

George Twumasi



AFRICA'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

DECOLONISING AND INSPIRING THE AFRICAN MIND through
THE AUDIO-VISUAL POWER AND IMMEDIACY OF PUBLIC INTEREST MEDIA

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PREAMBLE

Colonialism impacted the African continent socially, politically and economically both positively and negatively, with far less of the former to be proud of; and disproportionality, more of the latter to contend with. Arguably, from a Eurocentric perspective, colonisation had positive social, economic and political impact on Africa. These included:

- the introduction of a Europeanised version of Christianity and a missionary-led system of education. Most missionaries introduced Western education in Africa by establishing mission schools to educate indigenous Africa about Western values and culture.
- the defence of colonised African protectorates against predatory enemy tribes through the exercise of European military might, warfare strategies, policing techniques and weaponry to defend the indigenous workforce and valuable natural resources.
- the introduction of mechanised technology across Africa for the purpose of building infrastructure comprising schools, medical facilities, railways, roads, office blocks and buildings, warehouses, trading posts, residential zones, and communication networks.
- the development of modern industries including the establishment of plantations for the growing of cash crops like cocoa, coffee, tea, rubber and cotton. and the creation of mining conglomerates to extract gold, diamond, copper, bauxite, uranium, iron-ore etc.
- the introduction of European language including English, French German, Dutch and Portuguese; to enable

indigenous Africans to communicate in a rapidly globalised world without any difficulties.

For the European, colonialism made the world aware of Africa's rich culture and its abundance of resources; a future basis for post-colonial African countries to trade on the international markets was established; fast moving consumer goods were introduced; and new jobs were created for those who would otherwise have been lacking in new trades and skills.

Naturally, the leaders of those tribal groups that sided with Europeans, grew richer. Moreover, for many European conservatives, a far stronger and superior governance framework - which is still in existence in most of the countries - was subsequently established to ensure continuity.

However, the negative effects of European colonisation has had far reaching consequences on the African personality and psyche than the positives outlined above:

- First, ahead of being colonised, Africans were taken as slaves to the new world and forced to work on the plantations without pay.
- Second, on the African continent, the Europeans seized land from the Africans to establish plantations for the growing of cash crops and forced the people to work on these plantations for a meagre wage.
- Third, Africa's culture was diluted, traditions were taken away and their ways of life were destroyed. The African's understanding and appreciation of his or her traditions and religion was completely destroyed.

- Fourth, Africans were forced to learn new languages, taught to eat European food and dress like Europeans; thereby abandoning their natural traditional way of life, just as the spread of virulent diseases also ensued.
- Fifth, due to the slave trade and the ensuing partition of Africa, families were torn apart as national boundaries were destroyed, leading to a post-colonial era of major inter-tribal conflicts which has ensued in millions of displaced refugees.
- Sixth, Africans were drafted into inferior in most colonial administrations with no say in the governing of their own countries. Nonetheless those fortunate

of a new generation of Africans via the Africa Public Interest Media Initiative.

ABSTRACT: AFRICA'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Africa is one of the world's fastest-growing economies. It is also one of its most diverse regions. Yet, its people, south of the Sahara in particular, once, one of the greatest civilisations ever, are also its most misconstrued.

Consequently, in 2020, a lurking question that needs to be resolved, particularly during the raging COVID-19 pandemic, is why Africa, one of the world's well-endowed, natural resource rich continents, with nearly 1.3 billion people, is still one of the world's poorest economic regions.



enough to be employed by their colonial masters felt superior to other Africans; leading to an enduring system of social inequality.

- Seventh, Europeans took away most of Africa's resources especially its gold and diamonds; and with the post-independent financialization of Africa's agricultural primary products and mineral resources, its capacity to earn substantial revenues on the international markets was significantly compromised.

Africa is yet to recover from its colonial trauma. However, the COVID 19 pandemic does offer the opportunity for the retooling

To answer this question well, we need to take a trip down memory lane.

Generally, Africans are often perceived as a clueless people with very little understanding of how past historical events have continued to impact on its present realities. But time is not linear. As such, there is an urgent need for the African continent to get plugged into the quantum technology grid that is actively driving a new global [Industrial Revolution](#) into fruition.

