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# THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE RECOLONISATION OF AFRICA

## THE COLONIALITY OF DATA

Everisto Benyera



# The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Recolonisation of Africa

This book argues that the fourth industrial revolution, the process of accelerated automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices via digital technology, will serve to further marginalise Africa within the international community.

In this book, the author argues that the looting of Africa that started with human capital and then natural resources, now continues unabated via data and digital resources looting. Developing on the notion of “Coloniality of Data”, the fourth industrial revolution is postulated as the final phase which will conclude Africa’s peregrination towards (re)colonisation. Global cartels, networks of coloniality, and tech multinational corporations have turned big data into capital, which is largely unregulated or poorly regulated in Africa as the continent lacks the strong institutions necessary to regulate the mining of data. Written from a decolonial perspective, this book employs three analytical pillars of coloniality of power, knowledge, and being.

Highlighting the crippling continuation of asymmetrical global power relations, this book will be an important read for researchers of African studies, politics, and international political economy.

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# **The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Recolonisation of Africa**

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**Everisto Benyera**



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**To all slaves; past, present, and future  
To those slaves who do not know that they are slaves**

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# **Foreword**

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) consolidates and takes effect, humanity and other forms of life are undergoing irresistible, irreversible and universal social, economic, and legal transformation based on the massive appropriation of social life through data extraction. In the 4IR, capitalism took a new turn, away from focusing on materials and goods towards services. The 4IR is essentially a services revolution brought about by the merging of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information communication technology (ICT), among others in the process blurring the traditional boundaries between the physical, the digital, and the biological worlds. This resulted in new ways of thinking and doing, aided by vast amounts of information and data harvested from people's daily lives, hence the Internet of Things among many technology-enabled services.

In the 4IR, the evolution of episteme has taken another turn and its relation to being which once again excludes the black people, broadly defined. With the history of exclusion, slavery, colonialism, and perpetual denial into personhood, black people are still struggling to be part of the thinking beings and always grapple with how to enter the realm of knowledge production. Stated differently, black people, the majority of them African, lack the right to rights. The 4IR will undoubtedly complicate the quest for black people to enter and be accepted into the realm of humanity.

In the 4IR, the thinking and cognitive space has new entrants, trans-humans, robo-humans, and other forms of enhanced humanity who occupy an ontological position higher than that of black people. The 4IR is therefore another sad moment in the life of black people as they slide lower and lower on the ontological ladder, whose apex is occupied by white Caucasian males and the bottom is occupied by black women.

Knowledge production is shifting from the human being towards online entities that are now playing the role of cognitive thinking, imagination, and creativity. Intelligence is now artificial, and AI is now responsible for the creation of a new reality to which we all belong to.

Who are those responsible for creating this new reality? Who are the new Philosopher Kings? The new Philosopher Kings are the emerging tech oligarchy that is replacing the political oligarchy. They own and control big data,

artificial intelligence, online communities, and the online economy. They harvest data, process it, commodify it, and hence make data capital. Like all forms of capital, data extraction is not only unethical but brutal and unforgiving. Data is capital, the new gold, and oil. Like oil and gold before it, data is power and like all forms of power, it is deployable in political spaces in order to predetermine, influence, and pre-empt political decisions. Indeed democracy and many other political processes and outcomes are under threat of being subverted courtesy of the 4IR and many of its gismos. This, in turn, will result in the entrenchment of coloniality especially in Africa where there are weak accountability institutions and unethical and unjust leadership.

# Preface

Africa must cautiously celebrate the Fourth Industrial Revolution as this will not end or lessen its challenges which are a product of centuries of being on the darker side of Euro-North American modernity. Africa experienced the cumulative effects of what has been wrongly termed the transatlantic slave trade (the Atlantic Ocean never enslaved anyone. It is the European and North American slave trade, not transatlantic stave trade), colonialism, apartheid, globalisation, and now coloniality. This book was conceptualised against the background of the mutative nature of colonialism which today presents itself as coloniality which thrives on accumulation, misrepresentation, and misrecognition. The (formerly) colonised people were dispossessed of their land, capitals, and humanity. These were accumulated from those who consequently became non-human or the *Athropos* by the *Humanitas*.

Euro-North American modernity, the slave trade, and colonial economy and coloniality constantly accumulate from their victims, from labour in the form of the slave economy, to resources through colonialism and now data through what is termed coloniality of data. In the same ways in which colonialism outlived decolonisation, coloniality is ahead of its victims in the Fourth Industrial Revolution where it is busy (c)overtly mining and harvesting data, in the process clamouring to appoint itself as the data custodian for Africa. This constitutes the (re)colonisation of Africa which is the main theme of this book.

In the same misrepresented ways in which colonialism was misrepresented as a civilising mission to the “dark continent”, coloniality of data is already being packaged and misrepresented as data for development (D4D), or as a possible panacea for Africa’s perennial problems of poverty, insecurity, lack of human rights, development, rule of law among others.

# Acronyms

1IR	First Industrial Revolution
2IR	Second Industrial Revolution
3IR	Third Industrial Revolution
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
5IR	Fifth Industrial Revolution
Africom	African Command
AGI	Artificial General Intelligence
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANC	African National Congress
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
CFA	<i>Communauté Financière Africaine</i> (African Financial Community)
COREMO	<i>Comitê Revolucionário de Moçambique</i> (Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique)
DoNGOs	Donor-Organised NGOs
DONs	Donor Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FNLA	<i>Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola</i> (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)
FOCAC	Forum on China–Africa Cooperation
Frelimo	<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> (Mozambique Liberation Front)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoNGOs	Government-Organised NGOs
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
INFOs	International Financial Organisations

Li-Fi	Light Fidelity
LONMIN	London Minerals
LONRHO	London and Rhodesian Mining and Land Company Limited
MPLA	Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MTN	Mobile Telephone Network
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
RICA	Regulations for the Interception of Communications Act
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SWAPO	Southwest African Peoples Organisation of Namibia
TP OK Jazz	<i>Tout Puissant</i> (All Mighty Jazz)
Ts and Cs	Terms and Conditions
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNITA	<i>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i> (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Vodacom	Voice Data Communication
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZISCOSTEEL	Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company

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In order for me to think and to write this book, I had to request my family on numerous occasions to accord to me a lot of solitude and quietness. It was at this moment that I connected with myself and managed to develop this argument, just like a composer writes a sonata. This was not easy for them as I am their father, their friend, their driver, and my wife's husband. My family put up with my long absence even though at times I was physically present with them as I grappled with the idea of the (re)colonisability of Africa. My family had to put up with a lot of questions, most of which they did not have answers to. In return, I found a lot of answers in their seemingly blank faces and at times in their utter amusement at my line of inquiry.

Even though I am the one who put the ideas and views in this book together. Some of these ideas and the views were expressed in many platforms by many people who are too numerous to mention individually.

My students are also acknowledged for their silent contribution to this book project. I had an opportunity to bounce off some of my ideas to my senior students. There are many colleagues, and students who (un)consciously contributed to this book. I am heavily indebted to my classes of 2018, 2019, and 2020 at the South Africa National Defense College. These platforms and the resultant interactions allowed me to share my then nascent ideas and to test

some of my thought processes which are now contained in this book. I had several engagements with my students who came from all over Africa but mainly from the South African National Defence Force.

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Like any other book project of this nature, the mistakes made in this book are all mine.

# 1 Data coloniality

## A decolonial perspective of Africa and the 4IR

### Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)<sup>1</sup> will not positively change the fate of Africa and Africans for various reasons outlined in this book. A key factor is that courtesy of the merging of nanotechnology, robotics, networked digital computation, biotechnology, and information and communications technology (ICT), new forms of humanity now exist, and these humanities occupy positions above the (formerly) colonised people on the ontological hierarchy. The 4IR must not be misconstrued as Africa's moment to "develop", that is, catch-up with the "developed" world. While post-anthropocentrism is fast emerging and consolidating, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that Africa will remain on the darker side of the 4IR, accruing the same net negative impact as was the case with the past three industrial revolutions. The key issue addressed in this book is how and why Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised world will accrue minimum benefits and suffer maximum consequences in the 4IR. That Africa developed the Global West is indisputable, the question is, why is Africa not developing itself?

The Global North owes its affluent standards of life largely to the slave trade, colonialism, and other iniquitous vices perpetrated upon Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised world. Africa, especially Africa south of the equator, underwrote the economies of what became the "developed" nations. "Developed" nations of Europe and North America have a huge incentive in keeping Africa in the same conditions of material and epistemological retardation and impoverishment, lack of human rights and dignity; summed up as coloniality because if Africa does things differently, the whole global economy, especially that of Euro-North America will suffer drastically. Stated differently, the affluence of the Global North is funded by the poverty of the Global South. Global power institutions such as ideologies and all the "knowledge" that is taught in pre-schools, school, and universities are meant to keep Africa in the same conditions, so that those that are benefiting will continue to benefit.

One way that the world capitalist system has been maintained is by blaming Africans for their conditions. This tactic is efficacious in keeping Africans away from looking at and trying to solve their real problems and instead keeping

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them preoccupied with self-blame, self-hate, and intra-fighting. Africa today is impoverished, and lacks human rights, not because of the faults of Africans, but because of the effectiveness of four classes of European men who forerun colonialism. European traders, hunters, missionaries, and explorers laid a solid foundation for Euro-North American modernity, colonialism, and now coloniality. These traders, hunters, missionaries, and explorers who came to Africa and became part of the colonial project are still useful in maintaining the colonial asymmetrical relationship with Africa more than 50 years after the end of official colonialism.

There is a matter of life and death incentive for Western Europe, North America, China, and other countries benefiting from and looting Africa to keep Africa in its present state of appearing to be benefiting from these countries through aid and foreign direct investment, yet the opposite is the true. Africa supplies the world with the bulk of its raw materials almost for free thereby funding the luxurious lives of those in the so-called developed countries. They are developed because they are pilfering Africa and affording those lives because of their ability to keep Africa as a source of their material needs. If Africa is to do something differently such as to unite and form one currency, one central bank, have a unified foreign policy, the result will be that the standards of living in the so-called developed countries will fall because the resources that underwrite their high standard of life will no longer be available at the same prices. This necessitates the subjugation of Africa which I argue in this book will continue into the 4IR.

The subjugation of Africa is maintained through various ways such as the production and deployment of Western knowledges and ways of knowing in Africa. When Africa's brightest intellectuals are given scholarships and fellowships to go and study in the Global North, the rationale will be for them to learn predominantly Western ways of managing Africa and Africans so that Africa remains as a source of cheap raw materials, *inter alia*, for the Global North. Not only would Africa have been deprived of its brightest minds, but also these brightest minds will come back and act as native informants and informers, actively leading their own people astray and in the process keeping Africa subjugated and impoverished. Having been schooled in the Global North and on Western epistemologies, these African intellectuals will look at Africa from a Western perspective and will act as employees of the Global North in the Global South. Together with other forms of Western "benevolences" such as aid, development, and foreign direct investment, the Global South is locked in a perpetual cycle of hope which emanated from one of the greatest myths in the history of politics, decolonisation. The 4IR is yet another point in the Global South's cycle of hope of autonomy. The pair of decolonisation and development locked the Global South in perpetual hope, depositing their dark side there, while benefiting the Global North.

### **Decoloniality: Affirming a concept**

The notion of coloniality denotes the continued asymmetrical power relations between the (former) colonisers and their (former) colonised. From its Latin

American origins, the term “coloniality” has found much favour and usage in Africa, especially among African scholars (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2013b, 2016; Mpofu, 2014, 2017a; Nimako, 2015b; Sithole, 2016b, 2016a; Tafira and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Benyera, 2018d, 2020a; Benyera, Mtapuri, and Nhemachena, 2018; Jazbhay, 2019). In this chapter, the notion of coloniality is deployed in the field of data, data harvesting, and broader datafication, to denote the continued asymmetrical and abusive extraction of Africa’s technology-based resources by predominantly Euro-North American multinational corporations and their networks. Other networks from Asia are also active and these include those from China and Japan, South Korea, and other Asian Tigers such as Samsung, Huawei, Baidu, Toyota, Sony, Panasonic, China Mobile, Tencent, Alibaba, and other tech companies.

Decoloniality denotes the continued asymmetrical power between the (former) colonisers and (former) colonised after the end of official colonialism. There are systems, norms, and structures that have maintained the colonial status quo and three of these were synthesised as power, knowledge, and being. Coined and developed by Anibal Quijano, coloniality of power denotes the structures of power, control, and hegemony which emerged from Euro-North American modernity to colonialism and started with the Spanish conquest of al Andalucía and the “discovery” of the Americans (Quijano 2000). These systems, mechanisms, institutions, and legacies of colonialism which remain highly efficacious against the former colonisers and in favour of the (former) colonised include debt servitude, misaligned economies, ungovernable colonial states, and extroverted economies which are too integrated into those of the (former) colonisers. The (former) colonisers continue to reap the benefits of their “colonial investments” while the (former) colonised continue to suffer the consequences of being first enslaved and then colonised.

The impoverished state of Europeans before their conquest of the Americans and the Iberian peninsula, their colonisation of Africa, Latin America, and Asia was well captured by Simon Martinot who wrote,

In the time prior to the conquest, Europe was a poor, rural peninsula on the western edge of Asia, with little of value to offer the world economy. At the centre of the world economy, between India and Baghdad, Europeans found themselves hopelessly outcompeted, or ignored. The only means they were able to imagine to gain access to this world economy was conquest: the crusades of the middle ages, the 15th century slave trade from west Africa, the expulsion of the Moors and Jews from Spain, and the conquest of the Americas in the 16th. The project to enslave the American peoples enters the thinking of Columbus on his first voyage among the islands of the Caribbean.

(Martinot, 2016, p. 2)

Euro-North American modernity is anchored in the year 1614 when Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas and opened that part of the

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world to European epistemicides, genocides, enslavement and colonialism. An important year in the development of coloniality is the year 1700 which marked the consolidation of the Atlantic economy, the intensification, commercialisation, and commodification of slaves, especially in the English colonies of North America and Africa (Martinot 2016, p. 2). During the year 1700 the Dutch and English also took full control of the shipping trade routes to the east. The year 1700 is a cardinal moment in Africa's history because it impoverished Africa through the enslaving of its most economically productive and reproductive citizens, in the process created unprecedented wealth for Euro-North America. This period also marked the final seizure and transformation of land in Africa, the Americas and India from being communal assets into European private property with a market value. It must also be noted that by 1900 the indigenous populations of the colonised places of Mexico and Peru and the Caribbean and other parts of Latin America were decimated and replaced by African slaves. These events marked the shifting of the global power from the Orient and towards Europe, thereby inaugurating Europe as the centre of the world and the rest as the periphery. This was achieved through sheer power, brutality, genocide, plunder, and barbaric warfare.

Coloniality of power is efficacious in understanding how colonialism was inscribed into the body and mind of the (formerly) colonised. A key aspect of coloniality of power is the use of a hegemony to establish and maintain colonial relations. Colonial inventions such as ethnicity, national identity, the state and concomitant hierarchical sub-colonies such as sexism, racism are all constituted by and constitutive of coloniality in general and specifically coloniality of power, where every aspect of life is hierachised, racialised and follows the pre-scrip of Euro-North American morality and normative order. Coloniality of power explains the seemingly puzzling phenomenon of (former) colonisers' self-appointed entitlement to African natural resources, bodies, and public assets.

Geographically, the notorious region which the empire predominantly occupies is known as Euro-North America and is relatively small. It comprises not all of the Americas and not all of Europe. The empire sits in the United States of America, Canada, and Europe excluding Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. This region is the primary focus of this book as this region tries to recolonise Africa as a survival tactic for the many challenges it is facing at home. These manifold challenges include the American sub-prime lending rate (Moyo, 2009; Russell Sage Foundation and Jung, 2016), other various economic crises (Bond, Chitonge and Hopfmann, 2006; Sutcliffe *et al.*, 2010; Bond, 2011; Xaba, 2011; Chatterjee Partha, 2012), and the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic (Filatov *et al.*, 2020; Peeri *et al.*, 2020; Sahin *et al.*, 2020; Tanne *et al.*, 2020; Millán-Oñate *et al.*, 2021); Euro-North America is obviously turning to its trusted strategy, which is to (re)colonise Africa.

According to Martinot, the coloniality of power operates through a matrix of control which operates through the control of hegemony, authority, labour, sexuality, subjective, and most importantly African resources which include but not limited to big data (Martinot, 2016).

Multinational corporations, also referred to as transnational corporations, operate in many countries, but have one predominant centre of power, that is, the Global North.

But the curious thing about these, so-called, “multinational corporations” is the fact that almost all of them are controlled by the capitalist-imperialists of one or another single country. Thus, we have American MNCs, such as IBM, Microsoft or GM; Japanese MNCs such as Toyota and Sony; British MNCs such as BP; and so forth. All multinational corporations are multinational in their sphere of operation, but very few are “multinational” with respect to the bourgeoisie that controls them. This is a very important distinction to keep in mind.

(Baran, 2007, p. 5)

The multi in multinational corporations denotes their operations and not beneficiaries. MNCs have evolved to become very important tools of both diplomacy and foreign policies of their home countries. The French petroleum MNC Total was at the forefront of supporting the “democratisation” of Libya, with the resultant assassination of its sitting President Colonel Gadhafi, and rendering of the once thriving country into a failed state. MNCs work in tandem with their home countries from where they get political support and protection as well as financial support when needed. Data is no longer just a tool of informed policy decisions, but the latest weapon of mass destruction – a smart weapon to maintain the asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the Global South.

## **Coloniality of data**

Coloniality of data refers to the asymmetrical power relations resultant from the (ab)use of data generated from the various online platforms. In the coloniality of data, data is weaponised and used to initiate, maintain, routinise, and normalise asymmetrical power relations between the (former) colonisers and their agents and the (former) colonised. As a nefarious (mal)practice, it involves the broader data economy’s constituent sectors such as, but not limited to, data mining (Nhémachena, Mlambo and Kaundjua, 2016; Staunton and Moodley, 2016), data farming (Horne and Meyer, 2005, 2010; Wolfert *et al.*, 2017), data harvesting (Richmond, Kappler and Björkdahl, 2015; Nhémachena, Mlambo and Kaundjua, 2016; Thatcher, O’Sullivan and Mahmoudi, 2016), data colonialism (Thatcher, O’Sullivan and Mahmoudi, 2016; Couldry and U. Mejias, 2019; Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, 2019; Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019; Halkort, 2019; Hicks, 2019; Couldry and Mejias, 2020; Mejias and Couldry, 2020; van der Spuy, 2020), and data/digital slavery (Chisnall, 2020).

Data coloniality is the control over the flow of information and how it is transmitted. It is concerned with the acquisition of data, just like colonialism was concerned with the acquisition of both physical territory and epistemic

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territory and resources from which economic value is then extracted. The extraction, processing, and redeployment of data ensures the asymmetrical power relations and injustices which started with the slave trade and continued through colonialism and are now being reproduced under coloniality. Like all forms of Euro-North American modernity, data coloniality represents the dark side of the data revolution. It denotes the transformation of data into capital and its resultant use in controlling, influencing, and undermining autonomous decisions by individuals, states, corporations, and other entities that (forcibly) rely on data to make everyday decisions, execute and evaluate them.

*Prima facie*, there is a transfer of business from Africa to the Global North courtesy of the 4IR. Local media is facing dwindling readers, viewers, subscribers, advertisers as these are migrating to western multinational tech giants such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WeChat, Instagram, and so on. The same is happening in the taxi transport with e-hailing services such as Uber and Bolt crowding out local taxi operators. Amazon is doing the same through its online shopping experience, though it is facing competition from African online retailers, notably from Takealot. Local industries will be decimated by western multinational corporations as they cannot compete with these well-established, well-funded, and well-protected Western firms.

The movement of business, revenues, and taxes from Africa to the Global North represents the bigging of the consolidation of coloniality. The data-coloniality nexus exists by virtue of African countries becoming increasingly digital, in the process rendering data as a source of economic power and governance (Mann, 2018, p. 3). Western economies are being superimposed on Africa through the use of technology. The models and ideas of a future digital economy are being framed from the Global North and projected into Africa with little or no African meaningful input. The same way in which a handful of European men: the hunters, missionaries, traders, and explorers came to Africa in small numbers and slowly increased their stronghold on Africa's land and other resources is the same way in which a handful of Western multinational corporations are slowly increasing their grip on Africa's digital economy.

Africa's digital economy does not belong to Africa anymore. It can be argued that it never belonged to Africa. The world is increasingly being run by tech companies with the biggest five exerting the most influence and projecting the most power. These top five global companies are all involved in the digital ecosystem and are referred to as Gafam (Google/Alphabet, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft). Together, they constitute the new technological oligarchy that controls the bulk of global critical functions. Gafam is now the de-facto global government. A single platform like WhatsApp has over 2 billion subscribers in over 180 countries. With a global population of 7.8 billion, Mark Zuckerberg has access to the data of one quarter of the global population from just one of his many social media platforms. This makes him not only rich but most importantly powerful as he can anticipate, engage, pre-empt, and influence the lives of 25% of the world's population just from WhatsApp alone. No government or any multilateral institution has this amount of power.

Courtesy of the 4IR, the global economy is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and their companies, yet the functions they play are central to humanity, and the influence they exert is impactful to global governance. The increase in the power of the world's richest 1% of the population is attested to by the growth in the personal wealth of these super-rich people such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos whose net worth increased from US\$6.8 billion in 2009 to US\$184 billion in 2020. Similarly, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg's net worth increased from US\$2 billion to US\$103 billion in the same period. Jeff Bezos' wealth increased by 2606% in 11 years. For Mark Zuckerberg, his net worth grew by 5050% in the same 11 years. In contrast, the average global minimum wage remained at US\$7.25 for the same period. The conclusion is that the 4IR is working for the world's 1% and not the majority whose bulk is in Africa. This view is affirmed by Kwet who noted that,

Gafam and a few other Big Tech corporations now control most of the critical functions that can be performed in the digital world: social networking (Facebook, Twitter), smartphone messaging (Facebook, which owns WhatsApp), internet search (Google), desktop and laptop operating systems (Microsoft Windows), smartphone and tablet operating systems (Google, Apple), online advertising (Google, Facebook), Cloud computing (Amazon, Microsoft, Google, IBM), transportation (Uber, Lyft and, in South Africa, Taxify), lodging (Airbnb) and streaming video (Google, YouTube, Netflix, Hulu).

(Kwet, 2018)

None of the above companies are from Africa, yet they operate in Africa where they extract huge profits. The 4IR has thus, in both principle and practice, (un)intentionally facilitated the undermining of democracy and human rights by concentrating power in the hands of a few capitalists. Data coloniality is being misrepresented in various ways, the major one being data for development.

### **Decolonisation as a myth and the elusiveness of epistemic freedom**

Decolonisation as a myth's genealogy is traceable to the 28th US President, Thomas Woodrow Wilson's doctrine espoused in the Fourteen Points plan tabled before the Congress on 8 January 1918, and subsequently codified in the United Nations Charter 27 years later. Decolonisation is another phase in the continuum colonial project wherein the colonisers outsourced the (mis) administration of their colonies to local elites, most of whom masqueraded as nationalists. This partly explains why France willingly initiated the decolonisation processes for some of its colonies; in some cases even forcing its colonies to be independent. Not surprisingly, 14 (former) French colonisers pay a colonial tax to France for the loss of its colonial investments into these colonies. According to Koutonin, the (former) colonies signed to several obligations as

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part of the independence deal. These included (1) surrendering all national reserves to France, (2) France awarded itself the right of first refusal to any raw materials or any other resources to be discovered in these countries, (3) the prioritisation of French companies and French national interests in all public procurement and bidding, (4) the exclusive right to supply military equipment and train the country military officers, (5) the right to pre-deploy French troops and subsequently to intervene in these (former) colonies to protect French national interests, (6) an obligation to make French the official language to be used especially in commerce and education, (7) the obligation to use the French currency, the French CFA, (8) the responsibility to report to France the (former) colonies' annual balances and reserves as a precondition for accessing their money "safeguarded" by France, (9) an undertaking never to enter into any military alliances without France's approval, (10) an obligation to be France's ally in case France is to fight any war (Kotounin, 2014).

The above relationship between France and its (former) colonies epitomises coloniality at its best. France is obsessed with looting its (former) colonies because without the looting, France as we know it will collapse. To survive, France needs its (former) colonies' money, military support, markets, raw materials, gold reserves, and labour. Because of its poverty, the Global North must ceaselessly loot the Global South, a condition and practice which will be entrenched in the 4IR.

Decolonisation and development are products of the United Nations Charter and are understandably inflicted by the same problems and vices committed by those who championed the formation of the United Nations and the subsequent penning of its Charter. With capitalism and liberalism as the mantra of the post-World War II dispensation, there was never going to be room for an autonomous and self-reliant Africa.

As products of western liberal thought, decolonisation and development are products of Western liberal thought and initiatives and there is little to no possibility that the African elites could seize these two concepts and use them for the benefit of their people. By buying into the narratives of decolonisation and development, the African elites bought into the myth of these two Western-centric liberal principles that were meant to perpetuate Africa's marginality and subjugation. With decolonisation and development, Africa remained a perennial cash-cow for sustaining the affluence of the Global North. That development as a paradigm was somehow going to transmogrify Africa and was one of the greatest acts of marketing in world history. In development and decolonisation, Africa was sold as the proverbial dummy and this is evident in the even more asymmetrical relations between the (former) colonisers and the (former) colonised.

Once sold the double myth of decolonisation and development, Africans relaxed thinking that they had gotten independence and self-determination and that their (former) colonisers had suddenly met their Damascus moment, hence they were willing to assist Africa with development aid to Africa. On the contrary, the (former) colonisers were busy Nicodemously increasing their

stranglehold on Africa through what is termed coloniality. Most African countries still celebrate non-existent independence and freedom. This attests to the strengths and efficacy of the twin myths of decolonisation and development.

As rightly argued by Achille Mbembe, colonialism and by extension development are not unidirectional phenomena, but they are binary in that they produce the colonised and the colonisers (Mbembe, 2021), beneficiaries and losers, subjects and citizens, *Anthropos* and *Humanitas*, and so on. As for development, Walter Rodney argued eloquently that the development of the Global North was at the direct expense and underdevelopment of the Global South (Rodney, 1973). This thesis was further developed and updated by Nkwazi Nkuzi Mhango (Mhango, 2018). The affluence of the Global North is at the expense of the impoverishment of the Global South. The same argument can be made at the subset level such as the Francophone and the Anglophone relationships with their (former) colonies. This is why Franz Fanon argued that decolonisation was, in reality, the provincialisation of Europe, which in itself is a form of coloniality. This form of coloniality will be more profound in the 4IR as multinational corporations from the Global North reap the benefits of both the slave trade and colonialism by acting as the self-appointed data custodians of Africa. Big data's malleability and ductility into economic and political power will result in Africa losing its sovereignty to multinational corporations and not multilateral organisations.

As a provincialised product of colonialism and decolonisation, the 4IR presents and organises another scramble for Africa, this time for its data. There is very little possibility that Africans who failed to protect themselves from being enslaved and colonised will be able to protect their data.

The 4IR renders Africa *terra nullius*, *terra inhabitabilis*, and *tabula rasa* whose data sovereignty is up for grabs by those with the most military, economic, and technological power. Without a sizable uncolluding African bourgeoisie, Africa's data will suffer the same fate being suffered by Africa's mineral wealth, human resources, humanity, *inter alia*, which is looting, misappropriation, misrepresentation, and misrecognition.

Coloniality has been sustained through the deployment of various myths such as but not limited to development, the invisible hand of the market, market forces, state sovereignty, universal human rights, and so on. There is nothing called development, the market is not impartial, the invisible hand is very visible. The invisible hand is the power of the elites who determine global affairs. By presenting themselves as the "market", or the "invisible hand", these elites are hiding behind institutions to pursue and preserve their hegemony. Development is akin to a soccer match without goal posts. Africa plays perpetual catch-up with those that are looting Africa.

