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South African Afrophobia in local and continental contexts*

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa is the intellectual epicentre of the ideology of African renaissance and of the growing scholarly attention to decoloniality as an epistemological and aesthetic agenda of decolonisation. Paradoxically, the country is also a xenophobic crime scene: *the* continental state associated with endemic Afrophobic violence. This is a contradiction with both contemporary and historical significance. Positing this framing of a contradictory impulse should come with a caveat: Black South African intellectual investments in pan-Africanist projects were part of a broader cosmopolitan imaginary necessitated by South African colonial history and were thus partly projects of necessity. The origins of this politics of self-fashioning were not exclusively pan-Africanist.

The uneasy coexistence in South Africa of varieties of pan-African solidarity on the one hand and the rhetorical and violent scapegoating of 'foreign' African Blackness on the other calls for a deep historical inquest into the uniquely South African genealogies of both Afrophobia and its antipodal ideologies of pan-Africanism. Such an inquiry cannot begin and end in South Africa, however. It must cast its lens to the rest of the continent, where earlier, episodic and less persistent iterations of Afrophobia provide a historical backdrop to South African post-apartheid Afrophobia. This extension of the reflection to the rest of the continent not only gives us a historical frame of reference, it also enables us to conduct a continental intellectual survey of intra-Africa ideologies of virulent and violent Othering.

Accordingly, this essay dives deep into both South African and other African ideational histories and historical events in order to outline the long historical life of intra-Africa xenophobia both as a political programme of nationalist

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mobilisation and as a counterpoint to idioms of pan-African inclusion and solidarity. The survey here outlines a rough historical overview of the life cycles of intra-Africa animus, a phenomenon which now appears to have found a receptive location in South Africa. The essay also evaluates the ongoing debate on the roots of Afrophobia in South Africa.

AFROPHOBIA'S VIOLENT AND ANALYTICAL LIFESPAN

Since at least 1999, South Africa has been intermittently wracked by xenophobic violence in which Africans from the rest of the continent have been targeted. Some commentaries on the attacks situate the events in South Africa's 'Rainbow Nation' socioeconomic experiment, which has failed to redistribute wealth to the economically dispossessed and alienated Black majority (Neocosmos 2008; Mamabolo 2015; Claassen 2017).[1] The scapegoating of African 'foreigners' is causally linked to the negative emotions unleashed by the resulting frustrations, and to the human tendency to blame a perceived, proximate, constructed Other.

Some commentators, not departing from this foundational causal premise, accuse opportunistic politicians affiliated with the governing African National Congress (ANC) of stoking anti-African immigrant sentiment (Hanekom & Webster 2009).[2] The contention is that such politicians seek to exculpate themselves from the failures of the post-apartheid government and to secure or retain power by appealing to a crude, misplaced economic nationalism that avoids the structural racial and class inequalities inherent in South African society. This is the conventional interpretation of the nexus of politics and xenophobia. It is not entirely wrong, but a more compelling argument might be that it is in fact political actors who have been excluded from, or feel themselves to have been politically disadvantaged by the ANC's domination of the political space that have latched onto Afrophobia to rebuild their political following.

There is evidence for this contention, namely, that the spaces where Afrophobic attacks have reoccurred (Alexandra township in Johannesburg, Mpumalanga township, urban Kwa-Zulu Natal, townships on the outskirts of Cape Town, and squatter camps of the East Rand) are areas where the ANC has supplanted opposition parties rooted either in ethnic mobilisation or other emotive idioms. In particular, the ANC's electoral decimation of the Inkatha Freedom Party's Zulu ethno-nationalist base during the presidency of Jacob Zuma provoked the IFP's turn to xenophobic rhetoric. Afrophobia was the IFP's desperate gambit to win back its Zulu supporters from the fold of the ANC. The ANC's inroads into the IFP's ethnic base, aided by Zuma's robust performance of Zulu ethno-cultural identity and politics, marginalised the key actors of the IFP political universe and their agenda. One of those actors, the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini, reacted by bolstering the notion that the ANC was neglecting its own in favour of foreigners, an incendiary declaration that triggered days of Afrophobic rioting in 2015 (Campbell 2015).

The conventional political economy explanation privileges the politico-economic sphere, seeing xenophobic manifestations as subconscious or conscious substitutes for the structural displacements that mark South African society. It is a classic neo-Marxian explanation, one which is informed by the primacy of economics and power – political economy. To characterise the argument less ideologically, it is the idea that xenophobia is a signifier of and a stand-in for something more concretely existential.

The argument is of course not implausible. South Africa hosts one of the most unequal societies on the continent, a legacy of both apartheid and post-apartheid economic ordering of society into rigid groups of land owners and landless squatters. The racialised political economy of land ownership has plagued the post-apartheid ANC government and has created a semi-permanent underclass of extremely poor Black South Africans who may be vulnerable to emotive xenophobic rhetoric.

Explanations that posit xenophobia as incidental or manipulated outcomes of economic alienation, however, have a blind spot: they do not ascribe autonomous intellectual and programmatic agency to those who engage in xenophobic attacks or mobilisations. Such explanations fail to account for Afrophobia's purchase among a multiracial cast of rich South Africans, who occupy stable economic stations and have few, if any, existential economic anxieties. Economistic explanations, moreover, do not see Othering, racialised or otherwise, as an independent variable of quotidian politics or as a tactic of political self-positioning. Analyses that dwell exclusively on the economic factor can miss the ways in which the psychic violence of oppression can linger, mutate, infect a new generation of the oppressed, and find new targets. It is also noteworthy that, despite sharing the same economic marginality with areas wracked by Afrophobic violence, several ANC strongholds such as Katlehong and Khutsong have not experienced xenophobic attacks. This is in part because of the overarching political dominance of the local ANC, which diminishes the political utility of Afrophobic mobilisation, and because of grassroots efforts by local elites to discourage attacks on foreigners and to instead focus on local ameliorative struggles (Kirshner 2012).

The rhetoric of politicians often has to rely on a pre-existing psychic economy that permits the scapegoating of 'foreigners'. Is there a psychic formation that underpins South African xenophobia, and if so how can we retrace its history or situate it in South Africa's long history of racial oppression and resistance to it? Perhaps an understanding of a stealthy psychic reordering of South African Black society can provide clues to today's Afrophobic phenomenon.