The 1400s was when the Portuguese, the first Europeans to use African slave labour, cultivated its first plantations off the coast

of West Africa, in São Tomé. Thereafter, until its abolition in late 1800s, the dehumanising trade served as the primary economic activity through which Europe's early industrialisation and ensuing globalisation efforts would be funded.

Nearly 11 million Africans were forcibly enslaved and commoditised in the New World; as comparable numbers were also sold via the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean; and an estimate of 46 million slaves got lost at sea.

Nonetheless, in the February 2008 issue of the [Quarterly Journal of Economics](#), a Harvard Professor of economics, [Nathan Nunn](#), unequivocally asserted a researched study of Africa's slave trades on the continent's subsequent economic development that *"the African countries that are the poorest today are the ones from which the most slaves were taken"*

To further underline the grim reality of contrarian world-views, Boris Johnson, in 2002, writing in [The Spectator](#) as its editor then, about Britain's colonial legacy in Africa, opined that *"the continent may be a blot, but it is not a blot upon our conscience. The problem is not that we were once in charge, but that we are not in charge anymore"*

Yet, it was Africa's colonial masters who deliberately worked on the psyche of its colonised for nearly 500 years, in order to ensure a way of life, which for most Africans, would prove to be psychologically traumatising. Africa's post-independence elite, the leaders of its colonial struggle for independence, were indoctrinated to loathe everything about being African: skin colour, language, clothing, customs and cultural norms.

This was the anathema that compelled the revolutionary French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher from the French colony of Martinique, Frantz Fanon, to opine in his 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth*, as follows:

"Colonialism is not satisfied merely withholding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it."

In recent years, most leaders across sub-Saharan Africa's emerging markets are increasingly trading old friends for new ones. For example, the region's exports to the US have declined, while exports to countries such as Russia, China, India and Turkey have doubled or even tripled. This shift in partnerships comes on the heels of the imminent implementation by the African Union of the [African Continental Free Trade Agreement](#). It is a landmark free trade agreement, which barring the current COVID 19 pandemic, would have become operational on the 1st of July 2020.

The onus, going forward, is on Africa's inspired thought leaders - comprising its reform minded politicians; its perceptive intellectuals and creative thinkers; and its iconic social media influencers - to build equitable trading partnerships with its conventional and emerging global players alike, post-COVID 19. Instead of a new scramble for Africa, 2020 to 2030 should mark a new era of aligned 21st-century partnerships that will transform Africa's weak market place into a huge economic prospect.

Ideological conflicts that initially undermined meaningful efforts by Africa's authentic post-colonial politicians, intellectuals and entrepreneurs in their respective bids to develop a more compatible philosophy to guide an authentic *African Renaissance*, are now wearing thin. Consequently, through the power of the internet and digital networking, access to new technologies will - at the click of a button - ensure direct access to billions of smartphones around the globe. A unique opportunity for Africa to reset its image on the global stage; and its cultural identity within, beckons.

MY VISION

My vision is to build an Africa-wide public interest media system with the capacity to strengthen the rule of law; assure the certainty of economic revival; and enforce equitable social justice across sub-Saharan Africa.

My goal is to transform Sub-Saharan Africa's public interest orientated news media infrastructure into a financially sound Fourth Estate and which will revive the continent's story narratives. Accordingly, I have established the foundations upon, which a sound digital ecosystem can be developed.

First, Africa's cultural heritage weaves a rich and colorful fabric of deep knowledge and wisdom. Yet its folklore and the compelling insights they convey have been undervalued for generations. History tells us, however, that all great civilizations on Earth have flourished because of an unshakeable confidence in the creative power of their belief systems. Hence the need to celebrate Africa's myths as a digital lifestyle experience.

In recognizing the huge creative and economic potential of Africa's cultural resources and the need to renew the confidence of the African, I am working towards the establishment of an African Broadcast Network (ABN), public interest orientated digital media ecosystem spanning sub-Saharan Africa. ABN will harness various digital distribution technologies to underpin the production of engaging and inspiring African content

Drawing on Africa's deep cultural wealth, my intent is to recreate an inspiring storytelling tradition for television with content, *made by Africans for Africans*, which takes advantage of the immediacy and audio-visual power of television to celebrate the continent's lush history of folk tales, to entertain millions of Africans on a recurring basis.

