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# What Happened to the African Renaissance? The Challenges of Development in the Twenty-First Century

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Every so often African leaders and thinkers rediscover and reaffirm the future. It is invoked by all sorts of names, this future, names of hope and redemption: the African revolution, reawakening, reconstruction, rebirth, regeneration, renewal, resurrection, revival, and renaissance. These proclamations are part political propaganda, part cultural puffery, and part collective prayer for new beginnings, for Africa's modern cruel history to pause and change course. They express a long, recurrent yearning for a usable future, aching deep in the consciousness of a people with painful memories of suffering, struggle, and survival, and are simultaneously a cry of anguish and a call to arms, a declaration of both panic and purpose, a desperate and determined battle to reclaim Africa's history and humanity so cruelly seized by Europe through slavery, colonialism, and neocolonialism, a will to sustainable development, to viable African modernities.

Each generation articulates this powerful, perpetual dream in its own way, reflecting no doubt the weight of the historical moment as manifested in the prevailing social and spatial dynamics of the dominant challenges and possibilities. Today, the dreams and discourses of the African renaissance are driven as much by Afro-optimism as by Afro-pessimism, by both the positive and the negative political and economic changes that have taken place in post-colonial African history. On the one hand, they represent a celebration of the decolonization of the 1960s, the democratization of the 1990s, and intermittent development strides. On the other, they reflect the enduring deprecation of Africa in the Euro-American imaginary rooted in the racisms of slavery and colonialism, as well as concern and censure by Africa's dispirited friends and delirious foes pretending to be friends of the continent's recurrent economic, political, and social crises.

Nelson Mandela, the revered icon of the South African "miracle," the transition from apartheid to a multiracial democracy, first gave the concept of the African renaissance its resonance when he used it in 1994 at a summit of the Organization of African Unity, in Tunisia; he elaborated on it three years later in a splendid lecture at the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies. But his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, who succeeded him as president in 1999, became identified as the architect of the idea of the African renaissance because he spoke so frequently and eloquently about it.<sup>1</sup>

This essay was first presented as a public lecture in the 2008 Kiplam Lectures series, "The Future of Africa Considered," Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 21 November 2008. I thank the organizers of the series, especially Philip Zachernuk,

for the invitation and the audience for their avid interest in Africa and penetrating questions.

1. See Nelson Mandela, "Renewal and Renaissance—towards a New World Order," [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela)

Comparative Studies of  
South Asia, Africa and  
the Middle East  
Vol. 29, No. 2, 2009  
doi:10.1215/1089201x-2009-001  
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No sooner had the idea caught on than cold water was poured on it. In May 2000 the *Economist*, the haughty British magazine, published a notorious cover story that contemptuously called Africa “the hopeless continent.” What followed was an avalanche of bad history, discredited anthropology, questionable sociology, sterile economics, and vulgar political science about Africa’s inhospitable environments, endemic “tribalism,” vacuous states, ferocious tyrants, deformed psyches, and beneficent but misguided donors.<sup>2</sup> The story provoked widespread outrage in the Pan-African world.

In this essay I discuss the trajectory of the African renaissance as an idea and a project, a discourse and a process, a task that in essence entails examining Africa’s postcolonial development paradigms, performances, and prospects. As a historian, trained to dissect the messy past, I am not comfortable crystal gazing into the unpredictable future. Indeed, since the future will continue long after our presence has turned into dusts of memory, I find it inadvisable to prognosticate much about Africa’s development challenges and possibilities even for our new century, which is only ten years old.

My presentation is divided into four parts. I begin with a brief survey of the idea of the African renaissance, its history, and its resurgence in the 1990s. Then I examine Africa’s complex and contradictory inheritances of colonialism and nationalism, out of which postcolonial Africa was molded. I follow with a brief analysis of Africa’s development ideologies and experiences since independence. I conclude by trying to capture the current challenges of Africa’s renaissance and development as the new century unfolds.

### Africa’s Search and Struggle for a Renaissance

The notion of the African renaissance caught the African and world imaginations in the mid-1990s, in the aftermath of the demise of apartheid in South Africa. The end of the nightmare

of racial tyranny, without the bloodshed feared by both its friends and foes, marked an incredible moment that unleashed, even if fleetingly for a world mired in cynicism and despair, relief and hope that the future could be freed from the clutches of history, that Africa could be uplifted from its abyss. Not surprisingly, it was in South Africa that the African renaissance captured passionate discussion and debate among politicians, journalists, academics, and other members of the chattering classes.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of an African renaissance had a much older pedigree, going back to the founders of Pan-Africanist thought in the late nineteenth century, such as Edward Wilmot Blyden. In South Africa itself it was mooted as early as 1905 by Pixley ka Isaka Seme, one of the founders of the African National Congress, who in an essay advocated for “the regeneration of Africa,” and by the Nigerian nationalist Nnamdi Azikiwe, who in 1937 in *Renascent Africa* called for a “new Africa,” to be based on five pillars: spiritual balance, social regeneration, economic determination, mental emancipation, and national self-determination.<sup>4</sup> After World War II, as nationalism gained momentum and seemed poised for victory, the idea of an African renaissance captured the imaginations of Africa’s leading scholars and nationalists.

In 1948 the renowned Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop, in his essay “When Can We Talk of an African Renaissance?” argued that Africa was poised for a renaissance.<sup>5</sup> His compatriot Léopold Sédar Senghor, the poet and later president (1960–80), saw the negritude movement, which he helped found, as essential for an African cultural renaissance, not as an end in itself but as a necessary stage in the dialectical process of constructing a universal civilization. From Ghana came the visionary injunctions of Kwame Nkrumah for the creation of a new “African personality” forged through conscientism, an intellectual and cultural synthesis and

/1997/sp970711c.html (accessed 5 October 2000); Thabo Mbeki, “Speech by President Mbeki at the Launch of the African Renaissance Institute,” [www.polity.org.za/govdocs/speeches/1999/sp1011.html](http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/speeches/1999/sp1011.html) (accessed 5 October 2000); and Mbeki, “Democracy and Renaissance in Africa: In Search of an Enduring Pax Africana,” [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2000/tm1003.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2000/tm1003.html) (accessed 15 October 2000).

2. “Hopeless Africa,” *Economist*, 11 May 2000, [www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=E1\\_PPPQNJ](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_PPPQNJ).

3. This discussion on the African renaissance is derived from a much larger study in Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Rethinking Africa’s Globalization*, vol. 2, *The Developmental Challenges* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, forthcoming), chap 4.

4. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Renascent Africa* (1937; repr., London: Cass, 1968). Pixley ka Isaka Seme, “The Regeneration of Africa,” *Royal African Society*, 4 (1905–6): 75–81.

5. Cheikh Anta Diop, *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in African Culture and Development 1946–1960* (London: Kamak House, 1996).

reconstitution of Africa's triple heritage of traditional, Western, and Islamic cultures, guided by socialism and Pan-Africanism.

Alongside the proclamations of Africa's revolutionary thinkers, in the 1950s and 1960s some of Africa's Euro-American friends evoked the possibilities of an African renaissance. Among them was the indefatigable British Africanist historian and publicist Basil Davidson, who in 1955 in *The African Awakening* celebrated the rise of African nationalism.<sup>6</sup> In 1961 the radical socialist Roger Woddis in *Africa: The Lion Awakes* hailed the vanguard role of African trade unions in the nationalist struggle and the solidarity shown by international communist trade unions.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the decade, Leonard Barnes argued in *African Renaissance* that beneath the apparent political disorder, economic dislocations, and social despair trumpeted by casual observers and the continent's eternal detractors, a new Africa was germinating.<sup>8</sup>

It is revealing that more than a half century ago the struggle for independence from colonial rule, with its brightest prospects then concentrated in West Africa, inspired visions of the African reawakening. In the 1990s the struggle for development in a globalized capitalist world, whose best chances appeared to be centered in South Africa, stirred hopes of Africa's reconstruction. In addition to the liberation of South Africa from apartheid, Mandela pointed to the wave of democratization sweeping across the continent, rising economic growth rates, and the consolidation of regional economic associations as clear signs of the continent's renewal. The African renaissance was critical, he argued, to the construction of a new world order, one that was more equitable and secure. This renaissance was quite unlike the earlier renaissance of Western Europe that with ambitions of global expansion and domination resulted in the ravages of colonization in Africa and elsewhere in the world. For Mandela, the African renaissance entailed the recovery of Africa's historical initiative in the reconstruction of the continent itself and the creation of a new world order.

Mbeki identified four conditions that heralded Africa's renaissance: first, the completion of the decolonization project with the liberation of South Africa; second, the recognition among the African masses and middle classes of the bankruptcy of neocolonialism; third, the end of the Cold War and major power rivalries over global hegemony; and fourth, the acceleration of the process of globalization. United by their traumatic histories of slavery, imperialism, and neocolonialism, and by the postcolonial experiences of political repression and instability, the formation of predatory elites, mounting indebtedness, and declining living standards, African countries were united in their desires for renewal and an end to the marginalization of the continent in world affairs.

Specifically, the agenda of the African renaissance was to promote democratization and political accountability, peace and stability, and sustainable economic development; to resolve the scourges of indebtedness and HIV/AIDS; to ensure the emancipation of women; to further cultural creativity; and to strengthen the independence of African countries and the continent in their relations with the major powers. Mbeki predicted that it would be a complex struggle opposed by reactionary forces from both inside and outside Africa and that progress would be accompanied by occasional setbacks. But with commitment and leadership and by drawing on the great struggles and victories of the past, the renaissance would eventually be achieved in the twenty-first century, which would be an African century.

The message was electrifying and was seized with alacrity by other African leaders anxious to carry on a new millennial mission and to burnish their visionary credentials in a reactionary age, from newly minted democrats, such as President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, to discredited despots, such as President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. The heads of continental and international agencies such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa soon joined the palaver. In the ebullient

6. Basil Davidson, *The African Awakening* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955).

7. Roger Woddis, *Africa: The Lion Awakes* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1961).

8. Leonard Barnes, *African Renaissance* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969).

vision of Kingsley Y. Amoaka, “Overall, in the decades ahead we will live in a predominantly urban Africa, an Africa of business, media and science. An Africa where governance is more localized and more shared with civil society.” He argued vigorously that turning the renaissance into reality required “harnessing our storehouse of intellectual talent and expertise, be it on the continent or in the Diaspora.”<sup>9</sup>

Not to be left behind, the World Bank, Africa’s eternal overseer, also pledged its commitment to the African renaissance and to helping Africa claim the twenty-first century. In a series of speeches, Callisto Madavo, the World Bank’s vice president for Africa, lauded Africa’s turnaround from stagnation to growth and from dictatorship to democracy.<sup>10</sup> The World Bank weighed in with its collective institutional verdict in June 2000 in a glossy report titled *Can Africa Claim the Twenty-First Century?* Its answer was a qualified “yes, Africa can claim the new century.” Africa, the report enthused, “has been experiencing its own Renaissance, in the true sense of a rebirth of thought on governance and development policies, particularly in the context of an increasingly globalized and competitive world.”<sup>11</sup> Predictably, the World Bank and its “donor” friends saw themselves as partners of Africa’s development and not as perpetrators of its underdevelopment.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s the African renaissance had, indeed, become an academic growth industry, the subject of numerous conferences and publications. Many of the studies, even while being extremely critical of the conception and feasibility of the renaissance, took it seriously. The scholarly literature exhibited three tendencies: (1) works seeking to trace the historical origins and development of the concept; (2) studies attempting to raise fundamental questions about the nature, desir-

ability, and possibilities of the renaissance; and (3) empirical and prescriptive analyses of the renaissance covering specific sectors and institutions.<sup>12</sup>

Many writers conceived the African renaissance broadly as a depiction not of a past epoch, as in the historiography of the European Renaissance, but of a future one. One describes history already made, and the other history to be made or in the making. The South African historical anthropologist Bernard M. Magubane saw parallels between the European and African renaissances insofar as both were responses to profound crises. In the case of Europe, the region was rocked in the fourteenth century by political turmoil and conflicts and natural disasters, including the Black Death of 1348–50, which wiped out a third of the population, and its economies were tottering from the instabilities of the feudal system, recurrent famines, and peasant revolts. Africa, he suggested, was emerging from its own deep crises engendered by the histories of slavery, colonialism, and capitalist underdevelopment.<sup>13</sup>

Implied in many of the analyses was the injunction that the African renaissance must transcend the social and historical limitations and contradictions of the European Renaissance, which nourished the spirit of inquiry among Europeans while bringing misery to multitudes elsewhere. It gave the European bourgeoisie the freedom to loot, plunder, and dehumanize the rest of the world in the name of a perverted humanism. The African renaissance must extend the boundaries of human freedom, equality, justice, and development. One overriding theme of the literature is the modernization imperative, that Africa needs sustainable development.