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni rightly pointed to epistemic freedom as the right type of freedom for Africa to seek first ahead of all others such as but not limited to political and economic freedoms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 1). The idea of sequencing freedoms such as that political freedom is acquired first, followed by economic freedom, and then lastly epistemic freedom has failed to deliver

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autonomy to Africa such that hence the conviction that epistemic freedom must be sought urgently and immediately if Africa is to mitigate the negative impact of the 4IR. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni, ‘Epistemic Freedom in Africa is about the struggle for African people to think, theorize, interpret the world and write from where they are located, unencumbered by Eurocentrism’, Ndlovu-Gathseni 2018, p. 1). Epistemic freedom will help Africans reverse some of the effects of Euro-North American modernity, slave trade, and colonialism. Africans have been conditioned to think from a Euro-North American perspective when trying to solve African problems. The result has been the many failures at remediating the African problem. Instead of aiding in solving the African problem, the Euro-North American mindset in the African only serves to exacerbate the problems while the problems multiply. Jack Goody locates the genesis of this problem in what he termed the theft of African history (Goody, 2009).

The epistemic freedom being advocated was defined by Ndlovu-Gatsheni as cognitive justice. This type of justice will allow African knowledge systems to be reactivated. He argues,

Thus, epistemic freedom speaks to cognitive justice. Epistemic freedom is fundamentally about the right to think, theorize, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism. .... Epistemic justice is about liberation of reason itself from coloniality.

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 3)

With epistemic freedom, Africans can better unpack, analyse, and solve most of their problems and annul dead aid, and development aid, and the in vogue data for development which is a new form of coloniality.

### **The myth of D4D: Data for Development as coloniality of data**

As the 4IR consolidates, data has been paraded as a new hope for Africa’s development (Kshetri, 2014). On the contrary, and in the words of Mark Nelson, the Director of Stanford’s Peace Innovation Laboratory, data has the potential greater than a nuclear bomb. He asserts that,

If you can measure something, you can design for it; if you can design for it, you can create new value; if you can create new value, you can monetize it. Our aim is to create peace businesses.

(Mann, 2018, p. 11)

The above portrayal points to the efficacy of big data not only in altering people’s lives negatively, but also in its ability to determine and influence people’s thought processes, decisions, diets, governments, and many other aspects of life. People’s data is mined, and harvested through manufactured consents, and through simulations, modelling, high-performance computing,

and experimental design, and analysis, the results are used to inform and influence the decisions of individuals, organisations, and countries. In short, humanity is losing its agency to the emergent tech oligarchy. These processes are being misrepresented as, *inter alia*, data for development. Argued to be smart farming, data farming has resulted in tech multinational corporations engaging in a dog fight to become data custodians of Africa's emerging economies.

To fully comprehend the notion of D4D, it is imperative to define data. The notion of data has undergone many conceptual transformations from its innocent characterisation as an amalgamation of analyses, statistics, and facts to its current status as the new oil and a public good. According to Mann, data has two main characteristics: (1) it is an abstract concept, (2) it is a public good, a resource which can be mined, farmed, locked and unlocked, harnessed, tapped, and trapped. Coloniality of data refers to the asymmetrical power relations resultant from the (ab)use of data generated from the various online platforms. In the coloniality of data, data is weaponised and used to initiate, maintain, routinise, and normalise asymmetrical power relations between the (former) colonisers and their agents and the (former) colonised. As a nefarious (mal)practice, it involves the broader data economy's constituent sectors such as but not limited to data mining, data farming, data harvesting, and data colonialism. According to Mann data is:

... an *abstract* concept, ... a “*public good*” and as a “*re-source*” that just needs to be “*unlocked*”, “*harnessed*” and “*tapped*”, rather than as discrete sources of information circulating within specific contexts and bureaucratic systems.

(Mann, 2018, p. 9)

The questions which arise from the above definition are numerous and they include the following: (1) If data is a public good, who is the public? (2) If data is a resource, who owns it, is it the one generating it or the one harvesting and storing it? (3) If data must be unlocked, who locked it, and what will happen to the unlocked data? (4) If data is trapped, who trapped it and why?

When unlocked, data from Africa is politicised and deployed in Africa as a form of power. Data as power emanates from its ability to be trusted as an impartial source of policy direction, and many other otherwise complex and important decisions. The “benevolence” of the West in assisting Africa is aided by the misrepresentation of the West's colonial agenda as development partners, foreign direct investors, exchange scholars, peace corps volunteers, and many other “aid” and development partners. In a typical coloniality fashion, “..., data must therefore be ‘unlocked’ from organizations based in Africa and provided to experts based in advanced economies” (Mann, 2018, p. 9).

The notion of data for development (D4D) is a nascent one which by definition is the political economy angle of the data economy. The main thrust of data for development is how Western aid organisations that work in Africa are involved in the extraction of data from Africa which is then exported to the Global North for analysis, politicisation, and redeployment back to Africa as part of the devolvement tool kit. The justification for D4D is that the 4IR must result in more evidence-based, targeted interventions which will enhance

the pace, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of development, justice, and human rights in Africa (Mann, 2018). In a way, D4D advocates for the centralisation and globalisation of data. Africans' personal information which would have been (c)overtly harvested will be used for various purposes such as pharmaceutical research and development, surveillance, targeting vulnerable population groups, intentional discrimination by companies and government agencies, targeted political manipulation through fake news, and other social media platforms (Joanna Redden, 2017). D4D can be used to manipulate public opinions and sentiments within and across countries. The work of Cambridge Analytica and other lobby consultancy firms working in the spheres of political outcomes determination and manipulation are cases in point. The work of Montreal-based political and lobbyist consultancy firm Dickens and Madison in manipulating political events in Zimbabwe by generating a false video of the late opposition leaders Morgan Tsvangirai in conversation with Ari Ben-Menashe is an example of the manipulation of political outcomes, events, sentiments, and opinions in Africa through the (ab)use of data (Taylor and Meldrum, 2002; Chikukwa, 2004, p. 67; Coltart, 2016, p. 235; Tendi, 2016, p. 219).

D4D will give rise to a new oligarchy which is not a political oligarchy but a data oligarchy. Multinational corporations are no longer interested in Africa's water, but in Africa's data. By becoming Africa's data custodians, they invariably control Africa because in the 4IR, who controls the data will also control the economy. The question to be asked is if data is owned by Africans and is efficacious for Africa's and Africans' benefit and development, why are multinational corporations so invested in becoming the data custodians for Africa? The answer lies in what Hardt and Negri argued is the forced shifting of sovereignty away from the individual and the nation-state and towards the multinational corporations and these emerging technology oligarchies (Hardt and Negri, 2000). The bottom line is that as the global economy is increasingly becoming digitalised, African economies are also not being left behind; this makes data a source of economic power which is malleable and ductile into other forms of power.

At another level and given that the notion of development is a myth, as the so-called underdeveloped countries will always play perpetual catch-up to the so-called developed economies, the notion of D4D does not therefore arise. In the 4IR, for Africa, "development" will not get closer but even further for the reasons outlined and argued in this book.

"Development" is a form of coloniality meant to capture and channel the "underdeveloped" countries into perpetual subjugation, marginalisation, and being dictated upon by those who consider themselves to be "developed". The "developed" countries do not want the "underdeveloped" countries to be "developed" like them because those that are "developed" were 'developed' at the expense of those that are "underdeveloped". "Underdevelopment" is a construction by the "developed". Otherwise, how do you enslave, colonise, perpetrate genocides, linguicides, epistemicides, and then teach your victims of these

atrocities how to “develop” when you “developed” because of enslavement, colonialism, plunder, and other imperial vices? D4D is, therefore, part of the coloniality of data and Africa will be captured more using big data and other related technologies and applications that constitute the practice of D4D. While there will be some positives that will accrue from D4D, the cost benefit analysis suggests that Africa will emerge as net loser courtesy of D4D.

### **The 4IR and the resilience of colonialism**

So what is the 4IR? The 4IR is the technologically aided coming together of many aspects of life, and in the process blurring the lines between humans and machines, the physical and the biological (Schwab, 2016; Nhémachena, 2019). Essentially, the 4IR is the amalgamation of many technologies such as, but not limited to, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and information, technology and communication (ICT), in the process blurring not only the traditional distinction between these technologies but also the resultant technological products.

A characteristic of the 4IR is the notion of the internet of things (IoT). The internet of things has broadened and blurred the boundaries between the biological, the spiritual, the electronic, and the human. In the broadest sense, the term IoT encompasses everything connected and connectable to the internet. The IoT also describes the ability of objects to communicate with each other. It is the sum of devices connected together. For Nhémachena, there is a direct link between the 4IR and colonialism wherein the IoT is a sign of the resilience of colonialism, that is, a form of coloniality. For him, colonialism was about the establishment of what he termed networks of coloniality to which the IoT belongs. He argues,

The resilience of networks is evident in the Internet of Things – an emergent idea that defines ways in which things, including human beings, are technologically connected in a world that is increasingly possessed of sensors, sapience and sentience ... the Internet of Things which supports connections not only between human beings but also between human being and research objects that are increasingly becoming sentient and sapient.

(Nhémachena, 2018, p. 2)

Euro-North American modernity inaugurated networks, which commenced with the visit to Africa by missionaries, hunters, traders, and explorers, and are the ones which mutated into networks of coloniality that are developing, controlling, and owning the IoT. In the radar of these networks has been the body of the African and the Africans' resources. The African is a raw material to be shipped as a slave, to be traded as a commodity, to be used in the plantations like the tractors, and now to be mined for data like the coltan and diamonds in the minefields of Walikale and Kimberly. The IoT is, therefore, the technological age for treating the African as a raw material.

Klaus describes 4IR technologies as having the potential to propel digitally ready countries into an age of unprecedented economic prosperity, as the “fusion of technologies … blurs the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres” (Schwab, 2018, p. 1). The key is that in order for a country to benefit from the 4IR, it must be digitally ready. What does it mean to be digitally ready? It means that the country must have adequate and sufficiently functional ICT infrastructure, especially internet connectivity. Functional, reliable, and affordable internet connectivity is a prerequisite for benefiting from the 4IR. In other words, it is a necessary and enabling pre-existing condition for a country to benefit from the 4IR. Countries such as South Africa, with a sufficient ICT infrastructure are regressing as inputs such as electricity are now in erratic supply. Hence, if a country lacks just one of the ICT infrastructure such as reliable and stable electricity supply as in the case of South Africa, benefiting from the 4IR becomes hugely compromised as investments in alternative sources and forms of power will need to be availed first.

## **Organisation of the book**

The book comprises eight chapters whose outline is as follows: Chapter 1: *Data coloniality: A decolonial perspective of Africa and the 4IR*. In this chapter, I develop the coloniality of data as an analytical framework. I build on the work of Monika Halkort, Nick Couldry, and Ulises Ali Mejias, to develop the notion of coloniality of data (Couldry and U. Mejias, 2019; Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, 2019; Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019; Halkort, 2019; Mejias, 2019; Couldry and Mejias, 2020; Mejias and Couldry, 2020). The notion of coloniality of data is later deployed in the book as the analytical framework together with the broader notions of decoloniality, coloniality of power, knowledge, power and being.

Chapter 2: *Historicising Africa's subjugation*. In Chapter 2, I trace the history of Africa's subjugation. I historicise and contextualise the colonial project in Africa by exploring Africa's problematic relationship with what is termed Euro-North America plus China. I also outline the reasons why Africa was colonised in the first place, arguing that the first industrial revolution which propelled mainland Europe to massive production levels also propelled steam engines that came to transport African slaves across the Atlantic Ocean. The positives accrued in Euro-North America from the first, second, and third industrial revolutions also led to negatives being accrued in Africa. Euro-North American modernity deposited its ugly side and toxic by-products in Africa. These negatives are summed up as slavery, colonialism, and coloniality.

Chapter 3 is titled *Contextualising the colonial project in Africa*. Here I offer more background to how Africa became vulnerable to plunder, enslavement, and pilferage. This part of the argument contextualises the colonial project in Africa by noting the role played by mainly European hunters, traders, explorers, and missionaries not only in aiding and abetting the slave trade and the colonisation of Africa but also how they remain part of the colonial matrix of power.

I argue that these four classes of predominantly white European men were the forerunners of Euro-North American modernity and were efficacious in creating captive, ready-made victims for the colonial project. They partnered local “bad men” in creating the matrix (culturally, religiously, socially, economically, and politically) where slavery, colonialism, and coloniality would thrive.

Chapter 4: *Data mining, harvesting, and datafication*. I deploy the coloniality of data to analyse how Africans are dispossessed of their social resources through data mining and harvesting. Building on the notion of the coloniality of data, the chapter demonstrates how big data generated by citizens during their everyday social interactions is processed, priced and traded, and then weaponised for (re)colonisation. The commodification of data leads to its mining from unsuspecting, unwilling, and never consenting Africans. This data is then used for many purposes such as the development of electronic human doubles. Without ICT infrastructure of its own, and generating massive amounts of big data, and being the weakest member of the international community, this chapter argues that Africa is ripe for coloniality of data which will enhance the (re) colonisability of Africa. Coloniality of data is not an end in itself but a means towards an end the (re)colonisation of Africa and Africans.

Chapter 5: *Networks, big data, and data coloniality: Whither Africa's sovereignty?* I predict Africa's fate in the hands of coloniality, predicting the consolidation of coloniality. I argue in this chapter how networks that started during Euro-North America's modernity operated nefariously in Africa. Missionaries, hunters, traders, and miners mutated into today's cartels and “networks of coloniality”. They are conceptually linked to big data, data colonialism, and how this will lead to the (re)colonisation of Africa. The thesis by Hardt and Negri (Hardt and Negri, 2000) that the empire rescaled and redirected sovereignty away from the state and individual human beings towards globalisation, multinational corporations, and multilateral organisations is used as a tool of analysis in this chapter. In a way, the chapter traces the genealogy of Africa's colonialism and how this comes back full circle to a colonisable, a sovereignty-less Africa.

Chapter 6: *The 4IR as the mother of all destructions and accumulations*. I proffer that the 4IR is responsible for the consolidation of coloniality in Africa. I characterise the 4IR as the mother of all destructions and accumulations. by arguing that industrial revolutions underline capitalism in the form of accumulation, misrecognition, misrepresentation, appropriation, and decentring for others while centring Euro-North America. The chapter traces the various destructions (of knowledges, power, and beings) and the concomitant accumulation over the past three industrial revolutions and maps a trajectory of how the 4IR will not bring reprieve for Africa and Africans.

Chapter 7: *Mapping Africa's destiny in the 4IR*. I formulate and map out Africa's trajectory and destiny in the 4IR. Having historicised the negatives that Africa experienced in the past three industrial revolutions, this chapter maps Africa's destiny in the 4IR which is given as that of (re)colonisation. The chapter positions how and why Africa will be (re)colonised.

Chapter 8: *Africa's eunuch condition and the omnipresent footprints of the 4IR.* I build on the argument presented in Chapter 7 that Africa will be (re)colonised by proposing that Africa was rendered a permanently marginalised continent because if Africa is to do things differently, the Global North will lose its luxurious, first-world status which it enjoys courtesy of pillaging Africa. Africa underwrites the economies of the Global North and the Global North must keep it that way as any change in favour of Africa will seriously alter the lives of those in the Global North. A eunuch state owns and looks after what it cannot consume. The chapter traces the reasons which made the state in Africa a eunuch, powerless and absolute. These factors are traced to the earlier industrial revolutions. With the first industrial revolution, Africa lost its human capital through slavery. With the second industrial revolution Africa lost its sovereignty and natural resources through colonialism. With the third industrial revolution, Africa lost whatever was resilient to coloniality as “corporations started ruling the world”. Through coloniality of data, Africa will lose its political sovereignty which it had painfully gained after the various decolonisation processes. The last part of this chapter is a call to all concerned to start mapping how Africa can repel these negative consequences of the 4IR. Because this book is predominantly an exploration and a trajectory mapping intellectual exercise, the final chapter hopes to arouse African scholars and their friends into beginning to think how Africa can turn the 4IR from being a curse into being a resource.

## Note

- 1 On numerous occasions, I asked myself whether the Fourth Industrial Revolution is actually an industrial revolution. The more I looked at this issue, the more I was convinced that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is a misnomer as the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not an industrial revolution in the strictest sense but one that is very close to a technological or a services revolution. I continue to use the term Fourth Industrial Revolution for two reasons: (1) the term is the generally accepted way of identifying the phenomenon under discussion and (2) the technology and services sector can be classified as an industry thereby qualifying the 4IR as a revolution that is occurring in the technology and services industry.

## 2 Historicising Africa's subjugation

### Introduction

The story of Africa's problems, challenges, and opportunities – past, present and future – has been largely told from a perspective which blames Africa and Africans for their circumstances. In this process Africa is variously labelled as a place of perennial lacks, lacking, *inter alia*, development, history, human rights, manners, laws, democracy, and even the will to succeed (Grosfoguel, 2007a). Yet Africa is a product of millennia of external plunder, subjugation, pillage, and strategic and sustained colonialism whose latest stage I refer to as (re)colonisation in this book. (Re)colonisation of Africa is the consolidation, routinising, and maintenance of Africa's inferior position in the world. Africa is subjugated because it has to remain as a cheap source of materials (black bodies and raw materials) needed for the developed world to afford and sustain their luxurious lifestyles.

But the story of the four industrial revolutions, slave trade, colonialism, and the effect they had on humanity will always be told from different perspectives depending on the teller's lived experiences and motives. This book expresses African perspectives and from those who experienced the dark side of Euro-North American modernity, that is, slave trade, colonialism, and the past three industrial revolutions in Africa. Global imperial designs are exposed and explored as the reason and drivers of Africa's (re)colonisation. Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems analysis is efficacious in deploying the globe as the unit of analysis in understanding what sustains global power structures which in turn perpetuates Africa's marginality (Wallerstein, 1974, 2007). Global power structures, institutions, norms, and practices do not only sustain the Global North's superiority but they also routinise, normalise, and maintain Africa's inferior position in the capitalist global political economy.

Enslavement, slave trade, colonialism, the operations of extractive industries in Africa, and the data economy are very complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Coloniality, coloniality of data, the 4IR, and the reality of the (re)colonisation of Africa are equally contested and multifaceted. I am aware of the existence of many alternative, competing, and at times opposing narratives especially regarding the role of technology in solving "the African problem".

I do not expect those in London, Paris, New York, and Brussels to have the same views on colonialism as those in Juba, Nairobi, Lusaka, Lilongwe, or Nyasaka, Dambamazura, Gandavaroyi in Gokwe. When the colonisers left the United Kingdom destined for Africa as an example, what their families in the United Kingdom saw departing were brave men and women going to civilise a “dark continent”, making a huge sacrifice in the service of humanity. What our forefathers and parents received was not a civilising mission but the complete opposite. They received colonialism, brutalisation, humiliation, subjugation, commodification, and utter thingification, that is, the darker side of Euro-North American modernity. The views expressed in these pages are what we experienced and continue to experience in Africa. These views on the industrial revolutions and their impact on Africa and Africans are not the only narrative, I am simply stating one of the many views on the impact of the past industrial revolutions and the potential impact of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) on Africa, from Africa. In essence, this book produces a decolonial epistemic perspective on the potential impact of the 4IR on Africa.

In this book, I extensively deploy the notion of slaves and slavery. The practice of slavery goes against every aspect of human rights and justice. Human rights are taken as being born, living, and dying in dignity (Shivji, 2019, p. 7). In simple terms, and from an African perspective, human rights is living a life devoid of humiliation.

Since the term slave and its derivatives are used quite extensively in the book, framing the institution of slavehood is proper in laying the foundation for my arguments. A slave is a person who lives a life of humiliation, a life characterised by an alienation from the self, usually enforced by violence. Besides being alienated from oneself, a slave is usually owned by another, wholly or partly, as a property of the powerful other. In a way, the slave owner will be in possession of double persons, the enslaving self and the enslaved other. On the other hand, the enslaved other will have lost their humanity to the enslaving other. Enslaved persons are thingified. To thingify is to remove the humanity from a person by rendering them through violence the property of the powerful other. Enslavement is a product of power relations and exists today in various forms and geographies.

A slave is owned by the powerful other because they would have lost their agency, that is, the capacity to determine their own will and make free choice. Slaves do not govern or run their own lives. A slave does not have the agency to determine what happens in their lives. The loss of agency is very central to the practice of slavery and to the notion of data slavery, the subject of this book. There are modern digital practices that are occurring as a result of the 4IR that are resulting in data slavery. At the centre of the practice of slavery in general and data slavery in particular is the capitalist mantra of profit by any means.

Africans have been enslaved for the past millennia. Initially, they were enslaved in order to provide manual labour, for example in the plantations of South Carolina, Haiti, Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. In the current dispensation they are being enslaved in order to provide data which is the new

gold and oil of the 4IR. What changes is the form of slavery that Africans will be undergoing, slavery as a capitalist endeavour merely mutates and adapts and, in the process, manages to remain both effective and omnipresent.

This book problematises, explains, and rationalises the (re)colonisation of Africa in the 4IR owing to four main factors. First, the conditions which necessitated the initial colonisation of Africa by Euro-North American states still exist and are even more amplified than they were in the 17th/18th centuries. Instead of looking at the conditions which necessitated the colonisation of Africa in Africa, I look for them in Euro-North America where the colonisers came from. In other words, why did the colonisers leave the “comfort of their homes”, risking their lives in the venomous snake and malaria-infested African tropics? Euro-North America is more trouble now than it was when Africa was initially colonised.

Second, the conditions which enabled the initial colonisation of Africa still exist and are even more amplified in Africa. The conditions in Africa that made it relatively easy for the colonisers to colonise Africa still exists. Third, the 4IR will further entrench Africa as the weakest member of the international community and fourth, global cartels, networks of coloniality, technology-related multinational corporations have turned big data into capital. This new oil exists “unguarded” in Africa and will be mined as Africa lacks strong institutions to regulate data mining.

The main theme of the book is the (re)colonisation of Africa. The objective is to demonstrate how Africa will remain on the marginalised/darker side/underside of the international political economy. The looting of Africa continues unabated the way it occurred courtesy of the first industrial revolution. Developing on the notion of Coloniality of Data (Coudry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019, p. 83), the 4IR is postulated as the final phase which will conclude Africa's peregrination towards (re)colonisation. The 4IR will lead to the theft of individuals' and nations' sovereignties. Four factors are singled out and unpacked: (1) Africa will suffer the most because it has the largest proportion of the digitally deprived, (2) Africa has the rarest earth's natural resources needed to drive smart devices, (3) Africa does not have strong institutions and ethical leadership, to manage the extraction of its rare earth minerals, and (4) Africa and Africans lack the power to enforce their rights at home and away.

The various past industrial revolutions brought many innovations and technologies which enhanced the lives of humanity (Cipolla, 1976; Crafts, 1977; Fukuyama, 2014; Satia, 2018; Fomunyam, 2019). These developments commenced with the first industrial revolution where various machines and technologies were invented giving rise to industrialised mass production. The culmination is the 4IR which gave rise to unlimited possibilities of interconnectedness between billions of people, mobile and immobile devices, in the process giving rise to a lot of data, massive processing power, storage capabilities, and knowledge access (Schwab, 2016). The innovations, efficiencies, and comforts brought about by the various inventions cannot be questioned. What is being questioned here is the cost of these innovations to the African

continent. What was the cost of the first, the second, the third, and the current fourth industrial revolutions to Africa? The short answer is that the past three industrial revolutions and the current 4IR did not bring much sustainable development, human rights, and dignity to Africa. They brought dehumanisation, thingification, subjugation in the forms of the slave trade, colonialism, and now coloniality.

While depositing many positive aspects in Euro-North America, the industrial revolutions deposited their toxic waste, negative and darker side in Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised world. Euro-North American modernity works in a dialectical manner. It is akin to a person afflicted with bipolar disorder, benefiting its home while pilfering Africa. Euro-North American modernity underdeveloped and undeveloped the colonies in order to develop the “metropolis”. It enslaves, dehumanises, and thingifies the colonies in order to enhance and uphold human rights in the “metropolis”. It extracts raw materials from the colonies in a destructive and ruthless manner that aims at maximising production at the cost of human life and the environment to afford the “metropolis” luxurious and technological goods. The “metropolis” has a persistent underside where it deposits all its negative aspects. This place is Africa and other (formerly) colonised parts of the world. It is from what Walter Mignolo termed the darker side of Euro-North American modernity (Mignolo, 2011) that I am located and from where I write.

Contemporary Africa is a product of Euro-North American modernity. By definition, Euro-North American modernity is the occupation through violence of Africa and Africans' *time, geography, and being* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490, 2018, pp. 22–23). This forceful occupation of time, geography, and space birthed the rhetoric of trajectorying humanity's social “development” in linear terms of civilisation, development, emancipation, modernisation, and so on, with Euro-North America as the leaders and pace setters while Africa must play catch-up and learn from the “leaders”.

The book uses the three main decolonial analytical pillars; *coloniality of power* (Anibal Quijano, 2000; Grosfoguel and Georas, 2000; Wynter, 2003b; Grosfoguel, 2007a; Mignolo, 2007), *coloniality of knowledge* (Grosfoguel, 2007a; Ghiso and Campano, 2013; Al-Hardan, 2014; Connell, 2014; Nhemachena, Mlambo and Kaundjua, 2016; Benyera, 2017a), and *the coloniality of being* (Wynter, 2003b; Maldonado-Torres, 2004, 2007, 2018; Maldonado-Torres and Richardson, 2012). The *coloniality of the market* (Tafira and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017), *nature, and agriculture* (Janer, 2007; Graddy-Lovelace, 2017; Alimonda, 2019; Francis, 2020) are also used to support the (re)colonisation thesis being advanced in these pages.

The conceptualisation of Africans as raw materials to be enslaved and mined for data is presented in typical Toulminian argument format (claim, grounds, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal). The claim is that coloniality will be further entrenched in Africa because of the 4IR. The grounds exist both in Euro-North America on one hand and in Africa on the other. The existential circumstances which necessitated slave trade on both sides still exist. These

conditions warrant the (re)colonisation of Africa as Euro-North America has very few options of sustaining their economies and (re)colonising Africa ranks as the main possible solution. The 4IR provides the propitious environment for the (re)colonisation of Africa, starting with digital and data slavery. The rebuttal is offered in the final chapter where Africa is positioned as having the propensity to utilise the 4IR to end coloniality by claiming its epistemic freedom and agency and stop supporting unethical and unjust leaders. Blind political follower-ship, unconditional loyalty especially to the independence political parties and the instability to hold public officials to account have haunted Africa since the dawn of political independence. That Africans can not hold their public official to account can not be blamed on external parties. The conclusion of this logic is that the (re)colonisation of Africa has more to do with condition in Africa than elsewhere.

The trajectory of the past three industrial revolutions and how they accumulatively weakened Africa making it the weakest, albeit richest continent in the 4IR, is an innovative argument. This deviates from the analyses of the past industrial revolutions and their damages to Africa as episodic. Using Hardt and Negri's thesis of the empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000), I argue that the empire operates in a continuum, underlined by capitalism which is characterised as the clothes of the empire (Passavant and Dean, 2004). Each past industrial revolution is linked to the problems it caused in Africa (darker side of Euro-North America modernity) and how each problem leads to the eventual (re)colonisation of Africa predominantly by Euro-North America, this time joined by China.

### **Where it all began: Africa's conquest**

The opening up and accessing of Africa which led to its colonisation can be attributed to three European men and their collaborators. Two of them opened up the South African Cape peninsula to global navigation while the third one opened up the north of Africa for navigation. The first one is the Portuguese navigator Bartholomew Diaz who in 1488 failed to circumvent the Cape peninsula. The second one is another Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama, who in 1498 managed to circumvent the Cape peninsula and hence lead the way from Europe around the Indian Ocean to the Orient. The third man was the French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps who in 1869 was instrumental in opening up the Suez Canal, and hence North Africa.

When Africa was thus accessible to the world, it engaged the Orient and Europe in five major ways: (1) interactively; (2) comparatively; (3) competitively; (4) cooperatively; and (5) conflictually (Mazrui, 1998, p. 118). Prior to the opening up of North and South Africa to global navigation, Arabs had been coming to the eastern coast of Africa bringing along their religion as way back as the 7th century. This constituted the interactive, cooperative, and comparative aspects of these relations. There are cities that were born out of these interactions such as Mombasa, Kilwa, Malindi, Gefi, Sofala, and Lamu (Beach,

1972; Gayre, 1972, p. 59). Besides the Arabic religious influence, there was also a linguistic influence. The consequence of this influence was the birth of the Swahili language.

