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# AFRICAN RENAISSANCE FOR GLOBAL SECURITY<sup>1</sup>

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The post-apartheid call for an African renaissance in 1994 by South African President Nelson Mandela and the subsequent use of the concept as a rallying political platform by Mandela's successor President Thabo Mbeki derives from the following key moments of African life and experience.

## **AFTER AFRICANS BARELY SURVIVED FOUR CENTURIES OF SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE, "TO BRING THEM INTO THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY"**

Five brutal centuries of slavery holocaust that robbed the continent an estimated 40-100 million of the youngest and most killed members of society. Those who stayed behind were set on one another according to the strategy of black on black mutual destruction. The pretext that was used to justify the slave trade of Africans was the need to bring the black people under the fold of Christianity. Enslaving Africans for the purpose of saving them from themselves was based on the arrogant attitudes of the time that black people were heathens and needed the white men to guide them into Christianity. The ideologues and their missionary partners ignored the fact that Moses was born and raised in Africa by an African family in Egypt. The first known Christian church was built by St. Mark in Alexandria in 42 and the first country that used Christianity as a state religion was Ethiopia. Many of the Christian rites and ceremonies were derived from the African ones. Thus there was no need to import Christianity from the neighbouring Middle East to Europe only to recycle it back to Africa to justify criminal acts against humanity.

## **THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY**

Among the spill lovers of slavery was the bloody North and South civil war in the USA, state racism in the Americas and settler colonies in Southern Africa, Eastern Africa particularly in Kenya and in Algeria on the northern tip of the continent. Colour was used to pseudo scientifically divide humanity into hierarchy of races on the basis of the

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<sup>1</sup> Global and Local security seen as interdependent and integral.

less colour the better. As Dussell put it, “Modernity’s original racism prolonged itself even into the nineteenth century when France, Italy and Germany took for granted the superiority of the white European race over Indians, Africans and Asians. Such racism thrives today in the European Common Market”.<sup>2</sup> In his Introduction to the philosophy of History, Hegel (1770-1831) claimed:

*The Negro represents natural man in all his wild and untamed nature. If you want to treat and understand him rightly, you must abstract all elements of respect and morality and sensitivity—there is nothing remotely humanized in the Negro’s character...nothing confirms this judgement more than the report of the missionaries. Negroes are enslaved by Europeans and sold to America. Bad as this may be, their lot in their own land is worse...<sup>3</sup>*

As Basil Davison notes, the Missionary cause had become racist cause. The Bible had given way to not only the gun, but also to the all-excusing weapon of racial superiority. Priests and poets hastened to embellish it:

*Take up the White Man’s burden, Send forth the best ye breed  
Go, bind your sons in exile, To serve your captives’ need;  
To wait in heavy harness, On fluttered folk and wild,  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples, Half-devil and half-child.<sup>4</sup>*

The African experience and evidence in the Diaspora in the Americas and the wealth generated by forced African labour in the plantations, mines, domestic work and various other contributions prove that the stated objectives: Abduction, terrorization and forced transportation of tens of millions of Africans across the Atlantic were not in order to bring Africans out of paganism into the light of Christianity in the West. It was to enrich the new masters of the red continent. The consequence of four centuries of nightmare has left a huge legacy which continues to plague both Africans and Europeans, differently. The slave trade bred racism, superiority complex, paternalism and collective guilt on the part of slaving nations, psychological trauma, identity crises, and loss of self-confidence, economic ruin, depopulation, and endemic conflicts on the part of the enslaved. As far, I know, no other people on earth have ever suffered such mass deportation and plunder that lasted for four centuries in

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Magubane at the African Renaissance Conference held in 1999, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Basil Davidson, *Modern Africa* (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 174.

order to enrich other fellow humans. Since the end of this long nightmare, there has ever been any acknowledgement that what happened was a crime against humanity, no compensation. The refusal and amnesia of the crime have been justified on the grounds that slave trade was legal. In fact the only “reward” the Africans got at the end of official slavery and slave trade from 1883 was direct colonisations by the same powers that had designed and executed the slave trade.