The iconoclastic Kenyan intellectual Ali Mazrui, in his inimitable eclectic and provocative style, argued that the African renaissance

9. K. Y. Amoaka, “The African Development Forum—Dialogue for the African Renaissance,” [www.uneca.org/eca\\_resources/Speeches/amoako/99/1011AdressbyMrAmoako.htm](http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/Speeches/amoako/99/1011AdressbyMrAmoako.htm) (accessed 11 October 1999).

10. See Callisto Madavo, “Regaining the African Dream,” 4 December 1998, [www.worldbank.org/afr/speeches/cm981204.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/speeches/cm981204.htm); and “Africa on the Eve of the New Millennium: The World Bank’s Role in Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Africa,” 30 April 1999, [www.worldbank.org/afr/speeches/cm990430.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/speeches/cm990430.htm).

11. World Bank, *Can Africa Claim the Twenty-First Century?* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000), 14.

12. For book-length studies, see the following: Eddy Maloka and Elisabeth le Roux, eds., *Problematizing the African Renaissance* (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2000); Washington A. J. Okumu, *The African Renaissance: History, Significance, and Strategy* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002); Fantu Cheru, *African Renaissance: Roadmaps to the Challenge of Globalization* (London: Zed Books, 2002); and E. Ike Udogu, *African Renaissance in the Millennium: The*

*Political, Social, and Economic Discourses on the Way Forward* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

13. Bernard M. Magubane, “The African Renaissance in Historical Perspectives,” in *African Renaissance*, ed. Malegaparu W. Makgoba (Johannesburg: Mafube/Tafelberg, 1999), 10–36.

needed three major revolutions in skills, values, and gender relations. In an increasingly knowledge-based global economy, the power of skills is self-evident. The cultural question is also central to dependency, which for Mazrui entails the processes of indigenization, domestication, diversification, and regionalism within Africa and between Africa and the global South and counterpenetration of the global North. He postulated that southern Africa, anchored around South Africa, would probably lead the Pan-Africanism of economic integration; eastern Africa that of lingo-cultural integration because of the existence of Swahili; northern Africa that of political integration because of the region's shared religion, language, culture, and history; and western Africa that of military integration because of the precedent set by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).<sup>14</sup>

The topics discussed in the literature on the African renaissance are diverse, indeed, ranging from economic development, constitutionalism, theology, and genetics to regional integration and African foreign policies, just to mention a few. Political reform and economic development are widely seen as key to the African renaissance. Not surprising is that intense popular interest in the idea was expressed in South Africa. But even in South Africa the range of popular opinion runs from the dismissive and cynical to the supportive and enthusiastic, mirroring the divergent social, cultural, ideological, class, gender, and racial dispositions and divisions in a society undergoing a difficult transition. Outside of South Africa, attitudes toward the African renaissance have been conditioned by popular attitudes toward South Africa and the national mood.

Certainly, until the late 1990s, the term *renaissance* was not part of the vocabulary of most Nigerians, preoccupied as they were with strug-

gles to free themselves from General Sani Abacha's unprecedented reign of terror and kleptocracy. To Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's great man of letters, there could be no renaissance amid the slaughter ravaging various parts of the continent.<sup>15</sup> Nigerians willing to dream of a renaissance saw it—as was the case in South Africa, Nigeria's archrival for continental leadership—as a three-pronged process involving the revitalization of Nigeria itself, its regional grouping ECOWAS, and the continent as a whole. The Nigerian media discourse on the African renaissance focused on the indispensable role that the African diaspora can play, a dimension less well developed in South Africa. In the northern region of the continent, people were more likely to speak of an Islamic, rather than an African, renaissance.

In reading the African press from the 1990s, I was struck by the easy substitution of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism, according to the vagaries of daily news, a condition that speaks to the deep concerns of Africans and their investment in the current state and the future of their communities, countries, and continent. In Kenya, the African renaissance was largely dismissed because of a distrust of South Africa and despair with Kenya's own political situation. But a historic renaissance cannot be measured by a tracking of daily events. A longer view is needed; a deeper probe is required to unravel and mold the new social energies and visions emerging from the violent shakeout of Africa's current order.

For a moment in the mid-1990s, some sections of the Western press, caught in the frenzy of the African renaissance, lifted their age-old blinders and saw "Africa rising," to quote the lead story in the American weekly magazine *Time* of 30 March 1998. After the usual litany of Africa's traumas and tribulations, the story affirmed that "academics, diplomats and bankers who do business there talk seriously these days about an African renaissance. A grand word, it

14. Ali Mazrui, "The African Renaissance: A Triple Legacy of Skills, Values, and Gender," [www.africacentre.org.uk/renaissance.htm](http://www.africacentre.org.uk/renaissance.htm) (accessed 15 October 2000).

15. Wole Soyinka, "Amid the Slaughter, There Is No African Renaissance," *Daily Mail and Guardian*, 3 September 1999, [www.mg.co.za/mg/news/99sep1/3sep-renaissance.html](http://www.mg.co.za/mg/news/99sep1/3sep-renaissance.html).

turns out, for the slow, fragile, difficult changes that are giving the continent a second chance. But the description fits. Out of sight of our narrow focus on disaster, another Africa is rising, an Africa that works.”<sup>16</sup>

But Afro-pessimism is an insidious cancer that sooner or later repels hope or good news from Africa. In October 2000 the *New York Times* announced that Africa was “back to despair.”<sup>17</sup> The message repeated what the *Economist* had earlier stated at great length and with savage glee, that Africa was “the hopeless continent.” Angry responses were swift both in cyberspace and in print. Many censured the magazine for its wild generalizations. One wondered how a reputable publication could “arbitrarily condemn the 54 countries of Africa and their 800 million inhabitants as ‘hopeless.’”<sup>18</sup> The London-based *New African* magazine published a special cover story, “Reporting Africa,” in which it condemned Western media coverage of Africa for its selectivity, sensationalism, stereotyping, and use of especially denigrating vocabulary.<sup>19</sup>

Eight years later, in October 2008, the *Economist* recanted in a lead article titled “There Is Hope”: “Once described by this newspaper, perhaps with undue harshness, as ‘the hopeless continent,’ it [Africa] could yet confound its legion of gloomsters and show that its oft-heralded renaissance is not just another false dawn prompted by the passing windfall of booming commodity prices, but the start of something solid and sustainable. Despite its manifold and persistent problems of lousy governments and erratic climates, Africa has a chance of rising.”<sup>20</sup> But old habits die hard. Upon its return to Africa, the *Economist* found hope amid the continent’s alleged continuing marginality. The narrative of marginality confuses Africa’s lack of benefits from its global engagements for a lack of engagement itself: Africa has been deeply integrated into the world economy since slavery

and colonialism, out of which the global economy was molded in the sixteenth century.