With regard to the conflictual relations, the slave trade was the major outcome of these interactions (Williams, 1974; Kalusa, 2009). Slavery in Africa took place on three broad levels. First there was black-on-black slavery in countries such as Ethiopia, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, and Egypt (Collins, 1992; Tegegne, 2017). This practice consisted of black slave masters owning, trading, and controlling black slaves. The difference between Euro-North American slavery and intra-black slavery is that for the later, slavery was not biologically inscribed. Black on black slavery was socially constructed while Arab/white on black slavery was biological. One's social status, not skin colour, made them slaves.

In Africa, slavery formed part of the social system. Indeed, there were grades of slaves depending on their different roles and functions. Also, there were relative degrees of servitude: the right to ownership of property, possibility for social mobility etc. Above all, a slave was not defined by biological characteristics. He was not "naturally" a slave; he was socially, not biologically defined.

(Encisco, no date, p. 26)

In some civilisations such as the Fulani, Fante, Ashanti, Mandinka (Malinke), and the Dahomey, this form of slavery predates Euro-North American modernity (Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson, 1957; Polanyi, 1966; Bohen, 1985; Dale, 2010). However, the Dahomey Kingdom was also involved in slave trade with the Europeans. This became the source of Dahomey's military might.

Dahomey traded prisoners, which it captured during wars and raids or exacted from tributaries, with the Europeans for miscellaneous goods such as knives, bayonets, firearms, fabrics and spirits. The trade was so profitable that Dahomey amassed considerable wealth within a few decades and consolidated its status as a regional military and political power.

(Joubeaud, 2014, p. 12)

Black-on-black slavery was also prevalent in precolonial Africa, especially in Nigeria among the Igbo people. Among the Igbos, slaves were created from prisoners of war, from those that failed to pay their debt or as punishment for various crimes. Slavery created a caste system akin to that in India whose devastating effects persist until today. Descendants of former slaves among the Igbo people still face a lot of stigma, marginalisation, and all other ills suffered by (former) slaves elsewhere. Classifying the descendants of former slaves of the Igbo people as free persons is a misrepresentation and is an injustice because the effects of the enslavement of their forefathers still persist until today, albeit in a supposedly democratic, free Nigeria.

In intra-Africa slavery, slaves were not traded, they were not moved from their geographies and shipped thousands of kilometres away. However, parallels exist between intra-Africa slavery and the European and American slave trade. One similarity is the sale of those adjudged to be a disgrace to the family. The same was also done by the English when they banished their criminals and disgraced fellows to Australia.

The practice differed from slavery in the Americas: slaves were permitted to move freely in their communities and to own property, but they were also sometimes sacrificed in religious ceremonies or buried alive with their masters to serve them in the next life. When the transatlantic trade began, in the fifteenth century, the demand for slaves spiked. Igbo traders began kidnapping people from distant villages. Sometimes a family would sell off a disgraced relative...

(Nwaubani, 2020)

So many atrocities were committed against both sets of slaves. For example, when an Igbo person died, six slaves were buried alive with the deceased. Igbo slaves were also often chained together with chains that were so heavy that a child could not lift them.

At another level, Igbo slave traders were also complicit in the colonisation of Nigeria as they collaborated with the missionaries and even protected them from their fellow Igbos who intended to expel the colonial forerunners and accomplices masquerading as missionaries. One such person who protected Anglican missionaries in Nigeria was Nwaubani Ogogo who gave armed escort to the first missionaries in that region, a trio who were known as the Cookey Brothers (Nwaubani, 2020). Intra-Igbo slavery's legacy persist until today as narrated by a descendent of an Igbo slave trader, Adaobi Tricia Obinne Nwaubani, a celebrated journalist and author of award winning novel, *I do not come to you by chance* (Nwaubani, 2009). She narrated how slave trade still haunts its victims for generations after its official abolishment.

The descendants of freed slaves in southern Nigeria, called *ohu*, still face significant stigma. Igbo culture forbids them from marrying free-born people and denies them traditional leadership titles such as Eze and Ozo. (The *osu*, an untouchable caste descended from slaves who served at shrines, face even more severe persecution). My father considers the *ohu* in our family a thorn in our side, constantly in opposition to our decisions. In the nineteen-eighties, during a land dispute with another family, two *ohu* families testified against us in court. "They hate us," my father said. "No matter how much money they have, they still have a slave mentality." My friend Ugo, whose family had a similar disagreement with its *ohu* members, told me, "The dissension is coming from all these people with borrowed blood"

(Nwaubani, 2020, p. 3)

The second type of slavery was Asian on black slavery. This was mainly perpetrated by Arab slave traders along Africa's various coasts, especially those in the east (Mazrui, 1988; Kalusa, 2009; Nimako, 2015a).

The third and most ruthless form of slavery was the European and American slave system. This was the most commercially viable and also the most impactful, degrading of the three forms of slavery. The European and American slave trade had no room for upward mobility, assimilation, and was not integrational at all. Here, once a slave, always a slave – a situation attested to by the many Euro-North American contemporary black emancipation movements such as the *Black Lives Matter* and the *I Can't Breathe* movements.

Today, these three forms of slavery are being replicated again in the 4IR. There is intra-Africa data slavery, followed by West Asian-centric data slavery, and finally and still at the zenith Euro-North American data slavery. The 4IR must take credit for enabling what Christopher Ahlberg, the Chief Executive Officer of Massachusetts-based cybersecurity company *Recorded Future*, termed “the great data transition”. Data transition is the movement and processing of data from its raw form when it is mined, to information which can be used to make decisions, especially for commercial and political purposes. This transition in turn enables data slavery to occur, hence the saying “colonised by data” (Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019). “Big data” is the generic term used to describe big volumes of both structured and unstructured data from data sets, programmes, and applications which are too big and too complex to be analysed or processed using orthodox data-processing applications and software. Three Vs are used to distinguish big data from other data: volume, velocity, and variety (Ammu and Irfanuddin, 2013, p. 613). The data that forms big data is of high volume, comes at a high velocity, and from a variety of sources such as surveillance systems, social applications, software, institutions, governments, open source applications, and so on.

All this made Ali Mazrui's words about Africans ring true. Writing in *Africans: A Triple Heritage*, Mazrui mourned how Africans consume what they do not produce and produce what they do not consume (Mazrui, 1986). This is especially relevant to big data being produced in Africa and consumed elsewhere. In the meantime, Africa consumes “policy advice” from “international experts” and “technocrats” from multilateral institutions, some of whom are yet to spend a night in Africa. How did this all begin?

## **The genealogy of Africa's colonisation**

The late Samir Amin identified four stages that led to the eventual total colonisation of Africa (Amin, 2001). For Amin, colonisation was not a linear single process but a set of historically and logically interconnected processes. Ironically the first stage in the colonisation of Africa initially started outside Africa, with the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas by mainly the Spanish crown forcing all Muslims to convert to Christianity (Táíwò, 2009; Grosfoguel, 2013) during what Immanuel Wallerstein termed “the long 16th century” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 169). Known as the Reconquista, this was a

period in Spain when the Christians fought many wars with the Muslims in which the Christians reconquered that territory in the process expelling the Muslim Moors from the Iberian Peninsula into North Africa. The Reconquista ended the Muslim rule of Spain. The exact commencement of the long 16th century was on 2 January 1492 when King Boabdil surrendered Granada to the Spanish forces. Lewis Gordon noted that,

... fifteenth-century expansion of Christendom was that 2 January 1492 was marked by the victory of Queen Infanta Isabella I of Castile (1451–1504) and King Fernando de Aragón or King Ferdinand V of Castile (1452–1516) in Reconquista (reconquest), which was achieved by pushing the Moors southward back into Africa. Reconquest is an appropriate term since Iberia went from Vandals to Visigoths, who exemplified Germanic Catholic conquest until falling to the Muslim Moors.

(Gordon, 2008a, p. 4)

These genocides/epistemicides ensured that the Global North would never again be militarily, economically, epistemologically challenged by their victims. The victims of the long 16th century genocides/epistemicides and other victims in the Global South are dealt with by the Global North in three main ways: absorbed, disciplined, or dispensed. For Ramon Grosfoguel, the long 16th century was characterised by four chronological genocides/epistemicides.

(1) against Muslims and Jews in the conquest of Al-Andalus in the name of “purity of blood”; (2) against indigenous peoples first in the Americas and then in Asia; (3) against African people with the captive trade and their enslavement in the Americas; and (4) against women who practiced and transmitted Indo-European knowledge in Europe; they were burned alive accused of being witches.

(Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 77)

The first targets of Euro-North American conquest, enslavement, and colonisation were (1) Muslims and Jews, (2) indigenous Americans, (3) Indians and Africans, and finally (4) women. Of these four groups of victims, only Jews have managed to eventually extricate themselves from subjugation, albeit through setting up their own separate geographical habitation, Israel, in 1948 in historical Palestine – an area already occupied – by committing large-scale genocides, epistemicides, and ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants (Mamdani, 2015, p. 265). The rest of the victims, including Africans, have largely remained as enslaved, subjugated, and marginalised as they were in that long 16th century. What has changed, however, is the mode of their subjugation as they respond to the various challenges coming their way, demanding and agitating for total sustainable emancipation.

Before experiencing all the 16th century genocides and epistemicides, Africa had suffered sporadic Portuguese and later other Euro-North American forms of slave trade. From the 15th century onwards, Africa suffered from

enslavement, theft of natural resources and wealth, all of which were used in developing Euro-North America. This thesis was well articulated by Guyanese historian Walter Rodney in his seminal works, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney, 1973, 1981).

The counter-agreement is that it is an overstretch to link the industrial revolutions especially the first industrial revolution to slavery from Africa to Euro-North America. In the United States, the *Slavery Abolition Act* (1833), abolished slavery in most British colonies, freeing more than 800,000 enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and South Africa as well as a small number in Canada. It received Royal Assent on 28 August 1833 and took effect on 1 August 1834. But UK's economy was still up without slavery support since then, the counterargument goes. The fact is that by the time slavery was officially abolished, Euro-North America and the broader capitalist system had already massively benefited and entrenched themselves. They had not only gained a massive advantage, but also annihilated other political and economic alternatives, especially in the territories where they had raided and harvested slaves as if they were harvesting fruits.

When the Dutch defeated the Spanish at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, the centre of global politics moved from the empires of the Iberian Peninsula to the North-western European empires, again a reality which still exists today. For Grosfoguel, these are the processes which led to Portugal and Spain being left out of the realms of what we now term Euro-North America, which is the epicentre of global hegemony. The meaning of Euro-North America was well contextualised by Grosfoguel who contended that,

Since the late 18th century, it is only men from five countries (France, England, Germany, Italy and the USA) who are the ones monopolising the privilege and authority of canons of knowledge production in the Westernised university.

(Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 85)

Euro-North America excludes Scandinavia, Canada, Eastern Europe, Portugal, and Spain. This background, together with the victory of the allied powers in the Second World War, is the brief history of how men from another set of five countries (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) came to dominate global affairs. These are referred to as the institution of the veto wielding five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5).

After the 16th century with its genocides and epistemicides, the second phase in the conquest of Africa was directly linked to the first industrial revolution which needed more cheap labour, raw materials, and larger markets. Commencing in the mid-18th century, the first industrial revolution lasted until about 1830/1840. It was also during this time, in 1838, that the European and American slave trade was abolished, more than three centuries after 1503, the year that the Spanish took the first African captives from Europe to the Americas (Adi, 2012).

The first industrial revolution required mostly cheap resources such as labour, raw materials, and virgin, manipulatable markets, and Africa was a perfect source for all of these. This motive also worked perfectly well for the missionaries, hunters, explorers, and miners who I later characterise in this book as the forerunners of Euro-North American colonialism and the (re)colonisation of Africa. Their roles, collectively and individually, in foreshadowing both coloniality and colonialism, are clearly illustrated in the following quote by Couldry and Mejias about what happened to the Bororo people in Mato Grosso State, Brazil.

The telegraph pole, the Christian cross, and the rifle arrived all at once for the Bororo people of Mato Grosso. The rifle of the soldier and the settler served to seize the Bororo's land in the name of industry and progress, the cross "pacified" and "civilized" them, and the telegraph integrated them into the rest of the newly wired Brazilian republic in the mid-nineteenth century. Some Bororo donned western clothing and moved from communal to single-family dwellings, as the priests told them to do. They learned the settlers' language and were put to work on the construction of the national telegraph network.

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019, p. ix)

Soldiers, hunters, missionaries, and traders used force to steal land, used religion to pacify and "civilise" their target populations while using the telegram to introduce the locals to the empire and correspond with their kith and kin back home to the world and vice versa. The Portuguese forcibly introduced themselves to the Brazilians of the central Amazon who then became westernised, colonised, Christianised, and pacified.

"Sir" Harry Johnson was a leading British painter, natural scientist, and explorer who was also a diplomat and administrator in Africa around 1876. We can learn a lot about how the empire viewed Africans as less than human beings when we read what he wrote in *Fortnightly Review* in 1890,

By their own unaided efforts, I doubt whether Negros would ever advance much above the status of savagery in which they still exist in those parts of Africa where neither the European nor Arab civilisation has as yet reached them.... The Negro seems to require the intervention of some superior race before he can be raised to any definite advance from the low stage of human development in which he is contentedly remained for many thousand years.

(Gardiner and Davidson, 1968, p. 12)

The colonisers then, as is the case today, endowed themselves with the responsibility to "aid" and "enlighten" Africans. As they see it, without their benevolence Africans will remain savages, and Africa dark. The view that Africans are savages still exists today. It is argued that one way of taking Africans out of savagery is by connecting and datafying them. Connecting and datafying Africa

occurs when they get included in the global village, however, not as equal residents but inferior ones. Of course, the world is now a village, but like any village, it has its rulers and those being ruled, the rich and the poor, and so on.

“Sir” Henry Johnson was convinced that Africans required some outside intervention to assist them so that they could get out of their misery. This is a misrepresentation of the highest order. The so-called benevolent intervention and civilising mission was actually the commencement of an enslaving, decivilising mission which has continued unabated till today. This pseudo civilisation mission was well described and unmasked by Aime Césaire,

What am I driving at? This idea: that no one colonises innocently, that no one colonises with impunity either: that a nation which colonises, that a civilisation which justifies its colonisation – and therefore force – is already a sick civilisation, a civilisation which is morally diseased, which irresistibly progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment. Colonisation: bridgehead is a campaign to civilise barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilisation, pure and simple.

(Cesaire, 1972, pp. 39–40)

Instead of noting and endeavouring to correct their own deficiencies, Euro-North American civilisations went on to decivilise African civilisations, thereby dragging all civilisations involved into uncivilisation. The colonisers and the colonised all became decivilised.

For “Sir” Henry Johnson, the British was a superior race with a responsibility to civilise the uncivilised. This is basically still the view held by the empire whereas the truth is that Africans before Euro-North American modernity were highly civilised until their history was stolen by the colonisers and their civilisations obliterated (Anta Diop, 1955; Gayre, 1972; Rodney, 1973; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Goody, 2009; Adebajo, 2016; Benyera, 2018a).

Delving into the area of eugenics, race science, and medical politics which was overly abused, instrumentalised, and politicised by the likes of Eugene Fisher, Ottmar von Verschuer, Harry H. Laughli, and Reginald Ruggles Gates (Menozzi, 1994; Angamben, 1998; Tucker, 2002), “Sir” Harry Johnson continued,

... the black race has, of course, like the other sections of humanity, many faults and shortcomings. It is, as a rule, strongly as *averse to continuous regularised hard work, and its average disposition is passionate noisy, vain and quarrelsome*. But with all his defects the Negro is more likeable, more akin to us of the white race in disposition, and far less alien to our civilisation than is the *cold, inscrutable, reptilian, Chinese*.

(Gardiner and Davidson, 1968, p. 13) [emphasis original]

There is nothing as dehumanising as being characterised as averse to continuous, regularised hard work. It is of course not true that Africans were and are lazy

people. This characterisation amounted to a misrepresentation and dehumanisation which was meant to clear the conscience of the coloniser so that when they embarked on their murderous looting and exploitation of Africa, they could do so with a clear conscience. That Africans specifically are noisy, vain, and quarrelsome is also not true. These characteristics can obviously be part of virtually any population group of people anywhere in the world.

Johnson then showed the British hatred for the Orient in general and the Chinese in particular by describing the Chinese as “inscrutable reptilians”. The British hatred for the Chinese emanated mainly from their competition in dominating Africa and Africans. This competition is still present in parts of Africa such as Ethiopia where the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is being built with China supporting the Ethiopians while Egypt is being supported by the British, the Americans, and other Euro-North American countries. The same template is also true for South Sudan (Rolandsen, 2015; Mulindwa, 2020), where China and the United States are supporting opposite sides of the South-Sudanese civil conflict.

Soldiers, hunters, traders, and missionaries have mutated from their individual operations that started in the 15th century and continued ever since, and gradually evolved into sophisticated global cartels and networks of coloniality. These global cartels include but are not limited to the following families and their trusts: Cecil John Rhodes, Rothschild, Walton, Bezos, Koch, Gates, and Mars (Lord, 2018). For Henderson, there are four omnipresent financial horsemen patrolling the global financial shores,

The Four Horsemen of Banking (Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup and Wells Fargo) own the Four Horsemen of Oil (Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch/Shell, BP and Chevron Texaco); in tandem with Deutsche Bank, BNP, Barclays and other European old money behemoths. But their monopoly over the global economy does not end at the edge of the oil patch.

(Henderson, 2019)

Financial cartels financed slavery, colonialism, and now the (re)colonisation of Africa. The recently formed World Transhumanist Association now called Humanity+ claims to champion the ethical use of emerging technologies in order to enhance human capacities. It is a huge oxymoron that the world's wealthiest and most ruthless capitalists who moonlight as philanthropists are concerned about ethics and ethical business behaviour when they have accumulated their fortunes through unethical businesses such as the slave trade and presently, data mining.

Several of the richest men of the world, according to the last list of the magazine Forbes in 2018, are the organisers of the network Transhumanist Global, such as Carlos Slim, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Page, Sergey Brain, Bill Gates and Jeff Benzos, owner of Amazon books. This secret transhumanist

experimentation is probably the principal origin of their financial income for many of them.

(Flores, 2018b, p. 391)

These “philanthropists” are the champions of the consolidation of coloniality of Africa in order to achieve their ultimate goal of digital slavery. Mining cartels need the coltan and other rare earth minerals from Africa in order to digitally enhance their technology which is aimed at creating a transhuman whose mind can be remotely controlled, and whose behaviour can be permanently monitored with what is termed the brain net. It will aim to eliminate emotions so that otherwise ruthless tasks can be undertaken without remorse. These eventual transhumans will live a videogame type of life, living in a virtual reality where mind deletion is possible and sexuality eliminated (Flores, 2018b).

With the enslavement of Africa and Africans and the theft of their resources, also started the phase of massive inequalities between the rich and the poor globally. This inequality was racialised then as it still is racialised today all over the world. The globe was experiencing the third industrial revolution when Africa was witnessing the consolidation of its enslavement and over-integration into Euro-North American economies.

Africa was also important for the survival of what became the British empire as its colonisation averted social revolution back home in Britain. In a way, Africa bailed the United Kingdom out of a social revolution (Amin, 2001, p. 2). Regarding the impeding social unrest in the United Kingdom, Cecil John Rhodes wrote,

I was in the East End of London (a working-class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for “bread! bread!” and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism.... My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.

(Walker, 2009, p. 78)

The same European crisis highlighted by Rhodes as a factor which necessitated the colonisation of Africa was also highlighted by Rosa Luxemburg and Hannah Arendt (Luxemburg, 1913; Arendt, 1958, 1973). For Luxemburg, force, fraud, oppression, and looting underlie capitalist accumulation.

The other aspect of the accumulation of capital concerns the relations between capitalism and the non-capitalist modes of production which

start making their appearance on the international stage. Its predominant methods are colonial policy, an international loan system, a policy of spheres of interest and war. Force, fraud, oppression, looting is openly displayed without any attempt at concealment, and it requires an effort to discover within this tangle of political violence and contests of power the stern laws of the economic process. ... In reality, political power is nothing but a vehicle for the economic process. The conditions for the reproduction of capital provide the organic link between these two aspects of the accumulation of capital.

(Luxemburg, 1913, pp. 432–433)

For Samir Amin, Africa experienced a third stage in its subjugation when the Cold War ended (Amin, 2001). The Cold War was important for Africa, almost as a blessing in disguise, as it gave Africa global political and international relations currency. With the end of the Cold War contestations, the reign of most African dictators, warlords, and pseudo-nationalists who were leveraged either by the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) soon fell apart. Africa became more vulnerable to both internal and external threats. Enslavement, theft, pilfering, and corruption reached fever heights. It was during this period that the notion of Africa being afflicted with the so-called resource curse was accepted as normal (Burgess and Beilstein, 2013; Kopiński, Polus and Tycholiz, 2013; Miller, 2015; Knutsen et al., 2016).

Global cartels and networks of coloniality grew to compete with one another and their ruthless appetites for minerals and profits never diminished. Their operations and modus operandi were protected and normalised through various multilateral institutions which developed norms, standards, and rules of engagement which favoured these cartels, networks, and their countries of origin. For Samir Amin,

The objectives of dominant capital are still the same – the control of the expansion of markets, the looting of the earth's natural resources, the super-exploitation of the labour reserves in the periphery – although they are being pursued in conditions that are new and in some respects very different from those that characterised the preceding phase of imperialism.

(Amin, 2001, p. 3)

Africa's darkest hour during its long colonial history was when the hunters, missionaries, explorers, and traders either joined hands with, or became colonial administrators themselves. Cecil John Rhodes is an apt example in this regard.

The globally dominant countries which constitute what is termed the Triad (the United States of America, Western Europe, and Japan plus China), a medium through which Africa is first being rendered sovereignty-less (disembowelled), before it will finally be (re)colonised. I am aware of the view that colonialism in Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised parts of the

world never ended, it simply mutated, and adapted to the challenges of decolonisation hence coloniality. Termed the myth of decolonisation, this thesis was well articulated in Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni in his book *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonisation* (S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). The argument is how can Africa be (re)colonised when it is still colonised? What will happen is the consolidation and normalisation of coloniality as a way of life of Africans. Various violences, genocides and epistemicides instituted colonialism, the 4IR will see the normalisation and routinisation of coloniality.

Colonialism occurred formally, starting with the partitioning of Africa, and decolonisation also ended formally with the independence of Africa starting when the then Gold Coast, now Ghana, became independent from the British empire on 6 March 1957. The second phase of the colonisation of Africa is occurring clandestinely through the work of the empire, cartels, and networks courtesy of the 4IR.

Located on what Enrique Dussel termed the underside of Euro-North American modernity (Dussel, 1996), Africa and parts of the (formerly) colonised world will experience the adverse side of the 4IR. Just like the first industrial revolution which brought mass production as a result of the development of the steam engine, for Africa the first industrial revolution saw the same steam engines propel slave ships to the shore of Africa to harvest slaves. Likewise, the second industrial revolution saw Africa being colonised in order to provide new markets and raw materials for the empire. The third industrial revolution saw cartels and multinational corporations ruling Africa in cohorts with African pseudo nationalists. The 4IR for Africa is a *looter continua*, from slaves, raw materials, and now the empire is looting African data which will result in the (re)colonisation of Africa.

In as much as the abolishment of slave trade did not end slavery and in as much as decolonisation processes did not end colonialism, Africa will be (re)colonised because the conditions which necessitated the initial colonisation still exist today more than they did then, both in the colonised lands and in the lands of the colonisers.

Will Africa sink deeper into subjugation and sovereignty-less or the 4IR is a propitious moment for Africa to redeem, rediscover, and reassert itself as an equal member of the international community? The response is negative because the colonially inaugurated asymmetrical power relations between the (former) colonisers and the (formerly) colonised still exist; it is called coloniality.

### **3 Contextualising the colonial project in Africa**

#### **Introduction**

One issue which has been academically consuming many Africans and friends of Africa is why, despite the official end of colonialism in Africa, including apartheid in South Africa, are Africa and Africans still the same epistemologically, materially, and existentially? A lot of reasons for Africa's current and past predicaments have been offered (Mafeje, 1986; Mbembe, 1992, 2000; Ali A. Mazrui, 1995, 2005; Mazrui, 1999; Mkandawire, 2002; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2006; Hamilton, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Benyera, 2020a, 2020b). Concomitant with attempts to diagnose Africa's challenges are also efforts to map Africa's trajectory, especially in the 4IR. Previous industrial revolutions saw Africa assume the position of a voiceless, choiceless supplier of raw materials and labour under conditions of duress such as slavery and colonialism.

The slave trade might have been abolished, but slavery is continuing. Colonialism is officially over, but coloniarity is going full throttle. I respond to the question: Will Africa sink deeper into a lack of sovereignty and (re)colonisation or will the 4IR present a propitious moment for Africa to rediscover, redeem, and assert itself as an equal member of the international community?

This is happening against the background of countless political summits and initiatives which took place at regional level led by the African Union (AU), and similar countless initiatives at sub-regional level such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), and other similar regional economic communities. These efforts notwithstanding, the lives of Africans have generally remained the same, that is, living without what Hannah Arendt termed the rights to rights (Arendt, 1949). For our purposes, we take human rights to mean being born, living, and dying a dignified life devoid of humiliation and able to enjoy four fundamental freedoms: freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom from violence and freedom from enforced silence (Shivji, 2019, p. 7).

There were many multilateral interventions and initiatives especially from Eurocentric organisations. International “donor” organisations and

non-governmental organisations also intervened in trying to “solve” the African problem. Yet measured by any standard, the quality of life for the majority of Africans remains poor because of the effectiveness of the colonial matrix. In other words, colonially inaugurated harsh living conditions which took 500 years to entrench intensified after the end of official colonialism. Ramon Grosfoguel opines that,

By “colonial situations” I mean the cultural, political, sexual and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations.

(Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 12)

Contemporary Africa is awash with violent conflicts of all magnitudes. Why is it that the most vicious conflicts in Africa are located where the rarest and most valuable minerals are found? The recent surge of violence in Mozambique’s northern province of Cabo Delgado is taking place where the world’s largest deposits of graphite and liquid natural gas were discovered. This is besides the offshore petroleum which is already being extracted there. There are also vicious conflicts in Walikale Territory, North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is endowed with the world’s biggest coltan deposits. Coltan is used for the production of tantalum capacitors which are used in many electronic devices and smart devices.

Deals around raw materials have already been sealed in Guinea, for example, where the China International Fund funded Guinea’s infrastructure developments to an amount one and half times bigger than Guinea’s economy. Burgis notes that,

...the Queensway Group, through China International Fund, would announce joint ventures with the Guinean state that would undertake projects in mining, energy, and infrastructure. The whole package would be worth \$7 billion, equivalent to one and a half times the size of Guinea’s economy. China International Fund was to be paid for the infrastructure projects with revenues from mining concessions the government would grant it. ... China Sonangol, 30 percent owned by the Angolan state oil group ...

(Burgis, 2015, p. 119)

Being signed by Moussa Dadis Camara’s junta government which had massacred as many as 157 civilians on 28 September 2009, the deal was described by the previous administration as rapid and unorthodox, attesting to the fact that China had in fact already (re)colonised Guinea as the de facto government in Guinea will be the Chinese via their China International Fund.

Then there are the conflicts which resulted in Somalia becoming a failed state (Rotberg, 2010a, 2010b; Di John, 2011; Fiertz and Messner, 2019). These

conflicts are attributable to Somalia's geostrategic location leading to global powers wanting to situate their listening posts off the Somali Gulf of Aden. Libya's oil resulted in the assassination of President Muammar Gaddafi and the resultant three governments, albeit in a failed state (Campbell, 2013). South Sudan with all its abundant petroleum is teetering on the brink of being a failed state. Then Nigeria and its neighbouring countries in the Chad Basin are perennially being terrorised by Boko Haram, again destabilising another oil-rich African country. Countries in the Chad Basin that are oil-rich and being destabilised by Boko Haram include Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan, Algeria, and Libya. Mineral-rich African countries are deliberately being destabilised by powerful cartels from the empire so that these cartels and their local collaborators can loot and recolonise Africa.