### **DIRECT COLONIAL OCCUPATION—TO CIVILIZE THE UNCIVILIZED AFRICANS**

As if four hundred years of human and material plundering had not been enough, European leaders of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century found it necessary to take direct control of the already crippled continent. The decision to share the magnificent African cake was made at the Berlin Colonial Conference between November 1884 and February 1885. The European superpowers of the time Britain and France helped themselves to the biggest pieces of the cake, while smaller countries got smaller pieces. The exception was Belgium whose king Leopold II was able to secure the whole of Congo, thanks to direct American support. Eighty times larger than Belgium, Congo was given to the king as a personal colony. The direct colonial rule lasted up to 1975. The first country to rid itself from direct colonial rule was Ghana in 1957. Most African countries gained formal independence in 1960. The last groups of countries to free themselves from colonial yoke were the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau in 1975. The last country to shake off settler colonial control, was South Africa in 1994. Since Dutch seamen landed on the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, South Africans had been subject to settler colonialism until the democratic elections of April 1994. Apartheid legalized official racism when the racist national party came to power in 1948. The system of apartheid was based on strict racial segregation between blacks, white, Asians and the so-called coloured. Numbering some 8% of the population the whites earmarked 83% of the land for themselves. Segregation of education, work, public and private areas were put into the law books and enforced by brutal police forces. Non whites were denied the right to vote, to move around, organise or protest against their oppressors.

**THE REAL OBJECTIVES OF DIRECT COLONIAL OCCUPATION**

Although the colonizers claimed that the aim of their forced occupation of African lands was to civilize the natives, the real aim as both the conquerors and the conquered experienced was different. It was based on the mass plunder as much and as fast as possible of rich African resources to feed emerging European industries with forced African labour while turning the continent into dumping ground of the excess manufactured products and toxic wastes. European adventurers, scientists, missionaries, capitalists, soldiers and ordinary citizens flocked to find fortune in Africa through land grabbing and forced labour. Like the previous era of slavery, the colonial era was full of contradictions and schizophrenia. The editor of an African newspaper wrote in Lagos 1891: “A forcible possession of our land has taken the place of the forcible possession of our persons”. As Praha argues, “In the search for nationality for the partition of the continent, to accommodate the values of Christian conscience, a schizophrenic attitude was adopted by Western colonists. This poem sums up this schizophrenia:

*Onward Christian soldiers, unto heathen lands,  
Prayer books in your pockets, rifles in your hands;  
Take the happy tidings where trading can be done,  
Spread the peaceful gospel with the Gatlin gun.<sup>5</sup>*

**THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM**

The legacy of colonial rule in Africa has left damaging effects among the African people and on their relations with their fellow Europeans. Under colonial rule the whole economic and political system was reshaped to serve the colonial interests in disregard of the needs and interests of the African people. Africa value systems: culture and way of life were suppressed and treated as inferior to the culture of the occupiers. African economies were geared to feed the growing needs of western industries. So instead of producing for local needs, the best lands were earmarked for producing export goods. Exported African products were transformed into manufactured goods; African markets became open dumping grounds for imported products. African economies, production and management systems gave way to those of the dominant systems. The economies were tied up with the colonial economies, making them outward oriented.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Praha at the African Renaissance conference held in 1999, 47.

This is why up to this moment most African countries trade more with their former colonial masters than with their next door neighbours.

At the political level, the colonial authorities trained only very few cadres to the colonial administration. At independence, often these were the people who seized power. Most of them had no idea or interest in real change of system. What happened at independence was often no more than the change of the skin colour of the rulers. The system, the language remained intact. So, the clowns changed but the same circus continued.

Another legacy of colonialism was—like in the American civil war—the rise of colonial rivalries and fascism in Europe. This led to the greed and arrogance of imperialism which plunged humanity into the first and second world wars, which claimed the lives of millions of people and material destruction across the globe. Holocaust against Jewish, Roma and other non-whites was another consequence of the wars. The development and the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were also part of the colonial boomerang. It is worth nothing that the atomic bombs that landed on Japan were made of uranium from the Congo. As was the case with slavery, no colonial nation ever acknowledged, apologized or offered compensation for a century long colonial nightmare.