I have also worked in collaboration with Emmanuel Akyeampong of Harvard's Center for African Studies and with mainstream media organizations to create a framework for the launch of an African Public Broadcasting Foundation (APBF).

APBF's mission is two-fold: (a) work with global media support agencies to boost the professional capacity of Africa's free-to-air broadcasters, writers, journalists and producers; and (b) bring together African creatives and academic researchers to generate inspiring development-oriented story arcs. These will be designed into thematic concepts that will seek to primarily infotain and edutain. ABN's distribution platforms will provide on-air support to promote and expose APBF generated programming.

For centuries, Africa's uplifting storytelling tradition went uncelebrated. This has generally dampened interest among Africa's development financing institutions in the economic potential of our rich cultural narratives. For that reason, there is a lack of appetite to develop effective financing mechanisms to back the exploitation Africa's creative potential.

Furthermore, over the last 65 years, researchers have been amassing an expanding archive of African knowledge ranging from its archaeological and historical roots to its literary and folkloric traditions. Initiatives such as the African Writers Series sponsored by Heinemann Educational Publishers since the 1950s – which enabled writers like Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe to get started – also now represent a large literary archive.

Similarly, the six-volume Dictionary of African Biography, published in 2012 by Harvard University's Emmanuel Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates (Director of the Hutchins Center), which traces the events shaping the continent's

history over the past 5,000 years, provides another rich source of information about Africa's heroes and heroines.

The Dictionary of African Biography does reveal the depth, wealth, and complexity of Africa's history and document the tangible cultural and artistic contributions made by African societies of the past. These include Egyptian hieroglyphics, Meroitic script and the Ethiopian Ge'ez script and language. Accordingly, through the Center for African Studies and the Hutchins Center, I hope to gain direct access to an invaluable resource that will inspire young African creators to create viable African content.

Currently, however, unlike the rest of the world where the business models of most traditional media and content industries across the globe have been irreversibly altered by the shift to new digital media technologies. the traditional business models currently underpinning sub-Saharan Africa's public interest media sector remain obsolete.

Dynamic digital technologies have transformed the manner in, which we produce, store, distribute, and consume creative content. However, Africa's broadcasters are yet to embrace the new digital ecosystems, which have already transformed operating models, consumer relationships, and revenue growth across the globe. Nonetheless, Africa's broadcasters are sitting on a vast opportunity that can be remodel-led to entertain, educate, and inform millions of viewers across the continent.

Turning this opportunity into concrete benefit will require long-term commitments from institutional investors and private foundations.

Accordingly, I have secured the commitment of [His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor](#) who is proactively investing his political capital into the creation of the [Africa Public Interest Media Initiative](#), a mechanism through which the ABN and APBF propositions will attract

funding. The returns on this support - a more learned, prosperous, united, and democratic sub-Saharan Africa - would far exceed investment secured, with the dividends extending decades into the future. The key priorities areas, which the Africa Public Interest Media Initiative is focusing on are as follows:

- Facilitate the development of an intellectual infrastructure of enlightenment via a sustainable digital ecosystem; to inspire the re-discovery of Africa's authentic personality. For thousands of years, Africa did play a major role in the history of the Classical world and the Christian and Islamic Worlds that followed. For example, as the classical world of Greece and Rome reached its zenith, the only two empires that could rival them were both in Africa. From antiquity, Africans have continually produced recurring moments of inspiring and aspirational anecdotes to foster the economic growth and cultural enlightenment of mankind. Africa is where man first learned to think symbolically and create art. Its profound cultural shifts would eventually see their greatest expressions through the extraordinary civilizations fostered by the River Nile, Ethiopia and Songhai. But millions of modern day Africans know very little about each other; nor do they fully understand the historical role of the continent as the origin of all humanity.
- Work towards strengthening the African Continental Free Trade Agreement through the effective inter-connecting its authentic historical past - where great civilizations and economies flourished - to its future aspirations. An Africa, which had positive influence and impact on the development of various global civilizations and; an Africa, which has survived centuries of oppressive manipulation and colonization; is an Africa that can provide the world economy with one of its greatest