One way of (re)colonising Africa has been to revisit colonial fault lines, especially in the case of condominium states. Somalia and South Sudan are typical examples of countries which experienced condominium rule. Condominium is a principle of international law which is derived from two Latin words *com* meaning together and *dominium* which means right of ownership. It is a principle of international law where two sovereign political entities such as countries agree to have joint sovereignty over a territory. In a condominium state, the parties agree to have equal share of power and exercise their rights jointly over the same territory. The same principle can also apply to three states in which case it will be referred to as a tripartite condominium. A good example is the Abyei area which is jointly administered by the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan since 2011. Sudan is not new to condominiums as it was once in this arrangement when it was referred to as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This was between 1899 and 1958. During this period Sudan was jointly administered by the British and the Egyptians. At a larger scale the Antarctica is also part of a continental condominium where it is governed by 29 parties who are party to the Antarctic Treaty.

Regarding Somalia, it can be argued that there are basically three Somalias: an Italian Somalia, a French Somalia, and a British Somalia. There is in fact very little evidence of a Somali Somalia in Somalia. Sudan before the break-up was always a typical case of a secession waiting to happen, or, more correctly, to be caused. All the ingredients for a session were there: the North was Islamic, controlled by the Egyptians and predominantly Arabic; the South was predominantly Christian and controlled by the British. Sudan as a nation-state therefore never coalesced and the presence of abundant petroleum in the South just aided the break-up. In the ensuing milieu the (re)colonisation of South Sudan is busy taking place.

The British cannot be exonerated from exerting their colonial interest in petroleum-rich Nigeria (Olowu, 2010). And for good measure, the Portuguese in Mozambique and lately the Chinese are responsible for the current disturbances in Cabo Delgado province (Mheta, 2019). The want-away Republic of Ambazonia in Cameroon is another case in point where the British

are complicit in problems faced in this tiny oil-rich Peninsula (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

In order to actualise the (re)colonisation of Africa, the empire is busy situating military bases and command posts in Africa. The United States is the most present foreign army in Africa with their African Command (Africom) being omnipresent in every African region. As of now, the Russians are busy setting up their own military base in Sudan. The Chinese are already heavily present in Africa with their military base in Djibouti. A theory which explains this foreign militarisation of Africa is the (re)colonisation thesis.

For Mustafa Mheta, we have reached a point in international relations where foreign powers feel somehow entitled to Africa's natural resources (Mheta, 2019). This is the reason why African leaders who are not compliant with the demands of the empire are simply dispensed. The 2014 Obama-initiated US-African Leaders Summit held in Washington was akin to a second scramble for Africa with observers of the politics of the Great Lakes region labelling Rwandese President Paul Kagame an Anglo-American proxy in the region, who buys his legitimacy and protection by allowing the Eastern Congo to get looted of its rare earth minerals which are exported via Rwanda by the Euro-North Americans and their mining cartels (Bentrovato, 2014; Meagher, 2014; Burgis, 2015; Ingelaere and Wilén, 2017; Mulindwa, 2020). The Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), rich in rare earth minerals and a former colony of Belgium, is now argued to be a clandestine economy run by Kagame on behalf of Euro-North American mineral cartels (Meagher, 2014; Burgis, 2015). There are also those, however, who credit Kagame with stabilising the Great Lakes region, especially through ending the genocide in Rwanda which the West watched while it was happening and did nothing about (Moon, 2011; Hoile, 2014). Those in support of Kagame argue that he took Rwanda from being a genocide ravaged country to one of the cleanest and most stable and technologically advanced countries in Africa. Rwanda is progressing economically, the quality of life, especially human security, is argued to have improved drastically. Rwanda is now the economic hub of the Great Lakes Region. The first cellphone to be manufactured in Africa, the Mara is from Rwanda.

One factor that clearly remains constant in Africa is the resilience of colonialism. The resource curse has been widely explored (Burgess and Beilstein, 2013; Kopiński, Polus and Tycholiz, 2013; Miller, 2015; Knutsen et al., 2016) and challenged (Humphreys, Sachs and Stiglitz, 2007; Burgis, 2015), yet as Mheta questioned, "why is it that instability on our continent seems to be concentrated in highly resourced areas"? (Mheta, 2019). In order to properly respond to Mheta, I have to go back to Africa's history of Africa's conquest and pay attention to the role played by hunters, traders, explorers, and missionaries.

### **Hunters and traders: Missionaries as the link**

I have claimed that the escapades of four groups of predominantly white Caucasian men – hunters, traders, explorers, and missionaries – eventually led

to the colonisation of Africa, albeit without substantiating this claim. I have also linked this claim to the greater scheme of capitalism, again without substantiating it. In this section, I will present some evidence that proves that hunters, traders, explorers, and missionaries were not only the forerunners of, but also complicit in, colonialism. I will use the example of Frederick Courteney Selous. His story is in many ways similar to that of many other arch-colonialists such as Cecil John Rhodes, David Livingstone, Maurice Raymond Gifford, Alan Wilson, John Hanning Speke, the list is endless. Missionaries, and these included the Jesuits (the Society of Jesus), the Marist Brothers, and the Franciscans, imported their organised religion into Africa. Walter Rodney made this point when he noted that,

*The Christian missionaries were as much part of the colonising forces as were the explorers, traders and soldiers.* There may be room for arguing whether in a given colony the missionaries brought other colonialist forces or vice versa, but *there is no doubting the fact that missionaries were agents of colonialism* in the practical sense whether or not they saw themselves in that light. The imperialist adventurer, Sir Henry Johnston disliked missionaries, but he conceded in praise of them that “each mission station is an exercise in colonisation”.

(Rodney, 1973, p. 80) [emphasis original]

Frederick Courteney Selous was born in London in 1851 and his father was the chairperson of the London Stock Exchange. He received a very good education and at the age of 19 came to Africa to become an elephant hunter and explorer. Between the ages of 19 and 25, Selous was at the Kimberley Diamond Mines digging and trading diamonds. At age 25 he was already a renowned elephant hunter, successful miner, and influential diamond trader. As a trader, he traded not only in diamonds and ivory but various other merchandise and most importantly information on the geography and anthropology of South East Africa (Selous, 1893, 1968; Bourne, 2011, p. 19). As a hunter, explorer, miner, and trader, Selous’ sphere of influence was along and around the Limpopo, Chobe, Zambezi, and Congo rivers. He explored, mined, hunted, and traded in modern-day Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, and parts of Namibia.

What is notable is that the British South Africa Company (BSAC) realised that Frederick Selous had cordial relations with African chiefs, especially the Ndebele aristocracy. His social capital was therefore efficacious in tricking African chiefs into signing the many concessions and even receiving these colonialists in their courtyards. As a hunter, trader, and explorer, Selous was therefore a genuine and bona fide forerunner for British colonialism in South East Africa.

In Frederick Selous, Cecil John Rhodes found a very capable partner and leader of his so-called Pioneer Column. The Pioneer Column set out to colonise modern-day Zimbabwe from a place in Botswana called Macloutsie

comprising 400 men and destined for Mount Hampden, Mashonaland, which is on the outskirts of modern-day Harare. They left on 28 June 1890 and crossed the Tuli River on 11 July 1890 into present day Matebeleland South Province, Zimbabwe.

There was no better partner for the South Africa British Company in their colonial venture than Selous. Selous was praised for skilfully guiding the inaugural colonising force thus,

The spear-head of Rhodes's plan of northward expansion was the "Pioneer Expedition" to Mashonaland, which, during the dry season of 1890, cut a road 500 miles in length through a hostile, rugged and trackless country, and succeeded in planting the British flag on the high plateau where now stands the modern capital of Salisbury. *Skilfully guided by the hunter, Selous, the 200 pioneers, who were accompanied by a like number of mounted police, with 300 more in support, reached their objective without open collision with the Matabele regiments hovering on their flanks during their passage through the low country.* Their march occupied three months, in which not a shot was fired.

(Hole, 1936, p. 39) [emphasis original]

Selous skilfully navigated the Pioneer Column from Botswana to Rhodesia such that they managed to avoid any hostile communities along the way. Not only was Frederick Selous useful in introducing Cecil John Rhodes to African chiefs, leading the Pioneer Column, and befriending the many Africans along the way, he later became one of Rhodes' leading army commanders. Frederick Selous is also credited for bringing the modern-day Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe under British colonial control (Selous, 1893; Daly, 1982).

Besides his hunting, exploring, and trading prowess, Selous was also an accomplished soldier instrumental in putting down various local rebellions against colonialism (Selous, 1893, 1968; Cobbing, 1977). According to Selous himself, as a soldier for the British South Africa Company, he fought in the 1893 Matabeleland Uprising (Selous, 1968). He was wounded in this battle and had to go home to England to seek medical treatment. He returned two years later in 1895, this time as the manager of the Essexville Estate. When the Second Matabeleland uprising broke out in 1896, Frederick Selous was commander in the H Troop of the Bulawayo Field Force. In his later life when he returned to England in 1908, he was to be invited by President Theodore Roosevelt to accompany him on a hunting expedition to East Africa. In 1915 during the First World War, Frederick Selous worked in East Africa as a British intelligence officer. Of course, he had mastered the geography and anthropology of East, South, and Central Africa which benefited not only British colonial ambitions but also Allied World War One ambitions.

The story of Selous demonstrates the fluidity and operational efficacy of the hunters, traders, and miners into turned soldiers and colonial administrators. Some like the members of the Pioneer Corps were awarded with tracts of land

and turned into farmers and sudden land barons. The Pioneer Corps was officially disbanded on 1 October 1890. This is what I mean when I allege that the hunters, traders, missionaries, and miners were actually the forerunners of colonialism while their reincarnation, the big tech multinational corporations, are in turn the forerunners of Africa's (re)colonisation.

We also see this intricate relationship between soldiers, traders, and colonial administrators elsewhere, for example in colonial Nigeria. "Sir" Frederick Lugard, later Baron Lugard, is a classic example of how Euro-North American modernity had agents that mutated and chameleoned between these three roles. Initially, Lugard was a soldier who fought many colonial wars in West Africa between 1878 and 1887 (Gardiner and Davidson, 1968, pp. 23–24). He became a key servant and senior agent of the Royal Niger Company. He then later also became a senior government official for the British government in Nigeria between 1912 and 1919. Attesting to the unity of purpose between the hunters, traders, and missionaries, and the importance of commerce in the colonial era for the benefit of the British empire, Baron Lugard wrote,

Let us admit that commercial enterprise in Africa is undertaken for our own benefit, as much as and more than for the benefit of the African. We have spoken already of the vital necessity of new markets for the Old World. It is, therefore, to our very obvious advantage to teach the millions of Africa the wants of civilisation, so that whilst supplying them we may receive in return the products of their country and the labour of their hands.

(Gardiner and Davidson, 1968, p. 23)

Lord Lugard's legacy is omnipresent in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular as it is his wife, Flora Louise Shaw, also known as Lady Lugard, who named the country Nigeria. Lady Lugard was a British journalist and writer. Writing in *The Times* of 8 January 1897 she suggested that the name Royal Niger Company Territories was too long and suggested Nigeria rather than Central Sudan. Today the country is still known as Nigeria, a name which therefore qualifies as a typical colonial creation: you create it and you name it.

Back to Lord Lugard, we learn three important views about the presence of the empire in Africa from Baron Lugard's words, 'the empire is present in Africa for its own commercial benefit'. Any benefit that accrues to Africa and Africans are incidental. Every relationship between the empire and the (formerly) colonised world including in the 4IR must be understood against a commercial background.

Colonialism and the (re)colonisation of Africa is all about the need for new markets for the empire. Having gained access to Africa's rare earth minerals, the empire is now gunning for Africa's cyber markets. For Africa, the 4IR is about the online and digital enslavement of Africans. The same template which worked during the first industrial revolution which resulted in the enslavement of Africans, was used during the second industrial revolution to result in the colonisation of Africa, and used during the third industrial revolution to ensure

that multinational corporations predominantly rule Africa. Now the same template is being used to ensure that Africa's cyberspace, data, and digital spaces, and products are owned and controlled by the empire.

By extrapolation, the digital and online life that Africans are nowadays being forced to acculturate to is not necessarily a matter of life and death for them. Baron Lugard explicitly stated that Africans must be taught to want the things which the empire will then supply. This is the empire's interpretation of civilising Africa: stopping Africans from producing and consuming what they want and teaching them to consume what they have been made to need but cannot produce themselves. This is the genesis of what Ali Mazrui then observed decades later when he stated that "Africans consume what they don't produce and produce what they don't consume".

The 4IR in Africa will produce massive amounts of data which Africa will not consume. In this process, Africa will also use millions of smart devices which it will not produce. This is data and digital slavery at work.

The above examples demonstrate the relationship between explorers, traders, missionaries, and miners on one hand and their role in initiating and enabling colonialism in West, South, East, and Central Africa on the other hand. Hunters, traders, explorers, and missionaries are the glue that cemented colonialism, bringing together local African communities on one spectrum and the British colonisers on the other. Their role as agents trusted by Africans brought the colonialists into direct and friendly contact with local chiefs and populations. In a way, through their local relations and knowledge they prepared a captive audience for colonialism. There is no way in which colonialism would have occurred so rapidly without the role and collaboration of hunters, traders, miners, and missionaries. These classes of Europeans were also useful in putting down the many African rebellions against colonialism. The relationship was summed up by Oliver and Fage (1970) in the following words,

Before the onset of the colonial fever in the 1890s, Europeans had already made substantial inroads into the southern third of Africa. During the first three quarters of the 19th century, events there were dominated by the expansion of European settlement north-eastwards towards from the Cape of Good Hope. By 1880 this stream of settlement was already touching the Limpopo, over a thousand miles into the interior from its base at Cape Town. *Indirectly its influence was being felt even further afield, with missionaries and traders from the South African colonies producing an impact as far north as the Zambezi.* Livingstone's great transcontinental journey of 1853-6 was to have important consequences both for the Bantu tribes of Central Africa and for the long-established zones of Portuguese interest in Angola and Mozambique. [emphasis original]

With regards to the 4IR, hunters, miners, explorers, and missionaries have now mutated into networks of coloniality such as the Seven Sisters of Oil, De Beers Mining Company, Lonrho, Rio Tinto, Monsanto, the Earth Liberation Front,

Total, Facebook, Intel, Apple, Samsung, Alphabet, Nokia, Erickson, Huawei, and many others. These networks are enabling not only what is being termed digital colonialism but the entire (re)colonisation of Africa. It is striking that the initial colonialism of Africa was fronted by both state and private companies, as is the case with the current consolidation of coloniality of Africa. This underpins the importance of capitalism in coloniality.

One such company which helped fronting the colonisation of Nigeria was the United Africa Company. It was a merchant company which traded predominately in the British empire in West Africa in present day Gambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. It was formed in 1897 and later became National African Company in 1881, later Royal Niger Company (1886), becoming United Africa Company in 1929. William Lever bought the Royal Niger Company in 1920 and on 3 March 1929, William Lever's company merged with the Niger Company, which was a competitor and, in the process, formed what became known as the United Africa Company Limited. Today the company trades as Unilever and is still operational in Africa in those parts of the (former) British empire, channelling profits back to London. Coloniality is therefore underpinned, by capitalist

### **Capitalism as destructive extractivism**

One of the key characteristics of capitalism is its destructive extractivism. Whether it extracts from the earth or from people, capitalism leaves deep, unhealable scars in its aftermath. The rise of former concession companies such as Unilever to the status of global conglomerates is in part due to their ruthless extractivism and profits at any cost mentality. They extract not only minerals, people's sovereignties and even power and loyalty from the local elites who they recruit and enlist as their local partners. Ironically and unknowingly, people look up to these local elites for salvation from the ruthlessness of multinational corporations unaware that they work in cohorts with these corporations. The end was the establishment of a symbiotic relationship between politics and capital branded as neo-liberal politics. In some cases, such as South Africa, labour is part of the alliance between capital and politics, in the process increasing the vulnerability of the people they are supposed to serve and save.

Political power is mainly contested and amassed because it gives unfettered access to economic processes which drive capitalism. This explains the link and symbiosis between company executives (capital) and politicians (politics). Politics needs capital to run a country and therefore protect it while capitalism needs politics to access resources. Therein lies the umbilical symbiosis.

The link between capital, politics, and colonialism is well illustrated by the story of London and Rhodesian Mining and Land Company (Lonrho) founder, Tiny Rowland. In 1947, Rowland crossed from South Africa to Southern Rhodesia with three things: a Mercedes Benz, 5000 British pounds, and an ambition to seek and get fortune. When he crossed the Limpopo at Beitbridge border post, Rowland had no particular skill yet he was to later rise

and head an intracontinental, transcontinental conglomerate with 800 companies, 110,000 workers and with a combined value of 3 billion British pounds (Baba Nyenyedzi, 2019; Tendi, 2020, pp. 226–227). In reality, Tiny Rowland actualised Cecil John Rhodes' wishes of creating a British empire where the sun never sets. Just three years after arriving in Rhodesia, Rowland was already the richest man in Rhodesia. How did he manage to do this? Rhodes, Frederick Courteney Selous, Maurice Raymond Gifford, Charles Rudd, Leander Starr Jameson, and Rowland formed a cartel which was to own most of the land and mining concessions in Africa. Their land was in excess of one million acres.

From Rhodesia, Tiny Rowland controlled the economies of Mozambique, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Botswana, Tanzania, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, and as far into French Africa as Ivory Coast where he partnered with the state in forming SOCIVEX. Rowland was useful in propping up and financing dictators in Africa thereby keeping them beholden to London even after colonialism. Such a trend continues under American hegemony and Chinese influence. The only ones benefiting here were Tiny Rowland and Lonrho and similar Euro-North American capitalists and not Africans.

One company which epitomises capitalism and its extractive nature in colonial and post-colonial Africa is Lonrho. The name says it all: loot Rhodesia, enrich and build London. Lonrho, now renamed Lonmin, was and still is a destructive company which was instrumental in looting and corrupting the colonies especially in Anglophone Africa. The same company was responsible for the deaths of 34 miners in Marikana in 2012 in South Africa's North West province. The way Lonrho operated during the colonial period is exactly the same way in which Lonmin is operating in post-apartheid South Africa, that is, the ruthless extraction of minerals at whatever cost, including human lives.

Under the leadership of Tiny Rowland, Lonrho became the link between post-colonial African governments and the London administration. Lonrho was a perfect vehicle for the transmission and enforcement of instructions from London to the various capitals of the newly independent African states. The company was instrumental in ensuring that the interest of the (former) colonisers remained untouched and unthreatened. Lonrho was therefore basically a foreign policy arm of the British government in the wrongly named Commonwealth. The sum of the functions of such London-based African looting machines was that they acted in cahoots with the British government in ensuring that the United Kingdom continues to be underwritten by Africa. The effectiveness of the conglomerates in maintaining the power of the Empire effective in Africa was seen though how African states gained independence with *de jure* but not *de facto* sovereignty.

### **The empire and African states without *de facto* sovereignty**

In tandem with the deployment of Hardt and Negri's notion of empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000) it needs to be reemphasised that colonialism was not simply an expansion of geography, administration, population, and power. More importantly, colonisation was about the destructive exercise of power by the coloniser

on the colonised. Colonialism then and coloniality now capture and control human life itself, in one form or the other. Colonialism inaugurated the African as the fuel for capitalism, a raw material to be mined, processed, priced, and traded as a commodity.

The result of Africa's colonialism was the establishment of the empire. In their seminal work simply titled, *Empire*, Hardt and Negri developed a propelling thesis in which they argued that the empire is the form of sovereignty which exists under conditions of globalisation (Hardt and Negri, 2000). By definition,

Empire is the new logic and structure of rule that has emerged with the globalisation of economic and cultural exchanges. It is the sovereign power that effectively regulates these global exchanges and thereby governs the world.

(Arrighi, 2002, p. 3)

For those in the (formerly) colonised parts of the world, the empire is schizophrenic and bipolar. It has two personalities, the good (for its own children) and the bad (for the colonised). Euro-North America enjoys the best while Africa suffers the worst of the empire. Ndlovu-Gatsheni characterised this bipolarity thus,

... empire deposited its positive values and cultures of modernity, secularity, mass education, human rights, ethics, equality, development and democracy, whereas the latter emerges from an epistemic site where the darker aspects of empire that include mercantilism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, forcible Christianisation, apartheid, neo-colonialism, neo-liberalism, underdevelopment, "hot wars", and structural adjustments, were the order of interactions.

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b, p. 4)

After the "success" of the decolonisation project in Africa, the empire took over the project to continue the subjugation of Africa. With colonialism technically and officially gone from Africa, there was need for a new structure to continue what the colonisers could not do without – the subjugation of Africa. Having lived off Africa's resources for decades, the (former) colonisers were in no way able to stand on their own without the cheap labour, resources, and epistemologies of Africa. A new plan and structure were put in place, and Hardt and Negri rightly contend that this was the empire.

Under globalisation, they argued, sovereignty was remodelled and rescaled away from the level of the nation-state upwards to the level of the global. Instead of sovereignty being vested in the nation-state, the empire ensured that it now resides within the power of global cartels which feed the empire. The link between cartels and the empire operates where, for example, cartels finance the presidential campaigns of especially United States presidential candidates in exchange for business concessions once their sponsored candidate assumes

office. Arms manufacturers and financial cartels are the most notorious for placing their preferred candidates in office to, *inter alia*, preserve their interests and markets. In Africa, the opposite occurs, cartels assassinate or cause to be removed from office all presidents and public officials deemed to be antagonistic or non-compliant to their demands. The deaths of Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara (Zeilig, 1962; Gerard and Kuklick, 2015), and Muammar Gaddafi (Campbell, 2013) testify to this fact.

There is contestation over what constitutes the notion of sovereignty, with others refuting Hardt and Negri's notion of the empire (Thompson, 2005; Toms, 2008). Kevin Dunn, for example, argued that Africa had what he characterised as an ambiguous relation to empire. For Dunn,

Sovereignty is an institution or discourse that is constantly undergoing change and transformation, representing constituted and constituting power. It should never be assumed or taken as given, fixed, or immutable. While a paradigm of sovereignty has emerged in modern Western discourses, it is neither monolithic nor universally accepted and practiced.

(Dunn, 2004, p. 144)

Dunn is correct that sovereignty is contested, changes, and represents constituted and constituting power. The question is whose power constitutes sovereignty? The answer is that it is the power of the empire which constitutes and reconstitutes state sovereignty. State sovereignty was invented in Europe and politicised and instrumentalised so as to act as a weapon of disembowelling Euro-North America's (former) colonies. The greatest irony in international relations is that after the Thirty Years' War, Europeans agreed never ever to fight each other again, recognising and respecting each other's sovereignty while agreeing to deny Africa its sovereignty, and instead partitioning and colonising the continent.

As a result, the African continent has in effect been rendered a eunuch and can no longer intervene in its own affairs in regulating the digital space so as to prevent the illicit mining of data. In Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised worlds,

... everyday relations with data are becoming colonial in nature; that is, they cannot be understood except as an appropriation in a form and on a scale that bears comparison with the appropriations of historical colonialism.

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019)

Capitalism, as the underwriter of colonialism and coloniality, consciously and continuously reinvents itself to, *inter alia*:

- (1) Deal with new challenges such as was the case with decolonisation efforts.
- (2) Adapt to new challenges such as the Must Fall Movements.
- (3) Dispense challenges it cannot deal with or adapt to such as the latter-day Muammar Gaddafi, Patrice Lumumba, and Thomas Sankara.

For Mahmood Mamdani, Africa is no longer accountable to its citizens but to international norms and standards that were developed by Euro-North American-centric multilateral institutions. These norms and principles include the responsibility to protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention (Mamdani, 2009). Mamdani historicises and theorises this shift in sovereignty and accountability thus,

When World War II broke out, the international order could be divided into two unequal parts, one privileged, the other subjugated: on the one hand, a system of sovereign states in the Western Hemisphere and, on the other, a colonial system in most of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Post war decolonisation recognised former colonies as states, thereby embracing state sovereignty as a global principle of relations among states. The end of the Cold War has led to another basic shift, heralding an international humanitarian order that promises to hold state sovereignty accountable to an international human rights standard. Many believe that we are in the throes of a systemic transition in international relations. The standard of responsibility is no longer international law but has shifted, fatefully, from law to rights. As the Bush administration made patently clear at the time of the invasion of Iraq, humanitarian intervention does not need to abide by the law. Indeed, its defining characteristic is that it is beyond the law.

(Mamdani, 2009, pp. 273–274)

Noam Chomsky agrees and argues that Euro-North American countries bestowed on themselves the responsibility to develop international norms and principles (Chomsky, 2003). Obviously, they develop these in their own favour and most damagingly, to perpetuate colonialism and the subjugation of Africa and other (formerly) colonised countries. Just as was the case during the slave trade Africa is once again at the receiving end of the empire's brutality. This time, the difference is that the brutality is codified and presented as a civilised set of principles and norms. This is reminiscent of the misrepresentation of colonialism as a civilising mission.

The shift in state sovereignty and state accountability from citizens to norms and standards was codified in 2005 at the United Nations World Summit which resulted in the adoption of the now in vogue Millennium Declaration of the Millennium Development Goals which are now the Sustainable Development Goals. What is key is that the declaration claims the responsibility to protect what it terms "vulnerable people". For Africans, Euro-North Americans are the most vulnerable people in the world. It is actually their vulnerability which led them to colonise Africa; it is also their vulnerability which led them into many wars and brutalities such as in Vietnam (1955–1975), Falklands (1982), Korea (1950–1953), Libya (2011), Iraqi (2003–2011), Syria (2011–), and so on.

The vulnerability of the empire was demonstrated by Horace Campbell when he documented how the responsibility to protect was massively abused by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in its bombing of Libya (Campbell,

2013). States can therefore be destroyed outrightly in the pursuit of politicised norms and principles which in actuality serve to protect vulnerable citizens of the empire. The big picture here was to (re)colonise Libya, thereby setting in motion the (re)colonisation of Africa. Libya was a good starting point as it targeted the “stubbornest” country to make an example of how the empire deals with discontentment. Using an example on a different continent, the same argument can be made about the myth of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (Barnett and Duvall, 2005; Bellamy, 2005; Dodge, 2013; Evans, 2013). Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction are yet to be found almost 10 years after the end of the war and the assassination of Saddam Hussein (Edström and Gyllensporre, 2012). Again, these weapons were a disguise so that American-led Euro-North American interests could (re)colonise Iraq and have a field day sharing its oil resources.

The invasion of Iraq could not have been explained as the need to depose the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, for not following the dictates of the United States (coloniality); therefore, it was explained instead as due to Hussein being an undemocratic leader “in possession” of weapons of mass destruction. Once weapons were fabricated to implement wars; the neo-liberal inversion of the rhetoric of modernity consists in fabricating wars to implement and sell weapons.

(Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 141)

The same formula is now being applied in Africa using the 4IR and the notion of big data. There is a United Nations specialised agency which deals almost with every specific aspect of human life from postal services to health and even libraries. The United Nations is the undoubtedly extension of the victors of the Second World War’s foreign policies. Hardt and Negri saw this as problematic, thus asserting,

The birth of the United Nations at the end of the Second World War merely reinitiated, consolidated, and extended this developing international juridical order that was first European but progressively became completely global. The United Nations, in effect, can be regarded as the culmination of this entire constitutive process, a culmination that both reveals the limitations of the notion of international order and points beyond it toward a new notion of global order.

(Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 4)

The empire made sure that it outsourced the manning of global affairs to this multilateral institution called the United Nations and its various specialised agencies. Laws are now being made at the United Nations and brought down to national governments to domesticate without much input and debate at the local level (Mude, 2014a, 2014b). A practical example is *Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-related Information Act 70 of 2002* (RICA).

In order to legalise and normalise global surveillance especially of the poor in Africa, laws had to be formed at the highest level which made it virtually impossible for African states to maintain their online data and digital sovereignty. This is what Hardt and Negri meant when they postulated that sovereignty was rescaled upwards from the nation-state to the empire. With the interception of communications gazetted and legislated at every nation-state level, the empire literally has ears all over the world. The fact that data is the new oil completes the puzzle for the (re)colonisation of Africa. The various technologies of the 4IR are the new clothes for the empire, to borrow the words of Paul Passavant and Jodi Dean (Passavant and Dean, 2004). They the empire access to every corner of the world, thereby fulfilling words one the archi-colonialist, Cecil John Rhodes that the sun must never set on the British empire.