### **NEO-COLONIALISM—TO DEVELOP AFRICA IN THE WESTERN IMAGE**

As if the Africans did not experience enough trouble, direct colonial rule was replaced with indirect economic and political control. Western colonial governors lowered their flags only to return as developers and advisers of all sorts and brands. African elites with western education were eager to swallow the idea that development was universal, objective and evolutionary. Western development could be applied everywhere. What Africa needed was experts, technology, investment, cash flow from the west, local raw materials and cheap labour. As part of the cold war rivalries between the East and the West, African countries followed different but aping paths. Some chose the capitalist model while others the planned economy. Tanzania was the exception where the late Julius Nyerere tried to follow what he termed African socialism. The collective result of the imported development models was that they all failed miserably. 2-3 years after independence, more than 95% of the states opted for single party system. By the mid-1970s, more than 80% were under brutal military rule. By the end of the 1980s, nearly all African countries had fallen into the 1970s' debt trap of western commercial banks. The debt placed them under direct control of the structural adjustment

programmes—SAP of the World Bank and the IMF. 1994 was marked by both positive and tragic experiences comprising the end of apartheid in South Africa, the end of civil wars in Angola and Mozambique, the introduction of multi-party systems and free elections which often resulted in transition from the old guard to younger and more enlightened leaders. The genocide in Rwanda, the collapse of states in Somalia and the disintegration of others in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia marked the other side of the coin.

As was the case with slavery and the colonial masters, the development missionaries left without any trace of responsibility or accountability to the victims. These loans were given to often violent African dictators who recycled the money back to safe western banks. Many of the former dictators have followed their money trails back to the west where they lived in luxurious exile with billions of stolen money, while their people continued to live in abject poverty. Some of these deposed dictators have committed war crimes and crimes of torture, but none of them has ever got a free flight ticket to and “free hotel” in The Hague.

Thus, half a century of neo-colonial economic control and political manipulation under the guise of development, structural adjustment programmes have now been replaced by hypocritical demands for good governance. As the “Christianising” crusade gave way to the “civilising” mission of colonialism, development “aid” is giving way to “good” governance and “open” markets. African regimes have to ensure good governance for the global corporations to freely operate wherever they can make profit. As part of opening their markets, African governments are being forced to open their territories for the US led war on terror.

### **TERRORISM IN AFRICA**

When talking about terrorism in Africa it is not easy to distinguish between the local terrorism from the global one. Terrorism in Africa has often taken the form of ethno-civil or proxy wars in which those who use violence do it on behalf of foreign interests. Foreign interests have been involved in the indiscriminate killings and displacement of millions of civilians in Southern and Western Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, Mauritania and the DR Congo. The present reign of terror by the government of Sudan and its own Janjaweed militia is one of the latest reign of terror against civilians in Africa. The Janjaweed have not appeared on the list of terrorist groups, because their victims are black Africans and the government has

oil. As the executive director of the South African Institute for Security Studies, Jakkie Cilliers, argues,

*Although most contemporary writing on the subject focuses on the international dimensions or manifestations of terrorism, sub national terror and even state terror has been a long standing feature of Africa. In fact, by any objective standard, Africa is the continent most afflicted by terrorism albeit not yet by international terrorism... The US State Department's "Patterns of Global Terrorism" indicates that international terrorism is on the increase in Africa... It is overwhelmingly of domestic, substate nature that kills, maims and affects millions of people. Many latter day insurgent movements and government forces have adopted practices that rely heavily on the use of fear and terror.<sup>6</sup>*

Terrorism is part of the colonial origin and structure of most African states. The state was not created to serve the African people, but to control, exploit and terrorize them for the benefit of foreign interests. Thus, the people often see the state as violent, corrupt and exploitive and alien system that is ready to terrorize ordinary people. Toward its own citizens, the state uses nepotism, corruption and coercion as state policy. The whole system tends to degenerate into ethnic, tribal, clan and family rule.

### **CONFLICTS IN AFRICA**

Conflicts Africa have little to do with hard core life and death political or religious ideologies. Conflicts are mostly about access to power as a vehicle for access to scarce livelihood and financial benefits. Through political power one can get education, job and other privileges. The US led war on global terror is spreading to engulf Africa. As was the case during the cold war, Africa is turning into a battle ground. This time the battle is fought between the US and the Islamist groups from the Middle East. Donna Miles quotes Air Force General F. Wald:

*"...although most Americans know very little about the African continent and understand even less about its politics, it's critical that the nation focus on this area now to stem the growth of terrorism. Northern Africa serves as a transit route for terrorists headed to Europe... East Africa, particularly Somalia, has become a hotbed of al Qaeda elements. Western Africa has witnessed dramatic rises in anti-American and extremist Islamic rhetoric, particularly in northern Nigeria. And in parts of South Africa, 'we have no clue what's going on'..."*

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<sup>6</sup> Donna Miles reporting in the press service of US forces on 16 June 2004.