success stories ever. For centuries now, as the myth goes, the most enchanting stories have been narrated to millions of keen listeners across moonlit trees throughout village communities on the continent, through a rich oral storytelling tradition that has endured as an amazing source of inspiration. It is a reservoir of original fables, wild fantasies and, an ever-present conscience of Africa's painful past and tortured history. These aspects make it a source from which engaging television can be derived to enlighten, entertain and inspire a new generation of Africans to believe in themselves as a powerful force of change.

A PRESIDENTIAL OVERVIEW

The Presidency of His Excellency John A. Kufuor - from 7th January 2001 to 7th January 2009 - marked the first peaceful, civilian led, democratic transition of power in Ghana since the country's independence in 1957.

An exemplary guiding principle, which underpinned the integrity of his period in office, is His Excellency's impregnable conviction that a free media system is not only the bedrock of a functioning democracy. It is also a vital pillar for any aspiring nation and an ambitious continent to have.

The view of His Excellency is that Africa is at a pivotal moment in its history and as such, it is crucial to create a relevant mass media platform that speaks to the aspirations of the ordinary African. By generating an editorially independent public interest media system, which inspires significant change, he does believe Africa will emerge from its doldrums.

For more than 500 years, Africa has remained challenged by a legacy of stereotypes stretching from the negative imagery of Africans in antiquity - the classical age, Judeo-Christian literature, and

Islamic civilizations - to a crisis driven, news ecosystem that still rivets media coverage on Africa.

That continuing paradox, which Africans are still subjected to, has been heightened by a characteristic lack of willpower on the part of Africa's leadership to effectively present Africa in all of its endeavors in a positive light. To this day, albeit subtle, Western media continues to play a phenomenal role in validating a bleak, "[Joseph Conrad](#)", image of Africa.

Consequently, the discourse which continues to shape Africa's image on the global stage, currently lies beyond the control of Africa and Africans.

That notwithstanding, his view is that, through ABN, it is now possible to construct and project a confident image of Africa on the continent and on the international stage. It is a vision, which His Excellency is passionately motivated by. And as such, he is determined to persuade Africa's political leadership to support the Africa Public Interest Media Initiative.

However, far more importantly, with the advent of a dynamic global information highway and the rapid evolution of the network society, the polarizing threat of "fake news", disinformation and misinformation, does represent an inherent danger which if left unchecked, could lead to the rise of dictatorial regimes on the continent; and the crumbling across Africa, of all forms of checks and balances within its fragile, emerging democracies.

Within the context of the above, liberalizing Ghana's public interest media system and transforming the country's reputation into the bastion of media freedom, which it has become, is perhaps, the most significant achievement of his Presidency.

In equal measure, as President of the African Union, from 2007 to 2008, a major goal that His Excellency sought to achieve was to establish an authentic media of inspiration and reason which Africans

everywhere could identify with. His vision did not materialize as his tenure in office as President of the African Union, was a short-lived one.

His Excellency's vision then, was to facilitate the creation of a public interest media network that was aligned to the core values of the African Union; the concept of an African Renaissance, and the principles of ethical governance and the freedom of speech.

Nonetheless, it is a vision, which is still urgently required, especially post-COVID, to revive Africa's pathway to its social, political, economic and cultural evolution; and its integrated transformation.

During his term of office as President of South Africa, His Excellency President Thabo Mbeki, did also passionately promote the ideal of an African Renaissance that would awaken the philosophical consciousness of every knowledge seeking African. It is a vision, which the former President of South Africa is still very keen on.

However, a sincerely held belief of His Excellency John Kufuor is that the ideal's realization would be quickened only when, and if, an effective, public good focused, information dissemination system in the form of a financially viable digital media ecosystem were to be established. In his opinion, Africa's inherent inability to achieve tangible economic progress is particularly due to the fact that the continent is still bereft of sound and practical, public interest information-based knowledge systems.

