

Keynote Address of the Patron of the TMF,

Thabo Mbeki

at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) Conference:

The Architecture of Post-Cold War Africa:
Between Internal Reform and External Intervention

Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
January 19, 2012

Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research, Professor Mahmood Mamdani,
Distinguished Participants,
Comrades and Friends:

First of all I would like to thank Professor Mamdani and the Makerere Institute of Social Research for taking the initiative to convene this Conference to discuss urgent and important matters that relate to the future of our Continent.

Hopefully the discourse that will take place here over the next two days will find its way into the larger African political community to initiate the absolutely necessary broad-based discussion our Continent needs, to consider the vitally important question - what should Africa do in today's world truly to determine her destiny.

A decade ago an academic then at one of the South African Universities, Xavier Renou, wrote:

"There is a permanent reluctance among academics to call a spade a spade and a predatory (or imperialist) policy as such. In the case of French Foreign policy in Africa, very few academics have pointed at its dramatic consequences, and even fewer have been prepared to described them as resulting from deliberate criminal choices aimed at fostering a small minority's interest, at any cost."

(Xavier Renou, "A Major Obstacle to African Unity: the New Franco-American Cold War on the (African) Continent", 2000)

These are strong words with which we may differ. I quote them because they pose the challenge that at this Conference, in the interest of the peoples of Africa, we should have the courage to confront the African reality frankly, and therefore dare – to call a spade a spade!

I am certain that it is a matter of common cause among us that there were two issues which impacted on Africa in the context of the Cold War.

One of these was that the Cold War coincided with the historic period of the liquidation of the system of colonialism in Africa.

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

The second was that as our Continent achieved its liberation, it got enmeshed in the intense and then unrelenting global struggle between capitalism and socialism, led respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union.

The overall theme of our Conference requires that we discuss the matter of *'The Architecture of post-Cold War Africa'*.

Obviously, this means that we should say something, even briefly, about *'The Architecture of Cold War Africa'*.

In the context of the more complex reality we face today, it would indeed seem that it is a relatively easier task to discuss the latter issue, namely, *'The Architecture of Cold War Africa'*.

Let me state the historical reality relating to this 'architecture' in simple and perhaps simplistic terms.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union, the so-called '*super-powers*', could not but, at least in principle, welcome the liquidation of the system of colonialism, and therefore our exercise across Africa of our right to self-determination.

Within the context of the Cold War, the problem arose because each of the '*super-powers*', in their respective interests, intervened in Africa to help ensure that independent Africa acted in a manner which was consistent with their global objectives.

It is my firm view that in this regard the Soviet Union, and therefore the socialist perspective, occupied a strategically stronger position in terms of winning the allegiance of liberated Africa.

This was essentially because:

- in terms of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the assertion of the right of nations to self-determination, up to and including independence, was an essential part of the perspective of the global advance towards the victory of socialism; and,
- viewed in its context as anti-imperialist, the Soviet Union saw the anti-colonial movement as a strategic ally against its own opponent, imperialism and the imperialist powers.

The historical reality is that certainly many, and perhaps the majority of the African political forces that had been involved in difficult struggles to achieve liberation from colonial domination could not but be attracted to an anti-imperialist posture, which was sympathetic both to the ideas of socialism and partnership with the Soviet Union, the then leading socialist country.

The 'ruling establishment' in the United States, regardless of party affiliation relating to the Republican and Democratic Parties, which shared a common anti-communist and anti-Soviet ideology, understood the implications of the liberation of Africa from colonialism in the context of what I have said.

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

This 'ruling establishment' in the United States shared this understanding with the allied and major West European powers, which were also capitalist, and which the US had taken steps to attach to itself through such interventions as the Marshall Plan and various interventions to support the anti-Soviet and anti-communist formations in Western Europe.

Thus did the United States and West Europe, together, take fright at the possibility that Africa would take to a contrary path, which, in their view, would represent what they viewed as '*the deadly disease*' of '*Soviet expansionism*'.

It was therefore inevitable that the dominant Western capitalist powers would intervene decisively in Africa to realise the objective, in their view, to achieve the strategic objective to '*keep Africa within their sphere of influence*' and therefore, as much as possible, deny the Soviet Union any possibility to place Africa '*within its own sphere of influence*'.

