

THABO MBEKI AS AFRICAN PANTHEON: CLAIMING THE 21ST CENTURY FOR GLOBAL AFRICA

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Introduction

This paper is inspired by the joint vision of the Vice Chancellor of the Universities of the West Indies, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, and former Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg, Prof Ihron Rensburg, who challenged some of us in, 2016 and 2017, to brave, re-appraise and contest some of the Pan-African epistemologies, and go beyond old fashioned ideas of Africa and the Diaspora, review the concepts of epistemological ruptures in Pan-African and global contexts, and begin to re-interrogate and re-engage the ideas of Pan-Africanism in order to re-imagine Global Africa.

There is need for self-examination as Africans and people of African descent. We come at the idea of a Global Africa re-engaged and re-imagined through the works and views of Thabo Mbeki, South Africa's second democratically elected president, and arguably the most influential global Pan-African leader of his time, the man who Adekeye Adebajo depicted as Africa's "Philosopher King" (Sunday Independent 2016). Called a ruthless Machiavellian by some, an AIDS-denialist by others, and thin-skinned by more others (Adebajo 2016), he was, no doubt, and continues to be, a global Pan-Africanist who pursued, and continues to pursue, a global African Renaissance vision.

On his continued pursuit of global Pan-Africanism, we could mention his highly publicized work and report on illicit financial flows from Africa, due to a mercantilist relationship between global multinationals and

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some African leaders. This incessant exploitation of Africa's resources obstructs the realization of the African Renaissance vision and of full independence, and renders the continent bound to external actors devoid of Africa's best interests at heart.

Mbeki: a Global African Thought leader

Mbeki was not just a foreign policy president, but also a global African thought leader. His presence in the diplomatic and political arenas always loomed large, and his international role and grand foreign policy agenda is legendary. On 8 June 2000, just one year into Mbeki's term as president, former President Mandela put Mbeki on the proverbial global pedestal. Mandela concluded, while referring to Mbeki's exploits in the realm of international affairs, "I do not think there is anyone in the history who has put South Africa on the map as has President Mbeki" (News Africa 2000). In December 2002, Mandela continued with this narrative of Mbeki's formidable foreign policy and diplomatic skills when he again said, "no president or prime minister in the world could boast of having done more than Thabo [Mbeki]" (News24 2017). Although Mbeki's statesmanship could not be honestly contested, recognition for him as an exceptional statesman also came from the highest quarters.

The man that many described as aloof and distanced from the masses was all about work-ethic and putting Africa at the apex of his political life. In the words of Barney Afako (2016, xiv); "Mbeki's is about hard work... and Mbeki has always been about Africa", Former OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim echoed these sentiments when he opined that Mbeki was "one of the most outstanding emissaries of Africa in dealing with African problems" (cited in Afako, 2016, xiv). While he was deputy president of the Republic of South Africa from 1994 to 1999, as well as during his presidency between 1999 and 2008, and even after he left the stage of formal presidential politics in 2008, his role in national and international affairs was palpable, and he remains an intellectual and a thought leader to date. One of Mbeki's fiercest critics, Adekeye Adebajo, who at one point likened Mbeki to a thin-skinned autocrat, felt the need to remind us that, "Mbeki remains the most important political figure of his generation. As the leader of Africa's most industrialized state and with a sweeping vision of an African Renaissance", continued Adebajo, "Mbeki effectively ran the country as a de facto prime minister under Nelson Mandela after 1994" (Business Day 2016). During a speech in November 2012, Mbeki's friend-turned-foe, President Jacob Zuma,

sung Mbeki's praises stating that, "former president Thabo Mbeki was able to create macro-economic stability and bring in economic protection for the country's people" (EWNr 2012). Said Zuma, "comrade Mbeki succeeded to do something that many found very difficult to do – to draft for president Tambo. He was a very difficult leader to draft for and only Mbeki succeeded" (EWN 2012). What Zuma was referring to was Mbeki's role as the speech-writer for former ANC president Oliver Tambo. It should also be noted that he was the speech-writer for former president Nelson Mandela.