Clearly, the African renaissance as a project and a process, an idea and an injunction, has posed challenges that are both political and philosophical, concrete and conceptual, about renewal in economic and epistemic terms and of social and structural conditions, about the development and democratization of African institutions in an increasingly globalized world that rewards technological and scientific progress and economic productivity and competitiveness. At heart, then, the African renaissance is about Africa’s development, a question that has preoccupied Africa’s leaders and intellectuals since the continent’s tragic encounter with Europe in modern times.

### The Inheritance of Colonialism and Nationalism

Contemporary Africa is simply incomprehensible if one does not understand the complex, complimentary, and combative histories of colonialism and nationalism. Colonialism restructured African economies, politics, societies, and cultures with varied degrees of intensity. Economically, it left behind underdeveloped economies characterized by high levels of internal disarticulation, uneven development, and external dependency. The newly independent countries faced the challenges of rectifying these structural deformities, of promoting national development: how to build national economies without colonial despotism and how to realize the Pan-African dreams of regional integration as part of a strategy of increasing the leverage of balkanized Africa and engaging the world economy on stronger and more favorable terms.

Politically, colonialism bequeathed autocratic states without nations, state-nations that needed to be turned into nation-states. Thus one of the primary challenges for the new post-colonial states was nation building: how to turn

16. See Johanna McGeary and Marguerite Michaels, “Africa Rising,” *Time*, 24 June 2001, [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101980330-138851,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101980330-138851,00.html).

17. Hilary Mckenzie, “Back to Despair,” *New York Times Upfront*, 4 October 1999.

18. “Hopeless Africa,” *Economist*, 11 May 2000, [www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=E1\\_PPPQNJ](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_PPPQNJ).

19. “Reporting Africa,” *New African*, July/August 2000.

20. “There Is Hope,” *Economist*, 8 October 2008, [www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=12381162](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12381162)

the divided multiethnic, multicultural, multireligious, and multiracial cartographic contraptions of colonialism into coherent nation-states. Another was the democratization of state power and politics: how to wean the state from its deeply entrenched colonial authoritarian propensities and practices. In short, the political class and intelligentsia faced pressures to create new cultures and economies of politics, production, and participation. There were of course no easy blueprints from either the precolonial past or the immediate colonial present; the future had to be invented. And the neocolonial and neoliberal order proved exceedingly difficult for the postcolonial leviathan to manage, let alone reshape in the demanding dreams of nationalism.

African nationalism sought economic and political renewal, liberation from the debilitations of colonialism that had shackled Africa's historical and humanistic agency. Nationalism is one of the great intellectual and ideological forces that gave rise to postcolonial African states as they are currently configured and the imperatives for self-determination and development that have driven African political cultures and imaginaries. In the course of the twentieth century, African nationalism encompassed, at various stages, struggles to *retain* existing African sovereignties, to *reform* colonialism, to *remove* colonialism, and to *recreate* independence. It stands to reason that the timing, trajectories, and facilitating factors of these phases differed from colony to colony, as did the identities of the main actors, whose strategies, languages, and weapons of combat changed over time.

One could argue that amid all its complexities and diversities, African nationalism was a project that sought to achieve five historic and humanistic tasks: decolonization, nation building, development, democracy, and regional integration. In short, in spatial terms African nationalism was a territorial, regional, and transnational nationalism; in social terms, it

was a democratic and developmentalist nationalism. The achievement of the first goal, begun with Egypt's limited independence in 1922, was finally realized with the demise of apartheid in 1994. Decolonization was undoubtedly a great achievement for colonized peoples, for anticolonial nationalism, and was one of the monumental events of the twentieth century.

What about the other four agendas: nation building, development, democracy, and regional integration? On these, as the populist saying goes, the struggles continue, indeed. I do not propose to do any accounting here of the disparate fates of these agendas. More important, such stocktaking entails an inventory of the past half century of African history. Suffice it to say, the record of performance is extremely complex and uneven across postcolonial periods, countries and regions, social classes, economic sectors, genders, and generations, which fit neither into the unrelenting gloom of the Afro-pessimists nor into the unyielding hopes of the Afro-optimists, both of whom carelessly homogenize this incredibly diverse and complex continent.<sup>21</sup>

What can be said with certainty is that postcolonial Africa has undergone profound transformations in some areas and not in others. Nation building continues to pose challenges. While the majority of African countries have retained the integrity of their colonial boundaries, many have had difficulties in forging nations out of them. Several have even been wracked by conflicts and wars. The project of turning colonial state-nations into independent nation-states exhibits palpable contradictions: both state and ethnic nationalisms are probably stronger than at independence. These identities and the struggles over them eclipse the Pan-African nationalisms within the continent and with the diaspora, although these nationalisms are experiencing renewal in the thickening circuits of regional mobility and integration schemes, transnational migrations, and global-

21. The histories and legacies of African nationalism are discussed at greater length in Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "The Historic and Humanistic Agendas of African Nationalism: A Reassessment," in *Power and Nationalism in Modern Africa: Essays in Honor of the Memory of the Late Professor Don Ohadike*, ed. Toyin Falola and Salah Hassan (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 37–53.

ization, including the emergence of new African diasporas. Thus the dreams of regional integration have been compromised on the stakes of nation building, but they are currently stirring more vigorously than before.

Development remains elusive amid the rapid growth of the early postindependence era, the debilitating recessions of the lost structural adjustment decades, and the recoveries of more recent years. The African population is much bigger than at independence, currently stampeding toward a billion despite all the continent's trials and tribulations; it is more educated, more socially differentiated, and more youthful than ever; and it is better informed thanks to the recent explosion of the media and the information technologies of the Internet and especially mobile phones, a market in which Africa currently boasts the world's fastest growth rate, which indeed doubles that of the rest of the world. And democracy is cautiously emerging on the backs of expanding and energized civil societies and popular struggles for the "second independence" from the suffocating tentacles of one-party state and military authoritarianisms, notwithstanding the blockages, reversals, and chicaneries of Africa's wily dictators' adorning ill-fitting democratic garbs.

#### Development Paradigms since Independence

The sheer size and diversity of African countries make it difficult to map general development patterns and trajectories since independence. The differences in development ideologies and performance can be accounted for by variations among the continent's fifty-four countries in terms of their processes of decolonization, the size and state of the inherited colonial economy with regard to levels of development and resource bases, the dynamics of class and gender and other social constructs, regional and geopolitical locations and standing, and the nature of the countries' leadership and ideological proclivities.