Concretely, among other things, this resulted in such negative developments as the corruption of the African independence project through the establishment of the system of neo-colonialism, the overthrow of governments which resisted this, support for the white minority and colonial regimes in Southern Africa, seen as dependable anti-communist and anti-Soviet allies, the assassination of such leaders as Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara and Eduardo Mondlane, sponsorship of such instrumentalities as UNITA in Angola and RENAMO in Moçambique, support for predatory and client regimes such as those of Mobutu in the then Zaire, and of Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire, and even such major catastrophes as represented by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Of course we can also cite other very negative developments which took place in Africa during the period of the Cold War, where these developments must be attributed to administrations which the Soviet Union supported as progressive representatives of what was characterised as the '*non-capitalist path of development*'.

In this regard we can mention specifically the Sekou Toure administration in Guinea Conakry, and the Ethiopian 'Dergue', led by Mengistu Haile-Mariam.

However, the balance of evidence makes the statement that much of the negative developments on our Continent during the period of the Cold War derived from the determined efforts of the West to defeat what they saw and described as '*Soviet expansionism*'.

These are the countries which Xavier Renou said the African academy is reluctant or afraid boldly and accurately to characterise as imperialist and predatory.

I have spent what some among us might conclude is unjustified extended attention to the past of the Cold War years.

However, I believe, firmly, that this past is very much part of the present.

Accordingly, in my view, it is not possible for us properly to understand our present reality without a proper assessment of what might seem, in terms of chronology, to be a dead past that we must discount.

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

The hard truth is that absolutely each of our days is weighed down by the heavy burden of the past.

I am certain that as we consider 'post-Cold War' Africa, we will have to reflect on the continuing impulses which derive from the period of 'Cold War' Africa.

Nineteen years ago, on March 7, 1993, in the aftermath of the earlier disappearance of the Soviet Union, the influential US Newspaper, *The New York Times*, published an article written by Steven A. Holmes, entitled: 'The World: Africa, From The Cold War To Cold Shoulders.'

With your permission, I will take the liberty to quote this article at some length.

Among other things Holmes wrote:

"Having been carved up and colonized by European powers and turned into pawns, knights and rooks on a cold war chessboard by the superpowers, Africa now faces a devastating new problem: indifference.

"Writing in the current issue of Foreign Affairs Quarterly, Marguerite Michaels, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, noted that the disintegration of the Soviet Union "set America free to pursue its own interests in Africa - and it found that it did not have any."

"It is a harsh assessment. But with the end of the cold war, Africa's strategic importance to the West has declined. With shrinking per capita income hampering the market for Western goods, political instability and a poorly educated work force making investment unattractive... Africa's economic significance has been reduced..."

"I'm not nostalgic about the cold war," Salim A. Salim, Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity, said during a speech last week in Washington. "I am very happy the cold war is over. What I am saying is that there is diminishing interest in the issues of real human concern..."

"Perhaps the most significant development is the willingness of Africans to admit their own past mistakes - to stop placing the blame for the continent's underdevelopment entirely on the West and the legacy of colonialism, and instead condemn gross abuses by incompetent or venal leaders..."

"In the past, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other of other African countries, enshrined in the charter of the Organisation of African Unity, gave leaders for inaction even in the face of blatant abuses by rulers like Idi Amin of Uganda.

"We allowed the violations of human rights," Mr Salim said. "We allowed the dehumanisation of our people and used the charter as a scapegoat."

These comments would have been read by many decision-makers in what was by then the sole world super-power, the United States, making for what was called a unipolar, post-Cold War world order.