Mbeki's grand foreign policy agenda contained political, social, economic and cultural dimensions, and, in practical terms, it set out to use statecraft to progress peace, democratization, development, and nation-building (Van Heerden 2017). According to Van Heerden (2017, 136), under Thabo Mbeki, "[...] there was a shift in South Africa's approach to international relations with regard to the region and the continent". Van Heerden (2017, 136) went on to conclude that "the Mbeki administration sought to build skills and capacity and create a viable regional bloc, namely SADC², which could then operate effectively in the modern global environment". Van Heerden (2017, 136) gave us a sense of Mbeki's international strategy and reach:

South Africa has enhanced its position in the international order to the extent that it remains a key player in the G77 and continues to be invited to the G20 summits. It is frequently requested to mediate crises and conflicts on the continent, with varying degrees of success, as is still views by many as the gateway to Africa because of its well-established financial sector and its good infrastructure. The India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) initiative is gaining momentum and the South-South countries still see South Africa as a key team player in pushing to change the rules of the global governance game.

Mbeki's strategy was therefore multi-pronged and multi-faceted. Elsewhere we referred to Mbeki's foreign policy of transformation, and depicted it as a logical extension of domestic transformation policies: to create a non-racial society; end sexism in the country; create a caring society sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable; promote respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in the country; poverty eradication and transformation into a modern, dynamic and competitive economy (Landsberg 2016, 436-448). At the heart of this multitudinous foreign policy was Africa; the continent formed the epicenter of Mbeki's diplomacy under the banner of a continental African Renaissance vision, what I have dubbed elsewhere an Afro-continen-

2 Editor's note: Southern Africa Development Community.

tal (Landsberg 2016, 436-448) strategy. What is little known is his strategies towards global Africa, including strategies vis-à-vis the global South; North-South relations; and the terrain of global governance, what we would like to depict as a global African Renaissance strategy, all in efforts to make the global terrain and order more favorable to African interests.

Towards a theory of the new Global Africa

Before zeroing in on the global African Renaissance discourse of Thabo Mbeki, I would like to start on a note of conceptualization and theorization. The theory of the new Global Africa works on the premise that Africa and its historical diasporas throughout the world have entered a new dynamic phase and wish to move away from a dichotomy between the core (motherland) and periphery (diasporic communities) and embrace their histories, cultures and experiences. This is in order to assert a new identity of global Africa that wishes to recognize their participation and management of their public affairs and contribute to social transformation of all African communities worldwide, not just those in continental Africa. Kwesi Kwaa Prah pleaded for “continued engagement of the youth in Africa and the Diaspora to issues related to the ideals of Pan-Africanism. The vitality of the ideal and its continued ability to move people of African descent in pursuit of the ideal and its continued ability to move people of African descent in pursuit of the goals and the idea [sic]”, he vowed, cannot be doubted (Prah 2005, xxvii). “For a hundred years, the spirit of pan-Africanism has motivated and guided the thinking and action of a host of adherents” (Prah 2005, xxvii).

The major changes in the world marked by globalization in the areas of economic co-operation and international relations have paved the way for new opportunities and challenges to continental Africa and Africans in the diaspora. As Kwesi Prah put it, “the challenges of a globalizing world are many and Pan-Africanism needs to address these challenges. The platforms for Pan-Africanist”, advised Prah, “also need to be reconsidered” (Prah 2005, xxvii). We could add that Pan-Africanism has to spread beyond the political platforms, the rarefied spaces of the academe, and cascade into hamlets, and ghettos (locations) in Africa and the diaspora to ensure that the populace appreciates Pan-Africanism, its ideals, and have a role to play in its advancement.

Sabelo Sibanda argued that, “within the Pan-Afrikan Movement there have been those people who have taken the limited view that Pan-Africa-

nism is only about uniting the people on the continent of Afrika and this view is mainly confined to those people actually born and/or resident on the continent” (Sibanda 2005, 242). Elsewhere I have referred to this as “Afro-continentalism”. Sibanda goes further to assert that “this school of thought does not fully put into perspective, and thus recognize, the significance of the contributions of Diaspora born Afrikans to the pan-Afrikan Movement”. The key point to take out of Sibanda’s analysis is that “Pan-Afrikanism, without taking on board the fact that the presence of the Afrikan Nation is global and not just on the African Continent, is highly deficient and may render itself ineffectual and meaningless, thus null and void” (Sibanda 2005, 242). When he deliberately replaces “c” with “k” in Afrikan, he is driving home the point about the importance of indigenous language by Africans.