Nevertheless, broad trends in Africa's development paradigms since independence can be identified. I hasten to add that these para-

digms are not unique to Africa. In fact, they reflect broader global trends with specific African inflections and implications. I distinguish among three broad periods: the era of authoritarian developmentalism, 1960–80; the period of neoliberal authoritarianism, 1980–2000; and the current moment of possible democratic developmentalism.<sup>22</sup>

During the era of authoritarian developmentalism, African countries experienced the intensification of statism (the growth of state power) and developmentalism (the pursuit of development at all costs). The escalation of statism after independence was accentuated by the underdeveloped nature of the indigenous capitalist class and the weak material base of the new rulers. The state became their instrument of accumulation. Also important to remember is that the legitimacy of the postcolonial state lay in meeting the huge developmental backlog of colonialism, in providing more schools, hospitals, jobs, and other services and opportunities to the expectant masses. So after independence the postcolonial state was under enormous pressure to mediate between national and foreign capital and the increasingly differentiated populace. It was a juggler's nightmare, and the leviathan often tripped. The multiple contradictions and frustrations of the neocolonial order built on limited sovereignty, political posturing without economic power, and Africanization without genuine indigenization made the enterprise of state onerous.

State intervention in the organization of economic, social, cultural, and political processes intensified as the contradictions deepened and became more open. The monopolization of politics by the state was justified in the glorious name of development. In Joseph Ki-Zerbo's inimitable phrase, African populations were admonished: "Silence, Development in Progress!"<sup>23</sup> Economic development became the *raison d'être* of the state as well as its Achilles' heel. As the crisis of growth and accumulation began intensifying globally in the 1970s, the postcolonial state assumed a progressively more precarious and openly repressive charac-

22. This section is largely drawn from Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar: Codesria, 1997), chap. 13.

23. As quoted in Arturo Escobar, "The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development," in *The Post-Development Reader*, ed. Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (London: Zed Books, 1997), 88.

ter, with frequent coups and rearrangements of ruling cliques, endless constitutional revisions and human rights violations, and suppression of democratic freedoms. The authoritarian posture of the state in the 1970s can be explained in part by the fact that Africa's capitalist classes, the weakest in the capitalist world system, were the least able to resolve the crisis on their own or to export the costs of the crisis.

To be sure, until the mid-1970s, African countries experienced relatively rapid rates of economic growth and development. Altogether, between 1960 and 1980 African economies grew by 4.8 percent, a rate that hides wide divergences among high-, medium-, and low-growth economies. This period was also characterized by wide ideological divergences and disputes between states and regimes within states pursuing the capitalist and socialist paths of development or muddling through mixed economies. The different development models were often inspired, or justified, in the names of modernization, dependency, and Marxist theories, which saw development in terms of following Western stages of growth, the transformation of the international division of labor, and the restructuring of internal social relations of production, respectively. The differences in development paradigms were often more rhetorical than real, more apparent in public proclamations than in actual practice. Certainly, no model held a monopoly on rates of economic growth, and all states prayed at the altar of developmentalism and fetishized development planning.

The structural and ideological underpinnings of authoritarian developmentalism were reinforced by the onset of neoliberalism at the turn of the 1980s, which ushered Africa's "lost decades" of the 1980s and 1990s. The era of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) threatened to undo the developmental promises and achievements of independence, to dismantle the postcolonial social contract, and to abort the nationalist project of Africa's renewal. The rise of SAPs reflected the global ascendancy of neoliberalism, which emerged as an ideological response to the world economic crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s that ended the postwar boom. Neoliberalism marked the collapse of the "Keynesian consensus" and the political coalitions that had sustained it and the rise to power

of conservative, "free"-market-oriented governments in the leading industrial economies, from that of Margaret Thatcher in Britain to Ronald Reagan in the United States, Helmut Kohl in Germany, and Brian Mulroney in Canada.

SAPs were pursued with missionary zeal by international financial institutions, principally the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and by Western governments and were imposed on developing countries that were experiencing difficulties with their balance of payments. Many African countries found themselves in that position as their external accounts deteriorated thanks to the oil shocks of the 1970s, declining terms of trade, and mounting internal problems of accumulation. SAPs called for currency devaluation, interest and exchange rate deregulation, liberalization of trade, privatization of state enterprises, and withdrawal of public subsidies and retrenchment of the public service—in short, for a minimalist state and an extension of the market logic to all spheres of economic activity.

The introduction of SAPs reflected the conjunction of interests between fractions of the national bourgeoisie that had outgrown state patronage and the global capital that sought to dismantle the postwar fetters of Keynesian capitalist regulation. This is to qualify conventional analyses of SAPs in Africa as conspiracies against the continent: SAPs were welcomed by fractions of the African capitalist class and were applied in the core capitalist countries themselves. The relatively harsher consequences of SAPs for Africa and other countries in the global South reflected the enduring reality that economically weaker countries and the poorer classes always pay the highest prices for capitalist restructuring.

The results were disastrous for African economies. Structural adjustment failed to stem the tide of stagnation or even to decline and stabilize and return these economies to the path of growth and transform their structures. If anything, structural adjustment became part and parcel of the dynamic of decline in African economies. Initially, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank dismissed the difficulties that were evident as temporary. As the problems persisted, the blame was shifted to African governments and the behavior of their

supposedly corrupt, rent-seeking elites who were allegedly reluctant to reform and give up their “illicit” privileges accumulated under the old interventionist model of development that encouraged the flowering of growth-retarding patronage and clientelist systems.

By the 1990s it had become clear that SAPs, with little to show, were deeply flawed in conception and execution and that it made little sense to apply the same lethal medicine to countries of vastly different economic experiences and ailments. SAPs created the conditions, unintended by the architects of these programs and notwithstanding their retrospective claims to the contrary, for the resurgence of struggles for the “second independence”—for democratization.

The ascendancy of neoliberalism turned into triumphalism following the collapse of socialism in Central and Eastern Europe. This shift was best encapsulated in Francis Fukuyama’s delirious declaration about the end of history—the closure of global systemic options to liberalism and capitalism.<sup>24</sup> In this brave new world of free-market fundamentalism, the development industry ironically discovered the regulatory fixes of stringent and short-leash conditionalities, and development studies fell to what came to be known as the “development impasse” before succumbing to the paralysis of “post-development” discourse.

The 1960s and early 1970s had been the heyday of development theory, in its various guises; it dominated policy and research in, and on, Africa and other “developing” regions. The policy makers optimistically drew detailed development plans, packaged in the appropriate ideological flavor of each regime and its godfathers in Washington or Moscow, to be implemented by benevolent states and financed by export earnings and foreign aid. For their part, academic researchers, in chronicling the patterns, processes, and problems of development, opened new areas of inquiry into the dynamics of social, political, and economic change

and other topics previously ignored by colonial ideologues. To be sure, the various schools of development theory had different analytical and prescriptive emphases.