They made the assertions that:

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

- the end of the Cold War had left Africa adrift in terms of the global geo-strategic agenda and considerations of the sole world super-power and presumably its Western allies;
- liberated from the obligation to secure the allegiance of independent Africa in the context of its global anti-Soviet struggle, the US had found that Africa was otherwise not of any importance in terms of its global strategic interests;
- as a consequence of this, the ‘world community’ would leave Africa to her fate, except in the context of its ‘humanitarian crises’, thus reducing it to subsisting in the global geometry as a recipient of charity;
- Africa understood this reality, and pleaded that this ‘indifference and neglect’ meant that Africa, left to herself, could not, on her own, attend to what were her most basic human challenges;
- for Africa to regain her place as a worthy international partner of the dominant world capitalist system, she had to establish a track record as a Continent of democracy and the related free capitalist market economies, consistent with the paradigm that has been prescribed by the so-called ‘Washington consensus’;
- Africa had the responsibility to solve, on her own, the problems she had inherited as a legacy of the policies generated during the Cold War;
- among others, in this context, she had the responsibility to pull herself by her bootstraps to make herself a relevant economic player in the context of the global economy;
- Africa had to accept that the time for all special and favourable consideration by the former colonial and imperialist powers, resulting in her preferential treatment, had come to end, and therefore that all argument about any continuing impact of the legacy of imperialism and colonialism would be treated as self-serving argument to justify our own failures as Africans; and,
- accordingly, the West had no particular and special responsibility to assist Africa to address what the then OAU Secretary General referred to as ‘issues of real human concern’.

Because our Continent cannot and will not drift into a situation of autarky, separated from the rest of the world, including the West, our Conference will have to consider whether if any of the conclusions we have derived from the *New York Times* article remain relevant in the context of our discussion of ‘post-Cold War Africa’.

However, the fundamental suggestion contained in *The New York Times* article we have cited, that because of the end of the Cold War, Africa had become decoupled from the global capitalist economy was wrong.

The correct statement which the author should have made was that because of the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and the attendant collapse of the world socialist system,

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

Africa had lost the ability and possibility to bargain in a manner and context which would, to some degree, guarantee the space for her to exercise her right to self-determination.

This was because the emergence of a unipolar world, dominated by the United States as the sole world super-power, meant that there was no countervailing force to challenge imperialist domination.

In other comments, elsewhere, I have tried to draw attention to a school of thought most forcefully and expressed in the UK, which, in essence, has argued for the re-colonisation of Africa.

Whether stated or not, fundamentally, this proposition is based on the perceived imperative to sustain the 'smooth' functioning of the contemporary 'post-Cold War' process of globalisation.

It is based on the understanding that it is imperative that each component part within the international community of nations must play its expected role, especially to avoid all disjuncture within, and malfunction especially of the global economic system.

Because of this, the argument has been advanced that as Africans we have repeatedly failed to demonstrate that we are able to manage our affairs in a manner which would ensure that as an integral part of the integrated and universal system of globalisation, we play the role which would ensure the smooth functioning and integrity of this system.

Out of this arises the conclusion that others have an obligation, in the interest of the common, global good, to intervene to ensure that the 'misbehaviour' which is our wont, is contained and avoided, for the common good of all humanity, including ourselves.

In this regard, I have in the past drawn attention to statements made by various British commentators.

One of these was a June 2, 2003 article by Bruce Anderson, columnist of *The (London) Independent*, who wrote:

"Africa is a beautiful continent, full of potential and attractive people who deserve so much more than the way in which they are forced to live, and die. Yet it is not clear that the continent can generate its own salvation. It may be necessary to devise a form of neo-imperialism, in which Britain, the U.S. and the other beneficent nations would recruit local leaders and give them guidance to move towards free markets, the rule of law and - ultimately - some viable local version of democracy, while removing them from office in the event of backsliding."

Another British commentator, Richard Gott, wrote in the *New Statesman* magazine published on 15 January 2001:

"There is a growing belief, not least within the ranks of latter-day new Labour missionaries, that appears to favour the reconquest of Africa... Public opinion is often confused and disarmed when governments embark on neo-colonial interventions (in Africa). The new missionaries, (intellectuals and non-governmental organisations which "clog the airwaves and pollute the outside world's coverage of African affairs with their endless one-sided accounts of tragedy and

disaster”) are much like the old ones, an advance guard preparing the way for military and economic conquest.”

The British diplomat and theoretician, Robert Cooper, served as an adviser to then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and now advises the EU Foreign Affairs chief, Baroness Catherine Ashton.