Explanations emphasising how xenophobia grows out of economic alienation can sometimes construct a rather mechanistic causal relationship between the former and the latter. In South Africa, such a correlation is recent. It was never a given that the aftershocks of apartheid would catalyse a strain of xenophobia targeted at other Africans. If anything, 20th century South African history points in a different direction. The arc of Black South African thought and programmatic mobilisation, though divergent and convoluted, leads to a fairly discernible destination. It is a history marked not by separation from or antagonism towards the rest of Africa but by organisational, intellectual, political, and economic linkages with it. These linkages were necessary for Black

South Africans' effort to make claims on their new, segregated nation. This is why recent South African xenophobia presents historians with something of an anomalous historical contingency.

Nonetheless, if the scholarly consensus is that xenophobia is a sudden, ephemeral series of events rather than an endemic, malignant affliction, the process by which a pan-African Black political formation shot through with radical strains of Black consciousness and an unrelenting insistence on transnational Black solidarities has morphed into a post-liberation struggle with Afrophobic reaction requires an explanation.

A brief historical survey of South Africa's robust but fraught investments in the intellectual architecture of pan-Africanism and African solidarity will illustrate the disjuncture of the past and the present, the precise rupture that the xenophobic post-apartheid moment represents. It will also reveal the tensions that have long existed between the two Black South African visions of leading a continental regeneration and confronting the stark realities, impulses, and anxieties of economic insulation and isolation.

THE RISE OF SOUTH AFRICAN PAN-AFRICANISM

Despite its multiple sources and trajectories, South African Black intellectual history is marked by a remarkable clarity of thought regarding continental and global Black solidarity. Early Black South African nationalist thought displayed a racial certitude and a racialised cultural cosmopolitanism that renders the contemporary xenophobic moment an ahistorical aberration. Yet, a subtle but discernible ambivalence has resided in the depths of South African Black intellectual self-imagining, and an understanding of this enduring quality of South African radical and liberal Black intellectual history and its contradictions may offer clues about why the country is presently in the throes of Afrophobia.

Indeed, if the post-apartheid manifestation of Afrophobia has had a jarring effect on scholars and observers of pan-Africanism, it is because this trend disrupts and stands at variance from a long history of Black South African thought and gestures in support of a broad range of pan-Africanism. As scholars have demonstrated, South African intellectual history presents some of the clearest articulations of geographically boundless African solidarity. South Africa, after all, is also the land of Ubuntu, the much-cited African communal philosophy of coexistence, interdependence and human solidarity (Gade 2011).

The etymologies of Black South African thought lead to a robust set of pan-Africanist propositions, some more bounded than others. Early 20th century Black South African political thought was a site of remarkable experimentation in philosophical reflections on the place of Black people in the world. Perhaps due to the fact of growing alienation of Blacks from the political economy of the various proto-national colonies, and from 1910, from that of the unified South African nation, the gaze of Black South African thinkers was more external than internal. Magema Fuze, Zulu historian, publisher, journalist, nationalist and intellectual, and Pixley ka Isaka Seme, the founder of the African National Congress, were pioneers of a capacious Africanity that spoke simultaneously to internal concerns and the imperative of external African solidarity (Mashamaite 2011; Mokoena 2011). Their Africa-facing intellectual productions and engagements provide a historical foil for examining Afrophobia.

The two men represented the paradigmatic Black intellectual consciousness of their time. At first glance, Fuze's magnum opus, *The Black People and Whence They Came: A Zulu View* (1999 [1922]), appears to be a provincial tome on Zulu history. What Fuze was doing in that text, however, transcended Zulu history. His was not a vernacular argument on ethnohistory, although one could describe it as a vernacular inflection of a cosmopolitan theme of community. Fuze was interrogating the terms and idioms of his and other Zulus' South African Blackness. Being a proud Zulu and conversant with Zulu history and traditions, his point of departure was a Zulu universe of thought and self-construction. But this Zulu historical consciousness was decidedly an African nationalist one, for it sought to place the Zulu in a larger African cosmos. It was also steeped in the significations of Blackness, for in Fuze's thought, the Zulu was a synecdochical representation of a broader African Blackness that reached to the northern banks of the Limpopo River and beyond.

Fuze considered the Zulu an archetype of Africanity. He worked his way epistemologically from Zuluness to Africanness, and saw the two as coextensive. Fuze was thus one of South Africa's earliest pan-Africanist thinkers and writers. For Black South African intellectuals of Fuze's generation, ethnic and racial nationalisms were connected, and Africanity, defined strategically in continental, global and ideationally amorphous terms, served to anchor a political project of resistance against the expanding frontiers of colonial racism, discrimination and White minority rule. For Fuze, pan-Africanism was both a shield and a crutch. It was a programmatic necessity.

Fuze was an *amkholwa*, a literate convert to Christianity who was intellectually nurtured in part on the missionary ethos of the Ekukhanyeni Mission Station (Khumalo 2005; Mokoena 2011). Given this foundational cultural alienation, Fuze's search for an authentic African personality could not have stopped in Zululand, which was still recovering from the destruction of the Zulu kingdom by the British and was recuperating from the racialised trauma that that tragedy spawned.

For Fuze and other early Black South African intellectuals, the ongoing violence of colonialism, their own imbrication in a South African colonial modernity, and the disappointing refusal of White South African society to recognise them as Black moderns meant that their own country harboured no satisfying answers to the many questions they possessed regarding their place in the world. Such dissatisfaction with the domestic racial and cultural politics of their natal abodes in South Africa pushed them to look beyond their provincial Blackness. The cultivation of their continental identities, their Africanness, became a major and necessary aspect of their narrative politics and self-fashioning.

In this intellectual scheme, pan-Africanism came handy both for what it could do to foreground Fuze's identity and politics and for what he and other early Black South African thinkers envisaged as the future of their country: a country ruled by a Black majority and founded on the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Black people.