Chen Chimutengwende puts it more crisply and in a more basic, pragmatic manner:

Africa needs Diaspora Africans in the liberation and development process. Diaspora Africans also need Africa as their ancestral homeland and global base. They need each other at the international level. The global base is essential to their own liberation and socio-economic empowerment wherever they may be residing in the world (Chimutengwende 2005, 343).

It is important to bring global Africanism back in. Peoples of African descent in South, Central and North America, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, South Asia and the South Pacific are placing growing importance on the ties that bind them to Africa and the global Africa diaspora. These people of African descent wish to have their societies and experiences deconstructed and reconstructed. Some of these peoples and countries, notably those captured, wish to rectify the historical distortions of racism, racial discrimination, inequality and a history of humiliation.

Afro-continentalism: Africa “first” Renaissance

I could highlight here a number of legacies of Mbeki’s foreign policy project. But, the first and foremost legacy must be his new continental and global pan-Africanist project, pursued under the banner of “the African Renaissance” as he determinately set out to lay the foundations for the 21st Century to be transformed into the African Century (Pityana 2018). The key point to stress about the African Renaissance, is the idea of restoring Afri-

can pride, and dignity, as well as positioning Africa abroad, while seeking to infuse a sense of confidence in and about Africans continentally (Pityana 2019). Mbeki defined the African Renaissance as the need for Africans to determine who they are, what they stand for, what their visions and hopes are, how they do things, what programs they adopt, who they relate to and how.

According to Adekeye Adebajo, “Mbeki’s foreign policy was in part driven by his vision of an African Renaissance, which, as well as encouraging South Africans to embrace an African identity, sought to promote the continent’s political, economic and social renewal, and the reintegration of Africa into the global economy” (Adebajo 2016, 113). Adebajo went further and expanded on the political project, underscoring Mbeki’s Renaissance vision when he said that he “[...]urged Africans to adapt democracy to fit their own specific conditions without compromising its principles of representation and accountability” (Adebajo 2016, 113). Overcoming a sense of inferiority on the part of Africans was a key objective and, according to Adebajo, Mbeki “[...] further challenged them to discover a sense of their own self-confidence after centuries of slavery and colonialism, which had systematically denigrated their cultures and subjugated their institutions to alien rule” (Adebajo 2016, 113). Significantly, Adebajo articulated one of the cardinal principles underscoring Mbeki’s Renaissance vision, namely autonomy and self-determination: “Mbeki’s African Renaissance had as its central goal the right of African people to determine their own future” (Adebajo 2016, 113).

With Mbeki’s vision of an African Renaissance, which, as well as encouraging South Africans to embrace an African identity, often posed the major challenge to his Cabinet, his people, and to fellow Africans to embrace the African Renaissance and ensure that there had to be a major focus on the need to try and defeat global poverty, underdevelopment and inequality, while also empowering blacks at home and Africans generally to become confident to challenge their positions of underdevelopment and subjugation in the world.

Whereas white *apartheid* governments had seen South Africa as an extension of Europe, Mbeki set out to debunk this notion and assert South Africa’s African belonging. As part of Africa, and with other forces, South Africa championed for peace, democracy and reconstruction and development of the Continent. Notwithstanding the call by many that South Africa should act as some sort of an African hegemon – the one that would lay down the laws to others through imposition and domination – Mbeki shunned such ideas and instead punted the notion of South Africa as equal partner on the continent and globally. Peace diplomacy, or a *Pax-South Africana* strategy,

occupied a special place in Mbeki's foreign policy radar screen (Landsberg 2010, 436-456). He preferred to play the role of peacemaker and peacekeeper throughout Africa acting through multilateral institutions: the Southern Africa Development Community; the African Union; the UN Security Council.