*Calling it 'the worst terrorist organization in the world', Wald said Hezbollah finances much of its activities through Sierra Leone's diamond trade and through arms and narcotics smuggling and human trafficking. Wald warned... that confronting terrorism in Africa is a long-term proposition, and not one the United States can ignore. 'The terrorist activity in this area is not going to go away', he said. 'This could affect your kids and your grandchildren in a huge way. If we don't do something about it, we're going to have a real problem on our hands.' The United States can't afford to withhold these investments or to turn a blind eye to events unfolding in Africa. 'We have a huge interest in Africa from a security standpoint, from a strategic standpoint, and from the standpoint of protecting our security interests and investment interests.'*

According to Martin Plaut

*"The US has already announced plans to help Africa create five rapid reaction brigades to fight terrorism. Military officers from the US and Europe are reported to have met to discuss terrorism and the security of oil supplies in Africa. US officials say the meeting is the first in a series designed to provide the main forum for an exchange of security information about Africa."*<sup>7</sup>

#### **AMONG THE STEPS TAKEN BY THE US IN ITS WAR ON TERROR IN AFRICA ARE THE EAST AFRICAN COUNTER-TERRORISM INITIATIVE**

This initiative includes military training for border and coastal security programmes to control the porous borders, police training and assistance for regional efforts against terrorist financing. It comprises Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Djibouti. The East African counter-terrorism initiative is coordinated by 1800 US troops from their Lemonier base in Djibouti. The strategic importance of the base lies in its proximity to the Arabian Peninsula, particularly Saudi Arabia and Yemen both seen by the US as breeding grounds for anti-US terrorism.

#### **The Pan Sahel Initiative**

In his testimony at a hearing before the US House of Representatives' subcommittee on Africa on Fighting Terrorism in Africa, Karl Wycoff, Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, declared:

*"Africa is vulnerable to the threat of international terrorism and important in our efforts to counter that menace. While 9/11 is generally regarded as the watershed*

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Plaut, BBC, 1 June 2004.

*in the threat from al-Qaida and its allies, the horrible August 7, 1998, attacks on the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania were an even earlier wake-up call. These attacks killed and wounded far more Kenyans and Tanzanians than Americans; The ostensible target... The Sahel... is also an area of concern. The immense size of these countries, their physical geography combined with weak central authority, and the traditional independence of nomadic life styles, make border control and law enforcement exceedingly difficult. No longer isolated from the rest of the world, the traditional caravan routes in this region now serve as conduits for illegal migration and drugs and arms trafficking, as well as a hideout and staging areas for international and regional terrorists and criminals.”<sup>8</sup>*

### **Counter-Terrorism Centre in Algiers**

To demonstrate their participation in the global war on terrorism the African Union has established a Counter-Terrorism Centre in Algiers. The danger is not fighting against terrorism but the likelihood that the government will take advantage of the war on terrorism in general and the centre in particular against legitimate pro-democracy individuals and groups. It is worth recalling that the civil war killed more than 100000 Algerians was triggered by the annulment of the general elections that was won by the Islamic Salvation Front in 1992. In the bloody civil war, violence is used both by the military backed regime and the various Islamic groups such as the Armed Islamic Group GIA, the FIS and The Salifist Group for Preaching and Combat.

### **THE EFFECTS OF TERRORISM IN AFRICA**

The worse effects of political violence in Africa have taken the forms of genocide, widespread killings, and ethnic cleansing: many of the killings take place in the collapsing and disintegrating states. Angola and Mozambique have the world's highest number of disabled persons as a result of indiscriminate use of land mines. The war on black Africans of Southern Sudan has left more than 2.5 million dead and 92% of the citizens of the area displaced. The post-Mobutu civil war in the DR Congo has claimed the lives of 3.3 million people, about one million Rwandan were hacked to death while the world looked no in 1994. Liberia and Sierra Leone experienced one of the most violence against civilians a few years ago again while the international community turned a blind eye. The bombing of the US embassies in 1998 claimed the