Like Magema Fuze, Pixley ka Isaka Seme was concerned with an African identity that transcended his native South Africa. He sought identity affirmation and meaning in the burgeoning pan-Africanist philosophies of the time. More than Fuze, Seme was committed to what he called 'the regeneration of Africa' (Masilela, Unpublished). Seme's early intervention in the discourses of cosmopolitan Africanism percolating in his time is notable for its refusal to be parochial and for its zealous embrace of Black cosmopolitanism. Even before the emergence of the Union of South Africa in 1910, Seme was eager to construct his Blackness and Africanness in juxtaposition with those of Africans located in other parts of the Africa and outside the continent.

In 1905, Seme authored a major essay 'arguing the historical necessity of realising New Africanism as a means of bringing about the Regeneration of Africa' (Masilela, Unpublished). The geographic canvas and ideological referent of Seme was Africa. His primary inspiration for the idea of the regeneration of Africa came from African-American and diaspora intellectuals such as Alexander Crummell and Martin Delany, who had similarly imagined and articulated their Africanness in terms of a global community of self-discovering and progressive Africans. For Seme, African liberation in the context of South Africa required a fusing of the idea of New Africanism, African nationalism, and the organisational platform of the African National Congress.

EMBODYING AFRICA IN DEFIANCE OF APARTHEID

This early script of Black South African nationalist thought was clearly pan-Africanist in content and context, as scholars have affirmed (Vale *et al.* 2014: Chs 5, 6 and 7). Black South Africans embraced a cosmopolitan racial platform of nationalist identity out of necessity. Unlike other African colonial settings where there was an existing colonial nation-state upon which to craft nationalist imaginings, in South Africa, there was no such nationalist geopolitical given until 1910, and the union that emerged in 1910 was a product of a Boer and British compromise to construct a single White nation in place of two warring ones.

Lacking a nationalist geopolitical frame of reference that was not exclusively White and racist, early Black South African nationalists made a virtue of necessity, constructing a forward-looking cosmopolitan nationalist imaginary, which rejected both White racism and Black nativism, or what Seme, in his speech at the founding of the ANC in 1912, called 'the demon of tribalism and ethnicity'. For Black South African intellectuals seeking belonging and trying to make claims on an emergent, racially conceived nation, it was necessary to assert their Blackness. Prior to 1910, they had to transcend ethnonational identities and preempt the Union, and after 1910, they had to insist on their membership in a cosmopolitan Black identity, which in turn made them, at least in their thinking, eligible for membership in the new nation. A racially exclusive nation-state project necessitated a counterbalancing racial idiom on the part of the Black majority. A new ideational architecture of undifferentiated Blackness was a perfect retort, and a fitting, if fraught, instrument of claims-making. It should however be noted that this expansive nationalist imagination was not exclusively derived from an invocation of Blackness. It also had a British imperial provenance. Some Black intellectuals, given their *amakholwa* roots, articulated notions of belonging and made claims through the idiom of the British Empire.[3]

This complicated relationship with the British Empire and its modes of belonging no doubt shaped the cosmopolitan nationalist templates of early Black South African intellectuals, prefiguring, contributing to, but also constraining the pan-African engagements of these intellectuals. The tension between imperial modes of belonging and pan-African ones characterised the nationalist ideas of these early Black intellectuals. Furthermore, a certain friction remained, even in this early period, between the fairly settled South Africanness of these thinkers, and their African selves, which were evolving and competing with other imaginations catalysed by South Africa's somewhat peculiar colonial experience. South African settler colonialism enforced a particularly virulent variety of paradigmatic Whiteness on the lives of Black people. Segregationist rhetoric (and later apartheid propaganda) had one clear, persistent objective: to separate Black South Africans from their Blackness – their political Blackness –which was entwined with that of the rest of the continent and ultimately with global Black diasporas.

The racist colonial regime limited the mobility of Black South Africans both internally and externally. The most compelling reason was economic, as the government sought to make Black labour available and keep it cheap (Thompson 2001: 118–19). Within the broader alchemy of South African segregationist thinking, a de-Africanisation and re-tribalisation agenda was discernible in the policies of South Africa's colonial regime.

The colonial regime sought to keep Black South Africans in the South African enclosure, fearing that ideational contagion would result from intellectual interaction between Black South Africans and Africans elsewhere on the continent. The criminalisation of unmonitored mobility of Black bodies followed from this thinking. The movement of Black South African minds and bodies to other parts of the continent, and the absorption of continental and global pan-Africanist ideas were dreaded prospects, as colonisers believed that such mobilities could lead to revolt and clamour for liberation. The colonial fear of pan-Africanism and Black solidarity mitigated the incipient Black nationalist movements of early 20th century South African history. The origins of South African exceptionalism, both Black and White, lay in the racialised sociopolitical engineering of the first three decades of the 20th century. This colonial construction of South Africa as a special, unique and separate place in Africa seeped into and haunted the pan-Africanist expressions of Black South African thinkers.

It would seem that this overbearing burden of South African colonial Whiteness and its vigorous policing of Black people's mobility and transnational ideational intercourse complicated the African nationalist and pan-African projects of intellectuals like Fuze and Seme. The result was that they groped for a meaningful and authentic vocabulary for defining their relationship to the rest of Africa and to the anti-colonial pan-Africanist ferment emerging across the continent and its diaspora (Mokoena 2011: 6). This struggle to find a firm anchor for pan-Africanist commitments also plagued other elites across colonial Africa, but the peculiarities of South Africa's settler colonialism and apartheid prolonged and intensified it.[4]

Subsequent generations of South African thinkers, who inherited the mantle of Seme, nurtured the ANC and came of age in the era of apartheid, seemed to have better resolved the tensions between South African Blackness and Pan-African solidarity. Intellectuals affiliated with the ANC Youth League crafted a new political epistemology of Africanity that was as capacious geographically as it was ideologically. Anton Lembede, one of the League's most productive thinkers, went so far as to propose the establishment of an African Academy, which he hoped would serve as a clearing house for South Africa's multiple pan-Africanist thought trajectories (Lembede 1947). Others such as Jordan Ngubane, H.I.E Dhlomo and Dr Benedict Vilakazi, echoed Lembede as they sought to transform South Africa into a hub of Black intellectual, artistic and scientific expressions.

