Western Europe (Britain, France, Switzerland etc). Even the SACP leadership which preached socialism accepted the liberal democracy, if not corrupted, as its principle.

For that matter the post-1994 is an emancipated state not a liberated state, which can be said to be suffering the problematics and illusions of emancipation not liberation. Sithole (2011:3) argues that "the post-1994 political era is a contradiction which attributes the term liberation to something that is still-born". For Sithole the post-1994 state, instead of being declared a liberated state, it should instead be regarded as

having the potential to be liberated since the potential remains and subject to the political will of the ANC. That being said, the post-1994 democracy is a product of Western emancipatory politics as opposed to African liberation, and that is because it only propagates civil rights and not the existential freedoms as far as black condition is concerned. As a product of emancipatory politics, Sithole (2011:11) argues, “[i]t does not clarify how the black condition will be done away with; it only presents the sets of rights”. Emancipation is related to class not racism, and that is why the complaints of racial discrimination and its socio-economic inequality are explained away in quick defence of non-racialism.

The post-1994 South Africa is definable by Fanon’s distinction between “pseudo-independence” or “flag-independence” and “real-independence” or “liberation”, in other words, between decolonisation and sovereign independence. The flag independence is the result of a negotiated settlement between the nationalist leaders of the colonised peoples and the colonisers, whereas real independence is the product of national liberation or revolution resulting into the appropriation of power and expropriation of land. For liberation to materialise into a decolonised state, Fanon (1963:35) noted: “[t]o tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up”. In the case of South Africa, the absence of liberation means that black people were set free but not liberated. Fanon ([1952]2008:171) amplifies this view to say: “One day a good white master who had influence said to his friends, ‘Let’s be nice to the niggers...’”. True to what has happened in South Africa, Frederick de Klerk, the last apartheid president, simply told Nelson Mandela that “you are now free”. This announcement was followed by the first democratic elections in 1994 that brought ANC into government.

More (2011) argues that it seems though Fanon made his predictions about the future of post-colonial African states with the “post-apartheid” South Africa in mind. In this regard, More argues that South Africa, being the last African state to be independent on the continent, has failed to learn from Fanon’s prophetic warning of fifty-years ago to avoid the pitfalls of liberation. Fanon’s entire predictions, according to More (2011:173), “applies with stunning exactness to post-apartheid South Africa”. Nelson Mandela, commenting about his release from 27 years of incarceration and the declaration of emancipation on 27 April 1994, confessed: “I was astounded and a little

bit alarmed” (More 2011:175). For More, this declaration of emancipation does not necessarily set free the black people from their structure of oppression, albeit being told they are free. The point here is that freedom that comes through mercy amounts to nothing more than a simple gesture (like flag independence and national anthem), for it is dictated by the terms of life. Contrariwise, true freedom is achieved through liberation involving the fight of life and death struggle, where freedom of black humanity and the ownership of land and economy is taken back by force. South Africa is an emancipated state, it has never been liberated, and therefore it is not decolonised, which is why its post-1994 democracy is experiencing problematics. In this regard, Ndlovu-Gatsheni attests:

In 1910 [South Africa] gained what can be correctly termed ‘colonial independence’ (independence without decolonisation). Hence the black, indigenous people remained dominated and exploited. In 1994, South Africa gained liberal democracy without decolonisation. Again the indigenous black population found itself still languishing at the bottom of racial/ethnic hierarchy. Even politicians within the African National Congress (ANC) did not talk about ‘independence day’ but ‘freedom day.’ Whose freedom remains a key question. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:142)

In such situations where independence is a product of a negotiated settlement, as in the South African context, neo-apartheid takes over. “‘Neo-apartheid’ is a form of democracy where the demographic majorities are politically excluded and disempowered, and a demographic minority rules the country” (Grosfoguel 2008:615). In the post-1994 era, given the fact that South Africa has had five black presidents in succession (Mandela, Mbeki, Mohlanthe, Zuma, Ramaphosa), whites and black liberals are keen that apartheid is a thing of the past. If this is indeed true, why do white supremacy and black indignity remain the same as they were before 1994? This is because white supremacy and black indignity feed on the structure of racism, and this means the repetition of apartheid in the form of neo-apartheid. In other words, black president and the black political administration in government is a mere cover that mask the apartheid, which is currently the reality in South Africa. The post-1994 is continuing where Apartheid ended, and this time the apartheid system of racism has

become institutionalised, making it harder to challenge the racial discrimination. The post-1994 state in this regard is experiencing the problem of emancipation not liberation.

The national liberation movements in countries such as Angola and Mozambique in the mid-1970s, Zimbabwe in 1980 and Namibia in 1990, and South Africa in 1994, have all witnessed the rise to power (Johnson 2003). These liberation movements were bound to adopt an insurrectionary approach/armed struggle as a means to achieve liberation from the colonial/apartheid regime. They expressed the outward Marxist and nationalist revolutionary theories and strategies as their aspiration of liberation, including the use of guerrilla warfare that would seize the land and lead to people's power, as well as envisaged the idea of socialist states (Johnson 2003). But the new political dispensation of democracy and the economic system on which these liberation movements found themselves once in power was in many ways not the one they had prepared for (Johnson 2003). Their independence and the process of governance were internationally monitored, dictated upon by powerful forces of the new world order to adopt the constitutional or parliamentary democracies in line with the Western liberal and capitalist model so as to be legitimated and recognised as sovereign states. As a consequence, they all became independent through negotiation, not through insurrection, and their dream of a socialist state had to make way for liberal democracy within which the influence of capitalism is hegemonic.

In the South African context, the ANC-led liberation movement committed itself to making liberation its major priority and to fulfilling the expectations of the black masses who have been oppressed and excluded throughout the centuries of colonial and apartheid domination. But when 1994 came, since the promise was made to liberate black people and free them from racism and oppression, this longstanding liberation agenda was side-lined and replaced with templates of liberal reforms adopted from Western institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In adhering to the liberal principles of these institutions, the ANC government had to contend with the strict formulation of a liberal constitution, the rule of law, good governance, and market, including freedom, civil rights, and equality, all monitored by constant surveillance of Western grading agencies. Johnson sums the constraints that were faced by triumphant national liberation movements in Southern Africa:

In the post-colonial era, the revolutionary liberation parties confront the challenge of bringing about transformation through parliamentarism and other 'reformist struggles', armed with revolutionary strategies and theory that are not appropriate for this reality. The militaristic, top-down command that proved successful during anti-colonial struggle was hardly favourable for the durable strengthening of democratic values or norms, and has created new challenges on the difficult path to establishing robust, open and egalitarian structures and practices. (Johnson 2003:321)

Essentially, it is for this reason that South African critics on the political left still argue that South Africa was never liberated from the forces of apartheid and therefore is not decolonised. It is seen to embody the "Colonialism of a Special Type" (CST), where the white system of black oppression remains even after the formal collapse of the apartheid administration in 1994. South Africa is declared a post-apartheid state following the first democratic elections in 1994, yet the black majority is overwhelmingly deprived, and the white minority controls the economic mainstream. CST is sustained by untransformed colonial structure in post-1994, thus generating a system of discrimination and exploitation based on race, which creates racial and socio-economic inequality. "What makes the structure unique and adds to its complexity is that the exploiting nation is not, as in the classical imperialist relationships, situated in a geographically distinct mother country, but is settled within the borders" (Jordan 2001:13). Indeed, the post-1994 era is a repetition without difference from apartheid, where black-white conditions remain as they were albeit with some cosmetic changes, in what can be called the postcolony as termed by Cameroonian scholar, Achille Mbembe.

Since coming to power in 1994, the ANC government has adopted the liberal-inspired economic system of capitalism, also called neoliberalism. The neoliberal strand that South Africa adopted is definable at four levels, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni:

as a bourgeois class project of elite emancipation; as a popular signifier around which popular masses are mobilised; as a conservative macro-economic philosophy underpinning the capitalist development ethos; and as a potentially useful analytical category for

understanding the current conjuncture in South Africa that is promoting resurgent forms of nativism and populism. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008:62)

The political direction taken by the ANC government is a contradiction to the liberation agenda, and the failures of social and economic transformation in the post-1994 era reveal the limits of emancipation. The calls for the nationalisation of land and economy were silenced by BEE, sponsored by white oligarchs to appease the corrupt ANC leaders. Confronted with the challenges of racial tensions and the revenge that was provoked by fresh memories of apartheid, the governing ANC had to do with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a process that was forced on blacks to silence their tragic past. As argued by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:63), “the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in 1995 was scripted as a legitimate basis for laying to rest a racially divisive past and paving the way to a new future for South Africa as a ‘rainbow nation’”. Those black leaders who publicly backed TRC were praised and honoured by powers that be, including being elevated to the status of global icons. And those who dare question the TRC are sidelined, if not punished. PAC and AZAPO, for instance, found themselves in an ‘intensive care unit’ (ICU) for their constant questioning of reconciliation without liberation.

A deviation from Freedom Charter is haunting. ANC’s concepts of the National Democratic Revolution (NDP) and the Radical Economic Transformation (RET) are nothing but myths. While NDP and RET are said to be in line with the agenda and content of liberation, they rarely go into the government’s policies and programmes. Even as they propagate the radical social and economic transformation as far as black condition is concerned, they do not appear too political or radical on neoliberalism. This is evident in the fact that the ANC is silent on issues of land and economy, and is seen to fend the current status quo of economic system. Its silence is not a silence in practical terms, but the silence of not asking critical questions, because land and economy are crucial factors affecting the black majority. Sithole (2012) argues that ANC government has a tendency to be silent on what the dominant narrative of liberal discourse does not say, it is often a self-imposed silence, and this is based on who is talking. In this form, ANC pronounces after the white dominant narrative has spoken to ensure that it does not find itself on the other side of the dominant narrative.

The struggle continues

What was once regarded as one of the best constitutional democracies in the world, a non-racial and non-sexist society, finds itself engulfed in Afrophobia and tribalism. Of course, the government of the day is in denial that the crisis of Afrophobia and tribalism is the consequence of emancipation. The Xenophobic attacks that happened in May 2008 is the case in mind and attests to this effect. And President Ramaphosa did attribute the 'July unrest' to the forces of ethnic and tribal mobilisation (Mahlakoana 2021)) before later retreating from the statement under the pressure of the dominant liberal narrative. South Africa, in its current state, lacks the "authentic and real experience of the past" (Mbeki [1996]1998d:283). According to Mbeki (1998:283), "[t]he authentic and real experience of the past have to do with the struggle the ANC has waged for eight-and-a-half decades to bury the demon of tribalism". For Mbeki, tribalism is ethnic divisions imposed on black peoples by centuries of colonialism and apartheid. In this regard, Mbeki argues:

By demon of tribalism I refer to the attempt to set any of our ethnic groups against another on the basis of a canard that any of these groups can be presented as a cohesive political entity, with political, economic and social aspirations which are unique to itself and which therefore set it apart from the rest of society. (Mbeki [1996]1998d: 284)

Denialism does not assist in understanding the current crisis of national identity in South Africa. The answer lies in the fact that South Africa was never liberated from colonial and apartheid categorisations according to which the nation was divided not only in racial terms but also in ethnic terms. South Africa, whose post-apartheid leaders Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki promoted the ideas of African humanism and the inclusive notion of African identity, shocked the continent when it degenerated into embarrassing xenophobic and tribal regressions. The question of liberation is haunting the post-1994 state. This has taken the form of politics of xenophobia, tribalism, nativism, and racism that cannot be ignored when examining the current crisis of national identity and the question of liberation in South Africa. Mbeki ([1996]1998d:284) refers to the post-1994 era as the "birth of one South African nation, made up of a people inspired by a common patriotism, despite their variety, which is as multiple as the colours of the rainbow nation". Mbeki can be forgiven in this regard

for celebrating the emancipation of the post-1994 state too early. There is no single nation in South Africa but two nations in terms of race, as Mbeki later sums it in his 'two nations' speech. South Africa can also be regarded as a state where different ethnic groups meet to forge ongoing social relations, rather than being declared a post-apartheid nation.

The feel-betrayed liberation movements, particularly the openly Afro-radical Pan-African Congress (PAC) and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) that continue to envision a liberated socialist South Africa, have tirelessly demanded the return to the question of liberation and citizenship. The discourse of apartheid has polarised South Africa into various ideological reactions, beginning with the PAC, which emphasised South Africa for Africans as opposed to the ANC's emphasis on non-racialism and the BCM, which emphasised black pride and eradication of black inferiority complex, and these differences were never unified in the post-1994 era. As a consequence, the post-1994 state is a contested terrain with differing imaginations of the nation and visions of citizenship and democracy. It is only through the ANC's non-racial posture that South Africa projects itself to the world as one of the world's successful constitutional democracies, while on the inside, it is suffering the problems of emancipation and the crisis of tribalism. The idea of non-racialism in South Africa is met with opposition within some section of society notably the PAC in particular, which pronounces that 'African is for the Africans' and that its land and resources should be controlled by Africans. Mamdani (1998) has taken to demystify the falsity of South African exceptionalism, exposing the illusion that South Africa was just a form of colonial apartheid, and Mbembe (2002; 2006) called it the postcolony, referring to forces of imperial, colonial, apartheid combined into one epoch—post-1994 state.

The question of incomplete liberation has set a new stage for politics of citizenship, democracy, race, and class, even provoking the rise of nativism and threatening conceptions of non-racialism and a rainbow nation. The idea of nativism, crystallising around Mbeki and his allies, is a reverse discourse currently unfolding in South Africa with its ideology of blackness as a source of yearning the liberation from forces of colonialism and apartheid (Parry 1994). The formation of the Native Club in 2006, for example, is partly a product of a longstanding question of liberation. In the post-1994 era, the question of racism, inferiority complex, and blackness are issues that have

consistently been deployed by this Club, focusing on the question of black identity and liberation. The Club was seen as a forum to mobilise the blacks behind the struggle for liberation, for blacks to take care of their personal, political and economic destiny outside the limits and constraints of the neoliberal order. This Club, as well as other formations like Black Management Forum, Economic Freedom Fighters and the most recent 'Dudula Operation', are testimony to the ongoing struggle for cultural and economic emancipation (Myeni 2021) and, indeed a pitfall of liberation.

South Africa has failed to avoid a danger that Fanon warned against over fifty years ago. Fanon predicted what was to happen on the morrow of independence when the undeveloped native bourgeoisie and the lazy intellectuals come to power. The concepts of nationalisation and Africanisation, away from being the idea of liberation that carried the hopes of African independence and the decolonisation, are collapsed back into the colonial idea of tribalism, racism, Afrophobia, ethnicity, patriarchy, and divisions that are meant to be confronted. Fanon (1963:156) lambasts the new political class of independent state: "from nationalism" the state is "passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism" and xenophobia where "foreigners are called on to leave" and "their shops are burned" and looted. In most young independent states, Fanon (1963:148-149) rightly observed, "the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state". In the present South Africa, suffering the 'pitfalls of national consciousness' resulting from a betrayed national liberation, this situation is currently unfolding in the recent spate of anti-foreigner attacks. The government commands foreigners to go, blaming crime and unemployment on them, and thus giving their nationals satisfaction by covering their acts of corruption, incompetence and failures.

One of the crucial challenges facing the African liberation movements was how to move forward these African countries toward liberated states once independence is achieved. Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani reflected on how the independent African states were imagined by African intellectuals operating within the national liberation movements across the continent. In this regard, Mamdani attests:

There were times when we were sure ourselves: we knew what we were up against, and we knew where we were going. We were against monarchy, against dictatorship, against neo-colonialism, against

imperialism. And we were for socialism, sometimes for democracy, but always for socialism. Socialism had become a language in which we spoke to one another. For some, it was a badge; for others, it was a brand name. We were the first generation of post-independence African intellectuals. We thought in historical terms. We knew that history was moving, more or less like a train, heading to a known destination, and none of us had any doubt that we were on that train. We were certain that the future would be better than the past, much better. If there would be violence, it would be revolutionary, the violence of the poor against the rich, the oppressor against the oppressed. Good revolutionary violence would do away with bad counterrevolutionary violence (Mamdani 2010:48).