### **The consolidation of coloniality in Africa**

There are many motivations for Euro-North America to (re)colonise Africa. Before colonising Africa, Europe was a poor continent. Ironically, it is Europe which first colonised the Americas when the Vikings left Scandinavia for what is now Newfoundland. Fast forward to the Second World War when it was America's turn to colonise Europe. Europe became poorer as a colony of the United States whose main interest was to contain the advancement of communism from the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and East Europe towards West Europe. Today Euro-North America is one of the richest regions in the world; these riches can be largely attributed to the colonisation of Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised world. Two structures were produced by colonialism – empire and cartels. The contribution of cartels to the empire and how the empire is responsible for the (re)colonisation of Africa will be discussed later.

A reconceptualisation and rereading of colonialism is necessary here. To colonise is to make another country (the colony) dependent on another (the empire), usually by force or through the deployment of power including soft power. The dependence has to be that of a large extent. The word “colonise” is derived from various Latin words (1) *colere* which means to cultivate, (2) *colonia* meaning a landed estate or a farm, and (3) *colonus*, a tiller of the soil, a farmer. Drawing on its etymology, a colonialist is one who inhabits and farms land which does not belong to him. He owns, dwells, and farms that land by force. There is a direct link between being a coloniser (*colonus*), and its opposite corollary, dispossession, oppression, enslavement, and marginalisation of the colonised. In the 4IR, the colonialists are the data farmers who mine data from users of smart devices, commodify the data, and sell it. These data farmers of the 4IR are the conceptual and in some cases actual descendants of the first industrial revolution's slave owners and the second industrial revolution's colonisers. They are located and domiciled in Euro-North America and China.

Another motivation for the (re)colonisation of Africa is the sustained growth in the sovereign debt of both Europe and the United States (Mann and Haugaard, 2011; Xaba, 2011; Zielonka, 2013; Benyera, 2020a). For Francis Fukuyama, the irony is that the “birthplace” of democracy was also the birthplace of the European Union’s financial crisis. He noted,

Beginning in late 2009 and steadily intensifying thereafter, the European Union was shaken by a financial crisis that has threatened the future of the euro as a currency and the EU as an institutional framework for promoting peace and economic growth. At the centre of the crisis lay the inability of certain EU countries, in particular Greece and Italy, to repay the sizable sovereign debt that had accumulated in the previous decade. The sovereign debt crisis quickly evolved into a banking crisis for Europe as a whole, as the viability of the financial institutions holding this debt was called into question.

(Fukuyama, 2014, p. 6)

Greece’s financial crisis quickly spread to the rest of the European Union and the viability of the EU’s whole financial sector was under threat from the moment Greece joined the European Union in 2001. Having struggled with this and other crises, the European Union and its allies have one solution which is to export the crisis by (re)colonising Africa.

Besides the EU problem child Greece, the bloc is teetering on the verge of chaos with one of the main members, the United Kingdom, having Brexited. The bulk of European Union member states are in some or other financial crisis and these include Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Ireland (Xaba, 2011). This leaves Germany and France to carry the European Union through these financial and political crises. As a main member of the European Union it is a stated fact that France cannot survive without looting its (former) colonies in Africa (Chafer, 2002; Ogunmola, 2009; Burgis, 2015; Eckert, 2016). French public and private opinion is unanimous on “the fact that restoring the greatness of France could come only from its Empire and not in its strong integration in the structures of global economy” (Bost, 1999). On its own, France cannot carry itself, let alone lead the EU, hence its vested interest in all its (former) colonies.

With an increased burden of being the senior member of the European Union, France is now more motivated than ever to (re)colonise Central, North, and West Africa. This background explains France’s action in West African “Sahel conflicts” in Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania. The development in 2009 in which francophone countries came up with their own currency separate from the Euro was a farce as this new currency was pegged to the Euro and its foreign exchange reserves are still held by the French central bank.

France’s overreliance on its colonies which is hurting and haunting it today was initiated by its decision to grant its colonies pseudo-independence. When France under Charles de Gaulle granted 14 African colonies “independence”, almost all

in one year, this pseudo-benevolence was actually the height of coloniality. As a precondition for being granted “independence”, France retained four major aspects of these (former) colonies economies. These are: (1) defence, (2) finance, (3) natural resources, and (4) international relations. Up to this day, France’s (former) colonies pay reparation to France for the “benefits” of slavery and colonialism which these (former) colonies are supposedly enjoying (Koutonin, 2014). Needless to state that the opposite must be happening as it constitutes restitutive justice, that is, France must pay reparations to all its (former) colonies for the theft, agony, and humiliation of slavery and colonialism.

As for the United Kingdom, its life is underwritten by Southern and Eastern Africa. The United Kingdom is essentially a barren, cold, small country. Its soil is not fertile hence its aggressive policies towards Zimbabwe’s land reform programme. Zimbabwe was punished by the United Kingdom and its allies for its 2000 land reform programme because, for them, Zimbabwe was setting a dangerous precedent for their (former) colonies. The UK has some of the world’s largest gold reserves, yet their country does not endowed with gold resources as its (former) colonies, especially Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Their gold mines are in Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and other African countries. (C)overtly, the United Kingdom cannot do without the economy of Zimbabwe and South Africa in the same way in which France cannot do without the economy of the Ivory Coast.

The UK’s imperial priority was to have five colonies developed into white supremacist colonies. These five were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (Bowman, 1973). The UK succeeded in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand but ultimately failed in South Africa and failed dismally in Zimbabwe. The West’s belligerent response to land reform in Africa, especially in Zimbabwe and South Africa, must be viewed against this background.

Elsewhere, both European and American sovereign debt was constantly on the rise with devastating consequences for both. According to Xaba,

Citizens had a rude awakening when the pyramid scheme collapsed, triggered by American subprime mortgage speculation. Their dream became a nightmare and reality hit home. European governments and their citizens were always broke. Their lavish lifestyle was sustained by an artificial economy. The pension fund did not save money and public tax revenue was below health, social welfare and educational needs. Germany cannot sustain its efforts of bailing out its wasteful neighbours. Europe is desperate. . . . America’s base for economic success is Africa and her resources.

(Xaba, 2011)

With both the European Union and the United States in persistent financial crises, Africa’s (re)colonisation offers them a soft landing. These crises will not end as the problem creating them is inherent in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which created the EU’s common currency, the Euro, without creating the

concomitant framework for a corresponding common fiscal policy. In a nutshell, capitalism is in a big crisis and according to Samir Amin this is because,

... the contradictions of globalised capitalism, unfolding in real societies, have become such that capitalism puts human civilisation itself in danger. Capitalism has had its day. The destructive dimension that its development always included now prevails by far over the constructive one that characterised the progressive role it fulfilled in history.

(Amin, 2009, p. 8)

Stated differently, the good that capitalism did is far outweighed by the bad which it did during the same period. And to be precise, it is Euro-North America which is dragging the rest of Africa into its crises as the former cannot survive without the latter. Colonialism cemented the (former) colonisers and the (former) colonised in a somewhat umbilical relationship. In this relationship one is the parasite (Euro North America) and the other (Africa) is the host. Any attempts by the host to end this relationship were bitterly defended by the parasite. This explains the wars in Libya and West Africa which were disguised as fighting for the human rights of Africans, yet they were waged for the survival of the (former) colonisers.

France cannot survive without looting from West Africa and North Africa. West Africa rumbles for real sovereignty made Sarkozy to run like a headless chicken in defiance of the spirit of international law and destroying the credibility of international institutions. Libya's intention to encourage West African countries to participate in new banking system that is not based on the French currency made Sarkozy mad. Ivory Coast's desire for self-determination pushed Sarkozy to limits. Self-determination meant removal of French hegemony over Ivorian economy and military. Ivory Coast is the hub of West African economic activity and therefore loosing Ivory Coast meant losing the whole region. Imagine what will happen to France without West Africa. France had to go to war with Libya and Ivory Coast, not for the protection of civilians or promotion of democratic values but for safeguarding its economic interest (Xaba, 2011).

A key motivation for the (re)colonisation of Africa by the empire is located in Euro-North American modernity and its link with coloniality. There are two types of modernities which are often fatally conflated, African modernity and Euro-North American modernity. Euro-North American modernity was imposed on Africa, and it interrupted, and hijacked African modernity.

Euro-North American modernity began in Europe during the Renaissance as a break from European traditional culture which had dominated their ideology and mostly feudal way of living. This form of modernity is organised around the principle that human beings, individually and collectively, are responsible for their own history. This is a break from the past where history was attributed to God and supernatural powers. With Euro-North American modernity also came the notion of reason and the reconceptualisation of democracy. Having

developed like this in Europe and then exported to the colonies, Africans were henceforth trapped in an unwinnable, perpetual race to play catch-up with the moving target of having to become democratic, modern, and civilised people. There is an asymmetrical relationship between those catching up and those to be caught up with. Writing in his Frankfurt Lectures, Enrique Dussel defined and contextualised Euro-North American modernity as,

... an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon. In these lectures, I will argue that modernity is, in fact, a European phenomenon but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the “centre” of a World History that it inaugurates: the “periphery” that surrounds this centre is consequently part of its self-definition. The occlusion of this periphery (and of the role of Spain and Portugal in the formation of the modern world system from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries) leads the major contemporary thinkers of the “centre” into a Eurocentric fallacy in their understanding of modernity. If their understanding of the genealogy of modernity is thus partial and provincial, their attempts at a critique or defence of it are likewise unilateral and, in part, false.

(Dussel, 1993, p. 65)

There are key attributes to Euro-North American modernity which we can tease from Enrique Dussel's definition. Firstly, and essentially, Euro-North American modernity is exclusively a European creation and a European phenomenon. Secondly, it is constitutive of and constituted by its creation which is the periphery, in this case Africa. Dussel notes that Euro-North American modernity is constituted in a dialectical relationship with non-Euro-North Americans. The same argument was made by Walter Rodney when he argued how Europe underdeveloped Africa (Rodney, 1973) and by Kwazi Mhango when he argued how Africa developed Europe (Mhango, 2018). Euro-North American modernity affirms itself by “unfirming” others that are non-Euro-North American. Euro-North America inaugurated itself as the centre of the world and by centring itself it alternatively decentred the rest of the world.

There is a peculiarity and exceptionalism about Euro-North American modernity. For Dussel, it construes itself as prototype and peculiar from the rest. In order to affirm and create this dialectical relationship, it uses colonialism and (re)colonisation. These are dialectical relations wherein the exceptional centre oppresses, tortures, steals, kills, subjugates, dispossesses, and misrepresents the peripheral other in order to achieve its goal of domination. The exceptional centre tortures and (re)colonises the peripheral other in order to afford the centre an exceptional first-class life. The centre dispenses hell in the (former) colonies in order to deliver heaven to itself. Using the locus of enunciation, we learn that the empire is schizophrenic and suffers from bipolar disorder. It tortures the (former) colonies in order to deliver and sustain its modernity at home. This

modernity has two opposite sides, an underside (the colonised other) and a top side (the colonising exceptional prototype) (Patterson, 1984; Dussel, 1996; Gordon, 2008b; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2011; Warikandwa, 2017). However, those residing on the underside of Euro-North American modernity should never be forced to perceive and interpret life through the perspective of those located on the top side of Euro-North American modernity.

The result of this dialectical relationship is eurocentrism (Said, 1977, 1991, 2010; Dussel, 1993, 2000, 2019; Aníbal Quijano, 2000; Amin, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c).

Then there is African modernity which was interrupted, hijacked, and vanquished by the colonisers, a notion referred to as the theft of African history (Goody, 2009). For Táiwò, colonialism pre-empted African modernity (Táiwò, 2009) and in the process rendered Africa susceptible to (re)colonisation. The pre-empting of Africa's modernity was akin to removing a person's white blood cells. Without white blood cells, the human body's immune system becomes defenceless even against the least lethal infection.

One aspect of African modernity which was replaced with a Euro-North American one was the African university which existed as a community of scholars and their students who would meet to debate and solve the problems of their communities in general and humanity at large. Demonstrating how advanced the African university was well before colonialism, Malawian historian Paul Tiyembe Zelela states,

One country where monastic education developed early was Ethiopia where Christianity was introduced in the fourth century A.D. and became the state religion. From the period of the Zagwe dynasty in the twelfth century this system included higher education, which was largely restricted to the clergy and nobility. At the bottom of the system was the Qine Bet (School of Hymns), followed by the Zema Bet (School of Poetry), and at the pinnacle was an institution called Metsahift Bet (School of the Holy Books) that provided a broader and more specialised education in religious studies, philosophy, history, and the computation of time and calendar, among various subjects.

(Zelela, 2006)

This system of education was later to be reproduced in ancient Greece and credited to Greek thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato. The stratification of education, the focus on disciplines such as religious studies, philosophy, history, and the computation of time and calendar have long ceased to be credited to Africans.

The idea that colonialism introduced modernity to Africa is both malicious and outright mischievous as the opposite is in fact true, that is, that there were two competing modernities, one Euro-North American and one African. African modernity predates colonialism. In fact, African civilisations were flourishing well before colonialism with universities, and advanced agricultural

systems which were in tandem with local soils, rainfall patterns, and different terrains (Beach, 1974, 1976b; Anta Diop, 1987b, 1991; Rasmussen, 2014; Medupe, 2015). Human security was advanced and not only from a military and defence perspective, but also from a food security, public health, and climate change perspective.

European culprits responsible for halting and hijacking Africa's modernity were the aforementioned missionaries, hunters, explorers, traders, and military adventurers (Táíwò, 2009, p. 5). Euro-North American modernity in Africa was inaugurated by mainly missionaries, most of whom were increasingly African. This as European missionaries recruited and converted locals, especially the African aristocracy, to preach and convert their fellow Africans and subjects. African missionaries were therefore the mechanism through which African transitioned from its own modernity to Euro-North American modernity. In this regard Táíwò writes,

The transition to modernity was inaugurated under the direction of native agency in the context of the propagation of Christianity, civilisation, and commerce.

(Táíwò, 2009, p. 8)

Once "civilisation" and commerce entered Africa through the church and the church seeped through the local aristocracy, African modernity suffered one of the following three fates. It was (1) usurped if considered a threat; (2) demonised if considered manageable; and (3) appropriated and regulated if considered palatable and useful. This is how the Great Zimbabwe empire fell.

The link between capitalism, Euro-North American modernity, and the slave trade still applies to the impeding (re)colonisation of Africa (Tomich and Zeuske, 2008; Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019). Colonialism has an enduring function which it performs for capitalism. This function is for the,

... illegitimate appropriation and exploitation and ... redefining [of] human relations so that the resulting dispossession comes to seem natural. It is such continuities that the term data colonialism enables us to grasp.

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019) [own emphasis]

Colonialism and Euro-North American modernity play three important roles in the survival and functioning of capitalism: (1) they enable the looting of resources from the colonies to the empire; (2) they enable the redefinition and reclassification of human relations; and (3) they normalise the resultant human relations, thievery, and enslavement. Once Euro-North American modernity and colonialism structured people into slavery/slave masters, colonised/colonisers, civilised/uncivilised, black/white, it often normalised these classifications through laws, religion, violence, war, and education, *inter alia*.

Racial classes and ethnicities were created by the colonisers as a weapon of subjugating the colonised and rendering them governable. The racial and ethnic

division was especially pronounced in South Africa where the policies of apartheid and Bantustans became normalised and are still as effective today as they were during their official days.

By compelling us to declare whether we belong to this or that so-called “race”, the state forces us into a racial mould, whether we like it or not. Eventually, a racial habitus takes hold of us so that we take it for granted that we belong to this or that so-called “race” and we assume the relevant racial identity. This is what happened during the colonial-apartheid era and this is, preposterously, what continues to happen in post-apartheid South Africa, allegedly in order to benefit the oppressed and exploited majority.

(Alexander, 2013, pp. 159–160)

The normalisation of racism, ethnicity, xenophobia, sexism, and other negative -isms through practice, legislation, and violence makes it easy for the (re)colonisation of Africa as Africans will be divided and not united. Disunity is a propitious environment for (re)colonisation.

It is against the background of all these Euro-North American modernity inaugurated negative -isms that we view coloniality. Coloniality renders the subjugation of Africa and Africans, data slavery, racism, sexism, and patriarchy normal. By its nature, capitalism must accumulate and that happens through expansion. A new avenue of expansion is through data slavery and the (re)colonisation of Africa. Having exhausted current sources of its livelihood, capitalism must find new ways of making profit and finding new markets, just like it did when Africa was first colonised.

A question may be asked: how exactly is data slavery occurring? The answer is hidden in plain sight. Ever pondered why is it that for all the services, apps and Google searches, Google never sends you a bill? Contrary to conventional thinking, Human beings are not Google’s customers, but they are Google’s products. Human beings are no longer a source of production but are now the product to be mined day and night. Human life is now a *raw* material to be exploited and colonised. The 4IR is leading to the (re)colonisation not of countries and lands, but the (re)colonisation of human life itself, as captured by data. If something is raw, it is ready and available for processing and transformation. An African is both *raw* and a *material* to be owned, patented, commodified, and exploited just like the sugar plantations in Haiti and the Caribbean, the cotton plantations in the Southern states of the United America, and the coltan in Bisie Mountain, Walikale Territory, North Kivu Province, DRC.

In this emerging form of capitalism, human beings become not just actors in the production process but raw material that can be transformed into value for that production process.

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019)

Africa has four billion mobile users and that is a massive market for data miners and scavengers who will do anything to lay their hands on this raw resource.

Inasmuch as the abolishment of the slave trade did not end slavery and inasmuch as decolonisation processes did not end colonialism, Africa will be (re)colonised because the conditions which led to its initial colonisation which existed in the colonising countries of Euro-North America still exist today even more than they did then. So, how will Africa be (re)colonised in the 4IR?

### **Africa's cyberspace as *terra nullius*, *res nullius*, and *tabula rasa***

There are three principles that underlined and which the empire relied on to colonise Africa. These are *terra nullius*, *res nullius*, and *tabula rasa*. The first implies that the continent was unoccupied, that is, there were no inhabitants. *Res nullius* implies that Africa was a no man's land, it had no owners. *Tabula rasa* means that Africa was effectively an empty slate (Nhemachena, Hlabangana and Matowanyika, 2020a, p. 7). These three need to be unpacked first in their relation to the colonial project and subsequently to the (re)colonisation project.

Why was Africa described as an empty and unoccupied land, a no man's land and an empty slate? The answer is found in the notion of the coloniality of being. Colonisers did not perceive Africans as human beings, let alone human beings equal to the European colonisers. The Herero genocide (Anderson, 2005; Eckert, 2016; Madziyauswa, 2019) and the writings of Joseph Conrad attest to this reality (Nyamnjoh, 2004; Conrad, 2008). In order to (re)colonise Africa, Euro-North Americans had to doubt the humanity of Africans. When European hunters, traders, and explorers visited Africa for the first time and saw no white person, they then concluded that there were no people. Because for them a person was only a human being if they were white, specifically a white Caucasian man.

When they therefore reported back to the "metropolis", they reported that they encountered only empty land with no other people (read white) in the vicinity. The same logic explains why David Livingstone "discovered" the Victoria Falls in 1855 (Livingstone, 1857, 1861; Kleeberger, 1925; Siddle, 1974), and why the source of the Nile River was "discovered" by John Hannings Speke in 1862 (Speke, 1864, 1908). The same logic is also behind how Vasco da Gama "discovered" the Americas. That is what Nelson Maldonado-Torres correctly termed imperial Manichean misanthropic scepticism at its best (Maldonado-Torres 2007, p. 245). It is the notion of viewing people from Euro-North America as the prototype of humanity. The rest are then classified as non-white, meaning that black people deviate from the prototype of humanity, which is a white person, albeit not every white person but specifically a Euro-North American white person.

The reason why Africa was described as a *tabula rasa*, an empty slate, is because notwithstanding the existence of many African civilisations prior to Europeans' arrival in Africa, for the European coloniser only European civilisation essentially meant civilisation. Hence the notion of colonialism as a civilising mission.

Coming from a different civilisation and a different cosmology, one can be forgiven for concluding that places where there were no household dwellings were actually empty, unowned, and uninhabited lands. Africa's forest were

misconstrued as empty lands. The truth is that those areas, forests, and places had inhabitants. Those were also the places where African ancestors and the ancestral spirits dwelled – hence the notion of forests as sacred spiritual dwelling places for the spirits (Karambakuwa and Mangwende, 2010; Mawere, 2010, 2012; Ngara, Mangizvo and Mangizvi, 2013). Colonialism was therefore a double jeopardy for Africa because it colonised the land of the living living and also the land of the living dead, the ancestral spirits.

Having been described as empty, unowned, and unoccupied lands, Africa was open for colonisation. The same template is today being used for Africa's cyberspace and other online spaces for which there is an ongoing scramble in order to occupy and control. Tech companies from Euro-North America, China, and Japan are jostling to gain a foothold and dominate Africa's cyberspace. The Chinese, through their tech company Huawei, and WeChat the messaging app, are leading together with South Korea's Samsung (Burgis, 2015; Manu, 2015; Gavaza, 2019). Others competing in this space are Finland's Nokia and Swedish telecommunications and networking equipment company Eriksson. There is also competition for Africa's cyberspace from Facebook, Alphabet, and other Euro-North American tech companies that are offering apps and owning the social media space.

As postulated by Hardt and Negri, the empire works by rescaling sovereignty away from individuals and the nation-state and cedes it to the empire of which the big tech companies are an integral part (Hardt and Negri, 2000). "Empire is the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. xi). Data sovereignty of individual Africans and African states is being mined, stolen, and abducted by these companies. The unearthing of this scandal by Edward Snowden is just a fraction of the scandal (Lyon, 2014). The empire vested itself with sovereignty together with its agencies and benefactors. Hardt and Negri assert the following,

This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire. The declining sovereignty of nation-states and their increasing inability to regulate economic and cultural exchanges is in fact one of the primary symptoms of the coming Empire. It is a decentered and deterritorialising apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command.

(Hardt and Negri, 2000, pp. xii–xiii)

The declining power of individuals and nation-states to own and control their sovereignties will be accompanied by an increasing inability to regulate their economic, cultural, political, and digital spheres. The empire therefore decentres and deterritorialises both the individual and the nation-state. The sovereignties that would have been appropriated by the empire will be custodianed by what Hardt and Negri termed "networks of command". Nhemachena termed these

“networks of coloniality” and “colonialities of network” (Nhemachena, 2018). Decentred and deterritorialised from themselves and from Africa, Africans and Africa will be ripe and ready for (re)colonisation. This is exactly the same way slavery and colonialism occurred in Africa. It commenced with denying the humanity and sovereignty of the would-be victims before stealing their sovereignty, enslaving the victims and colonising them.

### **Of the two triads plus China and the squeezing of Africa**

The known triad in international relations consists of the US, Western Europe, and Japan (Amin, 2001, p. 3). There is, however, another triad marauding Africa’s poor, squeezing itself in-between African citizens and their governments. According to Issa Gulamhussein Shivji, this omnipresent and all-powerful, all-knowing triad consists of,

...the “DONs” (donor organisations), the “INFOs” (international financial organisations) and the NGOs, including “GoNGOs” (government-organised NGOs) and the “DoNGOs” (donor-organised NGOs).

(Shivji, 2007, p. 25)

These NGOs, as part of this triad, through their advisors and consultants, have not only hijacked Africa’s resources but also Africa’s problems, misrepresenting themselves as friends of the poor when in fact they are agents of imperialism and the (re)colonisation of Africa. Using the colonially invented, politicised, and misleading notion of development, Western NGOs have relegated the state in Africa to a role similar to that of spectators in a chemical reaction. Shivji has no kind words for these NGOs, noting that,

In this “discourse” the developmental role of the state is declared dead and buried. Instead, it is assigned the role of “chief” to supervise the globalisation project under the tutelage of imperial – now called development – partners or “true friends”. The irony of the recent British Commission for Africa was that it was convened, constituted and chaired by a British prime minister, while an African president and a prime minister sat on it as members. This symbolises the nature of the so-called “new partnership”.

(Shivji, 2007, p. 25)

Development is a doctrine developed by the West to justify their various interventions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Development was politicised and then deployed in Africa. The notion of development has been politicised especially by the triad of the USA, Western Europe, and Japan plus one, that is, China, for two purposes. Firstly, to prop up juntas, dictators, and illegal regimes in Africa which in return allowed them unfettered access to their country’s resources. Secondly, the notion of development allowed the two triads plus China to crowd out genuine development partners intending to pursue sustainable development in Africa which could put an end to Africa’s reliance on these two triads plus

China, even for the things that Africa is endowed with. These conditions created very fertile conditions for the (re)colonisation of Africa in the 4IR.

With the triads of the United States of America, Western Europe, and Japan on one hand, and that of Western donor organisations, the international financial organisations, and the NGOs on the other, Africa faces yet another form of (re)colonisation, this time from China. That China has been involved in the second scramble for Africa's rare earth minerals and is positioning itself to (re)colonise Africa has long been established in scholarship (Skocpol, 1979; Broadman, 2008; Burgess and Beilstein, 2013; Mohan and Lampert, 2013; Niu, 2014; Gu et al., 2016; Dobler, 2017). The consequence on Africa of all these pressures is that Africa lost its own triad of *esse, nosse, and posse* (being, knowing, and having power) (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 407). For decolonial scholars, courtesy of the various and never-ending colonial onslaughts, Africa now experiences coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2007b), and power (Aníbal Quijano, 2000), the market (Tafira and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017), human rights (Maldonado-Torres, 2018), and finally of nature (Francis, 2020).

### **China's (re)colonisation: He who owns the debt controls the continent**

China's grand strategy to restore itself as a great power is three-pronged: (1) by 2021 to double its 2010 gross domestic product to \$12 trillion; (2) acquire more regional and global leadership status; and (3) attain world class power and status by 2049, which is the year of the centenary of the Communist Party of China (Swaine, 2015; Cai, 2017; Nantulya, 2018; Gupta, 2019). China believes that Africa is the enabler to achieving the above three goals. Africa is indispensable to China's international relations ambitions and this hardens China's resolve to dominate Africa and in the process crowd out Japan, the US, the UK, and France.

China is very innovative in its response to the competition for Africa's resources coming from both the (former) colonisers and some Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. China is not a new entrant into African politics. Under Chairman Mao Tse Tung's leadership, China was an ally to most nationalist parties that were fighting for the independence of their respective African countries. Under Mao's leadership China supported infrastructure projects in Africa which it believed would help unify Africa. These include the 1,860 km, US\$400 million Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (Tazara) railway line project which links Zambia and Tanzania. Built between 1970 and 1975, China provided most of the funding as a grant.

Communist China offered ideological support, ammunition, refuge, training, moral and financial resources to most nationalist parties. These include the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Chama Cha Mapinduzi of Tanzania (CCM), Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), Southwest African Peoples Organization of Namibia (SWAPO), and Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). China also supported post-independence rebel groups in Africa especially in mineral-rich

countries such as in Angola where it supported two rebel groups: the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* or UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* or FNLA) (Meservey, 2018). China therefore has an established foothold in Africa that is even stronger than that of the (former) colonisers, especially Britain, France, and Portugal. Seen as an all-weather friend, China finds it easy to “invest” in Africa. Competition for Africa’s dominance for China came from the United kingdom yet the United Kingdom does not have a post-colonial continent-wide project in Africa.

It is, thus, frustrating that in its complicated, enmeshed, centuries-long history in Africa, there has never been a Western proposal for continental-scale infrastructure building. Outside Cecil John Rhodes’s racist “civilising” project of connecting Cape to Cairo from the 1870s, there has never been any programme, backed by financial resources, to build Africa’s rail, roads, ports, water-filtration plants, or power stations. It was the Chinese who sought to build a road, rail and maritime infrastructure network to link Africa’s economies with the rest of the world.

(Moore, 2020, p. 2)

While the UK is absent when it comes to Africa-wide infrastructure development and investment, it is the leading economy when it comes to harvesting wealth from Africa. This phenomenon amounts to coloniality of power wherein the United Kingdom uses its colonial networks and cartels to continue pilaging Africa.

... 101 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange — most of them British — have mining operations in 37 sub-Saharan African countries and they collectively control over \$1-trillion worth of Africa’s most valuable resources.