The implementation of apartheid in the late 1940s and 1950s did little to diminish the pan-African fervour of South African intellectualism. If anything, it enabled, and perhaps compelled Black South African thinkers and activists to face north across the Limpopo, and beyond to the African diaspora, where Blackness, both as a sociopolitical demographic and as a condition, was being vigorously debated and defined. South Africa's Black intellectuals adapted and appropriated W.E.B. Dubois's 'Talented Tenth' conception of Black uplift. H.I.E. Dhlomo, for instance, promoted the 'New Talented Tenth in theorising a new historical phase of New Africanism' (Masilela, Unpublished).

An entire generation of South African activist intellectuals, among them Pambani Mzimba, Sol Plaatje, Peter Abraham, John Jabavu, Walter Rubusana and Elijah Makiwane, nourished themselves with, were inspired by and amplified themes from diasporic canons of pan-Africanism. The works of Richard Wright, Booker T. Washington, Langston Hughes, and other personalities associated with the African American radical and uplift traditions and the Harlem Renaissance were staples in South Africa's Black intellectual circuits. South African Black thinkers and activists in the apartheid period, far from being isolationists, saw parallels between the historical experience of African Americans and that of Africans in South Africa.

The expanding repertoires of Black South African thought in the apartheid era embraced not just the growing African American experiential and intellectual canon; they also faced and tapped into the struggles and intellectual productions of Africans on the continent. Bernard Ngubane spent his years in exile from the apartheid regime producing tomes inspired in part by his exposure to African Marxist thinking and praxis, particularly the Marxist decolonisation epistemology of Amilcar Cabral, while also dabbling in the radical pan-African and Négritude postulations of Ngugi Wa Ntiong'o, Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Eric Williams and Aimé Césaire (Ngubane 1947).

An unbroken tapestry of radical Afrocentric and pan-African thought and activism culminated in the discursive and political oeuvre of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement, with its tentacles in a radical rejection of Whiteness and its restatement of a self-contained world of Black self-legitimation (Biko 1979). Biko's ideas were the most Africa-facing of the plethora of Africa-flavoured thoughts on racial and continental solidarity emanating from South Africa in this period.

POST-COLONIAL NATION BUILDING AND CONTINENTAL AFROPHOBIA

South African Black intellectual production and political expressions during apartheid coincided with the decolonisation struggle in the rest of Africa, and extended to the post-colonial moment of fraught nation-building, Cold War political meddling, centrifugal agitations and new socioeconomic challenges to Africa's new nations.

Decolonisation took different forms in different colonial territories. Some were marked by civic struggles of the generic kind; others by violent, scorched-earth confrontations. The late colonial period of emancipatory anticipation, along with its aftermaths, was even messier, birthing Africa's modern xenophobic and Afrophobic precursors. It began with the divide-and-conquer politics of colonisers but quickly made its way through the body politic.

Colonial taxonomies which codified ethnic differences, formalised and made permanent previously fluid intra-Africa modes of differentiation, and racialised occupational and cultural dichotomies proved perversely effective as instruments of control and as mechanisms for preventing an incipient solidarity deemed a threat to the political solvency of the colonial state. For example, as Mahmood Mamdani argues compellingly in *When Victims Become Killers,* German and later Belgian colonisers in Rwanda essentially created a privileged Tutsi ethnic imaginary where none had existed. They then contrasted this identity with a supposedly inferior Hutu one, the distinction founded on an elaborate edifice of false and forced colonial ethnographic claims.[5] The subsequent post-independence expulsion of Tutsi by Hutu leaders was accompanied by an Afrophobic rhetoric that legitimised and operationalised the racist Belgian colonial Hamitic Hypothesis, which posited the Tutsi as a foreign, alien, domineering presence in Rwanda (Mamdani 2001: Ch. 3). The introduction of the idiom of alien-ness, the very idea of some Africans being foreigners in their African abodes, changed the relational dynamics between Tutsi and Hutu, producing sociopolitical tensions and conflict that culminated in the 1994 genocide.

Rwanda was not the only African colonial territory to experience Afrophobia in late colonialism. Colonially induced Afrophobia gripped the British colony of Sierra Leone during its own moment of transition to independence. In 1956, the colonial administration launched what it called 'Operation Parasite', a mass expulsion exercise aimed at removing tens of thousands of 'migrants' in the gold mining district of Kono. Most of the migrants were from neighbouring Guinea, others from Liberia. This was followed by another exercise called 'Operation Stranger Drive' (Smillie 2010: 98).

Officially, these expulsion exercises were designed to rid the gold mining industry of illegal miners and smugglers, and the colonial administration deployed this reason to both demonise the 'aliens' and propagandise the threat they allegedly posed to state revenue, incomes, local jobs and the social fabric of Kono communities. However, a clear strain of strategic colonial xenophobia underlay these actions as colonisers' concern about illegal mining was mainly framed by the imperial 'foreignness' of the alleged illegal miners. Most of them were Guineans whose natal lands were under French colonial rule.

Although the expulsions divided opinion among Sierra Leoneans, most of the African political representatives of Kono district in the colonial representative assembly enthusiastically supported the move and espoused xenophobic rhetoric that mirrored those articulated by the colonial government. The political leaders were echoing and pandering to the prevalent opinion in their constituencies. Colonial political and economic xenophobia was repackaged, understood, and locally expressed as primordial Afrophobia.

Colonial divide-and-rule projects were designed to stave off African solidarity and rebellion and to ease colonial administration, but they had remarkable staying power because Africans internalised and instrumentalised them to make identity claims, and to posit themselves as autochthons and others as 'aliens' who were parasitic nuisances threatening the social fabric. The discursive trope of Africans as 'aliens' in Africa and of autochthony being the sole criterion of belonging was produced and politically charged by colonial expediencies, but it took on a life of its own in post-colonial Africa. Post-colonial political elites recalibrated the colonial template of invoking intra-African differences to secure their rule. Furthermore, these elites laced the trope of alien interlopers with a new populist element that made identity claims coterminous with autochthony and also fobbed off political failures to Africans designated and maligned as 'foreigners'.

The liminal, restricted spaces accorded Africans in colonial society produced a volatile arena of competition for resources and opportunities. As a result, even as anti-colonial solidarity emerged in pan-African, national, and pan-territorial forms, tensions simmered and suspicions percolated, framed in the primordial terms codified by colonial indirect rule and its obsessions with 'tribe', custom and other bounded identities fixed in land and ostensibly legitimised by antiquity of residence.