Mamdani's statement suggests a sense of nostalgia, and by extension, of being polemic in the face of deficit and grief. Or perhaps independence becoming almost meaningless. According to Mamdani (2001b; 2005), the limits of emancipation of independent African states began to surface in the crisis of postcolonial political violence, for these African leaders could only explain the political violence between white colonisers and black colonised and not when is black on black—tribalism. In South Africa, Mbeki bemoans that the struggle for liberation has fallen by the wayside of tribal and racial politics. If read closely, Mbeki is being nostalgic like Mamdani, reflecting on a time when the national liberation movement looked forward to helping African people move colonial mindset. In South Africa, the authentic and real experiences of the past, according to Mbeki, speak of:

... the emancipation of those who were oppressed, the elimination of the socio-economic disparities based on race, colour and gender, and therefore the realisation of the goals of equality among all our national groups and between the genders. That experience also includes a sustained effort never to allow ourselves to fall prey to the destructive forces of blind bigotry and intolerant fanaticism. (Mbeki [1996]1998d:284)

A sense in the reading of Mbeki's thought appears to suggest that liberation is revenge, and this is not correct. In this regard, liberation is seen as reverse discourse, and those

who spoke of liberation appears as marginalised subjects in Mbeki's reading and were indeed dismissed. Taking a purely non-racial position, Mbeki raised critical issues in defence of ANC led liberation movement about its high moral ground against populist tendencies of liberation (led by PAC and AZAPO). Seemingly buoyed by the euphoria of the post-1994 transition, Mbeki reminded his audience on 17 March 1996 of the followings:

It is a result of that determined struggle that, as the oppressed, we never succumbed to the temptation to respond to white racism with black racism, that we never sought to meet apartheid racism with our own campaign of terror or to glorify the use of force in the ordering of human relations, that we battled and continue for national reconciliation rather than vengeance, that today, in a spirit of forgiveness, we sit together with those who only yesterday considered and treated us as less than human, determined to work jointly with them to fashion a future of justice and happiness for all our people.
(Mbeki [1996]1998d:284)

In emphasising the notion of non-racialism as a cornerstone of post-1994 democracy and celebrating the political reforms of emancipation (with no liberation) too soon, Mbeki did not foresee what was to come. Taking a step further, there is a sense of arrogance and bullishness in Mbeki's defence and response to the questions of reconciliation and non-racism against those who differed and propelled the revolutionary question and ideas of liberation. In this regard Mbeki lamented and disparaged the radical Africanists:

Sometimes, when some of us witness the continued manifestation of arrogance and experience resistance to fundamental change, all deriving from the consciousness and subconscious habits that come of a millennium of white racism, we wonder whether these, who considered themselves as destined to be our masters, understand and will ever comprehend the depth of the spiritual sacrifice that the millions made when they chose to forgive and to bury their pain in the poetic words: *akwehlanga lungehlanga* – let bygones be bygones!
(Mbeki [1996]1998d:284-285)

Mbeki went on and on about how South Africa would be a better society if all were to embrace non-racialism and reconciliation, as opposed to racial intolerance, which he perceived as retrospective. The fact that the breakthrough to post-1994 democracy was achieved with negotiations and mutual agreements confounded Mbeki to believe that the call for liberation is irrational. Indeed, for months prior to the 1994 national elections, the world elevated South Africa to the highest political status and said its peaceful resolution of conflicts reaffirms the values of the international project of humanity. In this case, the apartheid constitution made way for the conciliatory and pacification of the interim Constitution that suspended the apartheid laws. Since the promise was made to adopt the liberation agenda and to end the apartheid system, these were set aside in favour of the liberal resolution. For Mbeki and his colleagues, it was ANC making history. Bishop Desmond Tutu called the defeat of apartheid a miracle. His notion of a happy rainbow nation metamorphosed into a national project. It was a period of euphoria occasioned by ANC, the people looking forward to a better future, and Mbeki being the spokesperson of this new dispensation.

However, as later developments show, the euphoria and promises of emancipation did not last long to trigger the turn in Mbeki's standpoint ideology. The pitfall of liberation was now clear to Mbeki that only political independence was given to the blacks, and economic, cultural and psychological freedom was not. In his assessment of the country's reconciliation without transformation, Mbeki reacted by delivering the 'two nations' speech in 1998, which characterises South Africa as a country of two nations – the first nation is a white minority and wealthy with control of the economy and lives a life of privilege and the second nation is black, poor and is economically excluded. The second reaction to Mbeki's fury is the formation of the controversial Native Club in 2006, which became a forum for gathering the black intelligentsia that would shape and influence public discourse in the direction of nativism, heritage, indigenous knowledge, intertwined with liberation, including the ability to influence the government's policies and programmes. Though Mbeki distanced himself from the Club in parliament, the initiative was close to ANC and the presidency because it was housed in the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA), partly funded by the government's Department of Arts and Culture, and its formation was a direct response to Mbeki's call for a progressive black intelligentsia.

In the post-1994 era, the struggle for liberation continues because the liberation project is incomplete, and this time its resurgence, which takes various forms, has moved from political to demanding economic, cultural, and psychological liberation. The anti-colonial/apartheid struggles that the ANC led promised to liberate the black people from the forces of colonialism, apartheid, racism, and capitalism. As can be seen, existential freedom has not been achieved as far as the black condition is concerned. The state and its project of emancipation has indeed failed to transform the lives of the black majority who continue to languish outside the economy. Ndlovu Gatsheni (2013:9) argues that “[l]ife in the informal settlements (shacks) of South Africa provides a good example of a hellish life as an underworld of coloniality of being where human beings live in unearthed shacks without protection from lightning”. Thus, “[t]here are no toilets and no sources of clean water. Violence is endemic. Poverty has become an identity itself. Social peace and human security are perpetually absent” (Ndlovu Gatsheni 2013:9). The transition to post-1994 democracy and its political reform, which featured the government led by a black president, the launching of a liberal Constitution, can be regarded as myths as blacks are still waiting for a change in their existential conditions.

Toward a new politics

Mbeki advocates for the notion of breaking with the past—that is, breaking with the practices of colonialism, apartheid, and racism, including political violence and intolerance as a mode of disagreement. He argues for the need to transform the practice of political engagement in South Africa. Change as part of political reform or transformation has to be located within the perimeters of the Constitution, according to Mbeki. In this regard, Mbeki emphasised the need for transformation in the practice of politics by stating:

I believe that we need to transformation around the question of the practice of politics. Over time, the situation arose in this province [of Kwazulu-Natal] that the use of force became established as an instrument in the conduct of politics under any and all circumstances; perpetuating the assumption that one of the goals of the practice of politics was for one political formation to achieve permanent domination over the other and over people. (Mbeki [1996]1998c:45)

A central argument in Mbeki's response to overcome apartheid is the need to build and cultivate a culture of political democracy. In Mbeki's estimation, the only means of ensuring political stability is having respect toward one another. In the event that people differ on political matters in the course of debate, be it governance or economic programme, none should resort to violence as a means to resolving differences. The politics of intolerance is rampant in South Africa and is perpetuated by the notion of populism and political correctness. Mbeki argues that the freedom of speech is enshrined in the Constitution and guarantees protection to those who hold a different view. In this regard he pointed out in stating: "[w]e assume it to be true that whatever might separate us as different parties, our loyalty to our country's Constitution binds us to the common vision of a non-racial and non-sexist democracy" (Mbeki [1996]1998c:88). In Mbeki's view, the only means to mitigate the political instability is by ensuring that debate is conducted within the parameters of the Constitution.

From being a revolutionary liberation movement fighting against the apartheid regime to becoming a governing party in South Africa, meant a need for change in the politics and practice of the ANC. The anti-apartheid and liberation movements in Southern Africa have been shaped by politics of political violence, intolerance, and radicalism, including undermining the regimes that oppressed them (Johnson 2003). Johnson (2003:321) argues that "[t]he national liberation movements of southern Africa were compelled to adopt an insurrectionary approach to change, given the nature of the colonial/apartheid regime and the impossibility of meaningful engagement and change through legal struggle". In the period of independence that led to the "establishment of constitutional or parliamentary democracies in line with the Western liberal model" according to Jonson, these new nationalists' government found themselves in the position of having to advocate for democracy and peace away from political violence. The fact that the independence process in these countries came through negotiation rather than total revolutionary victory meant that blacks and whites had to find a peaceful way to coexist as one nation. This means the politics of intolerance against the white system of racism which had characterised the liberation struggle had to make way for political compromise and tolerance to one another.

Among critical issues that the governing ANC focused on after coming into power in 1994 is the creation of a non-racial democracy. The ANC has rarely moved away from

this founding political principle. Williams (2011:42) argues that “[t]he political objective of the ANC in response to the racialised nature of South Africa under apartheid is the creation of a non-racial democracy”. Indeed after 1994, the ANC endorsed the non-racial political system, including Government of National Unity, liberal Constitution, all elections, as some of the things which serves as testimony to the commitment of a non-racial democracy. From the onset, the position of the ANC has always been the idea of reconciliation in order to build a racial harmony and social cohesion. According to Williams (2011:57), “[a]s a consequence of apartheid, building a non-racial democratic South Africa required building a culture of democracy and discouraging the use of political violence”. It is indeed from the political position of the ANC that Mbeki speaks from, that there is no future in the past in resorting to vengeance against the perpetrators of the system of apartheid and its beneficiaries, but tolerance can sure be a cornerstone toward building a non-racial democracy.

Mbeki pleads with all South Africans to join hands with the government toward building a better South Africa for all. In Mbeki’s view, working together as a nation can help the country to overcome its divided, painful, haunting past, something to do with a change in racial attitude and political culture. The creation of a non-racial society is where democracy, freedom and equality are lived rather than propagated. In particular, the idea of building a non-racial society must be underpinned and supported by a system of good governance rule of law, including transformation. As Mbeki ([1994]1998a:89) argues, “[w]e are at the beginning of the protracted process that will lead to the creation of that society”. In this, Mbeki called on people to work with the government and the government must work with people to make this dream a reality. The country as a whole, as government and as political parties and individuals all have a contribution to make toward the realisation of this dream, according to Mbeki.

MacKinley (2000) argues that the “ANC has become one of the primary advocates of liberal democracy in South Africa and the African continent”. This is rare coming from South Africa, “considered one of the countries where a transition to democracy is least likely”, and today is promoting the project of human rights, democracy and humanism (Giliomee 1995). One of the reasons that guided South Africa to what it is today can be critical the role of ANC leadership during the early 1990s. As argued by Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, “[t]here is no single or inherent reason why South Africa could not

become a stable, functioning democracy” (cited in Giliomee 1995:83). Gumede (2007:33) concurs in arguing that “[b]y contrast with many other liberation movements in Africa and the developing world, the ANC is in the enviably unique position of having leadership skill and talent in abundance. One could easily imagine any one of five other candidates comfortably sitting in the president’s chair”. Inspired by a young post-apartheid South Africa, most African countries have been undergoing dramatic political change, from a post-colonial period typified by authoritarianism, military coups, one-party states, ethnic rivalries, and dictatorships, towards consolidation of constitutional or parliamentary democracy.

But South Africa still has a long way to go before it could be a peaceful, stable, and inclusive society that it presents itself to the world to be, since the racial tension and intolerance persist to haunt its post-1994 sociality. Mbeki ([1994]1998a:89) concedes that “[d]espite the welcome reality of the existence of our democratic and non-racial legislatures, the fact is that the society over which we exercise the powers of government is one that is deeply enmeshed in the past”. In the context of differences, the way forward should not be despondency but tolerance and hope so that South Africa becomes a better society moving forward. In this regard, Mbeki ([1994]1998a:89) argues: “[t]o take [South Africa] forward, we must extricate it from that past of race and gender discrimination and oppression, of the marginalisation of its youth and of inadequate care and concern for the needs and demands of the handicapped and of our mature citizens”. The point in this contention is that South Africa needs to work on overcoming the legacy of apartheid, its ideologies and practices, that way it is possible to transform its practice of politics without hindrance from the past.

In the spirit of the country’s Constitution, Mbeki has held strong that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. Even in the debate on the controversial question of land, initiated by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and other leftists, Mbeki (2018) has always insisted that the resolution of the problem of land in South Africa must always “simultaneously” pay attention to the founding principles of the country’s Constitution, that is, a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white. Mbeki responded to the EFF call in his letter entitled ‘What then About Land Expropriation without Compensation?’, in stating:

Throughout the century of its existence, while also fully respecting its antecedents, the ANC has therefore done everything to emphasise that it has an historic mission both to help eradicate the legacy of colonialism and apartheid and simultaneously to help create a truly non-racial and non-sexist human society! (Mbeki 2018:5)

Mbeki's argument does not entirely dismiss the reality that the black majority is poor and have nothing to show for its freedom as far as land ownership and economic control is concerned in South Africa, while the white minority have a luxury of privilege. In fact, Mbeki has in his two nations thesis characterised South Africa as a country of two nations in terms of race and economic development, where white minority is at the top of economic mainstream and the black majority is at the bottom and poor. Mbeki nonetheless argues for the problems to be addressed within the context of the Constitution, for without complying with the Constitution, the country will degenerate and turn into the highest form of anarchy, as is the case in most failed African states. This, he pointed out in stating: "I believe that even now, as the country develops in the context of a negotiated and agreed settlement, we must expect that elements of co-operation and competition will continue to characterise the relations among the main players in our society" (Mbeki [1995]1998a:62). In Mbeki's consideration South competing interests will characterise South Africa cause of the equilibrium, that is, the notion that neither apartheid regime nor liberation movement had defeated the other. In this regard, Mbeki notes:

We are, therefore, happy advise this audience that it should not be stampeded to read crisis each time the elements of competition among the leading players in our society asserts itself, even as these players continue to participate in the process of deliberate and conscious co-operation that we have spoken of. (Mbeki [1995]1998a 1998:62)

The point Mbeki is emphasising here is that political parties representing people in government, instead of resorting to acts of dissent, should be seen to utilise their space in parliament to voice their case. It is in the observation of Mbeki that competition and differences among political formations and the citizens are normal in a democratic

society and that the parliament and the Constitution are there to assist in mitigating the differences. In this regard, Mbeki notes:

To take this matter one step further, the argument remains yet to be substantiated as to why and under what conditions the minority parties participating in government would find it in their interest to withdraw from government, go into opposition and deny themselves the possibility to share the accolades for the success of the process of reconstruction and development which will, inevitably, make South Africa a better place to live for all its citizens. (Mbeki [1995]1998a:62)

At the heart of the South African problem is the need for transformation to address racial and socio-economic imbalances of the system of apartheid. Thus apartheid South Africa was a “racialised authoritarian order” (Taylor 1998:15), a society dominated by race as an organising principle, where the white system of racism discriminated against blacks. Demand for transformation is an attempt to improve the black life by empowering them in the form of the ownership of land, the means of production, and economic control. In Mbeki’s analysis, the prospect of a negotiated settlement had managed to achieve a transition from apartheid to democracy but brought the undesirable outcome to the question of land and the economy. So far, only reconciliation has been achieved, and transformation is elusive. What Mbeki is arguing is that the use of political violence to resolve the differences may find the country into another armed conflict, provoking the ‘armed equilibrium’ the liberation movement had managed to achieve with the apartheid regime since both parties still possess sufficient strength to unleash violence. For Mbeki, the use of violence is not viable, solutions must be imagined through the change in thinking that paved the way for a negotiated settlement as a measure of achieving political stability.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes by arguing that the post-apartheid state is not what the anti-apartheid struggle and the liberation movement had envisioned. The ANC promised to liberate South Africa from colonialism, racism, and apartheid and to prioritise blacks who have been the general victim of exclusion and dispossession of land. Despite the country’s transition to the post-apartheid era following the first democratic elections in

1994, blacks remain powerless albeit being told are liberated, as admitted by Mbeki in the 'two nations' speech. This means that South Africa is emancipated, as opposed to being liberated, and that is why is experiencing the problematics of emancipation and not liberation. In the light of the current ongoing struggles for liberation and decolonisation across the country, Mbeki argues for such demands or political reform to be located within the context of the country's Constitution and democracy, rather than resorting to political violence which may lead to civil war. For Mbeki, the consolidation of democracy is the only means of ensuring political stability in post-apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER NINE

The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World

Introduction

This chapter explores Mbeki's politics and intellectual contribution on the continent and beyond. Specifically, this is explored through the five topics concerning (i) Stop the Laughter, (ii) Perspectives on and of Africa, (iii) African Renaissance, (iv) New Partnership for Africa's Development, and (v) Mbeki and Zimbabwe: a case study. These topics feature in Mbeki's varied speeches, and combined, these aspects reflect the intellectual contribution of Mbeki to African politics. Thabo Mbeki is, for Chris Landsberg (2016:507), "the most influential pan-Africanist of his time – Africa's uber diplomat, the man who brought us the African Renaissance with his fierce belief in African self-determination". Indeed Mbeki's legacy lies in the African Renaissance project, the commitment and advancement of the African continent, and this chapter brings to the fore the articulations by Mbeki towards the quest of this project.

Stop the Laughter

Mbeki, in articulating the 'Stop the Laughter' speech, is in critical dialogue with the African continent and its collective leadership. In Mbeki's analysis of the African condition, most problems on the continent, especially in the post-colonial period, are self-inflicted. Despotic leadership and corruption by African leaders whose actions are causing endless wars, famine and underdevelopment have made the continent a joke and laugh stock, according to Mbeki. Taking a pure Afro-radical standpoint, deputy president Mbeki told a gathering of African leaders at the Southern African International Dialogue in Namibia in 1998 about how Africa's unethical leadership undermines the continent and the attempt for the continent's renewal and development. This speech is described by Mpofu (2020:308) as "a telling example of Mbeki's courageous criticism of African heads of state and politicians who made Africa the butt of jokes and the laughing stock of Western countries with their greed and tyranny". In this speech, Mbeki calls on African leaders to stand together in repelling African leaders whose actions demean the continent, and alluded that his own rebellion is the direct learning of great African leaders from Abdul Gamal Nasser of

Egypt to Nelson Mandela of South Africa who fought against colonisation and apartheid and delivered independence.