Accordingly, His Excellency is committed to championing into fruition, the Africa Public Interest Media Initiative that is reinforced by the ABN proposition. His goal is to generate support for the production and Africa-wide distribution of inspiring content *made for Africans by Africans*.

An editorially independent public interest information-based knowledge system that is able to engender a strong sense of the African's identity will set hundreds of millions of Africans on a path of boundless possibilities.



A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prior to the colonial era, Africa had up to about 10,000 different states and autonomous groups with distinct languages and rich customs. From the mid-7th century, however, Muslim Arabs started the forced enslavement of Africans. From the late 15th century, Europeans joined the slave trade. Initially, slaves who were acquired through trade and later by force were transported across the Atlantic from Africa to Europe and the Americas.

Famous pre-colonial states in Africa included the Ajuran Empire, the Warsangali Sultanate, the Kingdom of Nri, the Nok, the Empires of Aksum, Mali, Songhai, Benin, Oyo, Mutapa, Asante, Kaabu, and Ghana.

Other remarkable pre-colonial dominions included the Kingdom of Lunda, the Mossi Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, the Kingdom of Sine, the Kingdom of Sennar, the Kingdom of Saloum, the Kingdom of Baol, the Kingdom of Cayor, the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, the Kingdom of Kongo, Kingdom of Ile Ife, Ancient Carthage, Numidia and Mauretania.



Recorded African reaction to the Portuguese-led European intrusion of the continent from the late 15th century through to 1994, was not a uniform one. As was the case in East Africa, few territories had suffered from obstinate slave raids by the Arabs. Initially, these extended a dim welcome to European presence in their regions, hoping the latter would be peaceful.

Others, however, including South Africa's Zulus and the Asante in West Africa (both remnants of once powerful sovereign states) who did participate in the slave trade for a while as vendors of beaten tribes, resisted European attempts to exert dominion power for long periods of time.

But, in West Africa, including its coastal confederacy settlements such as the Gold Coast's Fante Confederacy, there was an initial indifference. This was because the early years of Eurocentric interactions between 1400 and 1900 had a curious impact on the lives of most coastal and rural African people. This situation would only change as the horrid impact of colonialism became intense in the early to mid-decades of the 20th century.



Europe's colonization of Africa would subsequently develop rapidly from around 10% in 1870 to over 90% after the [Scramble for Africa](#), from 1881 to 1914. However, following struggles for independence in many parts of the continent, as well as a weakened Europe after the Second World War, the process of decolonization gathered pace, culminating in a post-apartheid South Africa and the presidency of Nelson Mandela in 1994.

A Case Study - Africa's Early Resistance to Colonial Rule:

The Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885, leading to the Scramble for Africa, which ensued after the pre-eminent defeat of the Asantes in 1874, unleashed strong resistance against European colonizers in many parts of Africa. The Asantes, however, remained persistent above all other anti-colonial resistance fighters of their time and, would eventually establish the foundations of resistance which led to the independence of Ghana.

Long before the end of the slave trade in 1807, the British were interested in extending their economic and political influence into the interior of the Gold Coast. These efforts were met with stiff resistance by the Asante who were able to defend their interests and freedoms through a series of victories in battles with the British over a period close to a hundred years.



However, after a half century of suffering incremental defeats at the hand of the Asante kingdom's fierce warriors, the British army, under the command of Sir Garnet Wolseley, inflicted a draining defeat on the Asante at the Battle of Amoafo. The spoils of this victory, albeit relatively short lived, paved the way for British colonial rule of the Gold Coast in 1902.

Even in defeat, once the Gold Coast was declared a protectorate, effortlessly, the Ashanti kingdom maintained its traditional system of government in parallel with the British. Nowhere in Africa was an indigenous monarch as organised as the Asante King, who considered himself equal to the British Crown. Grudgingly, Britain was forced to grant concessions to the Asante during its period of dominion in the Gold Coast.

In sharp contrast to the worldview of the Asante, there are records of an early adoption by some Gold Coasters, of an intensely Eurocentric lifestyle. This was underpinned by the abandonment of most of their traditional values, opting rather, for a full embrace of an elitist, missionary inspired class structure, which frowned upon centuries old cultural norms.