Mbeki is fiercely in defense of Africa's sovereignty. He is in the forefront in opposing external actors' propensity to meddle in Africa's affairs, thus encroaching on its sovereignty and perpetuating the legacy of humiliation against Africa. Mbeki has issues with international criminal justice as dispensed by the International Criminal Court (ICC), that he accuses of disregarding Africa's search for homegrown solutions in its quest to resolve its conflicts. He opposed the UNSC's decision to indict Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir for egregious crimes in Sudan's Darfur region first in March 2009, then July 2010, while peaceful efforts were ongoing to address the crisis. He has also been critical of the invasion of Libya by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) thus accelerating its ruination.

This led to Mbeki and his allies pushing agency and voice, resulting in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) – a modernization development plan, making a link between democracy and governance on the one hand, and peace and security on the other (Landsberg 2017, 195-212). They would not allow foreign powers to dictate to them what development program would look like and prescribe. They had no desire to return to the dark days of the Washington Consensus and Structural Adjustment Programs and devised NEPAD, which committed African leaders to pledge themselves to transforming their states into democratic developmental states (Mbeki 2012, 3). NEPAD's primary objectives were "to accelerate the eradication of poverty in Africa and inequality between Africa and the developed world", and to "place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development" (Landsberg 2008). "Leaders were determined to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process; and accelerate the empowerment of women" (Landsberg 2008). With NEPAD, Mbeki and his allies pursued a "developmental ideology, which makes the link between development, democratic governance, peace and security, and economic growth".

Mbeki was the chief architect of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a governance promotion tool which did not rely on punitive measures to promote governance, and singled out democracy, political governance, socio-economic development, economic governance, management and corporate governance (APRM, 2007). The APRM adopted a number of

principles in defense of African autonomy and self-determination, including (APRM, 2007): African ownership and leadership; anchoring the development of the continent on the resourcefulness of the African people, and lessening dependence on external largesse; accelerating and deepening of regional and continental integration; creating conditions that make the African countries referred destinations by foreign investors; a new partnership among Africans and the international community, especially the industrialized world; and a comprehensive, holistic and integrated development program for Africa.

This mechanism involved governments, civil society organizations, business organizations, members of communities and families to reflect jointly on the achievements and challenges of their respective polities. With the APRM initiative and others, Mbeki was driven by the vision of the right of the people to participate in processes of democratic governance (Mbeki 2012, 3). Africans, he implored, must serve as “their own liberators” (Mbeki 2012, 3).

Indeed, he was key to South Africa becoming the host for the NEPAD and APRM secretariats, and Mbeki was not shy to insist that South Africa should pay for these institutions. Mbeki showed agency and put his money where his mouth was on these noble continental initiatives that somewhat lost their steam after Mbeki left office in 2008. Mbeki’s strong and even idiosyncratic style of leadership in pursuit of the African Renaissance vision was also the flipside of these initiatives. Once out of power, no other African leader could champion the entrenchment of these structures in Africa’s governance architecture with as much enthusiasm.

By the time of Mbeki’s abrupt removal from office in September 2008, South Africa boasted a diplomatic presence in 47 of the continent’s states, more than any other nation of the world, positioning itself to be influential in Africa and elsewhere. As part of this ‘Africa first’ policy, Mbeki was key to the founding of the African Union. How ironic that the country that never had the privilege of joining the Organization of African Unity (OAU), because of its pursuit of an obnoxious, racist policy of apartheid, would come to be the first African state to Chair the successor African Union, and even have the privilege of launching the continent’s foremost pan-continental body (Landsberg 2006). Indeed, during the launch of the AU in July 2002, in Durban, South Africa, Mbeki articulated his vision of a continental functionalist project and an architecture based on states living with common institutions, norms and values, and a rules based common order, not that of Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi who favored a federalist supra-nationalist United States of Africa (USAf).

Under the Mbeki functionalist approach there were five sub-regions, and a sixth extending to the African diaspora.