African leadership summits, including African Union (AU) and the African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM), rarely engage with the question of internal problems (tribalism, Afrophobia, ethnicity, dictatorship) affecting the continent. René Lemarchand's (1972) conception of political clientelism denotes more accurately the nature and forms of engagements that Africa has with the Western world. Political clientelism has seen Mbeki emerging as the most severe critic of African leadership summits, for these often discuss the question of donations and loans from Western countries, rather than Africa's partnership for development. In this regard Mbeki argued:

We have been speaking of a smart partnership in which everything is nice and cosy between business, government, labour civil society, kings and queens, civil servants, police, military, big powers and small powers. All of us can enter into a mutually beneficial smart partnership. It makes you feel good. But is it real? (Mbeki 1998a:289)

Mbeki's contempt is what he terms 'a comfortable mutual accommodation' among African leaders while the continent is confronted by huge problems of political corruption, human rights abuse, and underdevelopment. African leadership is a key concern in Mbeki's analysis to most problems facing the continent. According to Mbeki, leaders are electing to be silent or uncritical against the leaders whose actions are demeaning the continent, an act which perpetuates rather than combat the problems at hand. As observed by Mkandawire (2005:25), "[a]nd to the extent that it blamed outsiders for our failures, it was comforting to the African leaders". Indeed the tendency to shift the blame to outsiders, like excuses of imperialism and capitalism, is common in African politics. Under the notion of a comfortable mutual accommodation the despotic and corrupt African leaders are able to thrive with this manipulation of blame. Part of this problem is surely perpetuated by the way in which African leaders are responding to their fellow African leaders and the problems of the continent.

African scholars such as Thandika Mkandawire (2005), Ali Mazrui (2005), Sabelo J. Gatsheni (2013, 2015a), and Chika Onyeani (2015) have also been frustrated by despotic and corrupt African leaders operating under a noble badge of African

nationalism and the African Union but whose action is a shame to the continent. The problem of African independent states, Mkandawire (2005:12) argues, “is not so much that the nationalists accepted existing colonial borders, but rather that this acceptance gave individual states carte blanche in terms of what they could do to their citizens within these borders”. Indeed, it is only in Africa where leaders such as Idi Amin of Uganda and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe could go on the killing spree in their respective countries and still Chair OAU (AU predecessor) and SADC. In Uganda, a military coup which brought Idi Amin into power in January 1971 was followed by Eight years of brutal dictatorship, where imprisonment, abduction, and killings became the rule of law (Mazrui 2005). Zimbabwean president Mugabe often bragged about his government’s ability to use violence as a mode of governance. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:184) states, “Mugabe often brags about having degrees in violence and he punches the air at political rallies to emphasize the agenda of violence as a solution to the political question in Zimbabwe”. The likes of Amin and Mugabe Chairing OAU and SADC is a joke for the continent that claims to take itself seriously. Chika Onyeani amplifies this to say:

One by one, African governments were taken over by military men of questionable character – immoral and illiterates such as Idi Amin of Uganda, Emperor Bokassa of the Central African Republic, Sergeant Doe of Liberia, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Sani Abacha of Nigeria. Jammeh of the Gambia is the latest in a line of idiots who seize the ballot box in a corrupt election to declare themselves democratically elected. (Onyeani 2015:26)

In his ‘stop the laughter’ speech, Mbeki tells the African leaders what the world thinks of African continent. This is told through the story of a small town named ‘Dead Man’s Creek’, Mississippi, in the United States. He said, among the citizens of Dead Man’s Creek was one Stevie Wonder, the only black man in town. The residents in this town, with no access to any form of basic entertainment, relied on the television for the news across the world. Neither of them has been to Africa, but Africa is known to them through television, and it is negative stories that always come out of Africa. And when they heard on the news one day that President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda was talking about an African renewal, they were greatly encouraged because they would

no longer have to contribute some of their personal money to famine relief in Uganda. The news of African renewal and development was spread everywhere on the continent, and this pleased the residents of this town. Indeed, the arrival of this message of renewal and emancipation emanating from the call for an African Renaissance sounded a positive news to the world, even to the then United States President Bill Clinton as some would argue. Clinton had the following to say about the African Renaissance project in his address to the South African parliament on 26 March 1998:

I also hope we can build together to meet the persistent problems and fulfil the remarkable promise of the African continent. Yes, Africa remains the world's greatest development challenge, still plagued in places by poverty, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy and unemployment. Yes, terrible conflicts continue to tear at the heart of the continent, as I saw yesterday in Rwanda. (cited in Mbeki 2000:76)

But soon again they heard on the television the negative news about Somalia, another day about Congo Brazzaville, then Ethiopia and Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, and residents in this town started to laugh saying:

But when these Africans talked about an African renewal, of an African renaissance, it must be because they have an excellent sense of humour! And then the following day they saw these African children with emaciated bodies, big stomachs and thin limbs carrying begging bowls, with aid agencies and humanitarian organisations attending to them. And again they laughed and said that these African politicians must be the best comedians in the world, as they had told them of an African renaissance. (Mbeki 1998a:291)

Stung by this scornful laughter, Mbeki begged his fellow African leaders saying: "Let us stop the laughter" (Mbeki 1998a:291). The scornful laughter is louder, and this time not only by residents of Mississippi, but the rest of the world is also laughing at the continent. They see election votes being rigged and the presidency stolen. They see civilians abused by government soldiers and police which are supposed to protect them, the famine, the emaciated bodies of women and children, the neglected

infrastructure, the incalculable number of coups d'état, the billions of cash stolen away etc. Indeed these stories are very much a true reflection of the political reality which is currently obtained in Africa. Most African states obtained their independence more than six decades ago with a promise for democracy and the better life for all citizens. For the ordinary people the rise to power by the African nationalist's movements brought hope for a better future in the post-colonial states (Neocosmos 2014). However as later development shows, independence was, in fact, not to change the conditions of the ordinary people on the continent. Politics of corruption, dictatorship, and tribalism was to become a regular feature of the post-independence states.

It is no exaggeration that dictators or long-serving tyrants rule more than half the African states. Many have had to be removed from office either by coups d'état, killed or forced to flee into exile, sometimes by foreign interventions (Mkandawire 2005). Mkandawire (2005:28) argues, "[o]thers clung to power, but age had begun to take its toll on body and soul". Examples include Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (30 years), Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola (37 years), Paul Biya of Cameroon (34 years), Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (31 years), Paul Kagame of Rwanda (21 years) just to name a few. A key question can be asked whether these incumbents were/are taking the continent forward or backward. Indications are that the rest of Africa is gradually moving backward, whereby one has to either be removed from the office by mass protest or death as a result of age. To remain in power for such a long period, there is no question that these incumbents exercise a repressive mode of governance that unleashes violence and oppression on the ordinary people in order to bring about fear and submission. During the March 2008 election campaign, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe told the electorates the following:

You can vote for them [MDC], but that would be a wasted vote. I am telling you. You would just be cheating yourself. There is no way we can allow them to rule this country. Never, ever! We have a job to do, to protect our heritage. The MDC will not rule this country. It will never happen. We will never allow it. (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:84)

African Union was quiet, instead protecting Mugabe by shifting blame toward Western imperialism, honouring him with awards and portraying him as a victim of neoimperialism and neocolonialism. The will of the people is not taken important in

African politics, but that of tyrants like Mugabe even in the face of oppressive politics in Zimbabwe. Indeed, this makes the notion of African renewal, a rebirth of the continent, the laughing stock to the world. After all, how can the world take Africa seriously when the continent does not take itself seriously? African leadership as a collective does not have the will to emancipate the continent toward the democratic states and the rule of law. Indications are that South Africa, the most celebrated democratic state on the continent, is heading toward the same political direction under the rule of the ANC government. There is already xenophobic and tribalistic sentiments driving the direction of the country's politics. When President Mandela left political office in June 1999, he left behind the country that was a happy 'rainbow nation', united nation its racial and cultural diversity, but today it has degenerated into different racial and ethnic segments. Once again the world is laughing, saying, Africans are doing it again and again.

It is deplorable that African leaders still blame Western colonialism and apartheid for the failure in their respective countries to build economic and social cohesion. Failures of service delivery including basic things like jobs and sanitation for the poorer masses are blamed on the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Yet, corrupticians are stealing millions from government. These countries borrow large sums of money in loans from Western countries on behalf of the government and squander it all on personal use. Nothing to show in return for these loans. Everywhere on the continent, the story is the same. Africa is the continent with the most natural resources (gold, diamonds, silver, uranium, plutonium, manganese, coal, oil etc), yet is the poorest continent in the world. African leaders blame the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the United States and the global capitalism, for the lack of development on the continent. In the South African context, for instance, office of the public protector found that former president Jacob Zuma used over 246 million rand for upgrades to his homestead in Nkandla using tax-payers money. Is this not the sign that Africa's problem of underdevelopment is self-inflicted?

It is unimaginable as of today that some African states in Western Africa have their reserve bank in Western capitals rather than in Africa. These include Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger, and Guinea Bissau according to

some reports (Tih & Tasamba 2019). To steal their countries' money, corrupt African leaders have used the same European banks to hide it. As narrated by Onyeani:

I am sure you have all heard of tyrants and dictators like Sani Abacha of Nigeria and Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Abacha stole more than \$5 billion from the impoverished treasury of Nigeria and took that money and deposited it in Swiss bank accounts. For his part, Mobutu Sese Seko took \$6 billion to the same Swiss banks. (Onyeani 2015:8).

Mbeki asserts that Africa can stop the laugh by standing up against corruption and dictatorship as a continent. “We have to rebel against political instability on our continent, because when something goes wrong in Somalia, the residents of Dead Man’s Creek, Mississippi, United States of America, do not say something has gone wrong in Somalia. They say something has gone wrong in Africa” (Mbeki 1998a:292). In Mbeki’s analysis of the Africa’s subjection on the world, he noted: “[a]nd when someone steals a presidency in Togo, they do not say somebody has stolen a presidency in Togo. They say the Africans have done it again” (Mbeki 1998:292). To move forward, Mbeki calls for the African leaders and heads of state to be united in fighting the political elements of corruption and the human rights abuse by despotic leaders whose actions are problematic to the development of the continent. As argued, “[t]he smart thing to do is that as Africans we must get together and say it is incorrect for any one of us to steal a presidency – and therefore, as government, say: What is it that we can do to ensure that that does not happen?” (Mbeki 1998a:292). In this regard, Mbeki argued by stating:

The political parties, the religious leaders, the trade unions and all other element of society, our intellectuals must be able to say together: We want to stop the laughter. And to do that let all of us act together to ensure that indeed this concept of power to the people becomes part of the reality of our continent. (Mbeki 1998a:292)

Mbeki further suggested that African leaders needed to comprehensively understand the nature of the problems and challenges facing the continent. In this regard, he pointed out:

I think it becomes necessary that as Africans, because of that interdependence, we must together understand what the challenges of the modern economy are. What is it that we must address together to ensure that our continent takes its place in the modern world economy? Do we need a common programme to develop an African telecommunications infrastructure? I say yes. Do we need a common programme to build an infrastructure that enables all of us together to address challenges of education, including distance education? Yes, I say. (Mbeki 1998a:292)

To stop the laughter, Mbeki is, therefore, advocating for the effectiveness of the African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), with the emphasis on African strategies and programmes on self-monitoring and partnerships for social and economic development. Mbeki raised critical issues about the achievements and inventions of pre-colonial Africa, including how Africa had developed European society from barbarism to renaissance. He reminded his audience about the great cultures of the continent, including wisdom and modern inventions in the forms of writing and performances, during the fifteenth century. "The best doctors in Europe, the best doctors attending to the kings and queens of France, came from Timbuktu in Mali" (Mbeki 1998a:293). In saying so, Mbeki wanted to emphasise the fact that Africa indeed has the potential to restore its African memory of wisdom, humanity, fortitude, pride, self-assertiveness and self-reliance, all of which constitute African dignity. He argued for the notion of "smart partnership", saying if the people of this continent could be united in the mission and quest for self-discovery and African restoration, the world would marvel rather than laugh at Africa. "[to achieve an African renewal in politics, in economics, in social life and in culture, we have to act together as Africans]" (Mbeki 1998:295). He concluded by reminding the citizens of this continent that the prospects of success and failure lie in their hands; that is, action is more important than talk. As long as things do not change, the world will continue to laugh that these Africans talk of an African renewal but nothing to show for it.

'Perspectives on and of Africa'

Mbeki's 'Perspectives on and of Africa' speech delivered at the Inaugural lecture of the South African Parliamentary Millennium Group on 01 April 2006 forms part of his

own attempt to re-positioning Africa in the world through the need to reclaim the twenty-first century. In his own articulation, the idea of the perspectives on and of Africa is about 'Africans defined by others/outside' versus 'Africans defining themselves'. Mporo (2020:297) argues that "Mbeki made it his political and intellectual project to challenge colonial and imperial definitions of Africa". In defending the image of Africans in the world, Mbeki made his own representation of Africa from within rather than outside Africa. One of the key points in Mbeki's analysis is that, given the historical fact of imperialism, colonialism, racism, apartheid, and of course, Western domination and oppression of Africans, the perspective of Africa is dominated by Western narrative than by perspective inside the continent.

Mbeki's conception of perspective denotes a 'mental view' about the past, the present and the future of a phenomenon being studied. The perspective about something means that "there must have been information, events and processes that shaped that mental view" (Mbeki 2006:234). In the same way, 'perspectives on Africa' is "based on information, whether correct or otherwise, events and processes about Africa and in Africa" (Mbeki 2006:234). To amplify this point, Mbeki elaborates by stating:

Dealing with this matter, a number of questions arise, such as: what past and present information is available on Africa? Who gathers and disseminates such information? Who interprets events and processes in Africa? From what point of view are these interpretations made? Whose views dominate the daily discourse in our country and in the rest of the continent? In other words, what is the world outlook of those who present news to us, those who analyse events and those who interpret processes taking place on the continent? Whose ideas drive our societies? (Mbeki 2006:234)

Mbeki's perspective of Africa and his defence of the perspective on Africans in the world raises critical views about how the West distorted, silenced, and erased African history in order to claim a position of superiority over Africans in the history of civilisation, humanity, and development. It is important to unpack the "African history and the place of Africans in the historical scheme of things, which took place, especially in nineteenth-century Europe" (Mbeki 2006:234), as an entry point to understanding the systematic distortion which informs the perspective on or of Africa

today. When the Western explorers first arrived on the continent, they named Africa the 'Dark Continent' because it was unknown to them. Africans were defined as inferior and uncivilised (in economic, religious, and educational terms), in many cases justifying colonisation. In this colonial quest, race was used not only to inferiorise Africans into barbaric and uncivilised but to deny their very humanity in order to justify the practices of dehumanisation, depersonalisation, humiliation, including killings. African places were defined as primitive and uncivilised, and so the use of colonisation was justified as a means to 'modernise' African places. Western colonisation of Africa, assisted by European historians whose writings twisted African history, is a point of contestation in Mbeki's defence of the misrepresented image of Africa. In this regard, Mbeki narrates:

The European historians of the nineteenth century were consumed by the cancer of racism and the firm belief that there were no human beings on earth who were divinely endowed with intelligence, fortitude and wisdom other than those who populated the European countries. About blacks, they were absolutely sure that these were not only incapable of making any significant contribution to human civilization, but were in fact, sub-humans who needed the tutelage (on everything) of the matured European peoples. (Mbeki 2006:235)

Essentially, this argument has a history that goes back to the nineteenth century debate regarding who brought civilisation or made history in Africa. In this context of the nineteenth-century imperial conquest, European scholars collaborated and formed a consensus with colonial administrators in claiming that Western colonisation brought civilisation and development to Africa. First, there was G.W.F. Hegel, in his lectures on the 'Philosophy of History' published in [1837]1956, who advanced the denial of Africa from the history of civilisation and humanity by stating that thought and reason were the distinct characters of Europe and Europeans only. Hegel rejected any possibility that the African continent could have produced anything comparable to Europeans in human and social thought. Africa is, according to Hegel, devoid of reason, civilisation, true monotheistic religion and philosophical thinking. Hegel's perspective on Africa divides Africa into three parts: (a) Africa proper, (b) North Africa, and (c) Egypt. In Hegel's analysis, North Africa and Egypt are detached from the rest

of the continent and linked to Europe and Asia. While North Africa is linked to Europe and Egypt to Asia, 'Africa proper' that lies in sub-Saharan Africa is marginalised and excluded from the community of mankind (in thought, reason or religion). Hegel referred to 'Africa proper' as a 'dark continent' that enveloped "the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night" (Hegel [1837]1956:91). African colonisation by Europe, in Hegel's view, was justified as necessary to develop Africa and the African peoples.