There is no clear genealogical link between colonial and post-colonial xenophobic events, and historians are suspicious of teleological causal thinking, but the abiding factor of mobilisation is the longevity of the colonial dichotomous idiom of native and stranger, local and alien, autochthon and settler. Left unchallenged and unrefuted, this intensely politicised colonial ideology of intra-African differentiation was merely papered over by the ephemeral euphoria of independence. It remained available as a convenient, handy tool of mobilisation for post-colonial political elites facing the wrath of citizens during times of national dysfunction, disappointment and turmoil.

This rhetoric of intra-African animus was so persistent and politically useful that even the avowedly pan-African administration of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, could not escape its power. Nkrumah's ruling Convention Peoples Party (CPP) succumbed to populist pressure and passed the Deportation Act in 1957. While not authorising mass expulsion of 'foreigners', mostly Nigerians, the act provided the government with a legal basis to expel West African 'foreigners' considered 'a threat to the nation', a nebulous category that enabled the ruling party to deport several wealthy Nigerians suspected of supporting the opposition (Aremu 2014: 177).

Later, following Nkrumah's downfall, the Ghanaian Government under Prime Minister Kofi Busia expelled about 2.5 million undocumented West African migrants in 1969, the majority of them from neighbouring Nigeria. The nationalist populist sentiment that was crystallised in that event had been simmering from at least the 1930s, when dwindling opportunities in the cocoa trade caused tensions between Ghanaian and migrant Nigerian cocoa producers (Aremu 2014: 176). The 1969 expulsion of Nigerians from Ghana enjoyed popular support, and the government used it to deflect attention from its economic and political failings, as relatively well-off African migrants were scapegoated as usurpers, job stealers and parasites (Lawal 2019). Notably, the 1969 Expulsion Order was justified in a language that resembles the justificatory rhetoric of the current South African Afrophobic moment. The government claimed that the Order would 'restore the economy to Ghanaians', 'purify the country', and 'curb lawlessness and crime' (Aremu 2014: 177). The colonial rhetoric of criminal and domineering Otherness (articulated in Sierra Leone) would be reinvented and put to post-colonial political use. 'Foreign' Africanness was redefined as both pathology and pestilence, something to be expelled so that the post-colonial nation may be healed of its economic and social ailments.

When, in 1983 and 1984, two Nigerian administrations, one civilian and the other military, expelled millions of West African migrants from Nigeria, the official rhetorical anchor was similar to, if not even more vitriolic than, the previous Ghanaian one, demonstrating the enduring utility of a set of long-running Afrophobic constructs. In January 1983, the administration of Shehu Shagari (1979–83) gave about three million undocumented West African residents in the country two weeks to leave. The ensuing mass departures across the Nigeria–Benin border caused a humanitarian catastrophe, with deaths, injuries and diseases marking one of the biggest demographic displacements in West African history (Aluko 1985; Lawal 2019). The tragedy was compounded by the decision of the Ghanaian authorities to close its border with Togo, fearing that anti-regime insurgents would use the returning migrants as cover to wreak havoc on the country or, worse, topple the regime of Jerry Rawlings. A year later, General Muhamamdu Buhari, who had overthrown Shagari in a military coup, ordered a further 700,000 West African migrants, most of them with residency papers, to leave the country.

Both waves of migrant expulsion relied on a populist rhetoric of Afrophobia and the demonisation of the non-Nigerian, African Other. In the first wave, Nigerian politicians of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) weaponised a growing resentment against 'foreigners' as Nigeria's economic prospects declined. The Nigerian economy, long sustained by the oil boom, began to collapse in 1980, when oil prices fell in response to a global economic downturn and to the beginning of oil production in the USA, Nigeria's major oil buyer. With the economy in distress and citizens blaming the ruling party for mismanaging the country's finances, politicians began, in the run-up to the 1983 general elections 'to use words like "aliens" in their manifestoes' (Aluko 1985). Such politicians blamed West African migrants, Ghanaians in particular, for putting a strain on the economy, taking jobs from Nigerians, and engaging in criminal activities, promising to expel the 'foreign' Africans if elected (Aluko 1985).

In Côte d'Ivoire, similar tactics of politicised Othering was captured in the ideology of *Ivoirité*, or Ivorianness, which was first articulated and adopted as state policy during the Henry Konan Bédié regime (1993–99) and invigorated during the period of transition following the December 1999 coup. *Ivoirité* sought to redefine citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire through the politicised criteria of autochthony, religion and ethnicity, defined in terms of land, soil and antiquarian belonging (Akindes 2003). This new definition excluded African migrants and descendants of migrants from neighbouring West African countries, mostly Burkina Faso but also Mali, Guinea and others.

The policy of *Ivoirité* was divisive, and its long political fallout ultimately resulted in a civil war largely because of the sheer number of those it deemed 'aliens' (Mitchell 2012). Nonetheless, it had immense populist purchase in sections of the country, and worked for a time as a tool of political mobilisation at a time of acute economic stress and political uncertainty. Successive administrations saw the need to shore up their political bases and move the prevailing national conversation away from their failures and from other structural legacies of colonial and post-colonial political formations. *Ivoirité* was an invented category which performed that expedient task.

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT OF AFROPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

The foregoing exploration illustrates the ways in which, in various ways and to various degrees, Africa's colonial past is implicated in post-colonial manifestations of intra-African animosities. Highlighting this convoluted genealogy does not absolve post-colonial African actors of agency and responsibility for the various scripts of xenophobia that have been produced and acted out on the continent. Rather, it shows the inability or unwillingness of post-colonial African political elites to transcend or discard the sharp colonial binaries of state-making, statecraft and nation-building. In South Africa, the colonial reference is to what the African National Congress and its anti-apartheid ally, the South African Communist Party, called Colonialism of a Special Type.