Supporters of colonialism in the average person from the welcome colonialism and Crown in exchange for the assimilation and/or Colonialism, they argued, slavery (in West, East and stop to inter-tribal warfare in ushered in a new [age of savage](#)".



Europe could now claim that Gold Coast would warmly subservience to British prospect of identity sociological affirmation. had brought the end of Central Africa); has put a parts of West Africa; and [enlightenment](#) to the "noble

While there was certainly some truth to the claim that colonialism brought peace and a measure of sociological compatibility to the Gold Coast and to a few other nations in Africa; and that there were some peoples who were initially thankful for an end to inter-tribal violence in their areas of domain, the historical evidence does not support the claim that, from a cultural perspective, there was widespread preference for colonial rule.

Nonetheless, by the beginning of World-War I in 1914, all of Africa, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, had been colonized; all resistance had been overcome by the major colonial powers of Britain, France and Germany. As colonial rule became institutionalized, African resistance to colonialism became more focused and intense. Specific to the Gold Coast, [the Aborigines Rights Protection Society](#) (ARPS) would soon evolve into the colony's first and most effective intellectual force of change.

Pan-Africanism, which represents the aggregation of the historical, cultural, spiritual, artistic, scientific, and philosophical legacies of Africans from past times to the present, would become the metaphysical spearhead with which Africa's liberal elite would wage war against colonial rule.



Pan-Africanism is an ethical system of governance which originated from ancient African Kingdoms and Empires, promoting values that were the product of past African civilisations. It has continued to inform the Africa's struggles against slavery, racism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism.

Inspired African-American and Afro-Caribbean intellectuals - including Edward Wilmot Blyden (who birthed the movement), Henry Sylvester Williams, George Padmore and W.E.B. DuBois - continued over nearly two centuries, to refine the system's nationalist and Africanist ideals.

Founded in 1917, [the National Congress of British West Africa](#) (NCBWA) which was linked to the ARPS, was a Pan-African leaning movement with West Africa as its primary focus of activity. Its mission was to pursue political independence on behalf the British colonies in West Africa.



By the late 1940s, new movements across most African colonies, inspired by the NCBWA, had adopted Pan-Africanism as a belief system. Unlike the conservative political parties of that era, its revolution-minded advocates could not be restricted by the Gold Coast's indigenous bourgeois elite. Its activist leaders efficiently mobilised mass support to

demand an end to institutionalised discrimination; were able to advocate for freedom from the grip of colonial rule; and commandeered legislative support for the immediate abolition of policies affecting the right to self-rule.

Exemplified by the deep intellect of Dr Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, the feisty brand of African nationalism that unfolded took Europe's colonial powers by surprise. Simultaneously, World War II had exacted a profound effect on colonial rule in Africa, including the Gold Coast. In 1941, the British Premier, Winston Churchill, and the US's President Franklin Roosevelt composed a document, the Atlantic Charter, which detailed principles to direct the Allies' war effort.

The third paragraph of the Charter stated that the Allies: *"respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they will wish to see sovereign rights of self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."*

Libya in 1951 and Egypt in 1952, were the first African nations to gain independence. The Italians and the British, followed by the French and then the Belgians, would soon, thereafter, respond to the demands for independence. Around the same period, an English trained firebrand legal advocate and constitutionalist, [Kobina Sekyi](#), who had emerged as a key driver of the NCBWA, joined the [Coussey Committee on Constitutional Reform](#), to devise the Constitution for the Gold Coast in 1946.

By the end of 1957, Ghana had become a beacon of promise in Africa's struggle for independence. Its education levels then were the highest in all of Sub-Saharan Africa; and most of its elite had been keen to put their intellectual weight behind the continent's movement for liberation.

[Paa Grant](#) and [J.B. Danquah](#), leading nationalists of the Gold Coast era, albeit conventional, started campaigning during the late 1920s and early 1930s for home rule well before the Second World War; and before the majority of the decolonization of the British Colonies had begun.