Harry H. Johnston, in his book 'A History of Colonization by Alien Races' published in 1913, argued that African indigenous subjects are incapable of creating anything that could be deemed worthy of historical and human study. In Johnson's (1913:450) view, it could only be Europeans: "beauty of facial features and originality of invention in thought and deed". On the other hand, Allan McPhee, in 1926, wrote an "Economic Revolution in British West Africa" brought by Europeans on backward Africa". Mbeki, in defence of the continent from the Western distortion, called on European historians' racists. According to Mbeki (2006:235), "[i]t was this European racism and attempts to deny Africans any capacity to build great civilisations that made even late twentieth-century European historians, such as Hugh Trevor-Roper (1963), boldly to declare that Africans had no history". In this regard, the racist Hugh Trevor-Roper had written the following about Africa:

Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present, there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness . . . and darkness is not a subject of history . . . We cannot, therefore, afford to amuse ourselves with the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe. (cited in Mbeki 2006:235)

This form of European thought and perspective persists in this modern day and age, with Hegel, Johnson, McPhee, and Trevor-Roper succeeded by fellow Western-Eurocentric historians of the same thinking, such as Leander Heldring and James A Robinson. For example, Heldring and Robinson (2012:8) argued: "[s]ome societies, for instance, the pre-colonial Rwandan state, did not even use money". The deliberate intention by European historians in the nineteenth century and the latter-day Eurocentric historians was/is to centre Europe and whites as the source of civilisation

and development in Africa, on one hand, and to decentre Africa and its creation of civilisation and development on the continent way before the Europeans came to Africa. European suffered a belief that God made Europeans superior to African mankind. The European view of Africa is that African history of civilisation and invention began with the arrival of Europeans and the age of colonialism. And ironically, European historians still believe that without colonisation, Africa would still be backward. This shed light on the manner in which the perspective on Africa is informed and formed, even in the period of independence this thought still persists, to putting Europe in the positive light and Africa in the negative light of history.

Mbeki, in this speech on 'Perspectives on and of Africa', reminded his audience about the historical inventions and civilisation by Africans, including the pyramids of Egypt, the royal court of Timbuktu in Mali, the sculptured stone buildings of Aksum in Ethiopia, as some of the development that was already existing on the continent before European colonisation. He also reminded them about how the Ancient Egyptians invented the letters and a form of writing mathematics which became the foundation of the emergence of the modern alphabets. According to Mbeki, it was the Egyptians who invented the technique used for mummification and to be able to perform mummification, they had to master a number of different disciplines, including physics, chemistry, medicine and surgery. This expertise, of between 5 600 and 5 400 years ago, included high expertise in surgical techniques needed to perform mummification, a treatise on bone surgery and external pathology. All these pre-colonial Africa inventions, Mbeki (2006:236) argued, were "later taught especially [to] the Greeks who, in turn, spread this knowledge to the rest of the Western Europe". He alluded how these were adopted by Europeans:

The Greek, Hippocrates, regarded as the father of medicine, studied in the temple of Memphis in Egypt where he learnt from the library of a great Egyptian physician, Imhotep, whom the Greeks called Askelepios. Ancient Egyptians invented mathematics and divided it into arithmetic, algebra and geometry. This knowledge was later passed on to the Greeks. The development of the ancient calendar began in Egypt, initially by observing the behaviour of the Nile River, which had three cycles of four months each. Egyptians also engaged

in engineering, construction, ship building and architecture. They then imparted their vast knowledge to the Greeks, most of whom became very famous, such as Plato, Pythagoras, Eudoxes (the mathematician and astronomer), Hippocrates and many others whose work reflected the great and pervasive influence of the black Africans. (Mbeki 2006:236)

Taking a further step, Mbeki told his audience that this Egyptian civilisation was later followed by fellow African kingdoms at the turn of the sixteenth century. By this time, Europe was a poor continent. He argued:

The great Egyptian civilisation was followed some millennia later, by the civilisations of Nubia, Aksum, Mapungubwe, Ghana, Mali and Great Zimbabwe. The Malian civilisation reached its pinnacle when Timbuktu became the intellectual and trading hub between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Timbuktu was a confluence of ideas, languages and cultures. We are proud that today we are in partnership with the government of Mali working together to preserve and restore the thousands of ancient manuscripts of Timbuktu, which tell a story of a great civilisation and a centre of learning. (Mbeki 2006:236)

Cheikh Anta Diop (1987), the Senegalese historian, had written and described the ancient African university of Timbuktu Mali as a living intellectual past of African invention and civilisation. He noted that students came from all parts of the world—including “Westerners, in ardent pursuit of science and virtue” (Diop 1987:179). He argued, “[i]n the Middle Ages, four centuries before Levy-Bruhl wrote his *Primitive Mentality*, Muslim black Africa was already commenting upon Aristotle’s ‘formal logic’ and practising dialectics” (Diop 1987:179). Centuries before Europe colonised the continent and questioned the primitive character of African ‘mentality’, Aristotelian logic was being discussed by local African scholars in Timbuktu, according to Diop. On the other hand, Souleymane Bachir Diagne (2008) points out that black wisdom, including science and scholarship, has a history prior to colonialism and prior to the introduction of the European language. Four Centuries before colonialism, Diagne (2008:24) argues, “Timbuktu and other similar intellectual centres were quite

comparable to the place of learning in the Islamic world at large in the same period” (Diagne 2008:24). In this regard, Diagne pointed the following about the confluence of ideas in Timbuktu:

These philosophers contributed to the universal history of the discipline by pursuing a fruitful dialogue with the likes of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus from their own perspective, which is their Qur’anic culture. (Diagne 2008:24)

Mbeki, comparing the African civilisation and invention with European state of development of the same period, argued: “[m]uch of European society was characterised by high levels of illiteracy, acute poverty and violence. To use the Hobbesian phrase, 'life was nasty, brutish and short'” (Mbeki 2006:236). These earliest African civilisations are said to have happened at a time when European societies were in the Dark Age. At this period, Mbeki maintains, Timbuktu was already a significant religious, cultural and commercial centre, alongside the Egyptians. Its great expansion and development period, by the eighth century, attracted much of the Iberian Peninsula, India and Indonesia, whose residents travelled to Timbuktu to acquire knowledge and engaged in commercial activities (Shuriye and Ibrahim 2013). Shuriye and Ibrahim (2013:697) note: “[a]t that period, Timbuktu was at the height of its commercial and intellectual development. Merchants from Libya, Algeria and numerous other cities of North Africa gathered there to buy gold and slaves in exchange for the Saharan salt of Taghaza and for North African cloth and Horses”. The legendary of Timbuktu informed the development and great pre-colonial African past. Shuriye and Ibrahim argue:

The famous contribution of Timbuktu to Islam and world civilization is its scholarship and the books that were written and copied there began in the 14th Century. It was a city famous for the education of important scholars whose reputations were pan-Islamic. The city scholars, many of whom studied in Mecca and Egypt numbered some 25,000 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013). The brilliance of the University of Timbuktu was without equal in all of sub-Saharan Africa and was known throughout Islamic world. (Shuriye & Ibrahim 2013:697)

Based on the developments of Timbuktu by this period, Mbeki (2006:237) argues, “Africa was part of a global order in which literacy, intellectualism and trade flourished”. By the time of European Renaissance in the fifteenth century, Africa was already a developed region according to Mbeki. Thus African by this period already had its Emperors and rulers, scholars, Islamic academic centres as well as commercial centre in Timbuktu. Among the Emperors that ruled this great city of the great Malian Empire is Mansa Musa (also known as Kankan Musa). He was one of the wealthiest, strongest and influential emperors of his time (Shuriye and Ibrahim 2013). It is believed that Mansa Musa is the wealthiest King who ever lived since the ancient civilisation to the current days of modern civilisation. It is said, Shuriye and Ibrahim (2013:701) explain, “[t]his astonishing wealth captured the imagination of both East and West, albeit for very different reasons”. To amplify this point, the English explorer Richard Johnson, wrote in 1620, of the riches in Timbuktu:

The most flattering reports had reached Europe of the Gold trade carried on at Timbuktu. The roofs of its houses were presented to be covered with plates of gold, the bottom of the rivers to glistening with precious metal and mountains had to be excavated to yield a profusion of Metallic treasures. (quoted in Shuriye & Ibrahim 2013:701)

Mbeki emphasises this point by saying:

With Timbuktu as a major trading and intellectual centre within the Malian empire, it is clear that Africa was not only a repository of knowledge from ancient civilisations across the world, but evidence also indicates that Africa should be regarded as an important conduit for knowledge to Europe during its renaissance in the late fifteenth century. (Mbeki 2006:237)

Considering the civilisations of Egypt and in Timbuktu in terms of development, it is clear where Africa was in comparison to the Western world. After a certain period, it is well known and perhaps ignored by European historians how Europe had systematically under-developed Africa. As Mbeki (2006:237) argues, “they used their colonial power, which followed the period of slavery, the gun and the whip,

systematically to impose their perspective on or of Africa on the rest of humanity”. Walter Rodney, the Guyanese historian, has written about how Europe underdeveloped Africa. As argued by Rodney (1973), African economic activity was deeply affected by population loss resulting from the slave trade. Europe grew stronger by the African slave trade, which included raiding their mineral resources, cattle and goods, to be used in the economic development of the colonial metropolis. It is estimated 100 million Africans were captured by Europeans to work as slaves in the American colony (Rodney 1973). These were captured in West Africa from Senegal to Angola, East-Central Africa covers Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Northern Zambia, and Eastern Congo. In South Africa, unlike in the rest of the continent, Africans were turned into farm and mine workers by Afrikaner and British colonialists. Following the above, colonialism and apartheid resulted in the dispossession of land, labour, economy, including mineral exploitation and brain drain, all which resulted to the benefit and economic development to Europe. In this regard, Mbeki argues:

The millions of Africans transported to the Americas as slaves made these regions and the European countries that owned them prosperous on the backs of black slaves while underdeveloping the African continent. When it became morally and otherwise impossible to continue with slavery, Europe colonised Africa and practised slave labour. Through this method, which included actual killings of those resisting conscription into labour camps, it is estimated that between eight and ten million people in the Congo basin alone lost their lives during the reign of King Leopold II of Belgium. (Mbeki 2006:237)

It is a historical fact that the colonisation of the continent helped to develop Europe into what it is today. In Southern Africa, mining in Angola, Mozambique, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Congo was controlled by European companies. Rodney (1973:237), for instance, wrote that “Congo was consistently a source of immense wealth for Europe, because from the time of colonisation until 1906, King Leopold of Belgium made at least \$20 million from rubber and ivory”. Other mineral resources extracted in this region included gold, diamond, platinum, iron ore, copper, steel, coal, uranium, chrome and many others. The extraction and expatriation of these mineral resources were carried out by European corporations. The Anglo-American

mining company, under imperialist Cecil John Rhodes, has been known to sponsor British emperor with this ill-gotten profit of wealth. Across the continent, the same looting of African resources was occurring. Rodney stated this point to say:

It should not be forgotten that outside of Southern Africa, there were also significant mining operations during the colonial period. In North Africa, foreign capital exploited natural resources of phosphates, oil, lead, zinc, manganese and iron ore. In Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, there were important workings of gold, diamonds, iron ore and bauxite. To all that should be added the tin of Nigeria, the gold and manganese of Ghana, the gold and diamonds of Tanganyika, and the copper of Uganda and Congo-Brazzaville. In each case, an understanding of the situation must begin with an enquiry into the degree of exploitation of African resources and labour, and then must proceed to follow the surplus to its destination outside of Africa – into the bank accounts of the capitalists who control the majority shares in the huge multi-national mining combines. (Rodney 1973:238-239)

There can be no doubt that Europe, through the slave trade and exploitation of resources, is the primary reason Africa is the most underdeveloped continent in the world. In addition, it is a fact that Europe developed economically and technologically at the expense of Africa. And still, Africa continues to be underdeveloped due to reason that European technology is not making its way into the African economies. Rather, it is African minds which are expatriated to European metropolis to constitute the supply of human capital and raw exports. In other words, Europe's refusal to exchange positive ideas and techniques with the European capitalist system is highly unfavourable for the development of the African economy. It has been pointed out, for instance, by various commentators that the inflow of technology in Africa is not so much from Europe (or the United States), but it has been coming from Asia mostly. The obvious reason is that Europe wants Africa to remain in Third World forever, of course, for the benefit of Europe's own interests.

In summarising the aforementioned points, in relation to the perspective on and about Africa, Africa was civilised before Europe. But through the historical facts of slave trade, colonisation, and apartheid, the African continent was captured, her history

erased, and African peoples dismembered so that there is no memory from which to think and speak from. These were the dismembering practices of planting European memory in Africa (Thiong'o 2009). Thiong'o (2009:5) argues that "[t]he dismemberment of Africa occurred in two stages". First was the colonisation of the continent through the Berlin Conference of 1884, which divided Africa among European superpowers. The conquered African places were changed names and renamed with European names like Port Elisabeth, King Williamstown, Queenstown, and Grahamstown in the South African context. The whole African landscape was blanketed with European memory of place, an act which dismembered the native memory of place and things like culture and language. Secondly, the exploitation and transportation of African mineral resources to colonial metropolis demanded that the captured Africans be taken to the Americas and Europe to work as slaves. The result was an additional dismemberment of the African who was now separated not only from his continent but also from his very sovereign being—memory and identity. Both acts formed the basis of dismembering memory, colonisation and capturing of Africans turned their heads upside down and buried all the memories they carried, and thereby implanting the memory of colonialists. Central to Mbeki is that the relationship between Africa and Europe is still tied to this history of triumph and humiliation which continues to dominate the perspectives on and about Africa.

The important issue in Mbeki's analysis is that the African perspective is constructed by the European narrative due to the everlasting legacy of colonial relations in the post-colonial period. Should it be the Africans, or should it be the Westerners, who speak for Africa? On the one hand, Mbeki believes that Africa should speak for itself, including defining itself and determining its own political and economic destiny. On the other hand, Mbeki says the Westerners believe their role is to provide thought leadership and guidance to the Africans. What is problematic to Mbeki is the notion of "African black subjects said to have no history themselves, but that of Western white subjects as agents of history" (Sithole 2014:336). Westerners, in their self-imposed duty to speak for Africans, relies on the assumption that there is only Western history and forms of knowledge in Africa. African knowledges, customs and traditions are perceived as irrational and irrelevant to the development of humanity. In the South African context, the views of a British missionary believed that Africans had been developed anew by the triple process of Christianisation, Western education, and

acculturation (Kros 2010). Sithole (2011:6-7) argues that “[c]apitalism, which dictates the social, the political, the cultural and the economic spheres of existence, directs and allocates the systems of domination and subordination”. This means Africa, though regarded as independent from European colonisation, its perspective is controlled and scripted by Western narrative.

It is a matter of fact that those in the economic system (the Westerns) are also in command of the African perspective. This, of course, is done through their control of powerful communication channels, including media and editorial, whereby Africa is explained in explicitly Western terms. This means that Africa is read and defined from the colonial metropolis rather than from within Africa as a standpoint of thinking. The upshot in this regard is the mis-presentation of Africa in a negative light and the West in a positive light. To put it bluntly, the perspective on Africa is one-sided, that is, Western-centric, and the Afro-centric perspective is muted. In this regard, perspective on Africa is manipulated in order to legitimise and justify such forms of imperialism and coloniality as capitalism and exploitation, including, of course, the silencing of the calls for Africa’s liberation and decolonisation. Sabelo S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and others have warned about the dangers of going against the capitalist agenda. He argued:

African leaders have no power and freedom to decide on the course of any development of their countries without approval from Washington, London, Paris and other Western capitals. Those who try to defy this logic of dependence are severely disciplined, if not eliminated. African scholarship has also become hostage to Western epistemological hegemony installed by what is called ‘Enlightenment’.
(Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:13)

From this, it becomes clear the Westerns are doing all the talking for Africa while Africa itself is reduced to a mere political subject. Thus African voice is irrationalised to the point of silencing. That is, it has no standpoint to express its thinking. This sheds light into what informs the perspective on Africa and, in extension, explains how the existing racial and socio-economic imbalances as well as structures and systems are defended under the propagations of Western logic. The Westerns, in the words of Biko (1978:22-23), “are claiming a monopoly on intelligence and moral judgement and setting the pattern and pace for the realisation of the black man’s aspirations”. Mbeki alluded to

the need to engage in African Renaissance to reclaim African history and African restoration. He argued:

As Africans, our struggle is to engage in both the total emancipation of our continent from the social, political and economic legacy of colonialism and apartheid, as well as to reclaim our history, identity and traditions and, on the foundation that our ancestors built for all of humanity, rebuild our societies to ensure that they are developed and prosperous. (Mbeki 2006:238)

The section that follows below builds on this argument about how the African Renaissance was intended to help the continent counter and overcome Western domination and what the imagined new Africa should look like. At the heart of Mbeki's project of the African Renaissance is the quest for the restoration of African humanity and dignity, African dynamic cultures and values, African intellectual hegemony, African self-assertiveness and self-reliance, including land ownership and economic control by Africans. Mbeki's African Renaissance project is about the rebirth or renewal of the continent, in which he distinguishes between an old and a coming new Africa, which would be based on Africa's self-determination of political and economic destiny, including mental emancipation and national self-determination away from Western dependency (Mbeki 1999; Evaldsson & Wessels 2004).

African Renaissance

While the idea of the African Renaissance is not new on the continent, but the context in which Mbeki's project of an African Renaissance is taking place is different from the earlier propagations by pan-Africanists such as Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe (1937) and the Senegalese Cheikh Anta Diop (1948). Diop's African Renaissance emphasised the importance of language, arguing that Africans had lost their identity and dignity by allowing themselves to change their language, which was the only capacity to define themselves, reclaim their names, and ultimately restore the continent. Linking language to the African renaissance, Diop (1996:35) pointed out: "the development of our indigenous languages is the prerequisite for a real African renaissance". Others who echoed Diop's emphasis on language in the African renaissance is Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:4), who said: "[t]he choice of language and the use to which language

is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to their entire universe". Mbeki joins Diop's call for the renewal of Africa to reverse colonialism, but he departs from language towards political and economic renewal in the post-colonial African states.