<sup>8</sup> Karl Wycoff on "Fighting Terrorism in Africa" hearing on 1 April 2004.

lives of over 200 Kenyans and Tanzanians plus 12 US citizens. Since the Sudanese government shifted its war on its black African citizens from the South to Darfur in the West in 2003, some 70000 people have lost their lives and 2 millions are on the run from death, rape and enslavement. Therefore, the terrorism that has been killing Africans is a direct result of the crisis of the post-colonial state in Africa. As Rene Lemarchand decries:

*“The African continent is littered with the wreckage of imploded polities. From Guinea Bissau to Burundi, from Congo Brazzaville to Congo Kinshasa, from Sierra Leone to Guinea and Ivory Coast, failed or collapsing states confront us with an all/too familiar litany of scourges-civil societies shot to bits by ethno-regional violence, massive flows of hapless refugees across national boundaries, widespread environmental disasters, rising rates of criminality and utter bankruptcy of national economies.”<sup>9</sup>*

### **THE IMPLICATIONS OF DRAGGING AFRICA INTO THE US WAR ON TERRORISM**

Reports suggest that agreements have been reached with Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea for the Americans to use their airfields. Nigeria, Benin and Ivory Coast have also been tipped as possible airbases for the US.

During President Bush’s 2003 trip to Africa, the oil fields off the coast of West Africa were high on his agenda. As the first Republican President to visit Africa, George W. Bush declared “We will not allow terrorists to threaten the people of Africa, or use Africa as a base to threaten the world.” This declaration did not translate into real action against the regime in Khartoum and its Janjaweed militia even after the US Congress and Colin Powell described the killings in Darfur as genocide. The UN also labeled the situation as acts of genocide. In spite of the “never” promise, genocide has been committed in Darfur without meaningful action against the regime in Sudan. In fact, Sudan has been praised by the US for sharing information on terrorism.

### **THE NEED FOR AFRICAN RENAISSANCE FOR GLOCAL SECURITY**

With the above past and present African experience in mind, the need for an African rebirth, renaissance and/or recovery can hardly be overstated. It is both genuine and

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<sup>9</sup> Quote in *Terrorism in Africa* by Jakkie Cilliers, Director of the South African Institute for Security Studies, 2003.

legitimate for the people of Africa to reflect on the past experiences that brought them to where they are today in order for them to analyse, understand and separate the root causes from the core problems and the many symptoms of the present crises. This will enable the African people to decide where to go from here, why and how. Therefore a true African Renaissance, that is free from political hijacking, can form the foundation and framework for Africa to attend to the deep wounds, socio-psychological, cultural trauma and political and economic legacy of the past. This will empower African people to tackle the present political confusion, aping, corruption, economic underdevelopment, the tragedy of HIV/AIDS and meaningless, but deadly conflicts across vast swathes of the continent. An honest and positive response to these seemingly endless challenges could provide livelihood, social and economic security and political stability on the continent which in turn can positively impact on the security of the wider world. As the cradle of human kind, Africa is a vital part of the global universe. Insecurity in the continent cannot but spread to the rest of the world, sooner or later. In order to appreciate the role of African Renaissance in global security it is worth considering Africa's geographical location, cultural and kinship linkages with the Middle East as well as her political, economic and trade ties with both Europe and the United States, Asia and Latin America.

### **THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN RENAISSANCE DISCOURSE**

Since the completion of formal decolonization of Africa with the end of apartheid in South Africa in the early-1990s, the notion of African Renaissance has become an attractive rallying force for both honest and dishonest African leaders. For the former, African Renaissance can be a unifying policy around which to mobilize the masses to deal with political bankruptcy, economic despair, and devastation of HIV/AIDS and generalized insecurity. Although the vision of Pan-African unity, African rebirth and recovery from the yet to be healed trauma of five centuries is not new, "African Renaissance is rapidly gaining popularity among many African leaders, scholars, entrepreneurs and artists". Since Mandela used the term in 1994 at an OAU summit in Tunisia, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa has since adopted it as a focal point of his domestic and continental policies.

Advocates of African Renaissance believe that the concept is the right approach for the transformation of the present situation into economic growth, political stability,

peaceful conflict resolution, good governance and socio-cultural revival. On what he termed “rediscovery of ourselves”, South African President Mbeki argued.