(Moore, 2020, pp. 1–2)

This denotes coloniality at its worst because without any rules forbidding the United Kingdom from benefiting from its historical colonial past, it continues to harvest the economic and political benefits of its imperial past. By its nature, coloniality benefits the (former) colonisers as it allows them to enjoy the cumulative and multiplier effects of their past endeavours and benefits in Africa, no matter how ill-gotten they were.

While the UK is generally absent from Africa-wide developmental projects, China’s investments in Africa are actually its way into the (re)colonisation of the continent. Having abandoned the MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*) in favour of the FNLA (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola*) in Angola, China also ditched Frelimo and started supporting the *Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique* or COREMO (Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique) in Mozambique. This demonstrates China’s modus operandi, political expediency, and pragmatism over principle.

China is clearly at the forefront of increasing its presence and influence in Africa, covertly and overtly. Its main strategy is its global infrastructure programme known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Belt and Road Initiative is not something new but actually unfinished business for China. While Tazara was a “gift” to Africa, the Belt and Road Initiative is actually a curse disguised as a means to enhance infrastructure, trade, and development links between China, Africa, the Gulf countries, Asia, and Europe. The BRI is an intrinsic web of Chinese state-funded infrastructure projects which officially is aimed at alleviating global logistical challenges faced by poor countries. However, in reality, this is China flexing its soft power and indulging in debt-trap diplomacy (Gupta, 2019). Debt-trap diplomacy is the act of seducing poor countries, usually in Africa, with debts which end up resulting in their (re)colonisation by China as these African countries eventually fail to repay the Chinese debt. Between 2000 and 2017, Chinese loans to Africa amounted to US\$143 billion. Strategic and mineral-rich countries are on top of the list of countries having received these loans. According to Gupta, the top five African recipients of China’s aid are the DRC, Angola, former Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya (Gupta, 2019). The DRC with its abundance of rare earth minerals got US\$7.4 billion, oil-rich Angola got a whopping US\$43 billion, East-Africa powerhouse Kenya got US\$9.8 billion, and Sudan before the breakup got US\$6.5 billion, while geopolitically strategic Ethiopia got US\$14 billion. Eventually these countries and others in Africa will be (re)colonised, this time by China, through the process where they will swap their huge debt for natural resources. This process has already started to occur in Zimbabwe where the Chinese now own vast tracks of the most fertile land which ironically was confiscated predominantly from former white commercial farmers, most of whom were of British origin. (Burgess & Beilstein, 2013; Gu et al., 2016; Mohan & Lampert, 2013; Scoones, 2014). China is therefore emerging as the biggest beneficiary of the hotly contested 2000 land reform programme, also known as the Third Chimurenga. The Chinese emerging dominance in fertile land ownership in Zimbabwe is akin to replacing one coloniser (the British) with another coloniser (the Chinese) in the process leaving the Zimbabwean citizens still marginalised and fertile, productive land deprived.

China is also proactively training Africa’s future leaders, thereby guaranteeing its interest when leadership inevitably changes in Africa. China is particularly interested in the next generation of African elites. Last year, Beijing announced it would invite 1,000 young African politicians for training in China, after hosting more than 200 of them between 2011 and 2015. Thousands of African students are pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in China on scholarship programmes funded by Beijing. As of 2017, more Anglophone African students study in China than the United States or the United Kingdom, their traditional destinations of choice (Kuo, 2017). China has thus used the tried and tested method of offering scholarships as a way of exerting the most soft power on Africa. Here China will be taking competition to its Anglo-Saxon, French, and Portuguese competitors.

Since 2011, when South Sudan was established China has given at least 4,100 scholarships and training programmes to South-Sudanese students and

officials. In August 2017 China pledged to offer at least 240 more scholarships. The China-South Sudan Friendship Association, headed by a former foreign minister and partly sponsored by the Chinese embassy, embeds South-Sudanese businesspeople with Chinese companies (Kuo, 2017). In July 2018, while officially laying the foundation of the US\$ 45 million Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China,

... will provide leadership training to emerging leaders from countries governed by the Former Liberation Movements of Southern Africa (FLMSA).

... African National Congress of South Africa, Chama Cha Mapinduzi of Tanzania, Popular Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, Movement for the Liberation of Angola, Southwest African Peoples Organization of Namibia, and Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front.

(Nantulya, 2018)

With its soft power firmly projected in the whole continent, China's backing of the Former Liberation Movements of Southern Africa includes making sure that they stay in office for their mutual benefit. The competition for the control of Africa is why Euro-North American "democracies" support liberal opposition political parties such as the Movement For Democratic Change in Zimbabwe whereas China supports its comrades with whom it walked the liberation journey – liberation here meaning liberating both Africa and China from Euro-North American colonialism.

It is thus clear that one way in which China is increasing its presence in Africa is through infrastructure development and finance lending. Ordinarily, most of Africa's debt to China can be considered bad debt. China often finances corrupt governments, dictatorships, and even illegal African regimes. China also prefers targeting countries that are mineral-rich. What is the big picture here for China? Known as debt-book diplomacy (Walker, 2009; Wong, 2015; Dobler, 2017; Nantulya, 2018), China lends money to countries which it knows will not be capable of repaying that debt financially. Instead, China then opts for a swap of the debt for natural resources. As mentioned above, equity for debt swaps have already happened in Zimbabwe, with China aiming to swap US\$ 150 billion of global debt in this way, most of which is owed by African countries (Weinland and Wildau, 2017). African resources on the Chinese's debt for equity swap radar include land, minerals, offshore areas, and of late air space and cyberspace. This is how China will (re)colonise Africa. For China, debt-book diplomacy is a smart, quarrel-free, and uncontested way of securing and protecting its interests abroad.

Besides Zimbabwe, China has already swapped debt for equity successfully in Djibouti, Sri Lanka, and Tajikistan. In practical terms, China is behaving like a loan shark, grabbing land and other resources from countries who fail to pay it back.

Djibouti borrowed \$1.4 billion from China in the last two years – more than three-quarters of Djibouti's GDP – that Beijing later leveraged to open

its first overseas military installation. In Sri Lanka, China acquired 99 years of operating rights for the Hambantota Port after costs for the project spiralled out of control, forcing Colombo to give up control of the port in return for a Chinese bailout. Back in 2011, China reportedly wrote off Tajikistan's debt in exchange for around 1000 square kilometres of territory. (Gupta, 2019)

China's strategy worked elsewhere and will not fail in Africa. As of now it is dominating aid, trade, investment and, most importantly, underwriting the tenure of unpopular regimes in Africa. China's success naturally demanded a counter response in this battle for Africa from the United States and its allies. Their strategy in this counter response entailed the invention of the War on Terror which legitimised their military presence in Africa.

What does the coronavirus pandemic mean for China, Africa, and the equity-debt swap strategy? African countries were already struggling to pay back China even without the coronavirus pandemic. This pandemic will hasten their demise and deliver these countries to China. This pandemic is an opportune moment for China to throw its debt-book diplomacy at Africa. This pandemic is a blessing in disguise for China as it will enhance the realisation of its goal to be the global dominating power by 2049.

This is so because most countries will struggle to recover from the coronavirus pandemic. Many of the most affected countries are those that were competing with China for dominance in Africa and include France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The pandemic is offering China a golden opportunity to increase its assistance and soft power in Africa with little or no competition from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

The threat of the (re)colonisation of Africa by its (former) colonisers mainly Britain, France, and Portugal explains the hostilities between China and Euro-North America. For Africa, the choices are limited at the moment. It is either (re)colonisation by China or (re)colonisation by Euro-North America. In this regard, Africa is showing an affinity towards China's "C" policy of co-option, cooperation, and inducements. Co-opted into and cooperating with the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC), while being induced to acquire massive loans and debt which it cannot service, Africa is on the road to Chinese (re)colonisation. The Commonwealth, Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the United States Africa Summit, and the Francophone Africa Summit have now become FOCAC rivals.

All these global centres of power are courting Africa; Why? The main reason is that Africa is (re)colonisable which in turn opens up many economic benefits of colonial proportions.

### **China's growing political capital in Africa**

What exactly does China want in Africa? Of course, China wants the rare earth minerals, the oil, and also arable land. The big price for China, especially as it

extends a helping hand to its founded “friends” in Africa during the coronavirus pandemic, is political capital. For China, gaining Africa’s trust and goodwill is more important and efficacious than deploying “boots on the ground”. This is an astute strategy: political capital will give China an advantage over its adversaries.

Before the coronavirus pandemic hit Africa, especially Africa south of the Sahara, the subcontinent was in serious trouble. There were the Ebola virus outbreak, endemic corruption and state capture, non-performing economies, and massive budget deficits. The arrival of the coronavirus only worsened an already desperate African problem. Africa generally lacks the human capital and infrastructure to effectively fight the coronavirus pandemic. There are countries with more vice-presidents than ventilators. There are literally five vice-presidents in South Sudan while this country of 11 million people has only four ventilators. That gives an equation of 2.7 million citizens per ventilator. What a long queue.

The same dire situation also exists in the Central African Republic where a population of five million only has access to three ventilators. Unlike the Americans that sent in their Marines when there was an Ebola virus outbreak in Africa, China sent in health equipment such as personal protective equipment and ventilators. All of Africa received this equipment from China’s billionaire “philanthropist” Jack Ma, the owner of Alibaba. This is an important point: China stood by Africa during anti-colonial revolutions and today China continues to stand by Africa in its most difficult moment, therefore China can be trusted more than the West, especially the US, France, and the UK.

The sum of China’s manoeuvres in Africa lies in its soft power. In contrast, Euro-North America is busy losing traction in Africa while China is increasing its soft power, notwithstanding the anger from African citizens resulting from the xenophobic attacks on Africans especially in Guangzhou which occurred in early 2020. The Chinese will always spin something like this and present it as the Americans trying to separate the Africans and their Chinese brothers and sisters. The growth of Chinese soft power can be attested to by the fact that more African countries attended President Xi Jinping’s 2018 FOCAC Beijing Summit than presidents who attended the United Nations General Assembly held only a few weeks later.

The implication is that for Africa, China is more important than the United Nations, a reality being driven home by the presence of China in Africa during the coronavirus pandemic and the absence of the United Nations. Increasingly, it can be argued that the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation will become more important for Africa than the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly, where Africans and other peripheral members of the international community are accorded equal time to speak, has been criticised as a talk show where nothing happens, where leaders from the late Yasser Arafat to Robert Mugabe and Fidel Castro went to vent their anger only to return home to the same reality of Euro-North American dominance and oppression. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation is a different platform. China listens and China helps without any conditions such as opening up the market, democratising, free and fair elections giving the civic organisations space for African leaders. An African problem today is being sentenced to a Chinese solution.

Whereas the first and second industrial revolutions and the resultant colonisation of Africa took place by brute force, the ongoing 4IR (re)colonisation is taking place through manufactured consent. (Re)colonisation by manufactured consent occurs through the usurping of the very individual sovereignties of African citizens thereby also controlling the national sovereignty which is the aggregate of these individual sovereignties.

Manufactured consent is premised on a number of myths regarding how China operates in and with Africa. There are five myths regarding the Chinese in Africa: that China operates through (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) mutual non-interference in internal affairs; (4) equal rights and reciprocal benefits; and (5) peaceful coexistence. Of course all these are highly contestable because China (1) does not respect the sovereignty of African states; (2) has been aggressive in Africa; (3) interferes in the internal affairs of African countries; (4) does not deal fairly with African states and companies; and (5) does not promote peace in Africa and has actually funded militias, coups, and jihadists in Africa.

### **America's War on Terror as a cover for the (re)colonisation of Africa**

Firstly, before focusing on the United States, what drives and necessitates the (re)colonisation of Africa? Since colonialism and coloniality are underwritten by capitalism, any threats to capitalism are threats to coloniality. If the capitalist and neoliberal system is in jeopardy (Amin, 1997; Anibal Quijano, 2000; Shivji, 2009; Dussel, 2013), it also presents coloniality with even more problems, hence must be defended at any cost.

At a practical level, the thesis of the resource curse assumes a bloody state. The American-led War on Terror as it plays out on African soil, is concentrated in resource-rich countries. Coincidence? Not at all. Once the Americans invented the War on Terror which was also fought on African soil, it gave NATO and its cartels a legitimate reason to get involved militarily. The whole War on Terror story was an invention and a farce allowing the US to respond directly to the challenge they face from the Chinese for Africa's resources. Mamdani placed the invention and deployment of the myth of the War on Terror on the same trajectory as colonialism and the Cold War (Mamdani 2009, pp. 6-7). Being on the same trajectory and of the same genealogy, colonialism and the War on Terror are the proverbial evil twin brothers who dispense the same violence on the same victims with the same aim: subjugation, humiliation, and (re)colonisation. Mamdani asserts that,

I put Darfur as well as Rwanda in a national, African, and global context, which over the past century has been one of colonialism, the Cold War, and the War on Terror.

(Mamdani, 2009, p. 7)

For Africans, this is more of the same as (re)colonisation by China or the United States remains (re)colonisation with the same effects: that of marginalisation, subjugation, and humiliation. The War on Terror is actually the actualisation of the (re)colonisation of Africa. The evidence is that two years before Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's death in 2009, China had overtaken the United States as the continent's largest trading partner and this was also the time when Gaddafi was the President of the African Union (Glazebrook, 2017). This therefore made Colonel Gaddafi a legitimate military target for the United States-led NATO. In Gaddafi and Libya, the US, its allies, and the cartels that supported them saw an opportunity to make an example to other African leaders of how they treat those that challenge and endanger Western capitalist interests in Africa.

Reading from Glazebrook, the destruction of Libya achieved seven important goals for the empire and its cartels.

1. They demonstrated to African leaders how they treat those that threaten neo-liberalism capitalism and Western interests.
2. They rendered Libya a clean slate (*tabula rasa*) for Euro-North America to (re)colonise and their ally cartels to loot. With three governments in two cities (two in Tripoli and one in Tobruk and Al Bayda), Libya is a failed state. The West almost succeeded in rendering Libya a no man's land (*terra nullius*). As a no man's land, (re)colonising Libya becomes even easier. This is why French oil company Total was at the forefront of funding the destruction of Libya.
3. At a strategic level, the assassination of Gaddafi, the biggest threat to Western interests in Africa, weakened the resolve of Africa and decimated the AU's dream of a United Africa.
4. Libya as a failed state implies that North-African security no longer existed. The country and the region was therefore open for human and drug trafficking cartels to undertake their illicit trade with no policing. This renders Libya further ungovernable.
5. The War on Terror turned Libya into a failed state and in turn created an incubation space for terrorist groups which are a known resource for cartels, Arab and western governments. The resultant looting of Libya's armouries and arsenals meant that the terror groups were armed right up to the teeth from day one, ready to repay their masters by aiding the (re)colonisation of Africa.
6. With these resultant homegrown terrorists and terror groups in Africa, Euro-North American governments and their cartels legitimately created a natural demand for their military "benevolence".

Charles Tilly theorised about this phenomenon of creating protection rackets which is applicable in contemporary Africa (Tilly, 1985). Africom and the way NATO operated in Libya fits well into Tilly's notion of protection rackets in Africa. Tilly argues that protection rackets,

... represent organised crime at its smoothest, then war risking and state making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy – qualify as our largest examples of organised crime.

(Tilly, 1985, p. 169)

Deployed in the field as was the case of Africom and NATO in Africa, the results produced were not only true but also conformed to Tilly's sequencing of the processing of protection rackets. Tilly noted that results for organised crime masquerading as state making are four-fold:

- (1) War making: Eliminating or neutralising their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force.
- (2) State making: Eliminating or neutralising their rivals inside those.
- (3) Protection: Eliminating or neutralising the enemies of their clients.
- (4) Extraction: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities – war making, state making, and protection (Tilly, 1985, p. 181).

War making is what happened in Libya, in the process eliminating Libya the state from international relations as well as Gaddafi the arch-enemy of Western interests. Secondly, state making is also taking place, which is basically the remaking and (re)colonisation of Libya. Protection will occur only when the new state of Libya will be underwritten by those who sponsored it and will benefit from its new status as a (re)colonised, rebirthed Libya. The disguise for the underwriting will be misrepresented as the need for dictators and dictatorships never ever to return to Libya again. What this means from an African perspective is that sovereignty and autonomy will never ever return to a rebirthed Libya. From one failed Libya, terror and terrorist groups are now operating in or can target 15 countries. There is a direct correlation between the deployment of Africom and the escalation in these terror attacks. For Glazebrook, the deployment of Africom resulted in an

... increasing numbers of lethal terror attacks across the continent including those in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Tunisia.

(Glazebrook, 2017)

With American boots on African soil, Gaddafi assassinated, Libya a failed state, African incubated terror groups running amok, the (re)colonisation of Africa can start to become a reality, at least in this region of Africa.

## 4 Data mining, harvesting, and datafication

### **“To every birth its blood”: To every industrial revolution its death**

In a novel set in apartheid South Africa, titled *To Every Birth its Blood*, by Mongane Serote (Serote, 1981), the link between blood and birth is reenacted and politicised. The notion is that to every birth, its blood is a conducive analogy to use for this book in explaining how the birth of each industrial revolution was underwritten by African blood. Each industrial revolution can be depicted as a birth in Africa; a birth of hope that Africa can extricate itself from the colonial matrix of power. However, the blood that is shed at birth, gives life, which is contrary to historic African experiences, where many deaths occur with each successive industrial revolution. This occurs repeatedly as Africa’s resources are ruthlessly extracted, from the coltan mined in Walikale, in the North Kivu Province, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, to the rosewood timber removed illegally in the forests of Gambia and Senegal and smuggled to China. Blood is shed in Africa, by Africans deprived of their resources through local-Western elite collusion and the use of outright brutality, that is, the paradigm of war.

With all the resources which Africa is endowed with, the only way these resources can be extracted and exported to what Samir Amin (Amin, 1972, 2001, 2009) termed, “the centre”, is by weakening African governments, through collusion with African elites, and subjugation and punishment of those Africans who dare to oppose coloniality agencies and its collaborators. While successive industrial revolutions are celebrated in Euro-North America, in Africa, they signify death, subjugation, and thingification (Cesaire, 1955; Rodney, 1973; Dussel, 1996; Mignolo, 2011).

### **Data as a raw material**

The raw material-ness of data was aptly captured by big data specialist and mathematician Clive Humby in his now famous words,

Data is the new oil... and shares many of its challenges. In its crude state it is difficult to use and benefit from. It needs refining and external catalysts

to make it useful. When processed it is potentially explosive and dangerous. Just like plastics and polymers... ... some of the best and most profitable uses are what is made from it by others.

(Humby, 2011)

These words capture the essence and usefulness of African data, just as they capture the essence of Africa's oil, be it in Nigeria, Angola, or Mozambique. Its existence is tantamount to chaos, dictatorship, failed states, and what others (Humphreys, Sachs and Stiglitz, 2007; Kopiński, Polus and Tycholiz, 2013; Knutsen et al., 2016) labelled the resource curse. If resources such as oil and data are a curse, why does the curse mainly apply to African countries?

Raw materials underline capitalism and fuel industrial revolutions. The First Industrial Revolution wanted raw materials and got slaves. The Second Industrial Revolution also wanted raw materials and got colonies. The Third Industrial Revolution wanted raw materials and corporations ruled the world by harvesting state sovereignty in Africa (Korten, 1995). The 4IR is now witnessing the continuation of African bodies (citizens) as a raw material. This is a continuation of the same practices inaugurated by capitalism during the slave trade. Couldry and Mejias (2019) sum it up as follows,

Then, through the practice of slavery (which preceded colonialism, but which reached a massive scale under colonialism), human bodies were transformed into a raw material for capitalism in the form of slaves [original emphasis]. Historians have warned us against treating slavery – usually imagined as a premodern practice – in isolation from the development of industrial capitalism. The plantation and the factory coexisted for a long time. The treatment of human beings, as mere property, stimulated the rationalities of profit maximisation, [original emphasis] accounting precision, and data optimisation that we now tend to associate with modern rationality.

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019)

Generally, the black body has been considered by capitalism as property, to be traded and profited from. The black body is generally dispensable, just like all other resources.

The 4IR has resulted in online data becoming the latest resource sought after by global capitalists. Like any other raw material, capitalists will seek to extract it at the least possible cost, if not for free, and sell it at the highest price. Like any other resources sought by capitalists, data is also being accumulated at massive rates (Katal, Wazid & Goudar, 2013; Mayer-Schoenberger, 2013; John Walker, 2014; Baack, 2015; Flyverbom, Deibert & Matten, 2017; Helbing et al., 2017; Sadowski, 2019).

One characteristic which cuts across the previous industrial revolutions is the capitalist practice of accumulation (Amin, 1976; Frank, 1978; Patnaik & Moyo, 2011; Hull, 2017; Sadowski, 2019). Accumulation during colonialism

and now (re)colonisation occurs primarily through dispossession. Stated in its most basic sense, accumulation by dispossession is making something private, which was not previously regarded as such. This is what happened to land in Africa and is now happening to data in Africa. Force, fraud, oppression, looting (Harvey, 2003, p. 137), alienation, obfuscation, trickery, and misrepresentation are some of the methods used during accumulation through dispossession.

Data users are enslaved before using any app or downloading anything; they are given only one option, which is to agree to the terms and conditions. This amounts to obfuscation, trickery, and misrepresentation: (1) it portrays a wrong picture that users have plenty of options, yet there is only one option – which is *misrepresentation*; (2) it portrays a false image that the user is willing to part with their details, information, and everything that will be harvested from them – which is *manufactured consent*; (3) it portrays the picture that the relationship is symbiotic, yet it is parasitic – which is *misrepresentation*; (4) once entered into, the relationship cannot be annulled, amended, or anything – that is *enslavement*; and (5) the resultant product (big data) is alienated from the source – which amounts to *displacement* and *appropriation*.

### **Coloniality of data and technical rationality**

The role played by technology and by extension, big technology companies in alienating Africans from their data cannot be overemphasised. In this coloniality era, there is a form of alienation, which is produced by technology through what German-American philosopher, sociologist, political theorist, and Frankfurt School theorist Hebert Marcuse termed, “technical rationality” (Marcuse, 1941, 1991). Technical rationality denotes how rationality is used, initially, in decisions to incorporate technology in society and how, once incorporated, such changes will be considered rational. Society will adjust to life with these new technologies, compliance becomes second nature, and questioning or not complying with new technologies will be criminalised and punishable. In this regard, Marcuse (1941, p. 154) states,

The objective and impersonal character of technological rationality bestows upon the bureaucratic groups the universal dignity of reason. The rationality embodied in the giant enterprises makes it appear as if men, in obeying them, obey the dictum of objective rationality.

The *Registration for the Interception of Communications Act* (RICA) was domesticated in many jurisdictions, with very little no democratic debates and participation. The RICA Act prescribes that all telecommunications companies register and keep a data base of their clients. It also regulates the interception of communications and associated processes such as applications for and authorisation of interception of communications. The rationale of the law is to prevent criminals from using cellular telephones and related technologies for illegal activities such as but not limited to planning and committing crimes. Most African countries have this

regulation and include Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Mauritania, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Nigeria (GSMA, 2016, p. 9). Having amassed the personal identification information to their mobile cellphone subscribers, big tech companies will be in possession of all the ingredients needed to create a new online order. Big tech companies become reason themselves and obeying “terms and conditions” the norm. These data miners and harvesters become the embodiment of rationality; yet, they are data thieves and agencies of the (re)colonisation of Africa.

There was a point when the industrial revolutions resulted in the accumulation of slaves and slave labour from Africa to cater for Euro-North American labour and human resources needs. There was also a time when there was a massive accumulation of natural spiritual and epistemic resources from Africa, especially its minerals. A case in point is the looting and accumulation of Africa’s artifacts looted during colonial conquest which are displayed in Euro-North American museums, and the human skulls collected by the colonial German forces after the Herero-Nama genocide are still in Germany. At another level, Switzerland produces the most chocolates; yet, it does not have a single cocoa farm. Belgium is richer than most African states; yet, it has no natural resources of its own. What accounts for these anomalies? It is the capitalist and colonial practices of accumulation, looting, and dispossession.

Harvey (2004) and Nhémachena (2018) posit that accumulation occurs mainly by displacement (Harvey, 2004; Nhémachena, 2018). For others, accumulation occurs through looting, murder, plunder, (ab)use of the law, and outright waging of war (Said, 1979; Cobbing, 1988; Ali A Mazrui, 1995; Goody, 2009; James, 2009; Mawere and Nhémachena, 2017; Benyera, 2018a; Benyera, Mtapuri and Nhémachena, 2018; Mtapuri, Nhémachena and Benyera, 2018). The current accumulation involves Africa’s data and, subsequently, the sovereignty of both individuals and nation-states. Like previous accumulations, there is ruthless extraction of data, similar to the ruthless extraction of slaves epistemological, spiritual and natural resources.

Each revolution has got certain characteristics and these include (1) violences, (2) ruthless extraction, (3) massive accumulation, and (4) the creation of norms and standards which authenticate, officialise, and routinise these practices. Regarding “violences” as opposed to “violence”, Benyera (2017b, p. 69) noted that for colonialism to thrive, several violences were used against the colonised, including,

... “foundational violence”, which authorised the right of conquest and had an “instituting function” of creating Africans as its targets; “legitimising violence,” was used after conquests to construct the colonial order and routinise colonial reality; and “maintenance violence,” was infused into colonial institutions and cultures and used to ensure their perpetuation.

(Benyera, 2017b)

Other accumulations include the accumulation of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. The accumulation of weapons of mass destruction by the

beneficiaries of the past three industrial revolutions may appear to be unlinked to these industrial revolutions; yet, these revolutions were the propellers and rationalisers of these violences. As these violences were instituted and normalised, they enabled and routinised these series of extractions. Without violences, no revolution would succeed. The same is true for all industrial revolutions; without violences, no industrial revolution would succeed and the 4IR is no exception.

### **Consistent extraction and pilfering African resources**

Starting with the First Industrial Revolution through to the 4IR, Western multinational companies consistently extracted and pilfered African resources – slaves, knowledges, and mineral resources and, currently, African data. Capitalism never ceases to capitalise on what Africa possesses. African resources are pilfered to service the ever-increasing resource appetites of developed economies, in the process, further marginalising and hindering development in Africa. Each passing industrial revolution becomes a proverbial death nail in Africa's coffin. Instead of the industrial revolutions bringing respite and opportunities for Africa, by reinstating its humanity, recognising its epistemologies and resuscitating its economies, the opposite has happened, with more and more resources being exported to what Samir Amin termed, "the centre" (Amin, 1972, 1976) wherein Euro-North America constitutes the centre of civilisation, power, economics, law, and virtually every aspect of life. All other parts of the world outside Euro-North America, especially Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia form the periphery, hence the centre-periphery notion. The centre-periphery thesis found much application especially from the Latin America. For dependency theorists from the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) such as Andrea Gunder Frank, Africa and other parts of the periphery failed to develop not because of internal barriers to development, an argument put forward by modernisation theorist theorists, but because the developed Euro-North America has systematically undeveloped and underdeveloped them, keeping them in a state of dependency (Prebisch, 1959, 1962; Frank, 1966, 1978, 2015; Cardoso, 1977).

Hence, the claim and the analysis being made in this book is not new at all but applies to a new form of extraction and thievery by Euro-North American companies and their local collaborators. In a way, this section continues the debate on the inadequacies of the decolonisation processes (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a) and argues that the marginalisation, thingification, and pilferage of Africa continues, albeit in a different form and for different commodities (Amin, 1972).

The notion of coloniality convinces us that what changes in the colonial project is the item that will be pilfered from Africa and the way that it will be stolen. Mejias (2019) notes that,

Today, apart from minerals and fossil fuels, corporations are after another precious resource: personal data. As with natural resources, data too has become the target of extractive corporate practices.