In South Africa, Mbeki's concept of an African Renaissance is the second contour of his post-1994 democratic project, the first contour being the 'I am an African' speech delivered by Mbeki on 08 May 1996 in parliament on the occasion of the country's adoption of the new Constitution. Landsberg and Kornegay (1998:4-5) assert that "the 'I am an African' speech can be considered as the intellectual foundation for the articulation of an African Renaissance". For Vale and Maseko (1998), 'I am an African' speech is attached to uniting the post-apartheid South Africa with the rest of the continent, whereas the African Renaissance is South Africa's own version of Africa, and the two themes have reinforced South Africa's commitment to the continent. To Moeletsi Mbeki (2000:77), "African Renaissance" is a 'third moment' in Africa's post-colonial history, the 'second moment' being "the end of Cold War in 1989" and the 'first moment' "decolonisation struggles that delivered the political independence" on the continent. Vale and Maseko (1998) divided the definitions of the African Renaissance into the 'globalist' and 'Africanist' interpretations. Eddy Maloka (2001) further added a third perspective of the 'culturalist' interpretation of the definition of the African Renaissance. Taken together, all these aspects reflect that the idea of the African Renaissance is broader than what it is often perceived to be.

The question that has often been advanced in post-1994 among liberals and pessimists alike is, what is new about this Renaissance? because African renaissance according to them is not a new thing on the continent. A highly pessimistic response is by Ineke van Kes, questioning the meaning and significance of the South African version of the African Renaissance, the agenda of this Renaissance, and who is included or excluded in this new 'African' renaissance. Van Kes (2001:45) views Mbeki's Renaissance as a legitimising ideology in the politics of the African political elites in the ANC "that pays comparatively little attention to cultural dimensions". Taking a step further, Van Kes (2001:45) argued that "[b]ut still, outside our continent, the perception persists that Africa remains as of old, torn by interminable conflict, unable to solve its problems, condemned to the netherworld". Contrary to Van Kes's

observation, Dani Wadada Nabudere (2006) argues for Mbeki's Renaissance to be read beyond its authors; thus, as having a potential to mobilise Africans towards psychological, economic, and political liberation. This, he argued in stating:

The issue of an African Renaissance, which has been advanced politically, especially by the South African President Thabo Mbeki, cannot be viewed as an event in the politics of the African political elites, although that may be their purpose. It has to be taken up, problematised, interrogated and given meaning that goes beyond the intentions of its authors, and involve the masses of the African people in it if it has the potential to mobilise. It can be used as an occasion for beginning the journey of African psychological, social, cultural as well as political liberation. It can also be used as a mobilisation statement and the basis for articulating an African agenda for knowledge production that is not only relevant to African conditions, but also sets an agenda for the reclaiming of African originality of knowledge and wisdom, which set the rest of human society on the road of civilisation. (Nabudere 2006:8)

According to Mbeki (2002a:72), the idea of an African Renaissance is about "Africans defining themselves". Mbeki, in his engagement with the concept of African Renaissance from a 'culturalist perspective', speaks of the restoration of African history and African identity, African cultures and African Knowledges, African self-assertiveness and African self-reliance, African pride and African consciousness (Mbeki 2002a). Boele van Hensbroek (2002:127) argues that Mbeki is heeding 'a similar view of Africa and of culture in general' made by those who came before him, Edward Wilmot Blyden who lived more than 100 years ago to be specific, in his quest for Africa's return to 'roots'. But this emphasis on Africa's roots and identity does not essentialise race, blackness, or exclude white people; it is a rallying point of self-awareness and consciousness for African peoples. As argued by Bongmba (2004:294), "[t]his focus on identity politics is necessary to recover a distorted view of Africa that Mbeki evokes in his 'I am an African' speech". Bongmba (2004:294-295) is, however, critical of Mbeki's stance against race preference, arguing that "if there is going to be a Renaissance, Africans must at some point face the issue of blackness".

Indeed, a cultural interpretation of the African Renaissance without racial emphasis on blackness has not been without controversy from radical Africanists and the proponents of Black Consciousness.

The pan-African perspective, on the other hand, attempts to locate South Africa's African Renaissance debate within the broader Pan-African tradition. According to Nabudere (2006:11), "the deployment of this concept was also aimed at adopting the Africanist ideological stance". As an Africanist idea, Nabudere (2006:11) argues, "it reflects the mainstream political elite concern in South Africa for an African national identity against the background of an alienating apartheid system, which tried to depict South Africa as being part of the European continent socially, politically and culturally". On the other hand, Landsberg and Kornegay (1998:4) describe it as a South African philosophy (with a view of Africa) which combines "a set of foreign policy goals and domestic styles and politics entrenched in a set of political, social and economic relations". According to them, "[i]t can, furthermore, be regarded as a late-20th Century variant of Pan-Africanism that seeks to confront the challenges of globalisation in an international order dominated by the West" (Landsberg & Kornegay 1998:4). Some commentators have described this pan-African perspective on the part of the ANC's African Renaissance as 'reactionary', aimed to fill the ideological vacuum which was advocated by the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)" in the South African context (Nabudere 2006:11).

Moeletsi Mbeki (2000:78) provides that "[i]t was during 1997 that the African Renaissance began to be described as South Africa's Foreign Policy". He asserts that this was developed in a discussion document prepared for the ANC national conference held in December 1997 entitled 'Developing and Strategic Perspective on South African Policy' in which the "African Renaissance was described as 'the main pillar of our international policy not only relating to Africa but in all our international relations globally". Both Landsberg and Kornegay, Nabudere, and Mbeki note that the current usage of the concept in the ANC is dominated by Africanist and globalist perspectives. Mbeki's 'globalist perspective' of the African Renaissance, for its part, rested on the new struggles for political and economic emancipation. Mbeki articulates this notion as follows:

The new African world which the African renaissance seeks to build is one of democracy, peace and stability, sustainable development, and a better life for the people, nonracialism and nonsexism, equality among the nations, and a just and democratic system of international governance. (Mbeki 1999:xviii)

In Mbeki's engagement with the concept of the African Renaissance, there are four main areas which Mbeki highlights: (a) the history of Africa, which encompasses numerous achievements, (b) the potential of Africa's peoples, (c) the values of democracy and good governance, and (d) the power of information and modern technologies. Mbeki, speaking at the United Nations University, Japan in Tokyo, 9 April 1998, provided a historical perspective against which the articulation of the African Renaissance can be understood. Debates of the African renaissance in the light of the present situation in Africa tend to be incomprehensible in the absence of a clear understanding of the past (Diop 1999). Diop (1999:3) argues that "[s]ome historical depth is a prerequisite for any accurate definition of the concept of an African renaissance, and is indispensable if any prediction about Africa's possible future contribution to the advent of a genuine mankind is to be made". Mbeki said the call for an African renaissance is a response to correcting the misrepresentation of the image of Africa and the Africans in the world. In this speech, Mbeki reminded his audience about the infamous quote of Roman Piny the Elder, disparaging Africans to his fellow Romans. Mbeki quoted the Roman Pliny, who wrote:

Of the Ethiopians, there are diverse forms and kinds of men. Some there are toward the east that have neither nose nor nostrils, but the face all full. Others that have no upper lip, they are without tongues, and they speak by signs, and they have but a little hole to take their breath at, by the which they drink with an oaten straw ... In a part of Afrikke be people called Pteomphane, for their King they have a dog, at whose fancy they are governed ... And the people called Anthropomphagi which we call cannibals, live with human flesh. The Cinamolgi, their heads are almost like to heads of dogs... Blemmyis a people so called, they have no heads, but hide their mouth and their eyes in their breasts. (Mbeki 1998d:239)

In his book “Continents and consequences: the history of a concept”, Peter J. Yearwood (2014) argues that European writings commonly treated Africans and other people of colour as part of a scenic view against which a human drama unfolds. In Yearwood’s (2014) view, Europe speaks of Africa in an explicitly and systematically racist way. As narrated by Mbeki (1998d:239), in relation to Roman Pliny’s remarks, “[t]hese images must have frightened many a Roman child to scurry to bed whenever their parents said: The Africans are coming! The strange creatures out of Africa are coming!”. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Mbeki continues, the Romans and fellow Europeans had a different view of the Africans when Leo Africanus, a Spaniard resident in Morocco, visited West Africa and wrote the following about the royal court in Timbuktu, Mali:

The rich king of Timbuktu ... keeps a magnificent and well-furnished court ... Here are great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, that are bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges. And hither are brought diverse manuscripts or written books out of Barbaric, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise. (Mbeki 1998d:239)

In the speech, Mbeki reminded the audience about the African civilisation which is old as the history of the modern world, telling them that Africans have a rich cultural heritage to be proud of. He argued:

I speak of African works of art in South Africa that are a thousand years old. I speak of the continuum in the fine arts that encompasses the varied artistic creations of the Nubians and the Egyptians, the Benin bronzes of Nigeria and the intricate sculptures of the Makonde of Tanzania and Mozambique. I speak of the centuries-old contributions to the evolution of religious thought made by the Christians of Ethiopia and the Muslims of Nigeria. (Mbeki 1998d:241)

Taking a step further, he romanticised the African creations which today are part of the world’s heritage. He argued:

I refer also to the architectural monuments represented by the giant sculptured stones of Aksum in Ethiopia, the Egyptian sphinxes and pyramids, the Tunisian city of Carthage, and the Zimbabwe ruins, as well as the legacy of the ancient universities of Alexandria of Egypt, Fez of Morocco and, once more, Timbuktu of Mali. When I survey all this and much more besides, I find nothing to sustain the long-held dogma of African exceptionalism, according to which the colour black becomes a symbol of fear, evil and death. (Mbeki 1998d:241-242)

It is known what happened next to these great African civilisation and inventions of the past. It was during the European expansion in the fifteenth century, described by Bernard Magubane as European capitalism that set the stage for the Europe's conquest and invasions of Africa, culminating into the colonisation of Africa which looted the continent and turned Africans into slaves. As argued by Magubane (1999:17), "[w]hen Europeans began their global expansion and conquest around 1492, they spread the disease, destruction and inequality to the rest of the world". Over the many years that followed the European colonisation, Magubane (1999:17) argues, "[t]his set the stage for the derogatory stereotypes of Africa and its peoples". When Europe speaks of its own fifteen-century Renaissance is not referring to the renewal in a common understanding of the term rebirth; but rather to colonising other continents, stealing their mineral resources, and looting their wealth for the benefit of itself at the expense of the nations, it conquered. It is a historical fact that Europe before Africa's invasion and colonisation was characterised by conditions of poverty, sickness, the so-called period of Black Death, and underdevelopment, similar to Africa today. As argued by Magubane:

In post-Renaissance European thought, Africans were not only inferior but chattels whose destiny on this earth was to volarise the wealth of the earth for their superiors. Indeed, the most concentrated intellectual assault on the continent of Africa and its humanity coincided with the emancipation of European slaves. European anthropology, history and philosophy humiliated Africa and its peoples. (Magubane 1999:240)

Like the Old Europe, Africa today is faced with regression effects resulting from the forces of imperialism, colonialism, slavery, apartheid, and racism. These regression effects are a combination of political (Mamdani 1996, 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013; Mkandawire 2005), psychological (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986; Chinweizu 1987), and economic factors (Amin 1989, 1997, 2000; Mkandawire 1997, 2001). Africa not only has a history of imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and apartheid to forget but is currently in tribal conflicts, including struggles for power between dictators and rebels and violent conflicts, which have reduced Africa to *deathscapes*. Deathscapes are spaces where death occurs in everyday life, and the "life of those who are killed is meaningless, and their death cannot be accounted for" (Sithole 2014:vi). The violent conflicts in the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, Sudan and Darfur, Zimbabwe just to name a few is what bound Mbeki to make a call for African renaissance (Mbeki 1998e:296-297). Mbeki's quest for an African renaissance includes the need for political stability, psychological and socio-economic emancipation of the continent.

Speaking at the South African Broadcasting Corporation, August 1998, Mbeki (1998e:300) did not spare the criticism of Africans, especially the despotic leaders and unethical political elite, who makes Africa a failed continent with their corruption and tyranny. In this regard Mbeki argued:

The call for Africa's renewal, for an African renaissance, is a call to rebellion. We must rebel against the tyrants and the dictators, those who seek to corrupt our societies and steal the wealth that belongs to the people. We must rebel against the ordinary criminals who murder, rape, and rob, and conduct war against poverty, ignorance, and the backwardness of the children of Africa. (Mbeki 1998e:300)

In an address to the Corporate Council on Africa's Attracting Capital to Africa in Virginia, United States, in 1998, Mbeki told his audience the followings:

Out of this same Africa, a new star of hope has risen over that part of it which is described as Angola. Only a few days ago, parties that had fought against each other for decades as deadly enemies came

together to form a Government of Unity and National Reconciliation to serve a greater good of the millions of Angolans who have been victim to the pestilences of war, including disablement, displacement, degradation and death. (Mbeki [1997]1998:200-201)

Taking a step further, Mbeki confidently added that out of Zaire, the new country is emerging the rebirth of the continent, and this he asserted:

We see a new Zaire, perhaps with a new name, a Zaire which shall be democratic, peaceful, prosperous, a defender of human rights, an example of what the new Africa should be, occupying the geographic space that it does at the heart of our Africa. (Mbeki [1997]1998:201)

Mbeki's concept of an African renaissance is a critical dialogue with Africa and with the world in his defence of the image of Africans in the world. He dismisses the pessimistic perception of the Western world that the African renaissance has nothing to do with the renewal but is an empty statement which is repeated time and again. This, he alluded, "[b]ut still, outside our continent, the perception persists that Africa remains, as of old, torn by interminable conflict, unable to solve its problems, condemned to the netherworld" (Mbeki [1997]1998:201). Backing up the African renaissance project, he pointed out that Africa is undergoing multiple changes of transformation and development based on African terms. "Those who have eyes to see, let them see. The African Renaissance is upon us. As we peer through the looking glass darkly, this may not be obvious. But it is upon us" (Mbeki [1997]1998:201). Mbeki also pointed out the notion that just because in some countries, a particular political system did not succeed, it does not necessarily mean that the African renaissance has failed. In this case Mbeki defended the African renaissance, arguing that the overarching vision of Africa's renaissance is the "establishment of genuine and stable democracies" whereby African governments "derive their authority and legitimacy from the will of the people" (Mbeki [1997]1998:201). He argued that Africans were now working to establish a new political order because "one-party state and the military governments did not work", owing their existence and logic to the colonial order. He argued:

The way forward must be informed by what is, after all, common to all African traditions: that the people shall govern! Since 1990, more than 25 sub-Saharan countries have held democratic elections. This is what we mean when talk of a process on our continent, perhaps seen through the looking glass darkly, which affirms an indigenous and sustained movement towards the elimination of the failed systems and violent conflicts which have served to define the continent in a particular way in the eyes of many in the world, including this country. (Mbeki [1997]1998:201-202)

Mbeki rejects the claim that the African renaissance is a reverse discourse of racism, seeking vengeance against the perpetrators of the system of colonialism and apartheid. In this regard, Mbeki argued:

There exists within our continent a generation which has been victim to all the things which created this negative past. This regeneration remains African and carries with it an historic pride which compels it to seek a place for Africans equal to all other peoples of our common universe. It knows and is resolved that, to attain that objective, it must resist all tyranny, oppose all attempts to deny liberty by resort to demagoguery, repulse the temptation to describe African life as the ability to live on charity, engage in the fight to secure the emancipation of the African woman, and reassert the fundamental concept that we are our own liberators from oppression, from underdevelopment and poverty, from the perpetuation of an experience from slavery, to colonisation, to apartheid to, dependence on alms. (Mbeki [1997]1998:202)

Mbeki was echoed by then United States President Bill Clinton, who expressed a sense of optimism in the prospect of the African Renaissance (cited in Mbeki 2000:76). Clinton equally agreed with Mbeki's sentiments that Africa remains the world's greatest challenge in terms of transformation and development but further highlighted that the continent is gradually improvising toward the realisation of democracy and human rights. Speaking about the African Renaissance in his address to the South African parliament on 26 March 1998, Clinton stated:

But from Cape Town to Kampala, from Dar es Salaam to Dakar, democracy is gaining strength, business is growing, peace is making progress. We are seeing what Deputy President Mbeki has called an African Renaissance. (cited in Mbeki 2000:76)

Vale and Maseko (1998) argue that South Africa has so far been the most successful case of the African renaissance template. According to them, “[a] good example is peacekeeping, where South Africa has been encouraged to accept international responsibilities” (Vale and Maseko 1998:277). And the country’s leaders have not been disappointed on this front, according to them. “Clearly, South Africa’s government is committed to the development of democracy in Africa” (Vale and Maseko 1998:277). They argue that Mbeki’s mediation of conflict resolution in countries such as DRC, Darfur, Zimbabwe and others serve as a testimony to the cause of an African renaissance and the commitment to the promotion of a peaceful and united African continent. In Mbeki’s African renaissance view, South Africa for its developmental agenda, needed to develop and encourage a common agenda of African governments.