He reinforced the comments I have quoted with seemingly sophisticated intellectual arguments in a 2000 essay entitled, “The Post-Modern State and the World Order”. In essence he argued that these so-called post-modern states, essentially the major Western countries, were the determinants of where all humanity should be, given, especially, the integrating impact of the process of globalisation.

In this context, and among other things, he wrote:

“How should we deal with the pre-modern chaos as manifested in various areas of the world?...“What form should intervention take? The most logical way to deal with chaos, and the one most employed in the past is colonisation. But colonisation is unacceptable to postmodern states (and, as it happens, to some modern states too). It is precisely because of the death of imperialism that we are seeing the emergence of the pre-modern world...”

“All the conditions for imperialism are there, but both the supply and demand for imperialism have dried up. And yet the weak still need the strong and the strong still need an orderly world. A world in which the efficient and well governed export stability and liberty, and which is open for investment and growth - all of this seems eminently desirable.

“What is needed then is a new kind of imperialism, one acceptable to a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values. We can already discern its outline: an imperialism which, like all imperialism, aims to bring order and organisation but which rests today on the voluntary principle.

“Postmodern imperialism takes two forms. First there is the voluntary imperialism of the global economy. This is usually operated by an international consortium through International Financial Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank – it is characteristic of the new imperialism that it is multilateral... If states wish to benefit, they must open themselves up to the interference of international organisations and foreign states (just as, for different reasons, the postmodern world has also opened itself up.)”

We have now seen what happened in Côte d’Ivoire and Libya during this past year, in both instances to allow non-African countries, ostensibly mandated by the UN Security Council, and regardless of African opinion, to remove the sitting governments by force and thus effect regime change, in the interest of the Western powers.

Two decades ago, much of Africa would have characterised these interventionist Western countries as imperialist powers, fully understanding the meaning of this categorisation.

Yet when they intervened in both Côte d’Ivoire and Libya, they sought to justify their actions by claiming that they acted as they did to advance our interests as Africans, being more determined selflessly to protect these interests than we were, as Africans.

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

Presumably to achieve this noble objective, they even succeeded to sustain the self-serving and naked fiction that Libya was not an African country, but merely an Arab country, whose fate had to be decided on the basis of what the League of Arab States said, and never on the basis of what the African Union had decided!

Equally of importance, and relevant to the tasks of this Conference, these powers made their violent interventions on our Continent arguing that they acted out of the goodness of their hearts, with the objective to bring us, the Africans, the gifts of democracy, good governance, peace and the very lives of millions of Africans who would otherwise have been butchered by the African governments concerned.

Thus did the miracle occur that those we had and have known as our colonial, neo-colonial and imperialist masters re-appear on our Continent as the very best among the true friends of the peoples of Africa!

The clue to an understanding of this was provided by Henry Kissinger in his 1994 book, *Diplomacy*.

In this context he wrote that Reagan:

“meant to reach his goal (of the defeat of the Soviet Union) by means of relentless confrontation...Reagan was the first post-war president to take the offensive (against the Soviet Union) both ideologically and geostrategically...”

“(He aimed) to stop dead in its tracks the Soviet quest for strategic superiority, and to turn it into a strategic liability.”

“The ideological vehicle for this reversal of roles was the issue of human rights, which Reagan and his advisers invoked to try to undermine the Soviet system. To be sure, his immediate predecessors has also affirmed the importance of human rights...Reagan and his advisers went a step further by treating human rights as a tool for overthrowing communism and democratising the Soviet Union...”

“In fact, Reagan took Wilsonianism to its ultimate conclusion. America would not wait passively for free institutions to evolve, nor would it confine itself to resisting direct threats to its security. Instead, it would actively promote democracy, rewarding those countries which fulfilled its ideals and punishing those which fell short – even if they presented no other visible threat to America...”

“The Reagan Doctrine amounted to a strategy for helping the enemy of one’s enemy...The Reagan Administration dispensed aid not only to genuine democrats (as in Poland), but also to Islamic fundamentalists (in cahoots with the Iranians) in Afghanistan, to rightists in Central America, and to tribal warlords in Africa...They shared a common enemy, and in the world of national interest, that made them allies...”