Development theory began to fall from its ideological pedestal in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to internal and external critiques and profound transformations in the world political economy. On the left were the dismissive attacks of the dependency and neo-Marxist writers, while from the right came the combative claims by reenergized neoliberals about the inimitable development benefits of unrestricted markets. Joining these critics were feminists attacking gender biases in development theory and practice and demanding the incorporation of women in development, environmentalists talking about sustainable development, and postmodernists railing against “metanarratives” and positivism.

The post-development turn in development studies reflected the intellectual crisis of orthodox development theories, the perceived failures of development practice inspired by those theories, and the rise of the “posts”—post-structuralism, postmodernism, and post-colonialism—in the academy.<sup>25</sup> The posts laid bare the disciplining and depoliticizing nature of development models, the production, circulation, and consumption of hegemonic development theories as universalizing and homogenizing discourses, as representational systems that allowed the development industry to stereotype societies in the global South and intervene in real people’s lives with often disastrous consequences. But they failed to produce alternative visions of development, wedded as they were to the erasures of the metanarratives of class, nation, and gender, and development itself, which turned them into part of the ideological apparatus that undermined understandings and demobilized struggles against global capitalism and the construction of alternative futures beyond the romance with the local.

24. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

25. On the development of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and theoretical paradigms in African studies in different world regions, see Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, ed., *The Study of Africa*, vol. 1, *Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters*, and vol. 2, *Global and Transnational Engagements* (Dakar: Codesria, 2007). On the “posts” specifically, see Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, “Historicizing the ‘Posts’: The View from African Studies,” in

*Interrogating the “Posts” from African and Diaspora Studies*, ed. Zine Magubane (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 1–38; and Zeleza, “The Troubled Encounter between Postcolonialism and African History,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17 (2006): 89–129.

The theoretical and ideological turn in development studies and theory coincided with new developments in the world political economy: the abandonment of Keynesianism and the welfare state in the global North; the collapse of the Soviet bloc, which delegitimized socialism as a viable means of overcoming the problems of underdevelopment; the widening gap between rich and poor countries despite decades of developmentalist interventions; the splintering and disappearance of the Third World itself as newly industrializing countries escaped from its ranks, leaving the rest submerged in debts and structural adjustment programs; and the roaring tide of globalization's sweeping away of the possibilities of national economies and national economic planning. Development theory appeared to have lost its *raison d'être*. It had reached an impasse. Michael Edwards went so far as to proclaim "the irrelevance of development studies" for real people in the real world.<sup>26</sup>

In the meantime, among African leaders and thinkers a new urgency emerged in their development thinking and practice as the corrosive effects of SAPs became more evident in deepening poverty and increasing social dislocation including the rising levels of emigration of Africa's skilled professionals—the brain drain of popular folklore—that robbed the continent of its human capital, built at great costs since independence. In the 1980s, not only did economic issues and resolutions dominate the summits of African leaders, but new development programs were adopted with desperate rapidity, beginning with the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) in 1981, which set out a comprehensive short- and long-term development agenda for the continent. Hardly was the ink dry on the LPA when the World Bank issued its infamous Berg Report, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, which laid the basis for SAPs.<sup>27</sup>

Undeterred, African leaders sought to retrieve the developmentalist dreams of the nationalist project in a series of declarations that

called for both African self-reliance and partnership with donors to overcome the crises of growth and development. These included the *United Nations Declaration of the Critical Economic Situation in Africa* (1984), *Africa's Priority Position on Economic Recovery* (1985), the *United Nations Program of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development* (1986), the *African Common Position on Africa's External Debt* (1987), the *African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programs* (1989), the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (1990), the *United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s* (1991), the *Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community* (1991), *Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development: The Cairo Agenda for Action* (1995), and the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (2001).<sup>28</sup>

What these documents show is that Africa's problem is less about the absence of development policies and strategies—a moratorium on devising ever more elaborate development programs and prescriptions would be advisable—and more about the lack of resources and political will for implementation. Also evident is the premium placed on partnership with so-called donors. In the 1990s popular participation and democracy entered the development agenda, although in reality development projects and policies continued to be designed with little public consultation, as is the case with the much-celebrated NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development). The rhetorical homage to popular participation was in part a product of the rising tide of struggles against the devastating socioeconomic and political effects of SAPs that gravely undermined the nationalist project.

### The Challenges of Democratic Developmentalism

The road to democracy in Africa has proved long and arduous. In 1990 all but five of Africa's fifty-four countries were dictatorships, either civilian or military. By 2000 the majority of these countries had introduced political reforms and

26. Michael Edwards, "The Irrelevance of Development Studies," *Third World Quarterly* 11 (1989): 116–36. See also Frans J. Schuurman, ed., *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory* (London: Zed Books, 1993). For a more detailed examination of the intellectual history of development theories and postcolonial economic historiography, see Paul

Tiyambe Zeleza, introduction to *A Modern Economic History of Africa*, vol. 2, *The Twentieth Century* (Dakar: Codesria, forthcoming).

27. World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1981).

28. See the excellent collection of all these documents and others in Eddy Maloka, ed., *Africa's Development Thinking since Independence: A Reader* (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2002).

either had become democratic or were in the process of becoming so. The African transitions to democracy in the late 1980s varied widely and were characterized by progress, blockages, and reversals. The actual mechanisms and modalities of transition from dictatorship to democracy took three broad paths.

First, in some countries opposition parties were legalized and multiparty elections were authorized through amendments to existing constitutions by the incumbent regime. This pattern was followed mainly in one-party states in which the opposition forces were too weak or fragmented to force a national regime capitulation and the regimes still enjoyed considerable repressive resources and hegemonic capacities. Second, in other countries the transition to democracy was effected through national conferences in which members of the political class and the elites of civil society came together to forge a new political and constitutional order. Third, in others the path of managed transition was pursued by military regimes, which tried to oversee and tightly control the process and pace of political reform.