Ghana, sub-Saharan Africa's shining black star of hope, was the first country, south of the Sahara, to achieve independence on the 6th March 1957. The ensuing years unleashed a major drive for independence with Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, at its helm.

Through an unbending commitment, he pre-empted a powerful zeal to loosen colonial grip on Africa. The formation of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) is Kwame Nkrumah's most enduring testament.

Established in 1963 with 32 signatory governments. The mandate of the O.A.U. was to eradicate colonialism and obliterate neo-colonialism from the African continent.

By the end of the 1960s, only seven colonies remained. Of these, five were settler colonies in which the European settler community continued to keep the indigenous African population from gaining their political freedom. The Southern African nations of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, all of which were settler colonies, remained colonised as did Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde in West Africa.

The African nationalist movements that were formed in each of these settler colonies, mostly during the 1940s and 1950s, all sought peaceful constitutional change. The primary aim of each nationalist movement was to advocate for the constitutional rights of the majority African population.

For many years, the white settlers in these colonies were the only ones who had the right to vote. They used this vote to elect representatives who passed laws that protected the power of the European settlers and discriminated against Africans.



However, the ethnic nationalist leaders of each settler-colony believed that an equally empowered indigenous population would use their vote to bring in majority, independent indigenous African rule. The settler colonial governments responded to the non-violent constitutional demands of African nationalist parties with laws that violently banned all protests.

Repressive legislation allowed white settler governments to arrest and imprison the leaders of banned political parties. The most famous of the imprisoned political leaders was Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress of South Africa, who spent twenty-seven years in jail.

After being released in 1989 he became the first president of an independent South Africa in 1994. However, Nelson Mandela was just one of many African leaders who spent years in jail as a result of their demands for freedom, majority rule, and independence for their respective countries.

The O.A.U. was disbanded on 9 July 2002 by its last chairperson, South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki, and replaced by the African Union (AU). A key aim of the O.A.U. had been to encourage political and economic integration among member states.

Nearly 57 years after its formation and 39 years after its dissolution, a key vision for which the O.A.U. was established, is yet to come to fruition. Whilst it was effective in acting as a force of persuasion to disband colonial rule, it failed to achieve the political and economic integration of Africa.

How can Africa Achieve an African Renaissance?

The concept of an African Renaissance was first articulated by Cheikh Anta Diop in a series of essays beginning in 1946, which are collected in his book *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in Culture and Development, 1946-1960*.

The African Renaissance is a genuine attempt by Africa's past and current intellectual idealists to inspire a new mind-set that will enable the continent's thought leaders to tackle and overcome the current challenges confronting its peoples. The hope is that, together, Africans can find a philosophical pathway towards cultural, scientific, and economic renewal.

Kwame Nkrumah, a passionate ideologue of his time, compelled post-independent Ghana to pay a hefty economic price in order to ensure a sacrificial pathway to sweeping political

change across sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana is still digging its way out of the debt it incurred then.

Now, as it was during Kwame Nkrumah's era, again, Africa faces a grim a haunting post-COVID-19 economic conundrum in an increasingly polarized world. It is a challenge which it can only overcome if it is fortunate enough to find another passionate leader with the vision and foresight to forge a tangible and credible pathway to economic sovereignty.

In promoting the ideology of an African Renaissance, former South African President Thabo Mbeki, also established and funded the [New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development](#). His intervention, during his term of office, did herald the beginning of an intellectual agenda, which needs to be further refined into a viable and implementable proposition.

However, going forward, there are sacrificial choices, which will have to be made by those at the helm of the African Union, with guidance from the continent's most credible Statesmen.

Arguably, the choices Africa's leaders have made in the past were underpinned by reactionary fervour in response to colonial dominance. This time around, Africa requires a well-designed and carefully crafted strategy in order to achieve a relatable pathway to economic sovereignty.

Within the context of the above, the view of His Excellency, John Agyekum Kufuor is that as a priority, Africa needs to focus its immediate efforts on defining and/or refining a precise cultural, social, economic and political transformation agenda that will create a clear pathway to revival.