Moeletsi Mbeki, the young brother to Thabo, has offered his own reading and analyses of the African Renaissance in Mbeki’s various speeches and ANC documents. He identified a number of interventions needed to make the Renaissance possible. These include the interventions by governments, an integrated programme of action, the emergence of a strong independent African bourgeoisie class in economic mainstream and ownership to means of production, the rise of a large urban professional and entrepreneurial middle class that is a property owning property-owning and is active participants in the development of small and middle enterprises, as some of the things which could be taken to help the African Renaissance. Among priorities listed by Mbeki (2000:78) were “[t]he emancipation of women, the emergence of a more able political leadership, a revolution in education, better managed and more effective healthcare services, and greater African unity”. Mbeki, however, identified the lack of an integrated programme of action as the reason for the African Renaissance has not succeeded to the level of expectations of the people. In this regard, Mbeki (2000:78) argued, “[t]his was not altogether surprising given the South African government’s reluctance to appear to be prescribing to other African governments”. Indeed the

African Renaissance project was treated as a rumour by most African governments, perceiving it solely as a South African project rather than continental one, which is why it has been read and debated more in South Africa than anywhere else on the continent.

While the idea of an African Renaissance is generally perceived to be a noble idea for the renewal of the continent, it has often been criticised for being far too complex and also lacking in a comprehensive strategy. Thus, it does not clarify on how the question of transformation and development will be dealt with, especially the social and economic inequality, other than to propagate the need for transformation and development on the continent. Therefore, the launching of the 'pan-African economic strategy in the form of NEPAD could be seen as the acknowledgement by African leaders that the continent's economic crisis could not be resolved only on the basis of programmes conceived solely around the nation-state' (Olukoshi & Graham 2006:xiv). The key aim of NEPAD, Adesina (2005:1) argues, was "to ensure that the new millennium brings new hopes that Africa might be able to ensure its development as a continent in a world characterised by accelerating inequalities". Mbeki, for Falola and Oloruntoba (2020:16), "promoted the African Agenda through the New Partnership for African Development and the reforms of the African Union". There is no agreed consensus among the scholars as to whether or not the NEPAD has indeed been fundamental to the African Renaissance project and the African Union, but generally, it is agreed that NEPAD promoted Africa's idea of achieving self-reliance away from the Western-controlled capitalist system. The next section delves deeper into how NEPAD, as an integrated programme of action for Africa's development, was operationalised by Mbeki toward Africa's assertion into the global capitalist system.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

It proceeds from the critical imagination of Mbeki and practice that, in order to achieve the objectives of the African Renaissance, a comprehensive programme within which to articulate the political and economic strategy of transformation and development on the continent is critical. Landsberg (2007:196) states that "[t]he end of the anti-colonial struggle required the articulation of a new progressive African agenda that situates the needs of the continent within the context of the political and economic realities of the 21st Century". Central to this new African agenda was the transformation of the

Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), the launching of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), and the adoption of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), including the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and many other AU institutions such as the African Standby Force that is meant to deal with the problems of conflict and security on the continent.

Important here is NEPAD, launched by President Thabo Mbeki and President Abdoulaye Wade on the back of the Millennium Partnership, combining the OMEGA Plan and Millennium Action Plan (MAP) as the pan-African economic strategy. NEPAD also draws from the report on Compact for Economic Recover (REC) adopted from United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (www.nepad.org). Its website, NEPAD, among other priorities, aims to integrate Africa with the global economy, to overcome the challenge of poverty, to bring about regional development and to promote Africa's partnership for development (www.nepad.org). It is in the observation of Olukoshi (2018:168) that "if the African continent is indeed to find its rightful place in the emerging world order, it must organise itself to drive every facet of its development agenda and be the author of the narrative that accompanies that effort". For Chenntouf (2006:197), "[a]mong many initiatives which are taken at every level, NEPAD constitutes an African answer and for the benefit of Africa". To Olukoshi (2002:5), "NEPAD is perhaps the boldest new initiative on the appropriate development path which Africa should follow". NEPAD is embraced not because it is flawless but because it is an African-constructed and African-driven project in content and direction.

President Mbeki has been lauded as a key player on the founding of NEPAD and its single most important voice in the world economy (Alukoshi 2002; Hope, Sr 2002; Melber., et al, 2002; Bongmba 2003, 2004; Taylor 2006; Moore 2014; Affonso & Lengruber 2020). For instance, Bond (2004:68) posits that "[t]he origins of NEPAD can be found in South African president Thabo Mbeki's late 1990s determination to establish an 'African Renaissance'". Moore (2014:373) contends that NEPAD "came to light as a key foreign policy objective of the South African government". President Mbeki made strategic relationships with key African leaders like Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal), and Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria) toward Africa's development agenda. Taylor (2006:64) notes that "[s]uch activism has fitted

Mbeki's much-touted African Renaissance, which, although devoid of any meaningful content, has underpinned post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy, particularly since Mandela stepped down". Regardless of their share of criticism, formations of the AU and the NEPAD were the much-desired interventions by African leaders who have since the beginning of African independence spoken of the need to build the pan-African institutions that would serve the African people fully as part of the resolution of African problems away from the Western capitalist system.

It should be noted, however, that opinions on NEPAD are divided judging by collection of articles contributed to the series of CODESRIA in 2006 (edited by Jimi Adesina, Yao Graham, Adebayo Olukoshi). This debate can be divided into two groups according to Adesina (2006:5): (a) "the first highly critical of the basic neo-liberal foundations of NEPAD", and (b) "the second more sympathetic to the initiative primarily because it is seen as an autonomous, African-initiated and Africa-owned blueprint". A highly critical paper by Ian Taylor questions whether NEPAD represents a developmental agenda towards the African Century or is another capitalist tool for opening up Africa's economies by corrupt African elite. According to this view, "NEPAD is granted hearing precisely because the message communicated fits the neo-liberal discourse and avoids blaming particular policies or global trade structures for Africa's marginalisation but rather, if pushed, simply assigns the blame to 'globalisation'" (Taylor 2006:63). This further goes, "[t]his engagement and the calls for partnership are far more likely to gain a hearing in London or Washington than the rhetoric of anti-imperialism and appeals for special treatment" (Taylor 2006:66). The NEPAD criticism seems to lie on Mbeki alone, and if read closely, is by South African critics of Mbeki.

Patrick Bond (2002b:53), one of his strong critics, says that Mbeki's strategy for global and continental socio-economic progress via the NEPAD, is consistent with the broader problem of "compradorism". According to Bond (2004a:11), "[b]y explaining the challenge of globalisation in much more accommodationist language, NEPAD buys into the main premises of global apartheid". If Africa is 'marginalised', Bond (2004a:11) argues, 'does the continent require more globalisation?'. Bond (2004:71) provides that "Mbeki's agenda is not that of the majority of Africans or South Africans", arguing that "the real winners are those in Washington and other imperial centres that, increasingly, require a sub-imperial South African government for the ongoing super

exploitation and militarisation of Africa". And if Mbeki and his colleagues are themselves benefiting from the spotlight provided by NEPAD, "the real winners are those in Washington and other imperial centres that, increasingly, require a sub-imperial South African government for the ongoing super exploitation and militarisation of Africa" according to Bond (2004:71). NEPAD can succeed by "not by polishing the chains of global apartheid, but based upon breaking them, through deglobalisation and decommodification" (Bond 2004a:37). Bond (2000a) also criticised Mbeki for his 'talk left, act right' politics in his frustrated global reforms.

Adesina (2006:7-8) argues that 'If most of the analysis in the articles' contributed to the series of CODESRIA in 2006 'is critical of the discourse and prognoses that underscore the NEPAD document, Maloka's chapter offers a radically different approach. Eddy Maloka (2006) defended Mbeki and his colleagues on the undertaking of the continental project of NEPAD. He argued that "NEPAD is intended to be a framework and programme of action for the renaissance of the continent" (Maloka 2006:86). Maloka (2006:86) took a lead, "to address the confusion arising from stories making the round in the continent about the origin of the initiative", especially by Patrick Bond. To Maloka, Bond and his colleagues create the impression that Mbeki single-handedly formed and created NEPAD and imposed it on the rest of the continent. According to Maloka (2006:95), "[i]t is important to note here that the NEPAD mandate originates from the same unit that set in motion the process of the establishment of the African Union and its related organs". Contrary to what is said by Bond, Maloka (2006:95) added, "the NEPAD process was a culmination, rather than the beginning, of energies that were into efforts aimed at finding solutions to the continent's development predicament". The most frustrating part about the debate on NEPAD is that its critics tend to disparage it not because of its objectives but because it is associated with Mbeki, and these critics, in turn, offer nothing of tangible transformation and development. Against Taylor and Bond, global capitalism and economic apartheid can also be perpetuated by an act of doing nothing about the economic marginalisation of the continent, even in the absence of Mbeki's NEPAD.

Mbeki has consistently argued for the African leaders to take a stand in resisting to be acted upon by the Western capitalist government in their continued practices of exploitation, which do not cater the African development. Progressive African leaders

have also been frustrated by the continued dependence of African governments on Western institutions such as the World Bank Organisation (WBO) and the International Monetary fund (IMF), including the United States Aid, because these institutions have brought more crises to the African continent than solutions. It can be argued here that the adoption of NEPAD as a pan-African continental economic framework did put to rest the difficult question around Africa's policy to be pursued by the African states in the globalisation context. Unlike in the earlier programs devised under OAU, such as MAP and NAI, these initiatives failed to implement common African agenda that would promote Africa's partnership for development. A number of reasons contributed to this failure, among others, including a lack of political commitment, lack of mechanisms for political and economic political reforms, lack of political will, and lack of resources (Hope Sr 2002). Regarding MAP and NAI, Hope (2002:389) argues, "[t]hey were also extensively driven and influenced by the politics of the Cold War era". Most African countries and rebel groups were backed by either United States, the Soviet Union, or France in exchange for the economic imperial interests in these countries. But this situation is different with NEPAD. Hope Sr argued:

The NEPAD, on the other hand, represents a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politics. It is therefore anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world. In other words, it is an attempt at a homegrown solution to overcoming Africa's marginalisation in the world economy and international affairs, while improving the standard of living of the African people. (Hope Sr 2002:389)

In Mbeki's analysis, the challenge of transformation and development in Africa is very much defined by Africa's lack of Africa-driven programmes and the problem of dependency on the Western solution for African problems.

The creation of the NEPAD is important to Africa's agenda for development, and it forms part of the Mbeki's thinking to promote the project of an African Renaissance. To Mbeki, the political independence of the continent and the emergence of the African renaissance brought the new prospects for opening the continent for growth and development. But realistically, for this new dawn to translate into a reality of transformation and development, it requires the articulation of a clear African agenda that situates the challenges and also solutions of African continent within the context of globalisation (Olukoshi 2018). Indeed, it is important to approach and navigate the system of globalisation with some element of consideration, if the idea of renaissance is to succeed as the continent-led project of development. Olukoshi (2018:169) argues that "such a renaissance would demand nothing less than a radical, wholesale rethinking of the parameters, content, and strategy of African development in order to translate change into a sustained, all-round project of progressive structural transformation". Central to the African agenda is the need to achieve self-reliance and self-assertiveness, transformation and development, peace and democracy, and economic growth, including the partnerships on the continent.

Mbeki, in re-articulating the African renaissance and the NEPAD, is attempting to reposition Africa internationally to be able to engage and deal with the globalisation of capitalism and the neo-liberal paradigm advocated by Western institutions rather than shy away from them because he indeed understood that these institutions and their economic systems are inescapable. As argued by Williams (2009:87), central to Mbeki's political thought and the idea of NEPAD "is an attempt at negotiating a space for the development of the continent within the context of neo-liberal capitalism". Mbeki, in propelling the NEPAD, aimed to decentre the dominance and control of Western institutions and economic systems in Africa and to centre Africa's institutions, programmes and projects. As amplified by Ndlovu-Gatsheni in the light of the frustrated progressive African leaders and Africanists, in stating:

[Africanists] have also been frustrated by the continued use of imported Euro-American ideas and institutions in Africa. They have unanimously called for the reconstitution and reconstruction of African postcolonial states on the basis of African history, African knowledge and African positive values if these states are to be considered

legitimate and to serve their African constituency fully. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: *viii-ix*)

Strategically, NEPAD provides an alternative to the Western capitalist system for African governments and the global South generally. As Williams (2009:88) observes, “NEPAD forms part of Mbeki's intellectual response to neo-liberal globalisation in that it is an attempt at trying to reclaim the development agenda from the Bretton Woods system”. For Mbeki, the absence of African-imagined policies on national, continental and international relations is a hindrance to the political and economic agenda of an African renaissance on the issues of transformation and development. Williams (2009:88) stresses that “[In Mbeki's estimation, NEPAD provides an opportunity for African countries to articulate a development agenda that is founded on the specific challenges facing the continent”. According to Mbeki, effective NEPAD will manage to bring African international relations in line with the Western institutions, as well as solidifying partnership within and between African governments. As Williams (2009:88) elucidates, “[I]n this respect NEPAD is a program tailored to suit the needs of the continent but is also acceptable to the international community”. One of the important points in Mbeki's call for an African renaissance and the NEPAD is that the success of Europe's Renaissance came as a result of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which sought to project a collective spirit of the partnership and cooperation.

Mbeki (2002) situates the NEPAD within the broader project of the African Renaissance, which, when expressed within a context of African political history, becomes part of the longstanding agenda of pan-Africanism that dates back to the period of 1881 under Edward Blyden, one of the foremost pan-Africanists who promoted the idea of Africans taking the position of their destiny, including determining their own future. Blyden argued in 1881, stating: “The African must advance by methods of his own. We must possess a power distinct from that of the European... We must show that we are able to go alone, to carve out our own way” (Blyden cited in Mbeki 2002). In his address to the Work-in-Progress Review Workshop of the NEPAD on 24 January 2002, Mbeki described NEPAD as an affirmation of the pan-Africanist idea initiated by Blyden and others of his generation. Mbeki stated:

This dream of 1881, three years before Africa was carved up at the Berlin Conference, was not one that could be realised in the century

that ensued, that saw the entrenchment of colonialism, racism and neo-colonialism, with African economies becoming dependent on the metropolitan countries and the destruction of the productive capacity of African peoples to work in their own interests and for their own gain... Afro-pessimism pervaded to the extent that there are those who would say that we have forfeited our right as Africans to dream, to hope, to speak and to plan for a better life.... Yet, clearly, the latter half of the twentieth century has seen a new attitude among Africans who now choose to see themselves as activists for change, who are reclaiming their place as equals among other humans, who walk a common continent and world proud of who they are and confident of their abilities for self-development. (Mbeki 2002b)

Mbeki further elaborated with respect to the 'new confidence' that arose emanating from the independence of the continent, stating:

This new confidence and this new African emerges out of an Africa that has largely moved to genuine independence and democracy, where the colonial system has been liquidated, where efforts are focused on the ending of conflicts and the attainment of peace and stability, where the consciousness exists that Africa's economic and social upliftment is dependent on African unity and African peoples and countries working together to fortify themselves and insert themselves favourably in a world economy from which they have largely been excluded as global players. (Mbeki 2002b)

Alexandre (2003) contends that Mbeki embodies similar Africanist credentials of those who came before him in the ANC and in diasporic Africa. According to Alexandre (2003:14), "[I]ike most of the leaders of the ANC before him, Mbeki, too, is driven by the original vision of Edward Blyden, who, like most of the first pan-Africanists, was from the Caribbean diaspora, and one of the first black people to define the meaning of the pan-African vision". African states, in Mbeki's view, have always been at the risk of re-colonisation by the Western states and institutions in the global North because of the continent's fragility, with many African states already on the brink of collapsing or depending on Western governments. In Mbeki's estimation, Africa needed to come

up with a development plan and a programme of action that would promote Africa's partnership for sustainable growth and development in the form of NEPAD. He also pointed to the need for Africa to adopt the African-centred approach to addressing socio-economic development. Mbeki was aware of the globalisation problems and the influence of Western government on capitalism in African states. Mbeki contended in the NEPAD Work-In-Progress Review Workshop in January 2002:

The New Partnership for Africa's Development answers Blyden's call for African ownership, African possession, and asserts that Africans can and must advance by methods of their own and indeed are able "to carve out our own way." It is premised on recognition that Africa has an abundance of natural resources and people who have the capacity to be agents for change and so holds the key to her own development. (Mbeki 2002b)

NEPAD constitutes not only a progressive African agenda for partnership and development but forms part of Mbeki's intellectual agenda in response to the relationship between the African continent and the World. For Mbeki, the African-Western relationship is built on terms that are hostile toward African states and Africa's development, a reality characterised by Africans being reduced to cheap labour and Africa being seen only as a supplier of raw materials for the developed world. The international institutions such as the World Bank Organisation and International Monetary Fund that expresses opposition to the underdevelopment of African states are themselves, in fact, interested in Africa's mineral and economic wealth rather than Africa's development. These institutions' hidden agenda is pushed through loans and debts of highest interests given to African governments. Africa's mineral resources are being exploited, African human capital is attracted to the colonial metropolis to offer cheap labour, and left to mourn brain drain. NEPAD arises in part to reclaim Africa's development agenda from the Western capitalist system that provided the set of super-exploitative policies and rules to the IMF and World Bank as part of a strategy targeted toward African governments and global South generally. African leaders, especially Mbeki in particular, were not complicit in this imperialist agenda from the colonial metropolis.