In terms of *Pax-South Africana*, only one year into his presidency, South Africa established the \$30 million African Renaissance and Co-operation Fund (ARF) to promote democracy, development and cooperation, by granting loans and financial assistance to other African countries, putting South Africa at the table with other donor nations; Mbeki wanted to show others that he puts his money where his mouth is and is not one who relies too much on the largesse of western states (Adebajo 2016, 118). With the ARF, Mbeki showed that he was willing to commit funds to secure Africa and supported peace initiatives in Burundi; in the Comoros, as OAU mandated coordinator; in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); facilitated dialogue with Lesotho and Angola; helped train observers for peace processes in Ethiopia and Eritrea; provided logistical support for the peace process in Sierra Leone; supported UN-led processes in Western Sahara; provided support for IGAD peace processes in Somalia; and provided assistance for demining.

Towards a Global Africa Renaissance – The Diaspora

On 30 June 2003, President Thabo Mbeki delivered one of the most important, yet under-reported and under-estimated speeches at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. This speech spoke directly to Global Africa as Mbeki spoke of “the African Diaspora in the 21st Century” and located this speech within the context of the “bold” speak of an “African Renaissance” and the “need for us to ensure that the 21st Century becomes an African century” (Mbeki 2003).

Mbeki invoked something akin to the global African Renaissance when he said how vital it was “to talk about what we might do together to achieve those goals, understanding that when we speak of an African Renaissance, we speak of the rebirth that must encompass all Africans, both in Africa and in the African diaspora” (Mbeki 2003).

Global Africa has to respond to the realities of global geoeconomics and geopolitics, in which it plays a marginal role. When he interpreted the world in the 2003 speech, he asserted that “Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora are today confronted by a world of financial, investment and trade regimes which unfairly favor the developed world and which prevents them from improving their quality of life” (Mbeki 2003). Africans on the continent and in the diaspora should have no illusion that “skewed invest-

ment patterns, unfair trading systems and gross imbalances in terms of access to production of capital continue to undermine development efforts in the African and developing world” (Mbeki 2003).

While he was confident that Africa could claim the 21st Century as its own, he had no illusion about the challenge at hand: he reminded us that

Africans in both the Diaspora and the continent have entered the 21st century still confronted by the hard realities of entrenched poverty, general underdevelopment, death from curable diseases, illiteracy, international marginalization and little prospects of rates of growth and development that will close the gap between themselves and the rich countries (Mbeki 2003).

Unity amongst Africans is an overriding theme that runs through the works of Thabo Mbeki. He noted that these founding fathers, the Pan-African pantheons, highlight the importance of unity “even as they had traversed the seas” and “born of the realization that as one people with one history we are bound by the same future” (Mbeki 2003). With this statement, Mbeki transcended old motherland-periphery understandings of the diaspora and embraced a true Global African outlook. On this score, and drawing a link between past and future, he bemoaned the fact that, “long after the demise of slavery and colonialism, the lives of Africans and their dependents are still blighted by a plethora of challenges not unrelated to the past whose imprints the present bears” (Mbeki 2003).

We all know that as members of the global African family, we share a history of oppression and humiliation, and Mbeki was correct in the Jamaican speech to assert that, “shared oppression in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa at the end of the 19th Century, took some of the foremost thinkers and activists for the emancipation of Africans everywhere to London to participate in the 1st pan-African Congress” (Mbeki 2003).

Mbeki reminds us indeed that it was the year 1900 when the Trinidadian barrister Henry Sylvester Williams initiated the first pan-African Congress in London. Mbeki drew a link between late-19th and early-20th Century pan-Africanisms and the variant of the early-21st Century derivants, when he said that the 1900 conference was seminal to the political and philosophical movement of pan-Africanism throughout the world, the catalyst that has ultimately led to the formation of the African Union at the beginning of the 21st Century.

In 2000, Mbeki went to Bahia, Brazil, to receive an honorary doctorate from a local university, located in an area in which most of the inhabi-

tants are offspring of slaves from Africa (Adebajo 2016, 119). He insisted in addressing the local inhabitants and no other African leader has taken the hereditary link between Brazil and Africa more seriously than Mbeki. Adebajo reminds us that Mbeki read “from a poignant poem, ‘The Slave Ship’, by the Brazilian poet Castro Alves, he told the audience: ‘Brazil cannot achieve its full identity unless it celebrates, also, its historical and cultural connection with Africa, before calling for the development of more Afro-Brazilian scientists, economist and businesspeople” (Adebajo 2016, 119). By doing so, he broke ranks with diplomatic protocol and niceties and raced squarely the race issue in Brazil.