In what specific ways is the current Afrophobia connected to the social engineering and governing logics of apartheid? South Africa-based philosopher and political theorist, Achille Mbembe, has excavated the crucial link between apartheid practices of surveillance, control and restrictions on Black mobility and post-apartheid strategies and policies on licit and illicit African migration to South Africa. How is it that in 21st century South Africa, so-called '"foreign nationals" are mostly Black people from the rest of the African continent and, eventually from the various African diasporas in the world'? (Mbembe 2019). For Mbembe, the answer lies in the continuities between apartheid demographic management technologies and those of successive post-apartheid administrations.

First, Mbembe contends that just as the ideologues of apartheid crafted and refined a coherently sinister ideology justifying the marginalisation, exclusion and systematic political and economic disenfranchisement of Blacks, some South African post-colonial Black elites, including the notoriously Afrophobic former Mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba, have produced 'the rudiments of an [Afrophobic] "ideology"' (Mbembe 2015). Mashaba is in fact a politician alienated from the ANC power system who found political relevance as a Black face for the Democratic Alliance, a White conservative party devoted, for reasons of political mobilisation, to nativism and a xenophobic agenda, hence his Afrophobic obsessions. This emergent Black-led Afrophobic epistemology alternately constructs Africans from the rest of the continent as threats to the South African body politic and as a Trojan Horse that would ruin the nation, corrupt its essential character, or undermine the autochthonous claims at the heart of its constitutional citizenship (Mbembe 2019).

Second, Mbembe locates South Africa's emerging ultra-nationalist immigration regime in both the bureaucratic and racial ideologies of apartheid. The current system and its underpinning ideologies and assumptions are carryovers from apartheid, Mbembe contends. Here is his characterisation of the Apartheid genealogy:

> Of almost all African states, South Africa has the best record in terms of immigration enforcement and control. After all, the South African state was founded on the capacity to ruthlessly coerce Blacks into rigid patterns of mobility. To achieve a quasi-monopoly over their movements, it invented one of the most brutal migrant labour systems the world has known beside slavery. It partitioned space and divided it into various fragments peppered it with various enclaves, zones of affluence and zones of abandonment, reserves … and bantustans, all under the sign of race and ethnicity. (Mbembe 2019)

This segregationist bureaucratic machine has 'only been partially dismantled', Mbembe insists, and its 'habitus has remained alive', producing 'violence on a massive scale as well as disastrous and emotionally traumatic experiences' (Mbembe 2019). 'Black 'foreign nationals' are the contemporary victims of a violent regime 'originally designed to discipline and to domesticate Black South Africans'. The post-apartheid recalibration of the South African bureaucratic system to express South Africa's understanding of itself as a besieged fortress of exceptionalism in Africa – a bureaucratic logic inherited from apartheid – undergirds current state policy regarding African migrants.

The other aspect of this ideological and bureaucratic indebtedness to apartheid racecraft, Mbembe contends, is that the post-apartheid ANC ruling oligarchy has only partially deracialised South Africa's immigration system. In apartheid South Africa, White European immigration was welcomed and accorded routes to permanent residency. On the other hand, the official bureaucratic attitude to both Blacks in South Africa and Blacks from the rest of the continent was defined by 'the logic of capture [of the labour force]' and 'the logic of temporariness' (Mbembe 2019).

While the logic of labour extraction no longer structures how the post-apartheid state understands and deals with the so-called Africans from elsewhere, these Africans are still defined through the logic of impermanence, that is, the foundational position that such Blacks, in Mbembe's words, 'must ultimately go back to where they came from'. European migrants to South Africa, on the other hand, are not understood and codified through the prism of temporariness. African migrants are thus uniquely defined through their Blackness and their status as immigrants in ways that White immigrants are not. This foundational bromide of temporariness has authorised several policies and acts of parliament designed to close or severely restrict the routes to permanent residency and to reinscribe the temporariness of African migrants' presence in South Africa.[6] Here, clearly, the apartheid segregationist belief that Blackness and its policed mobility were bars to belonging are still in force, albeit now repurposed for African migrants to, and in, South Africa.[7]

There is yet another aspect of apartheid ethno-racial social engineering that connects to the emerging ideology of Afrophobia in today's South Africa. In the late apartheid period, when pressures from within and outside South Africa mounted on the country's White minority leaders to restore the rights of Blacks and to promote the visibility of marginalised demographics within the society, the state devised a mechanism for creating a façade of gradual Black empowerment to mask the absence of inclusive change. In concert with industrial capitalists, apartheid ideologues imported Black labourers from neighbouring African countries such as Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique. The first three countries had conservative leaderships that maintained quasi-diplomatic relations with the apartheid regime. This migrant labour was mostly unskilled, but the labour pipeline eventually brought a few skilled 'foreign' African workers to South Africa (Adepoju 2003).

These few skilled and semi-skilled Africans were strategically placed as exhibitionist Black expatriates in a few White-dominated institutions as a token gesture of commitment to Black inclusion. 'Foreign' Blackness was strategically privileged over local Blackness in a very limited, self-interested and cynical project. South African Blacks were deemed ineligible for inclusion because they were ostensibly not educated enough, even though if this claim was true it would be self-indicting because of the Bantu Education Act, which allowed only an inferior, vocational and terminal education for Black South Africans. In the end, the apartheid racial politics of divide-and-rule and of deploying 'foreign' Black bodies to project a non-existent racial inclusion and to satiate industrialists' demand for cheap labour may have heightened intra-Black xenophobia or at least created a narrative that opportunists in South Africa can invoke to authorise a retreat from pan-African solidarity.

Some of the Black South African ideologues of Afrophobia anecdotally and semi-formally invoke this history of strategic apartheid importation of Africans from some African countries to defend and legitimise their exclusionary practices of keeping South Africa for only Blacks deemed autochthonous to the soil of South Africa.[8] In this way, Afrophobia is partly a reversal of apartheid racial exclusions, a backlash against the presence of 'foreign' Black bodies in specific, compromised South African spaces during the heydays of the struggle against apartheid. Afrophobia is thus partly a product of intra-racial anger and retribution.

A toxic Black nationalism marked by Black-on-Black racism has supplanted apartheid White nationalism, but both have as their constant targets Black bodies that are perceived as foreign and are thus outside the boundaries of a designated special community of belonging. That community was exclusively White under apartheid. Today, it is multiracial, but it is still constructed as exceptional. In other words, South African nationalist exceptionalism, originally posited by the architects of apartheid as a divide-and-conquer strategy, has been carried forward by some Black superintendents of post-apartheid South Africa. In his essay, 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness', Frantz Fanon foretold the dangers of post-colonial elite nationalist demagoguery, which is produced to deflect the failure of elites to define a new pan-African character for their states (Fanon 1963), but even he could not have anticipated the range and reach of South African post-apartheid nationalism.