In Mbeki's analysis of the African agenda for the quest of political and economic self-determination as espoused by pan-African figures such as Tiyo Soga, Blaise Diagne, Edward Blyden and others faced a strong resistance of imperialism and colonialism. The conditions and historical experience of imperialism and colonialism influenced and shaped the character of political and intellectual interventions among these pan-African figures. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:58) argues, "[s]uch traumatic experiences as the slave trade, colonialism and apartheid influenced the way Africans imagined freedom and shaped the content of African intellectual interventions". The prospect of gaining political independence and the dawn of the African renaissance meant that African peoples were provided with the opportunity to revisit the pan-African agenda with a clear mind toward the renewal of the continent. Gevisser (2009:221) argues that Mbeki "developed his ideas about African Renaissance" and the "New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)" in order to "liberate the continent from its dependence on the West". The African Renaissance would become Mbeki's foundational ideology, and NEPAD was designed to make the continent self-sufficient, according to Gevisser.

This is known that the outspoken pan-African leaders who are combative toward the Euro-North American empire and economic system have either been marginalised or persecuted. The "United States of Africa" is an idea for which some African leaders have paid the ultimate price, with sanctions, including being toppled and, in some instances, killed. As argued by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:13), "[w]ithin this 'postcolonial neocolonized world', African leaders have no power and freedom to decide on the course of any development of their countries without approval from Washington, London, Paris and other Western capitals. Those who try to defy this logic of dependence are severely disciplined, if not eliminated". The struggle for the 'united states of Africa' has moved from the struggles against the imperialism, colonisation, and apartheid to now embark on the economic freedom and development from within rather than outside Africa. In this quest for the Africa's partnership for development, NEPAD under the guidance of Mbeki, have indeed been a 'beacon to be reckoned' on the political history of the continent. In this regard, Landsberg argues:

Mbeki embarked on a quest for strategic relationships between Africa and the outside world, a new South-South solidarism, a North-South dialogue based not on neo-patrimonialism but on mutual

accountability and responsibility, and a transformed global governance order in which Africa and the South would have a greater voice and the interests protected, and bilateral relations anchored not on hegemony but on mutual respect and common interests (Landsberg 2016:507)

Mbeki undertook the difficult task to champion the NEPAD, as he did with HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe political question, fully aware that he shall be targeted including being criticised. In this regard, it becomes clear that NEPAD is not something which is adopted precisely because it seeks accommodation in global capitalist hegemony on the part of Mbeki and co-architectures, but because it is critical to achieving the African renaissance agenda for transformation and development on the continent. For this reason, the politics of criticism has not stopped Mbeki from championing the African renaissance project and the NEPAD but, instead, it has hardened his ambition to see Africa that is fully liberated and decolonised from all forces of imperialism, colonialism, and global apartheid. A hint of this act of Africa's self-determination is the example of Zimbabwe, where the leading Western countries, including Britain and the United States, put pressure on African governments and the African Union to remove the Mugabe regime, but these advances were treated with disdain by Mbeki's leadership. In the end, this live example demonstrated the potential of NEPAD for the realisation of the African renaissance project, which calls for African solutions to African problems.

Mbeki and Zimbabwe: a case study

Nowhere is Mbeki's pan-Africanism and African renaissance ideology more apparent than in his engagement and political ideas on Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, Mbeki was criticised and appreciated for his deployment of the "African solution to African problems" principle. The March 2008 general elections that resulted in political violence and human rights violations in Zimbabwe is where Mbeki, then a President of South Africa and Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), was deployed by the region to facilitate negotiations for a political solution between ZANU-PF and the MDC. Mbeki's quiet diplomacy on Zimbabwe and towards President Robert Mugabe was seen as protecting him, and he was heavily criticised by Western governments, especially the United States and Britain. There was an

expectation from these governments and within the South African liberal circle that South Africa, under the leadership of Mbeki, would punish Mugabe or hand him over to be disciplined by the International Court of Justice. Mbeki, instead of being dictated by external pressure, stuck to his pan-Africanism and principle of “African solutions to African problems”.

President Mugabe led Zimbabwe to independence and has been in power since 1980. For over 30 years, Zimbabweans have known only one president and that is Mugabe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015a). Zimbabwe, under the leadership of Mugabe and ZANU-PF government, became a synonym for bad governance, tribalism, ethnic violence, corruption, and violation of human rights that led it to degenerate into political and economic crisis. Mugabe’s government embraced political violence as a mode of governance. As argued by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015a:1-2), “[t]ribalism became normalised and exacerbated to the extent that Mugabe’s regime unleashed ethnic violence on the minority Ndebele-speaking people of Matebeleland and the Midlands regions”. Under Mugabe’s leadership, Zimbabweans became one of the poorest nations on the continent because his political allies within his government have been allowed to steal at the expense of ordinary people. Within his ruling party known as the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), Mugabe was feared and rarely challenged, even at his advanced age of 91 years (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015a).

Economically, Zimbabwe was once the strongest economy in Southern Africa region during the first decade of independence. Mnangagwa (2009:112) notes that “Zimbabwe’s growth rate during the eighties was higher than that of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole”. But as a result of the combination of mismanagement and corruption by the leadership of Mugabe in the past three decades, Zimbabwe has become the poorest in the region, if not the entire continent. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe did not begin in 2008 with Western sanctions after electoral fraud and violation of human rights as some analysts seem to project, but it started way back in the 1980s when Mugabe and ZANU-PF came into power and engaged in undemocratic practices and primitive modes of accumulation. In the period 1980-2008, Moeletsi Mbeki (2009:8) argues, “[h]as shown how an African country can travel from relative prosperity to the status of basket case”. Impositions of the Western sanctions

were only the continuation of the already existing political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

Moeletsi Mbeki, a young brother of Thabo Mbeki, has maintained a critical stance on Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Mbeki says the African leaders who proclaimed the much-heralded African Renaissance were caught off-guard and paralysed by Robert Mugabe who set to extinguish it by political violence in Zimbabwe. African Renaissance was announced in 1997 by President Mbeki, and it committed to *the establishment of genuine and stable democracies in Africa, in which the systems of governance will flourish because they derive their authority and legitimacy from the will of the people* in Africa. Mugabe, according to Mbeki, treated with contempt the arrival of this renaissance in Zimbabwe. According to Mbeki (2009:118), “[t]he answer is short-sighted leadership coupled with the fear of the emergence of more democratic political forces in Zimbabwe that might threaten the status quo of southern Africa’s established political elites”. Renaissance, to Mugabe and ZANU-PF, was perceived as threat to power. In this regard Mbeki amplifies in stating:

As Zimbabwean society became increasingly sophisticated and its citizens better educated and more prosperous they demanded a greater say in how their country was run. The spectre of new, well-organised, cosmopolitan and vocal constituencies no longer interested in the politics of race but in the accountability of governance struck fear into the hearts of these elites and explains their solidarity with ZANU-PF and Mugabe. (Mbeki 2009:118)

Moeletsi Mbeki, taking a step further, criticised what he perceived to be a ‘blinded’ Renaissance which protects despotic and corrupt leaders at the expense of the ordinary African citizens. Mbeki is opposed to corruption and human rights violations by African nationalists like Mugabe and ZANU-PF, who feel entitled to power over their citizens because led Africa into independence. He argued:

Southern Africa is unique in Africa in that most of the countries in the region are still ruled by the nationalist parties that fought against colonialism. These ruling parties – be they Zanu-PF in Zimbabwe, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Chama

Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) in Tanzania, the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), the ANC in South Africa or the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia – consider that they are entitled to rule their countries forever by virtue of having been part of the liberation struggle. The attitude of these nationalist parties to the mass of the people is paternalistic and they do not accept that they should be accountable to them. (Mbeki 2009:118-119)

Meanwhile, the evidence of the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe by President Mugabe and ZANU-PF was there, but Mbeki ignored the Western governments and media pressure, which called for President Mugabe to be acted upon, sticking instead to his fierce belief in African self-determination. In this undefiant act, Mbeki earned himself the respect of being “Africa’s true renaissance man” (Landsberg 2016:509). To Mbeki, the “‘African solutions for African problems’ was not just a throw-away line” according to Landsberg (2016:512), but “[i]t was a principled line, and a point of conviction”. Mbeki knew of the human rights violation happening in Zimbabwe under Mugabe’s regime but, instead of giving in to the Western pressure, sustained the principle of ‘African solutions for African problems’. He also knew that Mugabe had taken the land from white people and even about white farmers being murdered, but this did not change his attitude toward the African renaissance project in Zimbabwe. Mbeki himself admitted to these crises that were being reported by Western media, stating: ‘I’m not saying the things that are going on in Zimbabwe are right’, and argued the following:

A million people die in Rwanda and do the white South Africans care? Not a bit. You talk to them about the disaster in Angola, to which the apartheid regime contributed, and they are not interested. Let’s talk about Zimbabwe. Does anyone want to talk about the big disaster in Mozambique, from which it is now recovering? No. Let’s talk about Zimbabwe. You say to them, look at what is happening in the Congo. No, no, no, let’s talk about Zimbabwe. Why? Because 12 white people died! (cited in Roberts 2007:167)

Mpofu (2017:57) notes that “[i]n his philosophy and politics of liberation, Mbeki was not blind to the hand of white imperialists in the politics and history of Zimbabwe”. Despite the legitimate concerns that were being raised by ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe against the Mugabe regime, with many citizens even fleeing the country to seek refuge in nearby countries, Mbeki knew that the Western government stood to benefit most than Zimbabweans themselves should there be a regime change in Zimbabwe. As correctly argued by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015a:2), “[b]ut Western powers are also not helping matters in Zimbabwe. While they collectively rail against Mugabe’s authoritarianism and violation of human rights, they tend to ignore that there was an unattainable situation of ‘constitutionalised injustice’ in which a minority of white Zimbabweans who were privileged by white settler colonialism continued to own vast tracts of land at the expense of the majority of black people who were dispossessed by colonialism”. If anything, Mbeki was not against Mugabe being punished for the crimes of human rights violations, but that had to be carried out by the peoples of Zimbabwe and the African Union other than external Western governments. Indeed, it begs the question as to why these Western governments were not concerned about similar situations in Rwanda and Angola, but Zimbabwe alone their preoccupation.

Among the liberals in South Africa, Mbeki is hated for questioning the Western motives and pointing out the hidden agenda in Zimbabwe, which is propagated in the name of human rights violations and the Right to Protect (R2P). Mbeki has also been criticised for Quiet Diplomacy towards Mugabe and Zimbabwe; his ‘silent diplomacy’ is perceived as nothing but ‘silent approval’ as far as human rights violation is concerned in Zimbabwe. This argument is made clearer by Tony Leon, leader of the Democratic Alliance in South Africa, who said: “[i]f we fail to act and speak out, then it will become clear to the international community that the South African government’s policy of ‘silent diplomacy’ is nothing more than ‘silent approval’” (Roberts 2007:157). But it is not difficult to understand why Mbeki adopted the Quiet Diplomacy. It is precisely because the Quiet Diplomacy worked for South Africa’s own peace talks between the apartheid regime and the ANC-led national liberation movement during the country’s anti-apartheid struggle and transition to democracy. Mbeki stood firm on Quiet Diplomacy towards Zimbabwe because it adheres to non-confrontation African diplomacy.

Mbeki did the rightful thing of upholding the Quiet Diplomacy because it protected the agenda and discussion between ZANU-PF and MDC from the pressure of media and external forces. In most cases where Open Diplomacy is preferred, the media tend to dictate the solutions and often, these are not in the best interest of the parties involved in the conflict. And it is often the pressure of media and external parties that lead the peace talk to breakdown. Mbeki defended the Quiet Diplomacy because only Zimbabweans are capable of finding their own solution, not people from outside. According to Mbeki, the Zimbabwean people needed to be given a space to discuss their issues without prejudice from media and international pressure. Mbeki knew that Open Diplomacy would open the back-door access to Britain, the United States and European Union to push for their interests. According to Mbeki, “[t]he reason Zimbabwe is such a preoccupation in the United Kingdom and the United States and Sweden and everywhere... is because white people died, and white people were deprived of their property” (Roberts 2007:166). So, here was the case of Western interest in Zimbabwe coupled with the drive for vengeance toward President Mugabe.

Mamdani (2016:xxii) argues that “Zimbabwe was arguably one of Mbeki’s greatest successes” of protecting the African integrity and promoting African renaissance. Mamdani and others have observed that the Western involvement in Zimbabwe was motivated by the need for ‘regime change’, and Mbeki succeeded in blocking them. To Mbeki, Mamdani (2016:xxii) explains, “Zimbabwe was the great NO, no to regime change, no to external dictation. It was at the same time a great YES, yes to reform as the alternative to punishment, yes to regionalism as a way to stem the tide of growing external interference”. Indeed, the record of regime change has been more about the crisis than solution everywhere it has been put on the continent. In the case of Zimbabwe, Mamdani (2016:xxii) argues, “regime change would have deepened the internal crisis in Zimbabwe in the name of resolving it”. Roberts (2007:159) argues that “[o]n Zimbabwe, Mbeki is a victim of this truism”. It is not like Mbeki was protecting Mugabe or dictatorship in Africa. Mbeki, according to Roberts (2007:159-160), “has opposed not only externally imposed ‘regime change’ but any suggestion of ‘good governance’ by military coup”. Indeed one of the goals of African renaissance that is pursued by Mbeki was the removal of tyrannic regimes but through democratic processes.

Essop Pahad, one of Mbeki's closest friends and a minister in the government under Mbeki, commented on the issue of Mbeki and Zimbabwe. For Pahad, the unnecessary attention on Mbeki's approach towards Zimbabwe was created and attracted by the hostility of the major Western powers more than the political issues at hand in Zimbabwe. The reason for this hostility, Pahad (2016:105) argues, "[t]hey had decided that they wanted regime change in Zimbabwe, especially the British". Pahad commends Mbeki for standing by the set principles when but the entire ANC had been silenced, in stating that:

One of Thabo's strengths – or what others might regard as a weakness – is that once he is convinced that a position is correct, it does not matter who brings the pressure or how powerful they or it may be. He will not be browbeaten or blackmailed into taking standpoints just because relationships with certain powerful people need to be maintained. (Pahad 2016:105)

Taking a step further, Pahad pointed out that Mbeki was not acting from self-determination in Zimbabwe as some commentators and critics seem to project, but that it was a collective resolution of the ANC to protect Zimbabwe from Western's push for regime change. Pahad said:

The positions Mbeki took on Zimbabwe were consistent with the positions that many of us had taken. Of course, he just articulated it better and of he was the president of the country, but this was a position that we took as the ANC, as government and as a cabinet. If he had taken those positions by himself, he would have been long gone. (Pahad 2016:105)

The political resolution that was agreed to by the Government of National Unity (GNU) between the ZANU-PF and MDC served not only the best interest of Zimbabweans but of the ANC government in South Africa albeit in an indirect way. This point is reinforced by Pahad (2016:105) in stating: "[w]e all understood why a regime change in Zimbabwe would have devastating consequences for us in South Africa; they could do the same thing to us if they did like our policies; they could initiate a regime change". Mbeki, in his political determination for non-interference and principle of Africa's self-

determination, was not complicit to this Western agenda. As Pahad (2016:105) alludes, “[o]ne thing is clear and that is that the superpowers understood that they could not impose their views on Mbeki and his government and the ANC”. It is only now that this reality of Western’s push for regime change in Zimbabwe and the Southern Africa is beginning to be seen by many including those who first criticised his approach towards Mugabe and Zimbabwe. This is known that regime change in Southern Africa is consistent with white liberal agenda in South Africa in its desperate resistance against the policies of black economic empowerment and African-centred development.