Debate on Africa's democratization processes and prospects has centered on four interrelated issues, that is, the relative roles of (1) internal/endogenous or external/exogenous factors, (2) historical and contemporary dynamics, (3) structural and contingent forces, and (4) economic and political dimensions. Suffice it to say, a comprehensive understanding of democratization in Africa would have to transcend these dichotomous analyses. Clearly, the struggles for democracy in the 1980s and 1990s represented the latest moment of accelerated change in a long history of struggles for freedom, an exceptionally complex moment often driven by unpredictable events and new social movements and visions, anchored in the specific histories, social structures, and conditions of each country, in which national, regional, and international forces converged unevenly and inconsistently and economic and political crises

reinforced each other, altering the terrain of state-civil society relationships, the structures of governance, and the claims of citizenship.<sup>29</sup>

Fundamental to the question of democracy in Africa have been different conceptions and visions of what democracy means and entails. Views range from minimalist conceptions of liberal democracy, emphasizing competitive electoral processes and respect for civil and political rights, to maximalist notions of social democracy embracing material development, equality and empowerment, and respect for the so-called three generations of rights: civil and political, social and economic, and development or solidarity rights.

I identify five prescriptive models in the writings of African political thinkers and leaders: the nativist, liberal, popular democratic, theocratic, and transnational models. The first seeks to anchor democracy in traditional institutions of governance; the second limits democracy to multiparty politics and periodic electoral contests to promote the trinity of good governance—efficiency, accountability, and transparency; the third advocates basing both the political and economic domains on democratic principles; the fourth invokes religious visions and discourses about political transformation and organization; and the fifth seeks the reconstitution of African states through their regionalization to meet the challenges of both colonial balkanization and contemporary globalization.

The new dispensation brought revived and reformulated discourses on rights-based development and the construction of democratic developmental states. The seductive pairing of development and human rights is fraught with analytical and practical challenges. Conceptually, there are strains in the logics of development and human rights, and, concretely, there have been discrepancies in their histories. Examples of this mismatch abound. The rise of Euro-American industrial capitalism occurred on the backs of the ghastly barbarisms of slavery, genocide, and colonial conquests, and the

29. This section is drawn largely from Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Imagining and Inventing the Postcolonial State in Africa," *Contours: A Journal of the African Diaspora* 1 (2003): 101–23; and Zeleza, "Democracy, Africa," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (New York: Scribner's, 2005), 2: 556–60.

growth of Soviet and Chinese industrial socialism was achieved on the graves of tens of millions of victims of collectivization and terror. Indeed, until recently it was commonplace to dissociate development and human rights, to regard human rights as an inconvenience that could be traded off to achieve rapid economic development. The popular but dangerous association between levels of development and regimes of human rights was used by both racist Western commentators and Africa's own dictators to dismiss the prospects or justify the abuse of human rights across the continent. But the failure of authoritarianism to bring about development in much of Africa disproved the efficacy of despotism for development.

Clearly, both human rights and development, singly and jointly, remain works in progress. If in some countries development has historically occurred without human rights, in many others it has failed because of the absence of human rights and the staggering wastages of repression. Similarly, the contemporary historical moment provides conditions that are both favorable and inimical to the interdependent pursuit of human rights and development. This is because the two dominant forces of our age, democratization and globalization, facilitate and forestall the productive convergence of development and human rights. Democracies do not always protect the human rights of marginal or minority groups. Also, repression may actually increase in new democracies because of lagging repressive tendencies from the past and the propensity for protest behavior to increase at such times.

Equally contradictory have been the consequences of globalization on development and human rights. Globalization generally refers to growing and deepening transnational flows among continents, countries, and communities of materials, practices, peoples, ideas, and

symbols, from commodities to capital, images to information, labor to leisure, rights to reflexivities, and viruses to visions. Globalization has different dimensions—technological, economic, political, and cultural—each with its own internal particularities and propensities. Insofar as globalization represents an increase in the power of capital over other social classes, it contributes to the shrinkage of spaces for democracy and human rights. As is quite evident in Africa, the austerities of structural adjustment programs not only increased poverty, inequality, and social conflict but also required authoritarian governance.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these incongruities, since the end of the Cold War development and human rights, indeed the triumvirate of development, democracy, and human rights, have attained the status of “hegemonic political ideals” used by states to establish or enhance national and international legitimacy. It was the Cold War that introduced the unproductive separation of human rights into the hierarchical enclosures of civil and political rights, on the one hand, and economic, social, and cultural rights, on the other. The incorporation of the right to development in international human rights discourse and instruments not only has unified civil and political rights with economic, social, and cultural rights and thereby returned human rights discourse to the holistic tendencies of the pre-Cold War era, but it also represents major advances in human rights thought and practice.

But this of course has not stopped debate about the foundational basis, content, justiciability, and implementation of this right. The right to development is a human right because it is now recognized in national and international instruments. It refers both to the right to the *process* of development and to the *outcomes* of development based on equity and justice. The right to development entails a participatory de-

30. For detailed discussions of globalization, human rights, and development and of their complex intersections, see Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Rethinking Africa's Globalization*, vol. 1, *The Intellectual Challenges* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003); Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Philip J. McConaughay, eds., *Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and Development in Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Zeleza, “Human Rights and Development in Africa: Current Contexts, Challenges, and Opportunities,” in *Human Rights, Regionalism and the Dilem-*

*mas of Democracy in Africa*, ed. Lennart Wohlgenuth and Ebrima Sall (Dakar: Codesria; Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2006), 57–96; Zeleza, “The Struggle for Human Rights in Africa,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 41 (2007): 474–506; and Zeleza, “The Conundrum of Development and Human Rights in Africa,” in *Africa's Evolving Human Rights Architecture*, ed. John Akokpari and Daniel Zimber (Johannesburg: Jacana Media; Cape Town: Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2008), 24–44.

velopment process nationally and internationally; it is about social and human development that expands people's capabilities and substantive freedoms. It is, in a sense, a metaright or a vector of all rights and freedoms, for it embodies and involves the realization of all civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and solidarity rights. The primary responsibilities for respecting, protecting, and promoting the right to development lie with states, while the principal beneficiaries are individuals.

In recent years, the possibilities of instituting human rights-driven development agendas have been raised—but remain unfulfilled—with the establishment of several initiatives and instruments by the African Union and the United Nations such as NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the most ambitious initiative in international development. The MDGs focus on eight limited, measurable, time-bound concerns (extreme poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, the environment, and global partnership) and provide an important test case of the relationship between development and human rights in theory and practice. To some the MDGs and human rights are consistent or potentially complimentary; to others they are incompatible and contradictory.