“The Reagan team thus turned the claims of the early Bolsheviks upside down: democratic values, not those of the Communist Manifesto, would be the wave of the future.”

(*Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger: The Easton Press, Norwalk, Connecticut, 1994)

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

Over an extended period of time, to date, US foreign policy has been informed by the two related propositions of US 'exceptionalism' and its 'manifest destiny' to lead in determining the content of the world order.

This was most recently reaffirmed by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, in an interview published by *Time* magazine on October 27, 2011. Among other things she said:

"What I found when I became Secretary of State was a lot of doubts and a lot of concerns and fears from, friends, allies, around the world. And so part of what I have tried to do as Secretary of State is to reassert American leadership, but to recognize that in 21st century terms we have to lead differently than the way we historically have done..."

"If you've got people who are moving away from you, if you've got people who are choosing a different path, then you have to use all the tools of your suasion to try to convince them that the path that you wish to follow is also the one that is in their interest as well. We've done a lot of that in the last two and a half years..."

"And it might seem a little bit unusual at first to understand that my goal is to assert our leadership in the most value-centered way...using...so-called smart power, to build more durable coalitions and networks...into which we are imbedded..."

"We have to be looking for ways that America can expand our economic presence, exercise our influence, and work with China. Part of my goal has been to imbed the United States into the preexisting regional architecture in Asia. And so when China began to show some muscle, and in part I think it was motivated by their assessment that, given our economic position, we couldn't really be as involved as we once had been. [The] future, I think, demands us to be..."

"We are limited in the geostrategic context because other countries are rising. That's a historical fact. It's happened at different points in history. But I don't view that as in any way a limit on our power. I view it as a challenge to how we can better exercise our power for the advancement of American security, interests, and values..."

"And I think that since I am so completely imbued with that sense of American exceptionalism and the conviction that we are called upon to lead, then it's up to us to figure out how we position ourselves to be as effective as possible at different times in the face of different threats and opportunities..."

If we scroll backwards to what Kissinger said, we can see that in essence the foreign policy posture of the US has not changed since the days of the Reagan administration.

The US still asserts its manifest destiny to lead the world.

It is convinced that its exceptionalism means that, as Secretary Clinton put it, *"if you've got people who are choosing a different path, then you have to use all the tools of your suasion to try to convince them that the path that you wish to follow is also the one that is in their interest as well."*

It will use all means at its disposal to achieve its geo-strategic objectives.

One of these, as explained by Kissinger, is the utilitarian use of democracy and human rights as instruments to achieve defined geo-strategic goals.

I believe that what I have said relating to US foreign policy, which would also be echoed, *mutatis mutandis*, by its major Western allies, imposes an obligation on us to understand its objective origins, its imperatives, its implications for us, and the consequential actions we should take, moving beyond any puerile notion that all we need to do is to make some militant statement.

As all of us will recall, in 2007 the US Council on Foreign Relations published a book on Africa entitled *More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic Approach Toward Africa*, which argued that the US should deal with Africa as a region of geo-strategic interest and importance, contrary to what was said in the 1993 *New York Times* article we cited earlier.

Specifically, among others, the 2007 Council on Foreign Relations publication stated that:

- the US was increasingly depending to meet its energy needs on imports of crude oil from Africa;
- *“It is impossible to count on a continuing supply of oil from Africa without attention to the quality of governance...and long-term stability”*;
- there was increasing international competition for access to Africa’s oil and other natural resources, including by China;
- China was becoming a *“formidable competitor for both influence and lucrative contracts on the Continent”*;
- *“Africa’s importance is also growing in trade negotiations”* specifically the WTO context; and,
- *“Africa is also rising in importance in the war on terror.”*

In this context we must re-state the importance of the issue raised by the British diplomat, Robert Cooper, concerning the duty of ‘the post-modern world’, i.e. the major Western powers, to ensure the integrity of the contemporary process of globalisation.