Beyond Zimbabwe, key to Mbeki’s politics and practice has been to sustain a critical dialogue with the public truth in his quest for African renaissance, even if this means criticising the African leadership. In Mbeki’s view, the West is not the reason all things are bad in Africa. Although he defends the African leadership against Western bashing, but he does not spare the criticism for despotic and corrupt leaders in Africa. In fact, Mbeki has been the single most vocal leader in condemning African leaders (including President Mugabe) whose actions of corruption and human right violations are hindering the prospects of transformation and development of the continent. In this regarding Mbeki attacked corrupt African leaders in stating:

The time has come that we call a halt to the seemingly socially approved deification of the acquisition of material wealth and the abuse of state power to impoverish the people and deny our continent the possibility to achieve sustainable economic development. Africa cannot renew herself where its upper echelons are a mere parasite on the rest of society, enjoying a self-endowed mandate to use their political power and define the uses of such power such that its exercise ensures that our continent reproduces itself as a periphery of the world economy – poor, underdeveloped and incapable of development. (Mbeki 1998d:297)

When it comes to defending the African renaissance and the best interests of African citizens, Mbeki does not care or mean his words in the debate. He even switches lanes to accommodate his fierce belief in the African renaissance without regard to race or ethnicity. This perhaps is the reason his critics accused him of a flip-flop. On the topic

of economic policies, for instance, Mbeki 'talks left and walks right' according to Patrick Bond, referring to the way in which Mbeki speaks against the Western capitalist system but acted right in adopting the Western systems of governance in Africa, including NEPAD which is seen a neo-liberal strand. Mbeki, in his dealing with the Zimbabwe question, the focus was the bigger picture of the African renaissance. For the reason that Mbeki speaks of the need for an African renaissance, Mboya (2007:80) argues, "[i]t has fallen on the shoulders of the newly liberated South Africa to try and intervene in the wars that cause instability on the continent and to try to bring about peace". African states played a key role in South Africa's independence hence South Africa's self-imposed duty to promote peace, democracy and development on the continent

Conclusion

In this chapter, five topics concerning (a) Stop the Laughter, (b) Perspectives on and of Africa, (c) African Renaissance, New Partnership for Africa's Development, and (e) Mbeki and Zimbabwe: a case study, were explored through the perspectives of Mbeki. Mbeki's speech 'Stop the Laughter' is a topic which relates to Africa's self-inflicted crisis by despotic leadership and corrupt African leaders. Taking an Afro-radical standpoint, Mbeki criticises the African leaders whose actions not only hamper the transformation and development of Africa but make Africa a laughing stock to the world. The speech 'Perspectives on and of Africa' is read as the misrepresentation of Africa by the Western world, and Mbeki as an African committed to defending the distorted image of Africans in the world. Focusing on African Renaissance, Mbeki speaks of the need for the renewal of the continent, Africa defining itself, including self-determination on the political and economic destiny. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the sub-project which Mbeki strategised toward supporting the concept of the African Renaissance, and it is about Africa depending on itself through intra-partnerships and breaking away from Western dependency. Finally, the question of Zimbabwe was deployed to make sense of Mbeki's Africanism. That is, Mbeki defended Mugabe not because there were no human rights violations in Zimbabwe but, instead, wanted an 'African solution to African problems' in Zimbabwe as opposed to being acted upon by Western governments. Essentially, this chapter was about Mbeki's commitment to the African Renaissance, and his actions on the continent.

CHAPTER TEN

General conclusion

Introduction

This chapter constitutes a general conclusion of the study consisting of different sets of conclusions from the nine chapters. This concerns the restatements of the study and further suggests ways for future research toward strengthening the body of knowledge with reference to the focus on Thabo Mbeki.

Restatements of the chapters

This study aimed to privilege, defend, and position Thabo Mbeki as an intellectual and, in particular, a political intellectual. This was done by examining and exploring Mbeki's intellectual thought and perspectives on politics, ideas, and power as the three thematic areas of this study in order to bring to the fore the evidence which could be used to substantiate this claim. The study argued that in examining the intellectual thought of a political thinker or politician it is necessary to move beyond the conventional and traditional definition of a scholar intellectual. And the study used the intellectual thoughts of Mbeki and ideas as the lens through which to understand the realities of post-1994 South Africa. A key question underpinning this study was whether or not the intellectual thought of Mbeki has indeed been fundamental to understanding South African political life. Several conclusions have been reached in the various chapters of this study, beginning with those who found Mbeki's political thought to be in line with the function of intellectual practice.

McKaiser (2010:189) found Mbeki to be "a very cerebral president who buried his deepest thoughts in the written and spoken word". Landsberg (2016:509) argued that Mbeki "was a president with a tremendous intellect and a tireless capacity to work – he was one who burned the midnight oil throughout in life". For Asante (2018:214), Mbeki is a "distinguished African intellectual and politician". As a political intellectual, Mbeki is understood to be a politician whose political activism mixed with a depth of intellectual reflections and has often been likened to earlier African leaders as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, and Kenneth Kaunda. Mangcu (2008:47-

48), one of the critics of Mbeki, found Mbeki to be an “intellectual leader – a philosopher-king” because “he is also the leader of a government and a political party branding a new national philosophy in much the same way that people such as Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Kaunda and Nyerere did”. But often, the scholars and commentators who refer to Mbeki as an intellectual tend not to provide an explanation against which the intellectual persona of Mbeki has been established. Therefore, this study engaged in the re-reading of how Mbeki has been formed and established as a political intellectual in order to fill this existing knowledge gap.

In Chapter Two, this study introduced the theory of travel and travel as theory as expounded by Edward Said to explain how the power of travel can transform one’s own thinking. Indeed, this theory was most appropriate to provide a backdrop against which the intellectual formation of Mbeki may be traced and analysed. It is in the perspective of this theory that Mbeki, like Fanon, Cabral and other post-continental philosophers of liberation, has been powerfully transformed by tri-continental travel into a liberating and humanising thought. Achille Mbembe (2012), as pointed out in the chapter, argued that Fanon’s thought became ‘metamorphic’ because of his tri-continental travel exposure beyond the continent of his birth. In Mbembe’s view, in his travel to Europe and Africa from the Caribbean, Fanon had benefitted from the different philosophies and strands of thoughts. As such, this post-continental exposure has enabled him to develop an expanded idea of a free world that was not narrow or limited to a specific region. “For Fanon, to think meant traveling along the same road as others towards a world that was perpetually and irrevocably created in and through struggle” according to Mbembe (2012:20). It is in thinking through Said that Mbeki’s thinking may have been “nourished and sustained” by travel of the world.

The deployment of the analysis of post-continental philosophy from Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2006) was to strengthen the reading of Said’s theory around which Mbeki in his travel of the world may have transformed the thought of the same. Those political thinkers who have travelled and lived in the various parts of the world and had been exposed to the different thoughts and cultures are what Maldonado-Torres labels as post-continental thinkers or philosophers. The term post-continental philosophy is defined by Maldonado-Torres (2006:1) as a style of thinking that “defies rigid boundaries” of the continent within which the thinker is geographically located. In a

similar way, Mbeki's thinking was profoundly strengthened by the period he lived in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Africa. He became not a narrow Africanist but a cosmopolitan African who was a post-continental and planetary citizen. In his self-explanation of what it means to be an African, Mbeki ([1996]1998a:32) asserted: "I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land... the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture is part of my essence". Mbeki's thinking does not suffer the nativist syndrome because of his travel exposure as far as Said's travel theory is concerned. Indeed, this exposure is evident in his liberating and humanising thought, which advocates for inclusion rather than exclusion of humanity, even broadening African definition toward Western racists.

In Chapter Three, this study took a step back to contextualising the nature of Mbeki's intellectual thought and practice within the context of a black intellectual tradition that dates back to the New African Movement, which started with Tiyo Soga (1862) and ended with Ezekiel Mphahlele's generation (1960). South African cultural historian Ntongela Masilela is acclaimed and credited to be a foremost scholar who researched seriously and even developed a comprehensive scholarship that archives the history of the New African Movement and the black intellectual tradition on the political history of African intellectuals in South Africa. According to Masilela's (2010) account, the New African intellectuals operated under the New African Movement, which consisted of writers, political and religious leaders, artists, teachers, scientists, and graduates. These intellectuals called themselves New Africans, specifically because they had been educated under the Western missionary churches-turned schools. This generation distinguished itself from Old Africans since they were engaged with creating knowledge using the acquisition of modern Western education and training rather than finding consolation in the old ways of traditional societies.

Indeed, Mbeki is part of the last generation in the long South African history of black South African intellectuals who had been educated in mission education in Lovedale in the Western Cape before the advent of apartheid's Bantu Education system in the 1950s. The educated generation of black South Africans undertook to define themselves as "New Africans" because they were able to adopt both Western modernity and African tradition in their lifestyle and practices. The New African

intellectuals, Masilela (2010:1) noted, “did not necessarily reject tradition but attempted to reconcile it to the historical imperatives of the progressive and new ways of formulating and creating political and cultural practices”. As narrated by Gevisser (2009:26), “[t]he 1930s was a time when black South Africans of Govan Mbeki’s class began to reject, forcefully, the colonial aspirations of their own parents; they discarded the identity of the ‘black Englishman’—which, ironically, gave them the personal autonomy to do so—and replaced it with that of the ‘New African’”. It is due to his parents and mission education that Mbeki developed the attitude of New African in his consciousness and political practice.

The influence of New Africa Intellectuals operating under the New Africa Movement on Mbeki lay bare in his “I am an African” and “African Renaissance” speeches. These were speeches inspired by the earlier leaders of the ANC, who had in their speeches called for the restoration of African identity and the renewal of the continent. As argued by Gevisser (2009:29), “[m]any years later, Thabo Mbeki would place himself squarely in this Seme-Lembede tradition: ‘I am an African’ ..., quoting Seme directly...”. Indeed, the idea of both ‘I am an African’ and ‘African Renaissance’ in Mbeki’s speeches is taken straight from Seme and Lembede’s writings on the moral call to unite the African people around the political idea of African origin and shared struggles. Both Seme and Lembede, like Mbeki, were also inspired by previous leaders who came before them. Their point of reference was Tiyo Soga, regarded as the father of cultural nationalism and the black South African intellectual tradition among black intellectuals in South Africa (Mangcu 2016). In his own self-definition, Mbeki sees his political thought as a product of the teachings and example of the African leaders who came before him in the ANC and the broader African movement.

Chapter Four concluded that the intellectual thought of Mbeki is very much a product of socialisation, travels, and teachings. Indeed, Mbeki’s birth and socialisation in apartheid South Africa exposed him to the general experience and the injustice of the black South Africans who were subject to the racist policies of apartheid. The young Mbeki was forced into understanding the suffering of black people and the world of hardships through his role of letter reading in the village. Many of the villagers of Mbewuleni were poor and illiterate peasants with no schooling background. The Mbeki children, including and especially Thabo, often assisted as the letter reader and writer

from the home shop, forcing them into understanding the miserable lives of the people. The young Thabo helped to read and write letters for family members working far in the farms and mines. The villagers, with no phone services in Mbewuleni, they relied on letters to stay in touch with their families. Most of them came to the Mbeki store to be assisted. It is this childhood experience and the hardship of life that quickly introduced Thabo to the world of hardship and indeed strengthened his level of consciousness.

In addition, Mbeki's intellectual thought was further strengthened by the travel of the world, which benefitted him not only through the travel experience, but epistemic and ideological growth on the part of the political thinker. Mbeki has, through his education at the University of Sussex, become exposed to the liberal world. He learned the British political culture and practices and especially the capitalist economic system as practised across Western Europe. Mbeki was also a communist ideologue, having undergone communist training in the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. He returned back to Africa in several countries, including Nigeria and Zambia, working for the underground ANC. All these travels and learnings equipped Mbeki with what William Mporu (2017a:50) termed 'a rounded sensibility of the world'. Of course, the institutional tradition of the ANC has indeed been fundamental to the development of Mbeki's intellectual growth. Mbeki, even as he travelled the world, ANC has always been a point of reference for everything he did. It is important to consider these aspects as a collective when analysing the intellectual thought of Mbeki in order to gain an overall understanding of his thinking and his takes on various issues affecting society.

In chapter five, "I am an African" speech by Thabo Mbeki, delivered on the occasion of the adoption of the country's Constitution on behalf of the ANC-led government, forms part of Mbeki's own thinking towards the inclusive notion of African identity in South Africa. The speech contributed to what can be regarded as a "second moment" in South Africa, the first moment being the country's attainment of democracy in 1994, and the third moment an African Renaissance. Affirmation of African identity is informed by Mbeki's Africanism, the concept that highlights a profound influence on him from the old variant of African nationalism within the ANC under the influence of Isaka Pixley Ka Seme and Anthony Lembede. Mbeki, in his 'I am an African' speech, advocated for a new South Africa which is not burdened by race, blackness or

historical origin of a person. Instead, it should be one that must embrace humanity for all. For Mbeki, the European settlers who instigated the extreme injustice through colonisation and apartheid, they too, are Africans. The Indian migrants, the Chinese merchants, to all of them, South Africa is their home, and like the indigenous peoples of this continent, they too are Africans. Mbeki's emphasis is premised on the notion that diverse peoples of South Africa – black and white – unite to create a rainbow nation.

What was also engaged in this chapter is the debate by the South African public in response to the speech in light of the current state of post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard, three observations were made. First is the ongoing tendency to define the speech singularly as poetic and beautiful with finely crafted grammar and emotions. The upshot of this observation tends to ignore or exclude the political appeal that the speech is intended for. Secondly, the South African public, especially blacks, are disappointed by the Constitution for failure to transform the South African society economically. Specifically, this disappointment arises from the view that the Constitution has only delivered the part of reconciliation in favour of white people but no transformation as far as the black condition is concerned. To Siphon Seepe and Xolela Mangcu, the criticism lies on Mbeki alone, whose 'I am an African' speech brings and bears to defend the Constitution. According to them, Mbeki's speech is devoid of political truth, arguing that it assures white fears and avoids the injustices done to blacks. And thirdly, it has been argued that a fair assessment of Mbeki's speech must take into consideration the political context in which the speech was articulated – thus, the period when the country was buoyed by the euphoria of post-1994 democracy. In addition, it argued that 'I am an African' must be read together with the 'Two Nations' speech in order to fully understand Mbeki's intellectual engagement with the South African post-apartheid national project.

Chapter Six examined and explored the political idea of post-apartheid South Africa using the perspectives of Mbeki. In this chapter, the attempt has been to provide a critical reading of the works written by Mbeki during the advent of post-1994 South Africa. The chapter reveals that Mbeki, as much as the ANC government, is satisfied with the transition to the post-1994 era and its political concession of a liberal constitution, including rule of law, as some of the things which inform the success of

the post-1994 state. Indeed, post-apartheid South Africa is hailed as one of the most successful constitutional democracies in the world, and it presents itself to the world as a free and prosperous society where everyone can enjoy freedom and participation in the nation building. There is no doubt that Mbeki, as much as Nelson Mandela, played a pivotal role that helped South Africa avoid the armed revolution as anticipated and steering the country towards finding a peaceful long-lasting solution to democracy.

In Chapter Seven, Mbeki is not very impressed with the manner in which the post-1994 state has been unfolding since 1994. His displeasure is evident in the “Two Nations” speech in which he problematises and characterises the post-apartheid South Africa as a country of two nations. According to Mbeki, the twoness of South African society is found in white privilege and social luxury in one hand, and on the other hand, black dispossession of land, economy, and labour as black majority continue to languish in poverty and suffering. Mbeki feels a sense of betrayal by white population who did not return the favour of economic transformation to black counterpart after the latter’s part of racial reconciliation. Indeed, the blacks are in political terms a majority in South Africa, and whites a minority, but in economic terms are in control of economic mainstream. In the chapter, Mbeki called for the topics related to the racism and economy to be debated openly rather than be avoided if South Africa is to translate into a fully post-apartheid society which it was envisioned for. The state of post-1994 democracy has not yet delivered the social and economic freedom as far as Mbeki is concerned.

Chapter Eight concerns the notion of power, and it was examined in relation to Mbeki’s thoughts and ideas. The struggle for power is ongoing in South Africa, and this time, it is about economic freedom. Even Mbeki admits that the post-1994 democracy only delivered political power since the economic power remains under the control of the white minority. Mbeki, in the light of the current ongoing struggles for black power, argues for such demands for power to take place within the context of the country’s constitution and rule of law as opposed to political intolerance and violence, which may lead to civil war. For Mbeki, the consolidation of democracy is the only means of ensuring political stability. The armed equilibrium that became the foundation of the political settlement on the part of the ANC and National Party required that the ANC compromise on some of its longstanding policies and political practice. The popular

politics of intolerance and violence had to make way for the democratic practices, especially in relation to the contested interests on issues and ideas relating to the economy, as opposed to resorting to fighting every time there are different views. The constitution and the democracy are what bound Mbeki to advocate for the notion of black power, which is located within the context of the country's constitution.

Finally, Chapter Nine concerns Mbeki's thoughts and perspectives on the African continent and beyond. Mbeki used the concept of the African Renaissance as his intellectual currency to challenge the misrepresentation of Africa and the NEPAD to promote the continent's self-reliance rather than continued dependence on Western countries. Mbeki's project of the African Renaissance is about "Africans defining themselves" (Mbeki 2002a:72), and the NEPAD is the "third moment" in Africa's post-colonial history. The "second moment" is anti-colonial struggles and independence since the 1950s, and the "first moment" the Pan-Africanism and Negritude that dates far back to the 1800s. Without a doubt, Mbeki is one of the most important political and intellectual leaders on the continent, his voice is the intellectual heritage which reminds the continent about its past, present, and future. He has been and continues to hold the continent together even after retirement from political office. He is still alive, and may he continue to have the strength to help the continent overcome its challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a need for in-depth further research on Mbeki's thoughts and intellectual ideas. This need arises from the view that, in terms of what is been or has already been written on Mbeki, too much attention has been on his political life and not on the embodiment of thought and ideas. This study has argued that the interpretation of Mbeki's thinking as political rather than intellectual is not accidental, but a condition of racism created by an established act of epistemic erasure. It is important to engage in the form of writing that deliberately seeks to privilege the African thinkers and scholars in scholarship and intellectual terms. This study, as much as it concerns the intellectual biography of Mbeki, is an attempt toward this project of privileging Africa thinkers and their intellectual contribution. Future research should look into the figures such as Govan Mbeki and Steve Biko, treating them as embodiment of thought rather than political subjects, as part of contribution to the

frontier of African scholarship. This study concludes by asserting that Mbeki and others whose original contribution to African politics is reduced to political subject, is an entry point to future research on route.

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