*“I would dare say that that confidence, in part, derives from a rediscovery of ourselves, from the fact that, perforce, as one would who is critical of oneself; we have had to undertake a voyage of discovery into our own antecedents, our own past, as Africans. And when archaeology presents daily evidence of an African primacy in the historical evolution to the emergence of the human person described in science as Homo Sapiens, how can we be but confident that we are capable of effecting Africa’s rebirth?... how can we be but confident that we will succeed to be the midwives of our continent’s rebirth?... how can we be but confident that through our efforts, Africa will regain her place among the continents of our universe?”*

*And in the end, an entire epoch in human history, the epoch of colonialism and white foreign rule, progressed to its ultimate historical burial grounds because, from Morocco and Algeria to Guinea Bissau and Senegal, from Ghana and Nigeria to Tanzania and Kenya, from the Congo and Angola to Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Africans dared to stand up to say the new must be born, whatever the sacrifice we have to make—Africa must be free!*

*We are convinced that such a people has a legitimate right to expect of itself that it has the capacity to set itself free from the oppressive historical legacy of poverty, hunger, backwardness and marginalisation in the struggle to order world affairs, so that all human civilization puts as the principal objective of its existence the humane existence of all that is human!*

*And again we come back to the point that we, who are our own liberators from imperial domination, cannot but be confident that our project to ensure the restoration not of empires, but the other conditions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century described by Leo Africanus; of peace, stability, prosperity, and intellectual creativity, will and most succeed! The simple phrase ‘We are our own liberators’ is the epitaph on the gravestone of every African who dared to carry the vision in his or her heart of Africa reborn.*

*The conviction therefore that our past tells us that the time for Africa’s Renaissance has come, is fundamental to the very conceptualization of this Renaissance and the answer to the question: Whence this confidence? Unless we are able to answer the question ‘Who were we?’, we will not be able to answer the question ‘What shall we be?’. This complex exercise, which can be stated in simple terms, links the past to the future and speaks to the interconnection between an*

*empowering process of restoration and the consequences or the response to the acquisition of that newly restored power to create something new”*<sup>10</sup>

What President Mbeki describes here provides not only a unique opportunity to make a positive difference by effectively healing the trauma of the past and present injustices that Africans have been suffering from, but also a chance to address the root cause of global insecurity: inequitable distribution of the global environmental space, wealth, power and life opportunities. Livelihood, political and economic insecurity has wrought about a culture of insecurity, fear and despair whose implications reach beyond the African continent.

Insecurity in Africa has not only become the source of death and destruction for the African peoples and their environment, but it is increasingly degenerating into a fertile ground for the rapid growth of global insecurity. The situation in the failed and collapsed African states stretching from Somalia in the Horn across the great lakes region of central Africa to Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia is an obvious reminder of pre-9/11 Afghanistan. With the massive and strategic resources of minerals, corrupt and weak regimes, Africa is perfect place for weapon merchants of death, resource smugglers, mercenaries and warlordism of various sorts and agendas.

The starting point must be the revival of African self-reliance and self-empowerment to run their own affairs. A peaceful, politically stable and economically self-sustaining Africa is the best guarantee for transformation from a situation of dependency into a strong partner in the search for sustainable development, international co-operation and world peace.

### **THE LONG ROAD TO AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

There is general consensus among Africans and people interested in the continent that African Renaissance goes through Pan-African unity. Without unity in an era of political and economic blocks, Africa will remain divided and weak and at the mercy of the big powers. However, Pan-African unity means different things to different people. For some, Pan-African unity means African continental unity from the top of all the 53 African states, including the 8 Arab states in North-East Africa. Among the proponents of this kind of unity were Nkrumah of Ghana, Nyerere of Tanzania and Nasser of Egypt. For others, Pan-African unity means unity of all the people whose historical and cultural roots are in and feel belonging to and identify themselves as

<sup>10</sup> South African President Thabo Mbeki's speech at the United Nations University in Japan, 9 April 1998.