Similarly, just as the ideologues of apartheid anchored their racial segregationist policies on the belief that it would guarantee jobs and privileges exclusively to Whites and keep crime away from White zones, South Africa's Afrophobic ideologues such as the aforementioned Herman Mashaba and Deputy Minister of Police, Bongani Mkongi, advance the promise of jobs, exclusive privileges to autochthons, and anxieties about African migrants' crimes as the overriding logics of their Afrophobic convictions.

THE AMBIVALENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

If the ultra-nationalist exceptionalism that informed apartheid segregationist and immigration infrastructures has re-emerged and has been repackaged by South Africa's ruling elites as an ethno-racial campaign of isolation and rejection of the Black 'foreign' presence, there is another emerging, equally powerful project on the opposite end of the spectrum. The most instructive emblems of this duality are three manifestations of recent South African history: the fact that the country is an incubator for the growing pan-African epistemology of decoloniality; the Afro-universal philosophy of ubuntu ecumenical solidarity; and the South African provenance of the ideology of African Renaissance.

Decoloniality has emerged as one of the most potent discursive challenges to the enduring epistemological legacies of colonialism, defined broadly as Euro-American systems of historical and contemporary oppression. Decoloniality is also a tool of Africa-centred analysis, which seeks to retrieve Africa from the margins of global sociopolitical, economic and epistemic formations and inscribe it at the centre of such configurations. Decoloniality insists on Africa's ontological sovereignty, and constructs its epistemological boundaries in broad pan-African geographic strokes. It is no accident that the most influential voices of decolonial intellectual and academic discourse are South-Africa based, even if they are not all South African by nationality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 2015).

South Africa thus remains a contradiction. The country's Black intellectual and political imagination has been caught, historically, in a dual identity: as an aspirational bastion of Black and African regenerative thought and as a Black-majority country plagued by the nationalist exceptionalism of its racist past. Transcending the latter to fulfil the promise of the former has been one of the defining, enduring struggles of post-apartheid South Africa.

These ambivalent impulses characterise the second pan-Africanist post-apartheid project: the modern, revamped ideology of an African Renaissance espoused most aggressively under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki, who was president from 1999 to 2008.[9] As articulated by Mbeki, the African Renaissance was designed to inspire 'the reawakening of the African continent', restore the dignity and identity of its peoples, and unite them behind a set of regenerative ideas (Nabudere 2011: 16). The African Renaissance was a programme of both institutional reforms and psychological reorientations intended to rediscover and realise the full, latent potential of Africa's greatness and to 'place Africa and South Africa in particular in the new global context'.[10] In particular, the African Renaissance sought to empower Africans to determine their own future by manoeuvring collectively into a better position in the global socioeconomic and political order.

This programmatic and intellectual project derives in part from South Africa's pan-African intellectual history and maps onto its contours, but it was also fraught with contradictions. The most obvious of these dissonances is the fact that the highpoint of the Mbekian African Renaissance coincided with the rise of Afrophobic sentiments, even if the latter was muffled in order to allow the former to thrive. To the extent that African Renaissance became the public face of South Africa's foreign policy under Mbeki and South Africa actively sought continental leadership in matters of African developmental solidarity, the tension between this Africa-facing ideology and the fraught economic realities of post-apartheid South Africa quickly emerged. The disappearing afterglow of liberation, the deepening racial economic inequalities and the failure of the post-apartheid state to deliver on its promise of radical redistributive economic change, accentuated this tension.

Political scientist Dani Nabudere has described Mbekian African Renaissance as 'Janus-headed'. On the one hand, the popularity of the philosophy among South Africa's post-apartheid Black political and intellectual elite 'reflect[ed] the mainstream political elite concern in South Africa for an African national identity against the background of an alienating apartheid system, which tried to depict South Africa as a White man's country' (Nabudere 2011). The other side of the coin for Nabudere was the ways in which the African Renaissance was also a project of globalising South Africa.

The way I see it, the other side of the Janus-faced project was an aspiration to continental leadership. Post-apartheid Black South African leaders constructed a self-interested Machiavellian pan-Africanist project in which long-internalised views of South Africa's exceptionalism and some form of manifest destiny fed into and legitimised a deft manoeuvre to define the rest of Africa in South Africa's image. South Africa aspired to lead Africa as its global spokesperson. The leadership perceived South Africa's relation with the rest of Africa in purely utilitarian terms, in terms of what Africa does for South Africa, for instance, how Africa can help South Africa attain its ambitions on the world stage. There was no commensurate articulation of what South Africa would do for the rest of Africa. Nor was there a programmatic appreciation of what the rest of Africa had *already* done for South Africa.

The problem was that the aspiration to continental leadership and the quest for post-apartheid identity reclamation failed to assuage or mitigate the economic pressures and failures at home, which were magnified by the abandonment of the ANC's radical agenda for an embrace of neoliberal globalisation and the pursuit of corporate investments (Nabudere 2011). These preoccupations deepened Black poverty at home while the government pursued largely abstract continental and pan-African goals abroad. It was only a matter of time before these conflicting imperatives collided.

This tension was not new, since the ANC itself had to fend off previous attempts to define its struggle in purely racial and Afrocentric terms,[11] and eventually settled for a non-racial ideology of struggle during apartheid and a non-racial ethos of governance after apartheid. It was only natural that the African Renaissance, insofar as it sought to integrate South Africa into an African world racially defined by Blackness, would face a backlash that was informed by domestic problems and most crucially by a residual but powerful commitment to a non-racial, non-African, and thus nationalist and isolationist tendency. For this reason, the African Renaissance remained a vanity political project of Mbeki and his allies.

Mbekian African Renaissance lacked coherence, and so its impact was far from hegemonic in the ANC, let alone in the larger South African society.