Rights-based development discourses have brought the state back into development. Debates about the role of the state in development are quite old and, following Britain's initial industrialization, have been featured among all industrializing nations. In contemporary Africa, the question of constructing democratic developmental states centers on several issues including whether African states can be both democratic and developmental, what the indicators and mechanisms are for democratic developmentalism, and what the prerequisites and prospects are for establishing democratic developmental states in Africa.<sup>31</sup>

A democratic developmental state is one that embodies the principles of electoral democracy, ensures citizens' participation in the development and governance processes, and fosters growth and development. The democratic developmental state is defined by its objectives and its institutional characteristics, including the "autonomy" of state institutions, that enable it to define and promote its strategic developmental goals and its "embeddedness," that is, its ability to form alliances with key social groups in society that help it to achieve its developmental goals. In short, autonomy entails the ability of the state to behave as a coherent collective actor able to identify and implement developmental goals, while embeddedness implies accountability and engagement with civil society. A democratic developmental state is characterized by institutional autonomy and coherence and inclusive embeddedness operating in a democratic order marked by competitive and accountable electoral systems and has the capacity to promote development and growth.

The construction of democratic developmental states requires Africa to confront and control several sets of challenges and opportunities. At the domestic level there is need to revitalize the nationalist project by reconstructing the state, rebuilding citizenship, renewing the social contract, reconstructing society, and rejuvenating integrated and inclusive economies—in short, to manage the nexus of state, market, and civil society as effectively as possible. At the regional level the challenge is to promote more broad-based integration projects that encompass dense political, economic, and cultural exchanges and networks and incorporate both elites and ordinary people, as well as productively include Africa's historic and new diasporas. New diasporas already constitute Africa's biggest donors, remitting in 2006 about \$40 billion, more than all so-called foreign aid—read loans and investment—to Africa combined,

31. See the following influential works: Thandika Mkandawire, "Thinking about Developmental States in Africa," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25 (2005): 289–314; Robinson Mark and White Gordon, eds., *The Democratic Developmental State: Political and Institutional Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Omano Edigheji, "A Democratic Developmental State in Africa? A Concept Paper" (Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, May 2005).

notwithstanding the glib claims of the mercy industrial complex fronted by celebrities who seek moral and public gravitas from African commiseration.<sup>32</sup>

Africa's new diasporas constitute more than a remittance pipeline. They are among the most educated people in the global North, certainly among the most educated group in the United States, and also possess an enormous stock of social capital—skills, knowledge, networks, civic awareness, cultural experience, and cosmopolitanism—that not only can provide access to global markets and investment and stimulate technological innovation but can also invigorate democracy, strengthen civil society, and encourage the growth of new philanthropic cultures. Moreover, they can be crucial intermediaries between Africa and foreign governments and international development agencies. The election of Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan student, as president of the United States clearly shows that the political profile of the new diaspora is also rising.

This brings the discussion to the global challenges and opportunities facing contemporary Africa. As a historical process globalization is not new. What has been different over the past three decades is its ideological configuration; in other words, it has been neoliberal globalization. I conclude with two observations that have enormous implications for African development and the realization of the dreams of the African renaissance: first, the possible collapse of neoliberalism and, second, the shifting terrain of global economic power from Europe and America to Asia, with the exponential rise of China and India following the earlier ascendancy of Japan.

The economic tsunami that started on Wall Street in September 2008 and is now ravaging economies around the world has swept into oblivion the fantasies of free-market infallibility, of neoliberalism that bestrode the globe with impunity. As the major Euro-American economies teeter on the brink of a prolonged

recession, the dangers for many economies in the global South, especially Africa, rise as primary commodity prices plummet and foreign investment dries up. Africa's spectacular average growth rates of about 6 percent over the past few years, the highest since the early 1970s, are likely to slow down.

But there may be new opportunities. African commentators cannot help but note the hypocrisy exhibited by Western governments that used to lecture them against state intervention and that now rush to intervene to save their economies through massive nationalizations. This crisis opens invaluable space for policy alternatives. In the history of global capitalism, such moments have often created the space for peripheral economies to restructure their economies away from the prying restraints of hegemonic powers preoccupied with their own recovery. This was the case during the Great Depression, which saw the drive toward industrialization in parts of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

The Asian dimension of the current financial crisis is quite intriguing. A flood of cheap goods and money from Asia lulled the United States into a false sense of economic prosperity, in which Chinese and Japanese reserves and Arab petrodollars financed rising deficits and debt-driven consumption, most evident in the housing bubble. While the crisis puts strains on the model of export-led growth that has fueled China's unprecedented growth and the appeal of American capitalism, it opens new possibilities, in the eyes of some analysts, to develop Asian capitalisms freed from the suffocating grip of the reckless neoliberal American brand. For others, still, it offers a rare opportunity to restructure the global economy and bring to an end the Euro-American hegemony of the past few centuries and accelerate the dawn of the new Asian century or centuries.

While it may be premature to see the current crisis as signaling the end of neoliberalism, let alone as a symptom of declining American

32. On African diasporas and their contributions to African development, see Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Contemporary African Global Migrations: Patterns, Perils, and Possibilities" *Journal of Global Initiatives* 3 (2008): 33–56; and Zeleza, "In the Trails of the Historic Diaspora: Africa's New Global Migrations and

Diasporas" (public lecture presented at the seminar series "Immigration: History and Policy," Center for Advanced Study, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 3 November 2008), [www.zeleza.com/blogging/african-affairs/trails-historic-diaspora-africas-new-global-migrations-and-diasporas](http://www.zeleza.com/blogging/african-affairs/trails-historic-diaspora-africas-new-global-migrations-and-diasporas). See

also Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Barack Obama and African Diasporas: Dialogues and Dissensions* (Oxford, UK: Ayebia Clarke, and Athens: Ohio University Press, forthcoming).

global supremacy, we may be witnessing what Fareed Zakaria in *The Post-American World* calls “the rise of the rest.”<sup>33</sup> Over the past few years Africa’s relationship with Asia has expanded, as evident from the frequent summits between African countries and China, India, and Japan and from the explosive growth in trade. For example, China’s trade with Africa jumped from \$1.7 billion in 1990 to \$10 billion in 2000 to \$73.5 billion in 2007 and is projected to rise to more \$100 billion in 2010, when China will overtake the United States as Africa’s largest trading partner.<sup>34</sup>

So what happened to the African renaissance? My simple answer is that it is a long project that entails the renewal of African societies internally, the building of broad-based regional integration, and the promotion of more beneficial participation in the global economy. On all three terrains—the national, the regional, and the global—changes are taking place, complex and contradictory to be sure, but far-reaching nonetheless. Scholars and students of Africa would do well to spend more time trying to understand the nature and implications of these changes and less time offering more prescriptions, of which Africa has received an overabundance and is no better for it. We need, in short, to think of the *longue durée*. ∫

33. Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: Norton, 2008), 1.

34. On Africa’s relations with China, see Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, “Dancing with the Dragon: Africa’s Courtship with China,” *Global South* 2 (2008): 170–86.