Consequently, on the one hand a dynamic doctrine on leadership, governance and development has become all the more urgent. On the other hand, the pedigree of thought leadership Africa chooses to embrace will determine its pathway to possible cultural revival and economic success.

However, throughout present day Africa, there is a stark absence of a systemic and systematic approach or move towards fostering cultural and social integration. Currently, straddling its ethnic populations, xenophobic roots of tribalism, albeit subtle, has become entrenched in many nations.

Post-independent Africa's brand of nationalism, which varied from nation to nation - by economic orientation and by degrees of radicalism, ideology and violence - has failed. According to the International Monetary Fund, the African region's economy is set to shrink by 1.6 percent in 2020, and real per capita income to fall by even more - 3.9 percent on average.

Nationalism in the colonial era was often framed purely in opposition to colonial rule and was therefore frequently unclear or contradictory about its economic objectives. However, Africa's post-independence leaders have continually struggled to find their own social and national identity.

According to historian Robert I. Rotberg, African nationalism would not have emerged without colonialism. Its relation to Pan-Africanism was also ambiguous with many nationalist leaders professing Pan-African loyalties but still refusing to commit to supranational unions.

Unfortunately, the European influence that controlled the political and economic landscape during the colonial era, still persists. Most political leaders across Africa are dependent on foreign donor aid from OECD donor countries; development assistance from the World Bank and other G20 sources; soft loans from China; and foreign direct investments.

Furthermore, post-independent African leaders have continued to preserve the same national frontiers created arbitrarily by the Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885, which defined the period of colonial rule. In 2020, Africa is yet to put any structure in place that could create a sociologically compatible cultural identity among its heterogeneous populations.

Consequently, an intellectually fueled sense of nationalism still exists alongside an uneasy relationship with a sub-ethnic form of nationalism; with each differing in their conceptions of political allegiance. In addition, based on tribal loyalties, Africans still faces the challenge of having to distinguish allegiances through ethnic rather than national identities.

Passionate African nationalists have continued to argue that tribes are a colonial creation. Hence, a geospatial divide, albeit understated, has incessantly continued to hamper Africa's social, economic, political and cultural progress. In the African's search for a unifying identity, which can be coalesced around the concept of a one people union and federalist nation, with a shared economic interest, Africa is yet to find a pathway forward. Currently, Africa's value systems remain Western inspired and without affirmation from the Global North, in most cases, its people remain challenged in the shared quest for mental emancipation. The grim reality, however, is that if Africa is to thrive this century, it will have to overcome the subtle but extremely powerful ethnocentric divides that it still faces.

Arguably, Africa has achieved a measure of decent progress since 1960. But there is still a long way to go if its aspirations are to be met this century. Due to an outmoded public service infrastructure that is in urgent need of reform, many of its economies continue to experience stunted growth; and the absence of a well-developed pool of quality human capital continues to impact negatively on the gross domestic productivity of its myriad nations. For most of its citizenry, COVID 19 has exposed the glaring absence of a viable health system; an environmentally unsustainable lifestyle; the inability to nurture and empower an informed citizenry; and, an incoherent capacity to deepen the roots of democracy and political participation.

To break every stronghold that still holds Africa in bondage, it needs an editorially independent public interest media ecosystem and a constitutionally empowered "Fourth Estate", which is capable of creating an informed, bold citizenry and an effective demand culture; and which is able to command an accountable and transparent governance matrix. The majority of eligible urban and rural voters across sub-Saharan Africa are either 30 years old or are under the age of 30 years; are barely literate, semi-illiterate or illiterate; and are mostly intellectually ill-equipped and are lacking in access to credible information. All are keen on experiencing accountability in governance; and are seeking aspirational tangibility.

To conclude, Africa's information deficit has created a huge void that is undermining all attempts to forge effective democracies. The mobilisation of public pressure through informed debate, as a means of resolving key issues which voters face and care about in their respective constituencies and nations, is almost non-existent. The above notwithstanding, there is a huge demand for skilfully packaged information. Hence, a dependable cycle in the flow of relevant knowledge by which citizens can be effectively empowered to make informed decisions and/or demand accountability and transparency from elected officials, is urgently required.