Aside from the exhibitionist activities of Mbeki's pan-Africanist allies in the ANC and in academic institutions such as the University of South Africa (UNISA), which hosts the so-called Institute for African Renaissance Studies, Mbekian African Renaissance had little or no influence in South Africa. Its infrastructures and commemorative events and institutions were thus either abandoned or dismantled when Jacob Zuma replaced Mbeki as South African president.

The contradiction of a country that simultaneously faces the continent and also faces away from it, in a push-and-pull dilemma, manifests itself in the sporadic outburst of Afrophobic violence and the persistence of Afrophobic rhetoric. The problem, as South Africa-based Nigerian scholar, Adekeye Adebajo, posited, is that, even as the complementary narratives of decoloniality and African Renaissance circulated in high political and academic discourse, what he calls 'South Africa's cultural schizophrenia' was also emerging in both official and popular vocabularies (Adebajo 2016*a*). This crisis of self-definition in relation to the African Other has only intensified as economic restiveness has put more pressure on political and thought leaders to locate the sources and culprits of Black poverty.

A political, cultural and philosophical retreat from Africa both undermined the pretentious ideals of Mbekian African Renaissance and outlived them. One of the results was that even as the African Renaissance made the scholarly and diplomatic rounds, 'Black South Africans still talked about the rest of Africa as if they were not part of it' (Adebajo 2016*a*). The country, Adebajo surmises, is 'caught between a shameful past of arrogant European racism, and a future at which it [is] struggling to arrive as the midwife of Africa's renaissance'. Afrophobia is not the only fallout of these dilemmas and contradictions of post-apartheid nation-building, but it is the most persistent and most sensational. It is also the one that connects most contrapuntally to South Africa's rich history of Afrocentric and pan-African intellectual and political projects.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

South Africa is associated with Afrophobia in the African popular imagination, but recent manifestations of Afrophobic violence belie a South African intellectual and political history of sustained pan-African and Afrocentric gestures. Black South Africans needed and still need to invoke connections to the rest of the continent and to global pan-Africanism as a way of legitimising their struggle and countering the myth of South Africa as a White man's enclave in Africa. At the same time, to various degrees, these Black South African elites have been shaped by and, wittingly or unwittingly, operate in the apartheid rhetoric of South African exceptionalism. The duality of simultaneously facing Africa and facing away from it is the result.

This contradiction has been heightened by the failure of successive post-apartheid administrations to fulfil the promise of liberation to the Black masses, and by the willingness of some members of the political elite to instead promote self-exculpatory Afrophobic scapegoating, even while nominally espousing the continental project of renaissance. This politics of nationalist mobilisation and its weaponisation at moments of national upheaval cannot be fully understood unless analysed in a wider continental context of post-colonial Afrophobia. There is a dual uniqueness to South Africa, however. The first is the articulation of an incipient, somewhat coherent ideology of Afrophobia and South African exceptionalism. This cannot be understood outside the legacies of apartheid. The second is an accompanying aspiration to African leadership that is framed in starkly utilitarian terms of what Africans can do for South Africa, while not being a burden to her or aspiring to membership in a South African nation still understood in the apartheid lexicon as a special place in Africa that must not be contaminated by unwelcome, unapproved Blackness.

NOTES

1. Even the scholar Michael Neocosmos, who critiques the causal obsession with poverty, acknowledges economic disenfranchisement as a primary factor and only criticises the tendency to reductively advance it as a final order explanation for xenophobic attacks when poverty, he argues, should be the starting point of the causal analysis but not the endpoint of it, since in his view it does not explain why African immigrants are the targets.

2. Political scientist Mahmood Mamdani echoed this view at the 2015 congress of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) when he blamed the highest officials in the ANC government of engendering xenophobia. As reported by Qaanitah Hunter (2015) in *The Mail and Guardian*, Mamdani stated that, 'the political class [government and the opposition] has provided the lead and signalled to the population this [view] by defining in narrow terms who belongs, who has entitlements and who can vote', and that 'if people are searching for clues as to why [this has happened] and how to move beyond this, I think both the explanation and the responsibility lies on the leadership'.

3. Notable examples include Richard Selope Thema and Sol Plaatje. According to Elizabeth Thornberry, many amakholwa, or mission-educated Africans, sought exemption from Native Law because, as one of them, Job Khambule claimed, they wanted to leave 'the Black race' or to become, as Thema put it, British without abandoning their Blackness. See Thornberry (2020, cited with author's permission).

4. I speak of peculiarities here in a similar vein as Mahmood Mamdani to signal, not a different trajectory of colonisation, but rather a typology of indirect rule located on a gradation of British indirect rule regimes in Africa. See Mamdani (1996: Chs 2, 3).

5. Mamdani (2001). See in particular, Chapter 3, for an analysis of the racialisation of the Tutsi-Hutu difference.

6. Mbembe does a great job of outlining these new, post-apartheid immigration policies and laws and the ideologies and thinking behind them.

7. For a series of essays on how post-apartheid immigration policy inherited and drew on apartheid immigration legacies and infrastructures, see the special issue of *Africa Today* volume 48, number 3, 2001 titled, 'Evaluating South African immigration Policy After Apartheid'.

8. I personally came in contact with this anecdotal narration at an Africa-centred academic conference at the University of Texas, Austin, in 2019, when a South African attendee, a high-ranking university administrator, justified the exclusion of African 'foreigners' from South African academic and research jobs by citing this apartheid-era practice of importing some Black academics from neighbouring African countries.

9. The current iteration of the African Renaissance is traceable to Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech, in May 1996 at the unveiling of the new South African constitution. From there, it seems to have been adopted, semi-formally, by the African National Congress, as Mbeki began to stamp his identity, imprimatur and political ideology on the party, preparatory to his ascendance to the presidency. Conferences followed, and a central African Renaissance Movement and its subsidiary chapters launched in the following three years. Subsequently, African Renaissance festivals and other events were held in South Africa.

10. For a full, critical evaluation of Mbekian African renaissance, see Adebajo (2016*b*) and Pityana (2018).

11. For a full account of the philosophical and operational disagreements between the ANC mainstream on one side and the radical pan-Africanist faction of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) on the other, and on the tensions and debates within the ANC, see Mandela, (1995: 227–30). One of the heirs to the radical Afrocentric tradition is the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) led by Julius Malema.

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