For its part, and due to many reasons, Africa failed to create a local indigenous bourgeoisie that could compete with cartels from the empire. French MNCs are dominant in (former) French colonies and they include Total, Elf, Orange, Sodexo, Société Générale, Groupama, Suez, Renault, Monoprix, Bricorama, Havas, GDF-Suez. British companies include British Gas, Crosco IDW, Shell, G4S (AITEC, 2014)

China filled this gap by effectively using local African state-owned enterprises as their partners in both wadding of Euro-North competition for Africa's resources while simultaneously (re)colonising these African client states. In Africa, generally, these state-owned enterprises have become a source of looting and personal enrichment by both local and empire elites with the Chinese elites joining the elites from the empire. This phenomenon had been termed state capture or state of capture and is a resut of the operations and effectiveness of what William Reno classified as the Shadow State (Reno, 2000). In Reno's Shadow State, rulers undermine the institutions of government which they preside over for personal gain, in the process diminishing the overall wellbeing of the economy making it susceptible for (re)colonisation. Reno demonstrates the depth of Shadow States in Africa thus, The Angolan insurgency, UNITA ... reportedly earned as much as US\$600 million annually from illicit sales of diamonds. Liberia's president, popularly known as "Superglue" for his personal habit of keeping anything he touches, hosts various former South African intelligence operatives. Ukrainian arms merchants and American "missionaries" set up their own bank in Monrovia (Reno, 2000, pp. 433–434). The Shadow State in Africa is therefore a key ally not only for China, but any multinational corporation willing partner local elites especially by offering these elites protection from their won people.

### **Decentring and dispossessing throughout the industrial revolutions**

The empire operates by decentring and dispossessing cognitively, materially, and epistemically. The initial contact between Europeans and Africans resulted in the decentring of Africans by misaligning them with their civilisations. Once Africans were decentred from their civilisations and foreign, mainly European civilisations forcibly imposed on them, they became vulnerable to dispossession. These dispossessions happened in the form of slavery, which was both a physical and epistemological disposition. Colonialism resulted in physical dispossession of land and, most importantly, epistemological dispossessions. The current phase of coloniality, which will result in the (re)colonisation of Africa, is not only about the material and epistemological dispossessions but about finalising sovereignty dispossession through data dispossession and accumulation. Data dispossession will result in data accumulation, which, in turn, will allow cartels from the empire to dispossess Africans of their sovereignty, their remaining humanity, and their identity.

But how dominant are cartels in the global capitalist project? Helbing (2016) notes the dominance of a few individuals in the global tech community for example, thus,

... today, 62 people are said to control as much capital as 50 per cent of people on this planet. The following people lead the ranking: Bill Gates (Microsoft, USA), Amancio Ortega (fashion, Spain), Warren Buffet (finance, USA), Jeff Bezos (Amazon, USA), Carlos Slim Helu (telecommunication, Mexico), Larry Ellison (Oracle, USA), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook, USA), Charles and David Koch (oil and various products, USA), Liliane Bettencourt (L'Oréal, France), Michael Bloomberg (finance data, USA), Larry Page (Google, USA), Sergey Brin (Google, USA). We see that business with data, software and information and communication technologies is outpacing most classical business models, and I expect that we might see a further rapid concentration process until the world is controlled by very few people.

(Helbing, 2016)

Increasingly, and typical of cartels, fewer and fewer people are in charge of the global tech industry. They will even become fewer as cartels have a tendency of cannibalising each other in their fight for spheres of influence. This is what I mean when I allude that capitalist cartels from the empire, Singapore, China, and Japan are in charge of the global tech business. Cartels are interested in profit, accumulation, and dispossessions. Humans and human activities are being dispossessed of humanity and humaneness. A question may be asked: how exactly is 4IR enhanced technology being deployed to dispossess humans of their humanity and humaneness?

The processes of inserting chips into human brains, developing designer babies in test tubes, developing robots, robo-humans, and other forms of augmented humanity blur the lines that inform human identity (Schwab, 2016, pp. 26, 93; Rocha, 2018, p. 127). Once these lines have been blurred, human identity will be very easy to appropriate. One way of such appropriation is through hacking into the Internet of Things.

Not only is human identity be at stake in the 4IR, but other aspects of life are also be impacted. These includes, but are not limited to, electoral democracies, which will be susceptible to manipulation by big technological companies (Ceron, Curini and Lacos, 2017). Cambridge Analytica, Facebook, and Twitter already have been found guilty of manipulating elections (Benyera, 2018c; Zuboff, 2019; Canals and Heukamp, 2020). The threats posed by the 4IR on citizens' lives is yet to be fully comprehended.

The scandal involving Cambridge Analytica, the British research company that was given access to Facebook users' personal information for political manipulation purposes, has revealed the real danger of what we commonly call social media. Calling Facebook a social-media company gives it

a significant amount of legitimacy among its operators and users. Some of the users have become addicted to it. They have found marriage, expanded their businesses and enjoyed a wider reach of networking opportunities.

(Benyera, 2018c)

Benyera notes how ICT cartels have subscribers from many countries and these subscribers, whose personal data the tech companies own, are massive beyond comprehension. To use David Korten's (1995) words, these corporations run the world (Korten, 1995). Regarding the power of social media, Benyera contends that,

The extent of the power that social media, especially Facebook, possesses is often understated. Of the 7.5 billion people in the world, 2.2 billion are regular Facebook users. This means that Facebook has close to 30% of the global population's data at its disposal. If Facebook was a country, it would have more people than China. This demonstrates the immense power that Facebook has across various countries, which, when not regulated as is the case now, has the potential to undermine democracy and human rights. Facebook's monopoly in this market is sure to be worrying many governments.

(Benyera, 2018c)

Then there is the power that these cartels hold with regard to finances. Financial systems will be under threat due to the creation of parallel currencies, that is, unregulated and autonomous systems/currencies such as cryptocurrency. Facebook's Libra is a blockchain cryptocurrency which now rivals Bitcoin (Brühl, 2019, p. 3). The potential of Libra to disrupt African economies is no longer an item of scholarship (Schwab, 2016). For Schwab, the world already reached a currency tipping point as, "10% of global gross domestic product (GDP) [is] stored on blockchain technology" (Schwab, 2016, p. 143).

On the dark web, cartels and criminals are the biggest winners, with tech-based terrorists now asking for ransom in cryptocurrencies (Fields, 2018; Skilton and Hovsepian, 2018). What is now at stake for Africa is the reality that its currencies will be rendered redundant as the world will move more towards cryptocurrencies. This again fits into Hardt and Negri's argument, namely that the empire has rescaled state sovereignty away from the national state and towards big Western multinational corporations and the cartels that support them. They noted,

This is a decisive shift in the concept of sovereignty. Married to the concepts of nation and people, the modern concept of sovereignty shifts its epicentre from the mediation of conflicts and crisis to the unitary experience of a nation-subject and its imagined community.

(Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 105)

Africa's financial markets are at the mercy of emerging disruptive alternative currencies. Diphoko (2019) highlights the eminent financial (re)colonisation of Africa and comments on this thus:

If the Libra becomes a reality, it could disrupt financial systems, especially in the African continent. Emerging countries are the main target of the planned cryptocurrency by Facebook and partners.

(Diphoko, 2019)

For Diphoko (2019), Facebook's grand plan is to apply price control in Africa. It will own the currency and the platform, namely, social media. Benyera is correct in characterising the misrepresentation of social media as social media; instead, Benyera unmasks it and asserts that the so-called "social media" is, in fact, a global mass surveillance programme. To quote Benyera,

(...) But the less charitable fact about Facebook is that it is not exclusively a "social media" that many think it is. That Facebook presents itself as a social media platform is also a deliberate misrepresentation by the company. The social media element gives Facebook the legitimate means to conduct illegal surveillance without a user's consent.

(Benyera, 2018c)

Slowly the continent is ceding control to foreign tech companies to regulate prices and many other key activities that were traditionally the domain of governments. Not only is the 4IR disruptive of lives, but it could potentially also capture and enslave. These disruptive systems/currencies not only undermine the sovereignty of nation-states, but also theoretically affirm the thesis by Hardt and Negri (2000), Boron (2005), and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013c), namely, that globalisation resulted in the rescaling of sovereignty, away from the nation-state towards global cartels (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Boron, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). Decentring and dispossessing Africa is an ongoing project traceable to slavery.

### **Africa and data slavery**

Five essential components constitute Africa, namely: (1) its people; (2) its air space; (3) its territorial waters – oceans, rivers, and similar bodies; (4) the land; and (5) products derived from the above four components. One of the most contemporarily contested products is data produced in Africa.

In this section, I will demonstrate how slavery never ceased to occur – that is, slavery as it applied to Africa in regard to Euro-North America. The initial phases of the slave trade involved humans being enslaved, trafficked, and then commodified and sold on the markets in Euro-North America. The slave trade has taken a different form today, into what can be referred to as digital slavery.

There are many similarities between the 17th-century slave trade and today's digital slavery. Firstly, in the past, there was the very dangerous combination of powerful European and North American slave traders and ignorant and or cowardly African chiefs. These African chiefs were complicit in selling their subjects to European and Arab slave traders such as Tipu Tip (Wallerstein, 1989; Satia, 2018). Tipu Tip, real name Hamad bin Muhammad bin Juma Tajab el Murjebi, was a notorious Zanzibari Afro-Arab trader who, besides selling slaves, also sold ivory (Page, 2018). He was a plantation owner and governor of Stanley Falls District (now roughly Tshopo Province of the DRC) in the then Congo Free State. He operated in central Africa where he met, assisted, and collaborated with other imperialists, slave traders, and fortune hunters such as David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley (Roberts, 1967).

On their side, the Europeans were very powerful economically and militarily. The same situation continues today, where some African leaders are complicit in selling the data of their people to foreign multinational corporations. Instead of protecting the data of their citizens, African leaders and their accomplices are distributing information in a way that is reminiscent of yesteryear's slave trade.

The counterargument is that the ICT multinationals, from China and Japan to Euro-North America are so powerful that African leaders do not have an option, but to surrender to their demands. However, this is not the case, as these African leaders are actually ceding their powers in order to amass personal wealth, usually facilitated through offshore banks predominantly those in the Isle of Man and Switzerland. Therefore, instead of operating under duress, they are willing partners in the looting of Africa's data and, in the process, raking in huge profits. African leaders are among some of the richest individuals in the world.

Another similarity between the 17th-century slave trade and today's data slavery is that African leaders believe that they have crossed the abyssal line and therefore left Africa, the zone of none being, and crossed into Euro-North America, the zone of being. Similarly, yesteryear's African slave traders also believed that they were immune from slave trade as they believed themselves to be in the same class with their Arab, European, and North American slave-trading partners. Just as these two classes justified trade in slavery, current African leaders also justify the sale of Africa's data. The justification is that, while the latter viewed their African subjects as their personal possessions, African leaders, today, see the data generated by their people, in their countries, as their personal property. This, they accomplish through deploying the Shadow State, a situation in which state officials use their official capacity to derive personal benefits and in the process undermining the very bureaucracy which they officially manage. Instead of protecting Africa's data, these Shadow State officials are at the forefront of trading it. This is what Charles Tilly termed protection rackets, the largest organised crimes run with the greatest advantage derived from legitimacy (Tilly, 1895, p. 169).

Digital slavery, also known as data slavery, is occurring globally, but is more pronounced and more effective and instrumentalised in Africa. At continental

and country-level, big technology companies are dominant such as Siemens, Nokia, Apple, Huawei, Samsung, and Ericsson. The dominance of the Chinese technical giant Huawei in the provision of 5G connectivity in Africa is worrying, at various levels. Firstly, the data generated from the ensuing communications will, in most cases, be owned and controlled by China. Secondly, when in control of that data, China will most likely weaponise and politicise it to, *inter alia*, support regimes that are in favour of its dominance in Africa. In this way, digital slavery will lead to the (re)colonisation of Africa, this time by China. China's appetite for dominating Africa's digital spaces has only one explanation, the need to dominate and control data coming from and into Africa. Thirdly, when China manages to own and control Africa, the scenario will help China to dominate and consolidate its (re)colonisation of Africa, as it is, by and large, also in control of large aspects of Africa's mineral and natural resources (Niu, 2014; Gu et al., 2016; Dobler, 2017).

Data or digital slavery also occurs at an individual and more practical level globally, but with greater impact in Africa. From waking up, going through the day – be it schooling or a working day – to going back home and sleeping, no aspect of human life is not technologised. The data generated from these everyday modes of living such as recording one's heart rate, location, body temperatures, and so on, is owned, processed, and sold by big technological companies, who harvest this big data. Nhémachena (2019) argues that digital slavery will take the form of humans being implanted with microchips in their bodies, particularly their brains, which will allow those in charge to control the behaviour of the population. He asserts,

Treated as text and as data, human beings will increasingly have their genes and memories edited using implanted technological devices, in the Internet of Things. Human brains will also be subject to hacking once they are wirelessly connected to the Internet of Things.

(Nhémachena, 2019, p. 4)

Once a person's gene and memory have been captured by the data miners, a person will be subject to being hacked and controlled by those in charge. There is no superior form of slavery such as owning, controlling, and managing one's genes, memory, and thought processes. The capturing of these aspects of humanity constitutes what can be termed the *sum of all colonialities*, aka *summa colonialities*, to borrow from St Thomas Aquinas' notion of *Summa Theologica* (Aquinas, 1947).

The dataring (rendering humans into data mines) and interconnectedness of humanity and the logic which justifies the Internet of Things will enable the (re)colonisation and enslavement of nature, humans, and things to be under simultaneous and similar control of a global tech oligarchy.

There is what has been termed self-surveillance which occurs within surveillance capitalism, courtesy of the 4IR (Dissel, 2004; Revel, 2009; Lyon, 2014; van Dijck, 2014; Flyverbom, Deibert and Matten, 2017; Sadowski,

2019). Self-surveillance occurs when users of smart device and smart technologies unintentionally and unknowingly use applications and other related platforms in such a manner that the generated data is harvested by third parties. Examples include the use of smart devices when exercising whose data is harvested by pharmaceutical and medical companies, online chronic conditions platforms whose data is harvested by pharmaceutical companies and individuals' tweets which are harvested by political parties and public relations firms. Instead of these firms having to invest millions of dollars in gathering the data, they simply provide "free apps" and harvest the data from these apps.

For those in developed economies, there is virtually no aspect of their lives which is not datafied. The difference between societies in Euro-North America and those in Africa and other (former) colonies is that the former have data rights, which they are capable of enforcing, while the latter are, for all purposes, data slaves and data mines.

These apps imply that they have enslaved humans to technology. Human beings now cannot do most things without the assistance of their smart applications. That humans are overly dependent on technology implies that there is a point in time where technology will take over the running of human life. Self-reproducing computer viruses hint at this possibility and now self-reproducing robots that are capable of functioning at a higher sentient level have actualised this idea. Also known as self-replicating machines these robots are capable of self-reproducing using raw materials found in the environment (Freitas and Merkle, 2004). This puts these machines at the same level as humans as they self-reproduce with no human input. This raises a lot of questions about the future especially of those parts of the world not capable of producing and deploying their own self-reproducing machines.

Numerous studies support the view that a sizable proportion of today's young generation is virtually addicted to technology (Price, 2004; Ng and Wiemer-Hastings, 2005). This comes with a host of other challenges such as social and physical problems including obesity. Online and technology addiction has also resulted in what is called "virtual adultery" (Price, 2004; Ng and Wiemer-Hastings, 2005; Fields, 2018, p. 38). Virtual adultery is the tendency to spend, "less time spent with 'real people in their lives in exchange for solitary time in front of a computer' and resulting disruptions in real-world intimate relationships" (Fields, 2018, p. 39). This form of digital slavery affects mainly the affluent, referred to in this chapter as the "digi-privileged".

What forms of digital enslavement apply to the digi-deprived, those in the Fanonian zone of none-being (Fanon, 1952), (or the other side of the abyssal line) (de Sousa Santos, 2007)? For Tendai Sithole, the digi-deprived are dispensable, subhuman, and predominately consists of the,

black subjects, who are caught in the world which locates and incarcerates them in the positionality of the other. In this positionality, black subjects are exterior to the zone of life and they are in the zone of non-being. The

anti-black world burdens, suspends or, at worse, totally eliminates them by the virtue of being raced.

(Sithole, 2016a, p. 179)

The digi-deprived are without technology, exist without a digital and electronic footprint and are, therefore, as good as non-existent, in other words, non-human. Being classified as non-humans gives the (re)colonisers a moral conscience to physically enslave and (re)colonise the digi-deprived, as such rte resultant (re)colonisations will not be deemed by those undertaking them to constitute human rights abuses. An example of this is the reported cases of housemaids and manual labourers being enslaved in the Middle East (Ullah et al., 2020, p. 12).

A counterargument is a liberal view that holds that Africa, just like the rest of the world, can benefit abundantly from the 4IR, especially from a governance perspective. This view is captured by Naude who asserts that,

African governments can learn from the experience of other governments with crowdsourcing, open government, big data, virtual-citizen schemes (such as Estonia's e-residency) and virtual currencies such as Bitcoin and the blockchains that are underpinning new trends in global finance and trade. Having access to large amounts of digital data will allow governments to assess and track changes more accurately and timely in their economies, changes in competitiveness, and measure in more detail the participation of their firms in the global economy.

(Naudé, 2017, p. 13)

What Naude (2017) omits to mention, is the fact that Africa does not own the data that is generated in Africa, by Africans. The notorious "terms and conditions" ensure that big tech companies, such as Siemens, Nokia, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Apple, and Samsung, are the owners of the data, complete with patents and intellectual property rights. Africa has to buy these data from the tech companies or through designated third-party data and digital merchants. For Africa, to buy data, which was stolen from Africa, constitutes coloniality of data.

### **"If you're not paying for it, you are the product"**

Attributed to an anonymous commentator long before the internet boom, the phrase that "if you are not paying for it, you are the product" is now more relevant than ever before. While online services may appear to be free in monetary terms, social media and other online platforms are not at all free. Besides being the customer, online users are also the clients because they pay in one of the world's most valuable currencies which is time. The time that users spend online can never be recovered. Yet the goal of tech companies is to get more and more of users' time every day. That is a huge price to pay for this so-called

free online access. The myth of free online platforms is the gateway to data coloniality and online slavery.

The expression that “if you are not paying for it, you are the product” can be traced to the boom in television marketing which occurred during the Third Industrial Revolution. From competing in capturing the attention of television viewers, the mission is now to capture and increase users’ net online spent time. The greatest lie ever told in the 4IR is that apps and other online platforms and services such as Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Wechat, TikTok, and Google searches are free. The truth is that these are not free; they act as rendezvous for advertisers and the users who are the customer. The idea behind the enslavement of online users is how much of their life will they spend online and how much of their private life will they share on these platforms.

The product that is being sold is the gradual but irreversible change in one’s behaviour and perception about life in general but also includes political choices in elections. In a way, the more time users spend online, the more they lose their agency, autonomy, and sovereignty to the tech oligarchy. The more time one spends online, the more their perceptions are altered in the direction desired by the advertisers and the owners of the platform. Online platforms are an unprecedented form of power, a holy grail, as they can afford their owners and networks power to change the way that people think, and subsequently how people make their political choices. This alters many facets of life such as religion, politics, economics, and how humanity relates as conflicts can be created, hatred fanned, people enslaved, and terrorism perpetrated online.

Known as surveillance capitalism, this process is meant to ensure that advertisers are as precise and hence as successful as possible, to the extent of even altering the choices, consumer and voter psychologies of online communities. The least empowered communities such as those in Africa and other (formerly) colonised parts of the world are at greater risk of being manipulated, enslaved, captured, and even experimented upon.

As noted in the al Jazeera documentary titled, *The Social Dilemma*, the new global market is now the online market and the product being traded is human futures, perceptions, choices, and thought processes. The future of humanity is being shaped online. The idea is to produce a human who is predictable, compliant, and responsive to online demands. This is intended to benefit capitalism as much as possible by driving profit from as little advertising and marketing effort as possible. As the documentary narrated, every online activity is profiled, measured, monitored, and recorded. User online footprints are used to predict, influence, and then pre-empt human behaviour. There are three core drivers of surveillance capitalism. These are: (1) the engagement goal, (2) the growth goal, (3) the advertising goal. The emerging global tech oligarchy aims to engage online communities for as long as possible, thereby giving rise to online addiction and subsequently online slavery. They also intend to keep growing the number of hours that humanity spends online. Finally, the goal of surveillance capitalism is to make advertising as direct and as targeted as possible, thereby

giving unprecedented profits to both tech companies and retailers while driving up consumerism.

Life without an email address is now almost impossible. Emails are now a prerequisite for participating in the capitalist economy. Email addresses are part of the harnesses used to trap humanity into tech slavehood. This is because tech companies use powerful algorithms to power their three goals of engagement, growth, and advertising, ultimately creating a compliant and responsive human being.

Stated differently, social media was created to affect the behaviour of humanity. It is one of the most powerful behaviour change tools ever made, more addictive than drugs. To be potent, online platforms use very persuasive techniques and captive technology which is applied to the extremes to affect and modify human behaviour, thereby compelling online communities to carry out activities which otherwise they would not have done. This happens through the planting of unconscious habits into the psyche of online users so that they become almost programmed. Linked to the above phenomenon is the practice of growth hacking which is when tech engineers use online platforms to hack into people's emotions and psychologies, in the process directing humanity to think in the ways chosen by the hackers. Without being aware of it, online users are made to do what they would otherwise have not done. This is made possible by the way tech companies' ability to exploit the vulnerabilities that exist in human psychology. The same tricks were used by yesteryear magicians.

Based on its many characteristics, online life qualifies as a drug because it possesses the main biological imperative of connecting humanity, albeit virtually, thereby directly affecting the release of the hormone dopamine. Dopamine is the feel pleasure hormone and it plays a huge part in people's ability to think and plan, hence the conclusion that social media is addictive, manipulatable, and consequently politicisable.

While the above effects of online life media occur across humanity, time, and geography, the effects are most pronounced in Africa and those in the (formerly) colonised parts of the world because of the following three reasons. African administrations are corrupt, most unethical, and prone to abuse by elites. Secondly, Africa is one of the fastest-growing markets in the world and is bound to attract many online platforms. Thirdly, Africans lack human rights and subsequently the ability to enforce them. The effects of surveillance capitalism and other forms of online malpractice by tech oligarchies will be most felt in Africa, just like any other global problem is most impactful in Africa.

### **The data-coloniality nexus: Vladimir Lenin revisited**

There is a connection between data, especially big data, and coloniality. The notion of coloniality implies the continued subjugation of Africa by the (former) colonisers. Coloniality is essentially the resilience of colonialism and imperialism. For colonialism to be resilient, it must (re)manufacture new ways

of remaining relevant and dominant. In the 4IR, one way in which colonialism is remaining effective and lethal is through data coloniality.

Like all other forms of coloniality, such as coloniality of power (Anibal Quijano, 2000), coloniality of knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2007a), coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), nature (Janer, 2007; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018), the market coloniality (Tafira and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017) and, lately, coloniality of data (Coudry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019, pp. 83–112), the same asymmetrical power relations exist between Africa on one hand and Euro-North America plus China, the Asian Tigers and Japan. In this context, coloniality of data implies an asymmetrical relationship in data collection, processing, and beneficiation in between Africa and its (former) colonisers. While Africa's (former) colonisers have unfettered access to Africa's data, through their many nefarious connections and networks, Africa does not enjoy the same status. Africa and Africans are sources of resources, such as minerals and data, to be mined by big multinational corporations.

What makes African big data a desirable commodity is that Africa is the future global market (Nhémachena, 2018; Hicks, 2019). Additionally, Africa is also the source of the rarest minerals used in the 4IR. Thus, the ones who control Africa's data, also control Africa. Together with Africa's debt, Africa's big data is one of the most sought-after commodities in the 4IR. As alluded to earlier on, debt trap has emerged as one of the most potent tools of (re)colonising Africa where African countries are “favoured” with huge debts which they fail to service. Having accumulated huge debts African countries end up giving up their sovereignty in exchange of debt cancellation. This strategy has been perfected by China.

In this section, I revisit Vladimir Lenin and redeploy his 1916 notion, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Lenin, 1963). In these pages, I argue that coloniality is the highest stage of colonialism, not imperialism. What Lenin foretold, as the characteristics of imperialism, are mostly markers of coloniality. Samir Amin (Amin, 2001) also differs with Lenin on Lenin's postulation that imperialism is a stage in colonialism. For Amin, imperialism is not even a stage of colonialism, but a perpetual part of it. Amin argues,

Imperialism is not a stage, not even the highest stage, of capitalism: from the beginning, it is inherent in capitalism's expansion. The imperialist conquest of the planet by the Europeans and their North American children was carried out in two phases and is perhaps entering a third.

(Amin, 2001, p. 1)

An example is an idea that cartels, networks, and monopolies will take over global affairs. The notion that cartels, networks, and monopolies will run global affairs was foretold by Lenin in 1902 (Lenin, 1902, 1918). Baran argues that there are five ways in which networks will run global affairs. These are: (1) control of economic life; (2) development of financial oligarchies; (3) export of capital by the triad; (4) territorial division of the world (pen holder at the UNSC); and (5) finalisation of global territorialisation (read (re)colonisation) (Baran, 2007).

In 1928, the heads of British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, and Standard Oil met in the Scottish Highlands and secretly agreed to limit production in the wake of the huge discoveries of oil in the Middle East. Today, the control that technology companies want to impose on Africa is more evidenced in the transport sector, where one tech app, Uber, which has disrupted, captured, and remodelled the transport sector globally, but more devastatingly in Africa. A tech company, based in California, Uber, has influenced global public transport fares literally at the touch of a button and, in the process, it pays very little taxes to the African governments where it operates. Besides controlling the global movement of passengers, Uber has the data of its users – it knows who went where, when, and with whom. Passengers' data footprint, such as their financial records, is literally being harvested, processed, and stored by big tech companies such as Uber and these are available for sale to the highest bidder.

## **Data colonialism and multilateralism**

The 18th-century idea of colonialism was to expand the empire into new markets and form new colonies. With the (re)colonisation of Africa, the template is still the same: expanding the empire into new markets and forming new colonies. The difference is that this time, the colonies are cyber-colonies, online colonies, and data colonies. This is consistent with Marxist view that capitalism exists by accumulation and expanding (Marx and Engels, 1867, 1894; Luxemburg, 1913; Harvey, 2003). In the 4IR, capitalism accumulates new markets, which, in this case, is turning people into raw materials, harvesting people's information and everyday communication into a commodity, which is priced and traded. The previous industrial revolutions and colonialism were characterised by the farming and harvesting of cocoa, sugar cane, cotton, and sisal as well as the extraction of gold, coal, platinum, and diamonds from mines. In the 4IR, the new farms are data farms and the new mines are people, who are being mined for their information, unknowingly so. Data mines are now the most lucrative forms of mines.

The plot here is simple, Western capitalist cartels are busy setting up telecommunications infrastructure and communications apps and, in the process, harvesting data, which they then turn into money. Like previous forms of colonialism, Africa and Africans will resist and try to fight back. Big tech companies and the beneficiaries of the (re)colonisation of Africa, simply threaten African countries using, among others, fake news and information. Napoleon Bonaparte once said that war is 90% information (Sundaravadhanan, 2018, p. 78). Misinformation and fake news, originating from the empire, is very often used to fight and punish African governments that threaten the interests of the West and data companies. The work of Cambridge Analytica, Facebook, and Mackenzie Global Incorporated, by interfering with states' elections, demonstrate the ability of big tech companies to destabilise even some of the most viable democracies.

But what exactly is data or digital colonialism, how does it differ from data coloniality and how does the (re)colonisation happen? What is termed data colonialism by Mejias and Couldry (2020) and by Lehohla (2018), is actually

data coloniality because it continues to sustain asymmetrical power relations between the (former) colonised and the (former) colonisers in the absence of official coloniality. Colonialism officially started and ended, coloniality is ongoing. Mejias and Couldry (2020) explain data colonialism as follows,

Data colonialism is the startling new social order, based on continuous tracking of our devices and online lives that has created unprecedented opportunities for social discrimination and behavioural influence by corporations. It goes well beyond the social media platforms and search engines that have attracted most criticism and comprise a complete reorganisation of everyday life and business. True, data colonialism may not have all the features for which historic colonialism is now most remembered (extreme physical violence, for instance). But, if we think about the core function of colonialism in world history – to exploit the world's resources on a completely new scale, redefining human relations to economic production in the process – the parallel is clear.

(Mejias and Couldry, 2020)

The fact that what they term data colonialism has some traces of colonialism renders the phenomenon data coloniality and not data colonialism because it is anchored on colonial infrastructure, and matrix of power. According to South Africa's former Statistician General, Pali Lehohla (2018), data colonialism works like any other form of colonialism, that is, without the consent and knowledge of the victims. Lehohla noted,

... data colonialism designates the decentralised extraction of data from citizens, without their explicit consent, through communication networks developed and owned by Western tech companies.