It would therefore seem clear that what Africa must expect in the contemporary ‘post-Cold War world’ is that:

- the so-called ‘post-modern world’ will intervene on our Continent wherever and whenever it believes this is necessary to ensure the integrity of the process of globalisation, to the extent that this process serves the interests of that ‘post-modern world’;
- such intervention will, among other things, focus on issues that relate to what has come to be known as ‘good governance’, including on the matters of democracy and human rights, essentially because the ‘post-modern world’ is interested in the stability which

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

will ensure that African instability does not disrupt the functioning of the world economy, create a base for international terrorism, increase illegal migration of Africans into the countries of the ‘post-modern world’, and so on; and,

- individual countries within this ‘post-modern world’ will also intervene in our Continent to protect and advance their unique interests.

All this will be based on the determination that, once more, because of her weakness, since the days of slavery, Africa is there ‘for the taking’.

The end of the Cold War meant that Robert Cooper’s ‘post-modern world’ had no countervailing power to contest its possibility to impose its leadership on all nations.

It is true, as Secretary Clinton said, that “*other countries are rising*”, referring to such countries as China, India and Brazil.

This, of course, does affect the ability of ‘the post-modern world’ to achieve the hegemony it seeks.

However, I believe that this does not put in question the conclusions I mentioned about what Africa should expect.

In essence I am saying that the end of the Cold War created the danger that the ability of the peoples of Africa to determine their destiny would be severely compromised and undermined, and hence the calls for a “*new imperialism*” in the statements I cited earlier.

Côte d’Ivoire and Libya have already shown us what can happen in this regard.

Other negative developments, such as the betrayal by the ‘post-modern world’ of the commitments it made in the NEPAD-related 2002 “G8 Africa Action Plan”, and the WTO Doha Development Round, and the determined EU insistence on the unequal ‘Economic Partnership Agreements’, all point to the resolve to continue to order the relations between Africa and the ‘post-modern world’ in the interests of the latter.

I would like to believe that all of us are opposed to any “*new imperialism*”, whatever form it might take, and would therefore see the defence of the independence of all our peoples as a fundamental and strategic imperative.

The defence of that independence surely means that we should not delegate to others the similarly strategic task to which we must respond without equivocation, to entrench democracy in our countries, to protect human rights, and to ensure that our countries are governed properly, in the interests of the masses of our people.

It also means that we have to strengthen our Continent’s cohesion, and therefore its capacity to act in unity, around a broad, progressive agenda, some of which is already contained in policies agreed through the AOU and the AU.

This must include strengthening the AU and ensuring that Africa’s voice, especially about its own affairs, is both heard and is treated with the necessary seriousness.

Thabo Mbeki – Keynote Address
19 January, 2012

We must also strengthen the links between Africa and other countries in what used to be called the *Third World*, to enhance our own ability to impact on the process of the ordering of contemporary global affairs.

None of this will happen on its own. It requires the mobilisation and activation of the forces on our Continent committed to the all-round progressive transformation of Africa, which must engage in struggle to achieve the objectives I have mentioned.

In this context, we will have to make an attempt to answer the questions whether the forces I am talking about have the required strength effectively to respond to the challenges Africa faces, as well as what they have to do to overcome the obvious and destructive inertia and legacy we have inherited from the long years of 'Cold War Africa'.

I sincerely hope that this important Conference will give itself time to reflect on all these matters and thus, perhaps, lay the basis for the re-birth of a genuine people's movement committed to the renaissance of Africa, fully understanding that we are our own liberators.

In his book, "Rethinking Africa's Globalisation", Paul Tiyambe Zeleza says:

"The language of crisis and marginality (concerning Africa), so deeply embedded in the Western imaginary...is attractive for its equal opportunity ideological possibilities: to those to the Right...it evokes a death wish for a Continent seen as beyond the pale of humanity, while, for the Left, it kindles the sympathies of redemption for the downtrodden."

(Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Rethinking Africa's Globalisation: Vol 1, The Intellectual Challenges*, Africa World Press, Inc., Trenton, New Jersey & Asmara, Eritrea, 2003)

I am certain that what the downtrodden in Africa demand is that we act together with them to end their condition as the wretched of the earth.

I wish this important Conference success.

Thank you.