Africans. Because of the sensitivity of exclusive nationalist fears, most Africans tend to ignore that Africa as a united continent is mission impossible, especially when the Arab states are at the very same time struggling to achieve exclusive Pan-Arab unity for the 21 Arab countries from the Persian Gulf to Morocco. As Professor Praha of the Cape Town based Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), explains “Africans need to define themselves on the basis of African history, culture and our contributive elements to the history of humanity”. According to him, “It is important to emphasise that the racial definition of Africans has little meaning or value. Its scientific status is bankrupt. Racial definitions... have meanings only for fascists... what remains the bedrock in this evolutionary process is that the emerging understandings and formulations of ‘Africanness’ must be free of chauvinistic implications and emancipator for Africans and the rest of humanity.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is essential for Africans not to repeat narrow nationalist exclusive notions and practices of unity against others according to either us or them. Pan-African unity and renaissance should build on the African philosophy of Ubuntu (humanness) according to which ‘I am because you are, you are therefore I am’. As a continent with no history of imperialism, universal, exclusive religion, no universal ideology to impose, no concept of one nation, one language, one king or even one God, a revived Africa will inspire the concept of unity in humanity and diversity in cultural, language and ideas and lifestyles and democratic diversity. With its traditional system of ethnic autonomy and diversity as a rule, African Renaissance will further enhance the growing need for understanding that human beings are part of and not apart from nature. Such new understanding will make people know that cultural diversity is a necessary as the biological diversity of the global environment. As the basis of life, security and well being of the global environment are preconditions for global security.

### **SIGN FOR AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

The positive effects of democratization processes in many African countries, the demise of racist rule in South Africa and the end of Cold War proxy wars have provided some space for concrete, albeit small, steps towards African Renaissance. Among these steps are the following:

- The return to African restorative justice system to address the legacy of apartheid to heal and reconcile South Africans through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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<sup>11</sup> Praha at the African Renaissance Conference held in 1999, 41.

Based on the concept of Ubuntu, the commission was led by Nobel peace prize laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. The idea is based on the African perception of criminal as someone straying out of the community confine and justice aims at restoring the criminal back into the community after s/he has met, confessed and asked for and received forgiveness from the victim's closet relatives. The community then helps the culprit with compensation, healing and reintegration into the community. The approach is also being used in Rwanda where it is called Gacaca to deal with the administration of justice in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

- African conflict prevention, resolution, management and transformation. Since the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union in 2001, African leaders have taken on themselves to secure peace on the continent. African mediators such as the late Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and others have been very active in reducing tensions and helping conflict ravaged countries to the negotiation table. Their efforts have succeeded in ending and transforming conflicts in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the 2002 Lusaka Peace accord of the DR Congo. Thanks to the active African efforts, there are fewer conflicts today than any other times in the past three decades. Africans are developing and deploying peacekeeping forces in Darfur to put an end to the ethnic cleansing by the Sudanese regime and its Janjaweed militia.
- The new African Union and regional economic organizations, parliament, civil society networks and growing networking and co-operation with fellow like-minded people around the world are seen as part of the process toward African Renaissance. Through such positive and mutually beneficial contacts, exchange and co-operation African political and civil society leaders get the chance to communicate to their colleagues about the special African values that can form a new basis for a more inclusive global system. Among these ideas and values are the concept of unity in diversity according to which we are all united in life and humanity but diverse in our cultures, our systems, lifestyles, outlook in order to complement and reassure each other. As the saying goes, if every man is an island, all islands meet under the sea. The other African value system that can contribute to the concept of global village is the sense of community according to which the whole takes primacy over its constituent parts. In other words, as we are part of the whole community of humanity, what is good for the whole humanity will also be good for the individuals. Local and global security are mutually supportive.

## **CONCLUSION**

The call for African Renaissance is a call for a Renaissance that will be of benefit not only to African people, but also for their fellow humans across the globe. Africa is not only the cradle of human kind, but it is still home top people of African, Asian and European origins. Africa is also home to the main religions and the world. In terms of wealth Africa is the second largest, one of the richest and least densely populated continent on earth. The ongoing discovery of oil in the Gulf of Guinea combines with the massive mineral, timber, water and hydraulic wealth to make the continent very strategic for glocal security.

On this basis, a more inclusive globalization can develop and the ideal and practice of more equitable sharing of the global space, wealth, power and life opportunities will be more accepted by more people. With instant information, travel of ideas, the cumulative knowledge, supersonic communication technologies and transport systems, it should be relatively easy, provide political will, to educate people to understand and act on such values for the sake of enlightened self-interest. This will be the best guarantee for local and global security.