Most engagements between Brazil and African countries are commercial, but not located with the global African milieu. Mbeki made a point of stressing this ancestral link.

In January 2004, Mbeki was the only African leader to attend Haiti’s bicentenary celebrations of its slave revolt against France. Haiti was the first black state to attain independence, it symbolizes the yoke of servitude that most African countries still suffer from long after independence and continued being indebted to France for years, a situation that contributed to its underdevelopment. There are parallels between Haiti’s plight and capital flight, illicit financial flows from Africa, and some of the impoverishing agreements that France has with its former colonies in Africa. Among African leaders, only Mbeki took notice of the significance of Haiti’s bicentenary celebrations to the rest of the global African vision.

On the responsibilities of the African Intelligentsia

For Mbeki, the African intelligentsia always had a major responsibility to help with the unity and renaissance of Africa. In that speech in Jamaica on 30 June 2003, Mbeki asserted that “the African universities, both in Africa and the diaspora, have a responsibility both to understand the world and to interpret it” (Mbeki 2003). “What we must be about”, argued Mbeki, “is changing the conditions that for many centuries have imposed on Africans everywhere the status of underlings” (Mbeki 2003). He was emphatic that “the African condition does not permit an African intelligentsia that merely interprets the world, while doing nothing to change it” (Mbeki 2003).

In terms of Global Africa, Mbeki observed that, whereas Du Bois defined the problem of the 20th Century as that of the color-line,

[...] perhaps the time has come for the African intelligentsia in the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa to come together again, this time to make the statement – the problem of the 21st Century is the problem of poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization – and together search for ways and means by which to confront this problem (Mbeki, 2003).

Few African leaders have shown as much appreciation for the role of memory and ideational power. As part of Mbeki's diaspora reach, Mbeki carried out certain high profile intellectual initiatives in commemoration of African memory, remembrance and retention.

Mbeki spearheaded the preservation of the Timbuktu manuscripts at Ahmed Baba Research Institute in Mali, following his visit to the country in 2001. He set up a trust fund and assembled a team of South Africa experts to train and help their Malian counterparts to preserve this invaluable African heritage and contribution to African epistemology and intellectual heritage. Initially, the South African government donated R30 million while the private sector donated R32 million to the fund. Although many were religious Islamic texts, the manuscripts contained details on mathematics, political history, astronomy, and natural sciences. Mbeki highlighted Africa's as the cradle of epistemology and debunked the myth that it is historically a tabula rasa. It is a producer rather than a consumer of knowledge per se, is the argument he made through this initiative.

In April 2017, Mbeki received an honorary doctorate from a Kenyan university, Dedan Kimathi University of Science and Technology, named after one of the country's leaders during the Mau Mau rebellion against the British rule. Even out of office, Mbeki still celebrates gallant individuals who have fought for the restoration of Africans' dignity and pride on the continent and in the diaspora.

Global African Renaissance: Enhancing South-South cooperation, North-South dialogue and Global governance

Strategies towards continental and global Africa were not the only ones that featured prominently in the Mbeki foreign agenda and grand policy schemes; building ties between Africa and countries from the global South, and developing countries in general, was just as important in Mbeki's foreign policy. In this sense, one could argue that Mbeki was a proponent of what I would call a South-South African Renaissance strategy (Landsberg 2000,

75-81). The emphasis on the need for South-South cooperation was born out of the struggle against *apartheid* and colonial rule, and the fact that the liberation movements benefited immensely from the solidarism of the countries of the South.

During the Mbeki presidency, South Africa pushed above its weight and commanded an influence in world affairs usually reserved for super powers. Moving beyond a 'dialogue of the deaf' between North and South, Mbeki advocated that development had to be seen as a universal and strategic challenge, and that there needed to be change in the international balance of power and significant financial resources should be committed from the North, so as to bolster Africa's development prospects. As part of his global African Renaissance strategy, Thabo Mbeki almost single handedly put the question of a new relationship between North and South on the agenda, moving away from a paternalistic relationship to a new policy, development and intellectual paradigm of a genuine partnership (Mbeki 1998).

His government emphasized that a heavy burden rested on the shoulders of the formally colonized, and that the developing world had legitimate claims for compensation from the West. Just as Europe and Germany received a massive injection of capital after World War Two, so should Africa, in order to achieve its development objectives. Mbeki was instrumental with Nigeria and Algeria in negotiating a strategic partnership between Africa and the G-8, jointly among governments with the private sector and other organs of civil society, which led to numerous North-South commitments in areas of health, innovation and knowledge, through science and technology, infrastructure, trade and investment, increased official development assistance, debt relief, private sector growth, agriculture and food security and education; this partnership was to be based on mutual respect, responsibility and accountability.

As Uber diplomat and Pan-African statesman, Mbeki also espoused global governance strategies that sought to transform the global order in ways that would give Africa, and states from the global south, a voice and greater agency in world affairs. Mbeki was no timid statesman. He was courageous enough to devise policies, in partnership with fellow African leaders and leaders from the South, that set out to give answers to the irreversible process of globalization in a manner that would respond to the challenges of poverty, inequality and exclusion, which confronted Africans and peoples from the broader "Third World".

Mbeki, almost single handedly, put onto the global agenda the idea of a strategic partnership between Africa and the international community, based on the principles of mutual accountability and mutual responsibility.

For Mbeki, the fundamental challenges flowing from the irreversible process of globalization included poverty, underdevelopment, the growing North-South gap, racism and xenophobia, gender discrimination, ill health, violent conflicts and a threat to the environment (DFA 2000). The spoils of globalization needed to be shared more widely and he was committed to the dismantling of barriers of trade for the mutual benefit of all (DFA 2000). Mbeki advocated for improved market access for the exports of all countries, most notably African and other developing countries, and supported a trade regime that would enable developing countries to build up skills and manufacturing capacities, while enhancing growth and achieving prosperity (DFA 2000).

The criticism we could cite is that owing to his commitment to the global African agenda, he lost touch with the domestic politics in South Africa that contributed to his premature exit from power. He seemed to have become oblivious of the nexus between domestic politics and foreign policy and exclusively concentrated his time and energy to the cause of global African Renaissance to the detriment of his legacy at home.

Conclusion

I conclude with an intriguing question: could it be that the man who grew up struggling from childhood, who played a pivotal part as a central figure in the world's oldest, and one of its most successful, liberation movements for 52 years, was called a ruthless decision-maker, and even labelled an AIDS-denialist, has undeniably positioned himself as a dovish super diplomat, came to dominate politics in his country, and diplomacy in his continent, for the entire first decade of the 21st Century, will come to play a more vital role in rebuilding continental and diasporic African communities, by promoting a global African Renaissance for the revival of Global Africanness now that he is freed from the strictures of formal presidential politics? Will Africa's foremost global Pan-African leader of the early 21st Century come to play a more fundamental role in helping not just continental, but global Africa to claim this 21st Century as the Global African century? Well, he has continued energetically with active promotion of the global Renaissance project after Presidency. I for one would not put this past Thabo Mbeki, the global African Renaissance man.

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Abstract

Thabo Mbeki is a global Pan-African in his own right, and one of the foremost Pan-African thought leaders of his generation. The man who was called sensitive, ruthless and hard-nosed, has left a distinct mark in pan-African discourse, both during and after his tenure as the second democratically elected president of South Africa. This strategist and tactician, who espoused a transformational and visionary leadership style, has earned his stripes, in part, by making a unique contribution to Pan-Africanism and is indeed among Pan-Africa's Pantheons. He pursued an African Renaissance as a vision and a strategy aimed at the Africana world broadly – a Global Africa strategy. As one of the Pan-African pantheons – heroes – he has made major contributions not just to Afro-continentalism, but also to Global Africa, in other words to continental Africa and the diaspora.

Keywords

Thabo Mbeki; Global Africa; Global African Renaissance; Africa Claiming the 21st Century; South-South cooperation; North-South dialogue.

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