(Lehohla, 2018)

For him, data colonialism, which has been argued to be data coloniality, is structured and has four pillars or main functions. These are:

1. The tech companies providing the technology and infrastructure for the data extraction, ad targeting, and ad distribution.
2. The advertising and consultancy firms, which use the technology provided by (1) to target different groups with highly personalised ads and messages.
3. The local companies, parties, and organisations, which pay (2) to help them impose their different agendas for the respective countries.
4. The citizens, who play both the role as data sources for (1) and target groups for (2) and (3).

These four structures of data coloniality – Western tech companies, advertising and consultancy firms, local companies, and the citizens – work or are made to work in synchronisation, like clockwork. This is how it all comes together. Big

tech companies provide the technological infrastructure such as base stations, 4G and 5G connectivity, and the undersea continental data cables. They also manufacture and provide end-user devices, such as cellular telephones, laptops, and tablets.

They work hand-in-hand with the second pillar, which is advertising companies and consultancy firms. The role of advertising companies in data coloniality is to make the tech companies and their products relevant, palatable, lawful, and viable in Africa. Like cheerleaders, they create hype around the data industry. They provide, so-called, consultancy services, especially to African governments, in the process making it easy for big tech companies to set up operations in Africa. The role of advertisers is to link the market together with the tech providers, where a lot of misinformation and appealing propaganda is used.

Local companies' work is the dissemination of the technology and also the infrastructure. Local companies are important for the localisation of the big tech companies. There are networks here in Africa that were formed to make this localisation easy and legitimate. The result is that the same cartels operate in different African countries. Mobile Telephone Network (MTN) and Voice Data Communication (Vodacom) work together with Huawei across many African countries. Huawei is reported to be offering equipment and cellular telephone network infrastructure in Africa, at a lower cost when compared to its main competitors, such as Nokia and Siemens (Gavaza, 2019). Resultantly, Huawei now provides Africa with 70% of its 4G infrastructure, which will increase when 5G is rolled out (Woodhams, 2020).

The final pillar is the citizens, who are the source of the raw data. In other words, the raw material to be mined. Again, advertising plays a very important role. The localisation of data coloniality is also accompanied by marketing. This is why cellular telephone and technology companies are among the biggest sponsors of sports in Africa. Sahara Computers which was owned by the Gupta family and which eventually closed when allegations of impropriety and state capture mounted on the owners, the Gupta brothers, was sponsoring cricket, MTN and Vodacom are very big in soccer and rugby sponsorship. They do this in order to occupy the top of the mind of the citizen, who is their data mine.

## **Whose data is it anyway?**

This is probably one of the frequently asked questions about data (Velasquez, 2018; Robert and Donetto, 2020). The question of intellectual property, works of art, and other related products has been an item of contention from time immemorial. Before the digitalisation of the camera, when photographs used to be taken on a film, which was then developed to produce the photograph, cases arose about the ownership of the negative film. Does the negative film belong to the photographer or the person on the photograph? Fast forward to the 4IR. Does the data belong to the person who generated it or to the tech companies which facilitated the generation of the data and the resultant communication?

The anomaly in this scenario is that it is pitting individual citizens against big tech companies the size of Apple, Amazon, Google, Vodacom, MTN, Varidi, Airtel, Glo, Appo, Vivo, Huawei, Samsung, and so on. The data accumulated include fingerprints, user location history, diets, medical records, and financial records. The collection of biometric data of global citizens is the working form of data accumulation occurring. This is how it happens. Most Smartphones require that users use their fingerprints and/or facial recognition for identification and authentication. It implies that those users, using their fingerprints and facial recognition for identification on Samsung smartphones, have their fingerprints and facial identities stored somewhere by Samsung. Samsung has therefore accumulated fingerprints and facial photographs of global citizens at a magnitude bigger than any country or continent. The question is: Who has the ownership of the data that is produced when people engage in their modes of everyday communication such as sending WhatsApp images and messages, sending Tweets to their followers on Twitter, and so forth?

The easy and generally refereed answer is that the data belongs to the person who generates it. However, with the way that capitalism accumulates and dispossesses, the question of the ownership of data is not that simple, especially since data is a form of soft power albeit in the hands of private elites and not states. The power of rising tech oligarchy was witnessed twice in international relations. Firstly, when Twitter unilaterally decided to ban the US President Donald Trump from the platform and secondly when Twitter the pages of Australian news outlets because the Australian government had insisted that Facebook pays for the news content shared on its platform. Facebook later reversed the ban after India, Canada and the US joined the matter siding with Australia. Like African slaves, which drove the First Industrial Revolution, African data is also driving the 4IR. Given the asymmetrical power relations between the generators of data and those who are contesting the ownership, the European and North American blueprint of disposition and accumulation, at whatever cost, will once again be replicated.

Besides the World Trade Organisation (WTO), many other multilateral organisations have issued regulations to control the ownership of data (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2016).<sup>1</sup> One thing that these regulations by the multilateral organisations have in common, is the banning of the localisation of data. They embedded various anti-localisation clauses that ban countries from requiring transnational tech companies to store and process data on local servers. Like farm products from African farms and precious minerals from African mines, they are beneficiated and enjoyed in the capital cities of Euro-North America, and not Africa. This complete liberalisation of digital trade benefits those in charge of developing norms, standards, rules, and regulations that govern the farming, storage, ownership, and trade in data.

In the 4IR, economies are gradually becoming data economies. According to UNCTAD, as of 2014, as much as 10% of global trade was happening through e-commerce (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

(UNCTAD), 2016, p. xi). With cloud computing and the Internet of Things increasingly becoming part of business practices and norms, the trajectory is such that the global data economy will become the mainstream economy by 2025.

In these data economies, the cardinal questions are: (1) Who has the data and (2) who owns the data? As the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other multilateral institutions are busy drafting regulations, tech companies are amassing large volumes of data. No matter the final regulations, tech companies will always be a step ahead and will emerge victorious. In a typical coloniality modus operandi, four reasons account for their assured victory: (1) they work in tandem with Western governments; (2) they sponsor African governments at some of these multilateral institutions; (3) they carry out the research that informs discussions, decisions, and policies adopted at multilateral institutions; and (4) they develop the norms that will be used to regulate data storage.

A regulation conundrum exists when it come to the regulation of tech companies and their operations. Ordinarily governments lack the technical knowledge of how the data economy functions. Governments, inevitably, are forced to ask for technical assistance from the very tech companies they will be trying to regulate. A case in point is when, in the United States Congress called Facebook's Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg for a congressional enquiry. The hearings centered on the roles of Facebook in three areas: digital currency (Facebook's Libra, privacy and elections). Most of the United States congressmen and congresswomen lacked both craft literacy and craft competency of the subject that they were interrogating. To state it clearly, the US Congress ended up asking Facebook for advice on how to regulate Facebook. If this is the case in the United States and the West, generally, it is even more amplified in the Global South.

As postulated by British mathematician, Clive Humby, after he made a fortune together with his wife after consulting for Tesla on big data, data is the new form of global currency and source of power, in the process replacing oil. (Humby, 2011). Humby drew parallels between oil and data,

Data is the new oil... and shares many of its challenges. In its crude state it is difficult to use and benefit from It needs refining and external catalysts to make it useful. When processed it is potentially explosive and dangerous.

Just like plastics and polymers.... . some of the best and most profitable uses are what is made from it by others.

(Humby, 2011)

Like all raw materials, especially those found in abundance in the Global South, it is not the communities endowed with the raw materials who benefit from them, but those with the ability to collect, process, and then trade the raw materials. This template worked in the First Industrial Revolution, Second Industrial Revolution, Third Industrial Revolution, and will also be efficacious in the 4IR. Capitalism is extractive by nature and will also extract value

from African data. Like all extractive industries, they leave a mess behind, which is then normally cleaned up by Western-funded non-governmental organisations.

Africa's situation is exacerbated by its lack of ownership of vital data economy infrastructure. Most, if not all, of the data economy infrastructure, such as submarine cables, network nodes, data and data centres, algorithms, and artificial intelligence software are mostly owned by non-African companies. Without owning its data economy infrastructure, Africa will remain on the same trajectory, that is, that of being a continent that is colonised by those economies that own the data economic infrastructure, which now constitutes the new means of production. Without owning the infrastructure, which necessitates and actualises the farming of data, Africa will remain at the receiving end of non-African monopolies, cartels, and syndicates especially those from the Asian Tigers (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong), China, Japan, and Euro-North America.

Where data economy transgressions are committed in Africa, by Western companies, Africa does not have the power to sanction these companies. Where legislative frameworks exist, in Africa, to sanction big tech companies, their home countries will quickly come to their rescue by threatening African countries with all sorts of eventualities such as the withdrawal of aid the imposition of economic sanctions or the devaluation of the currency. The United States is notorious for employing this tactic. African countries do not have anti-trust laws and do not charge any digital taxes on these foreign tech companies.

Euro-North American countries are schizophrenic when it comes to data regulation. In their home countries, they value and cherish the protection of data. However, regarding Africa, they view the same caution to the protection of data as undemocratic, stifling competition and against the norms of open-market trading. According to Sven Hilbig, “data protection is viewed as valuable and worthy of protection in Europe – yet a handicap for European companies’ economic activities in other countries” (Hilbig, 2020). This asymmetrical application of norms and standards is typical in a coloniality relationship. It is the same system which created and continues to sustain the underside of Euro-North American modernity. For Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), they actualise the abyssal lines which divide life in the two zones, the zone of being and the zone of none being (Fanon 1952).

### **Data storage: Who is responsible for storing data?**

One question which has seized the multilateral fraternity is: Whose responsibility is it to store global data? This issue was top of the agenda at the June 2019 G20 Summit, held in Osaka, Japan (Hicks, 2019). On the agenda was the endorsement of the *International Declaration on Data Flows*. Also known as the “Osaka Track”, many Global South countries refused outrightly to sign the declaration. Key boycotters were India, South Africa, and Indonesia, who rightly noted that they were being made to sign a declaration in which they had little

input (Kanth, 2019). Most importantly, their interests and those of other countries in Africa and East Asia were not taken into account when drafting the declaration. In other words, they felt that the *International Declaration on Data Flows* constituted coloniality of data and they were rightly offended to be invited to sign the policy, but they had not been consulted during the development of the declaration.

The crux of the disagreement regarding the Osaka Track is the ownership and control of data generated in the signatory states (Hicks, 2019). The declaration intended to introduce “sweeping rules on data flows, removal of prohibitions on data localisation, and cloud computing among others” (Kanth, 2019). This behaviour is consistent with that of an empire that seeks to rescale sovereignty, in this case, data sovereignty, from the individual human being and the nation-state to multilateral institutions through agreements that are a front for the empire.

Other technicalities were also flouted in the development of the Osaka Track, especially regarding the World Trade Organisation’s (WTO) principles. The WTO lays down principles to be used when reaching consensus-based decisions. The five principles followed by the WTO are non-discrimination, reciprocity, binding and enforceable commitments, transparency, and safety values.

The Osaka Track pontificates several important issues which point to the (re)colonisation of Africa by the empire, which are identified as follows:

1. The Osaka Track was developed without the full participation of those to be signatories. This represents the coloniality of policy space. Japan and its partners deemed (formerly) colonised countries to be unfit to contribute to the drafting of the declaration. This demonstrates coloniality in action (we, the empire, think for you the colonies).
2. Even without inviting them to the drafting of the declaration, the empire expected the (formerly) colonised states of Africa and Asia to sign. This is coloniality of power at play. The empire feels entitled to form opinions on behalf of Africa and regarding its resources; hence, they saw no reason to invite them to the drafting of the declaration.
3. There were several behind the scenes, pseudo-consultations with South Africa, Indonesia, and India, to try and encourage (read “force”) them to sign. These were attempts to legitimise the illegitimate – an admission of guilt, which was being wrongly corrected.
4. The 26 June 2019 ultimatum, circulated by Japan, demonstrates the patronisation, arrogance, and disdain which characterised these “negotiations”. The empire was offended that South Africa, India, and Indonesia refused to sign the Osaka Track, which was contrary to what Japan and other drafters of the declaration expected, in other words, the usual “Yes Sir/Madam” agreement from the (formerly) colonised countries.
5. The frog-marching of developing countries with regard to data-related negotiations and agreements, which was field-tested in Geneva, in June of

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- 2019, was meant to set a precedent for future technology-related multilateral agreements.
6. The way Japan and its G20 partners, such as the EU members, interpreted the notion of multilateral census, proves that they do not view developing nations as equal multilateral partners, but rather as their benefactors, whom they expect to toe the line or they will discontinue their (dead) aid.

How multilateral agreements are negotiated is contrary to the notion of rules-based, consensus-based multilateralism, as enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement, the founding document for the formation of the World Trade Organisation. It would appear that the rules apply to the weak, while coercion is used by the strong. This is partly why the United States is not a member of the International Criminal Court (Moss, 2012; Ambos and Stegmiller, 2013; McCargo, 2015; Benyera, 2018b). It does not need the protection of multilateral institutions, as it has the capacity to protect itself. One way through which European and North American countries protect themselves, is through brute force. An apt example is the “War on Terror”, which, ironically, is a large-scale dispensation of terror and not the prevention of terror. All this, in order to preserve crisis-ridden neoliberal capitalism.

### Note

1 International and Regional Organisation data regulations and instruments include the following eight:

1. *United Nations Guidelines on Consumer Protection*
2. *African Union Convention on Cyber-security and Personal Data Protection (AU CCPDP)*
3. *Privacy Policy Developments in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum*
4. *Data Protection in the Commonwealth*
5. *The Council of Europe Convention 108* (Data Protection Unit, Council of Europe)
6. *Data Protection in the East African Community*
7. *ECOWAS Supplementary Act A/SA.1/01/10 on Personal Data Protection*
8. *Data Protection in the European Union.*

## 5 Networks, big data, and data coloniality

### Whither Africa's sovereignty?

#### Introduction

The 4IR ushered in three major technological developments: (1) cloud computing, (2) Internet of Things and (3) big data analytics. Let me define these three terms first. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD), cloud computing is,

... a service for enabling self-service provisioning and administration. Cloud services are defined as services that are provided to and used by clients on-demand at any time, through any access network, using any connected devices that use cloud computing technologies (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

(United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2016, p. 10)

The Internet of Things refers to the datafication of everyday modes of life through internet-enhanced devices such as “wearable devices and gadgets, agricultural machinery, retail analytics and healthcare” (Kumar, Sangwan and Nayyar, 2019, p. 3). Even homes are now also online giving rise to smart homes. Self-driving cars also known as autonomous or driverless cars, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and so on are all part of the Internet of Things.

Big data refers to the ways of managing, processing, and storing big data sets and volumes which are not fit to be dealt with using conventional methodologies and systems. The connection between data and the (re)colonisation must be established *a priori*. Data is a resource for capitalism, and like all resources, they can be stolen, (re)colonised, (ab)used, owned, priced, and traded.

This (re)colonisation of Africa in the form of data colonisation must be exposed. Being disguised as “data” data coloniality does not imply that it will only affect Africa’s “data life”. Unlike 16th, 17th, and 18th century colonialism before it, data colonialism is the sum of all colonialisms as it is premised on the appropriation of human life not parts of it.

Since colonialism hijacked human life in Africa and at decolonisation, handed over these lives to coloniality, human lives are the new source of data which is

extracted for free in Africa and offered for sale to the highest bidders. The 4IR extended Hardt and Negri's notion of the empire to what is now termed the *cloud empire* (Couldry and Mejias 2019, p. 38). The empire is well disguised as a menu of free apps and other social media offering. Harris correctly noted; "Everything is free, except the video we capture of you. That we own... I am going to sell you your life back" (Harris in Couldry and Mejias 2019 p. 37). While colonialism gave rise to empire, 4IR gave rise to cloud empire. The battle for the (re)colonisation of Africa is now in the cloud, literally. In this (re)colonisation, a new form of imperialist, the cloud empire and the cloud farmers operate informally and have no political desire to control any territory.

Unlike earlier forms of imperialism, the cloud empire is not founded on a particular state's overt military and political desire for control of territories. Instead, it operates more informally, seeking to make all of life available to capitalization through data not by brute force but by sustaining the expansion of exploitable spaces (Couldry and Mejias 2019 p. 38).

The cloud empire operates by outsourcing the development of infrastructure, mechanisms, and systems that are required to mine data from people, process it, quantify it, and repackage it for sale and redeployment. This redeployment can be for any purpose, such as electoral (mal)practice or limiting human freedoms through mass surveillance. According to Couldry and Mejias,

Cloud Empire, (is) a totalising vision and organisation of business in which the dispossession of data colonialism has been naturalised and extended across all social domains. The Cloud Empire is being implemented and extended by many players but primarily by the social quantification sector, the industry sector devoted to the development of the infrastructure required for the extraction of profit from human life through data.

(Mejias and Couldry, 2020) [emphasis original]

Courtesy of the social quantification sector, data is being mined from unknowing, unconsenting people and sold for profits. This represents data slavery. The 4IR will turn almost everything into data through *inter alia*, the Internet of Things. By definition,

The Internet of Things is the term used to describe the numerous objects and devices that are connected to the Internet and that send and receive data.

(United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2016, p. 12)

In this 4IR dispensation, big data is the new gold (Hirsch, 2015). Secondly, the purpose of colonialism was threefold. Firstly, to destroy African networks. Secondly, to simultaneously set up Euro-North American networks. Thirdly, colonialism aimed to and indeed created new identities, structures, and institutions both in the colonies and at home. Most of the identities were binaries and include subjects and citizens (Mamdani, 1996), settlers and natives

(Nettheim, 1993; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007), blacks and whites (Sithole, 1980; Ahmed and Mills, 1999; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008; Stovall, 2010).

Networks are the proverbial golden thread that link, unite, and control colonially created and sustained identities, structures, and institutions. They are so successful and effective because they are underwritten by the power of the state and their ability to unleash all forms of violence. In most cases, cartels control African governments (Korten, 1995). By definition, networks are a form of social capital cultivated by civilisations over the years. Networks are well-knit, usually homophilic, closed communities which constitute structures of power specialising in a specific aspect of human life such as finance, diamonds (de Beers Mining Company), oil (the Seven Sisters of Oil), and so on. Networks can be both formal and informal, highly structured or unstructured at all. What links them is a common goal which in most cases must be attained at whatever cost. We see these networks and cartels emerging in the global data economy.

There have been various efforts to fight the growth and impact of networks, especially in the petroleum sector. In opposition to the domination of the Seven Sisters cartel, the Organisation for Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed in the 1960s. Typical of networks and cartels, the Seven Sisters of oil have merged and are now down to four, albeit powerful sisters. The argument is that collusion is much easier among four as opposed to seven cartel members.

At a basic level, pre-colonial Africa had developed mostly family and clan-based networks. These specialised in specific knowledges, for example, some became best medicine man for snake bites, some became experts at predicting the weather, some were experts at technology for preserving seeds, while some were experts at training craftsman such as a blacksmith. When these knowledge systems were disrupted, mainly by massacring the knowledge holders and geographically dispersing them, the colonisers then replaced these epistemologies with Western ways of knowing and doing – a practice known as coloniality of knowledge.

In addition to identities and structures, colonialism also created principles and norms both in the colonies and back home (Korten, 1995). Colonially created identities and classes include tribes (Chimhundu, 1992), ethnicities (Ranger, 1989), racial classes such as *kaffirs* (Phimister, 1980; Mafeje, 1986; Mazrui, 2014). Other colonially created identities include the notion of the foreigner, which is absent in many, if not, all African civilisations wherein, for example, among the Shona of Zimbabwe and Mozambique one is either a visitor (*muyeni*), traveller (*mupfupi*), or resident (*chizvarwa*). The identity of a foreigner is therefore foreign to Africa and has no history in most of its civilisations, most of which were open to welcoming new members from other clans, geographies and even defeated armies and kingdoms. Structures such as companies, financial markets, banks, Western-centric legal systems, and so on are colonial creations which uprooted Africans from their cosmology and planted them in an alien Euro-North America one, albeit while they were physically located in Africa. This notion has been labelled the coloniality of being (Wynter, 2003a; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Maldonado-Torres and Richardson, 2012; S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). This calls for the need to unpack what was termed, “the notions of

coloniality of ignorance and geopolitics of ignorance as central to coloniality and *(re)colonisation*" (Nhemachena, Hlabangana and Matowanyika, 2020b), [emphasis original].

One of the key results of the coloniality of ignorance is that it inscribed two permanent identities to global citizens – the conquered and the conquerors. These two binaries were codified by race and racism. Racism is,

... is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that has been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the “capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system”.

(Ramón Grosfoguel, 2015, p. 10)

Maldonado-Torres asserts that the role of racism was to create a model of power matrix applicable globally. This determines who is data mined and who is not. Race is efficacious for mass surveillance and collective punishment. Maldonado-Torres noted,

The codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of “race”, a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others.

(Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243)

Economically, socially, and politically conquered, Africa is struggling to escape from the omnipresent colonial matrix of power that is at its zenith in the veto-wielding five members of the United Nation (in)Security Council.

The exclusive veto power of the UNSC amounts to the totality of all colonialities, wherein power, in all its forms, is used to achieve and maintain the desires of the P5 (five Permanent members of the UNSC) and their allies. Coloniality of the United Nations enables systems, mechanisms, and networks to infiltrate, coerce, and or bypass African governments as they extract data and other resources from Africa and Africans.

### **Political, economic, and epistemological (re)colonisation**

Colonialism occurred in three distinct stages. The first one was the usurping of Africa's *political* sovereignty. The second stage was *economic* enslavement and the final stage was *epistemological* subjugation. Africans first lost their political power and subsequently lost their economic sovereignty. The final phase in the colonisation of Africa was the loss of epistemological sovereignty. Having lost their political, economic, and epistemological sovereignty it took Africans a lot of effort to reclaim their political sovereignty. This was done through the processes of decolonisation. However, as the colonisers were letting go of political power they were consolidating their stronghold on economic and epistemological sovereignty of Africa.

Although Africa managed to gain political independence, this was the first process characterised by what Ndlovu-Gatsheni termed the myth of decolonisation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). Decolonisation meant Africa gained political power only and without economic and epistemological power and sovereignty. Thus, Africa remained a de-facto colony of Euro-North America. In terms of global epistemological and economic power, the (former) colonisers are riding on the 4IR to reclaim Africa's political sovereignty which they lost through (de)colonisation.

Evidence that Africa only gained political independence is seen from the way France relates to its 14 former colonies. As alluded to earlier on, while voluntarily surrendering political autonomy to its (former) colonies, France unilaterally decided to withhold four aspects of these (former) colonies' economies. These are: (1) military alliance, (2) economic and monetary control, (3) control of natural resources, and finally (4) control of foreign policy. This agreement effectively implied that the independence of Francophone colonies in Africa was essentially a non-event. French remains the language of communication and business in these former colonies, and every aspect of life is predominantly French-based. In sending its troops to the Lake Chad area and Francophone Africa generally, France will be endeavouring to maintain its control of the above four factors while venturing into the (re)colonisation phase as was the case in Libya. This is a parasitic relationship which can only be stooped by the host rejecting the parasite. The parasite cannot be negotiated with to suck easily, or to suck only at night. By their nature, parasites suck the host ceaselessly, only to stop when the host dies.

What evidence exists to support the claim that Africa never had its total sovereignty? There is a notion at the United Nations Security Council known as the pen-holder notion (United Nations Security Council, 2018). Under the pen-holder principle, France is responsible for all resolutions to do with its (former) colonies. The United Kingdom also has a prerogative in tabling anything to do with its (former) colonies to the United Nations Security Council. This includes but not limited to the drafting of United Nations Security Council resolutions. The United States, on the other hand, is responsible for the Middle East. China and Russia have the right to see the first versions of these draft resolutions. This behaviour of the P5 is the zenith of coloniality of power.

### **On colonialism, decolonisation, coloniality, and (re)colonisation**

The link between networks, big data (read big money), and the (re)colonisation of Africa has to be conceptually linked to its genesis, which is Euro-North American modernity and colonialism. But for this conceptual linkage to be efficacious, the concepts have first to be disentangled.

But first, a small proviso: What makes the telling of the story of colonialism very complicated are three factors *vis-a-vis* the sources of the colonial tale. Firstly, those that experienced it are mainly no longer here to tell the

story. Secondly, the colonial tale is often told by subjects who essentially will be repeating what colonialism taught them. Finally, the tale of colonialism is told by the colonisers themselves should they decide to. Thus, the tale of colonialism is very complex and absent to be fully comprehended.

Colonialism is often reduced to a few sentences or allegations such as crimes against humanity. Some even praise and defend colonialism (Gilley, 2017). Three founding texts are important in allowing us to understand how colonialism worked. These are important not only because of their content but also because of the roles played by the authors in instituting and perpetuating colonialism. Applying mostly to southern, eastern, and central Africa, these are the writings of Frederick Selous and Cecil John Rhodes, the prime colonisers (Rhodes, 1902; Millin, 1936; Selous, 1968; Daly, 1982). Their detailed analyses are canonical in the comprehension and analysis of the nuances of their colonial actions.

Colonialism is a culmination of a series of events which resulted in Africa and other parts of the world being directly ruled by other countries such as, *inter alia*, England, Portugal, Spain, and Portugal. Colonialism is essentially an economic and political relationship wherein one country imposes its sovereignty on the other and starts stealing, abusing, pillaging, and exporting the loot mainly to the home country. As conceded by Cecil John Rhodes, the purpose of colonialism was to set a giant empire with various networks located across the globe such that these networks will be the ones running global affairs and not governments (Rhodes, 1902; Millin, 1936).

To recap, the purpose of colonialism was not only to occupy and rule Africa, and in the process steal its resources, it was also about displacing Africans and their languages, cultures, economies, and broadly their epistemologies. Laying the foundation of colonialism, Rhodes arrogantly proclaimed,

I will lay down my own policy on this native question... We have to treat natives, where they are in a state of barbarism, in a different way to ourselves. We are the lords over them... The native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise; he is to be denied liquor also... We must adopt a system of despotism, such as works so well in India, in our relations with the Barbarians of South Africa.

(Millin, 1936, p. 64)

Decolonisation is the removal and relocation of the coloniser from the colony usually by force but also by consensus as was the case with the decolonisation of Francophone countries, back to Euro-North America. It is noteworthy that in relocating to the so-called metropolis, the coloniser left behind in Africa institutions, languages, norms, cultures, and systems which were meant to perpetuate colonial rule in the absence of the colonisers. This phenomenon is termed coloniality. Coloniality is the infrastructure of colonialism, resilient, mutative, adaptive and at times deceptive. The sovereignty of the decolonised country while technically would have been restored as a result of decolonisation, the (former) colonisers will continue to undermine this newly restored

sovereignty through various means, which for decolonial scholars are coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. The asymmetrical power relations between the (former) colonisers and the (formerly) colonised is taking a new turn under the realm of the 4IR. This turn sees the (re)colonisation of Africa which is being enabled by the 4IR and takes the form of denying and stealing Africa's and Africans' digital and cyber sovereignty.

What is happening with data today is that it is being accumulated through dispossessing the human who owns and generates that data of their data sovereignty. This leads to the colonisation of data by capitalist cartels from the empire.

... this data capture process is a means of capitalist "accumulation by dispossession" that colonises and commodifies everyday life in ways previously impossible. Situating the promises of "big data" within the utopian imaginaries of digital frontierism, we suggest processes of data colonialism are unfolding behind these utopic promises. Amidst private corporate and academic excitement over new forms of data analysis and visualisation, situating big data as a form of capitalist expropriation and dispossession stresses the urgent need for critical, theoretical understandings of data and society.

(Thatcher, O'Sullivan and Mahmoudi, 2016, p. 960)

There are massive asymmetrical power relations between the human being generating and owning the data and the big tech companies and cartels who are stealing, mining, processing, illegally owning, and trading that data. Whereas colonialism was a confrontation between two civilisations, a colonising one and its victim, the (re)colonisation of Africa pits individual Africans against big tech companies. Ticking the "accept terms and conditions" before downloading an app, for example, is done at the individual level. If colonialism prevailed against entire African civilisations, it will surely walk over individual Africans in its (re)colonisation quest.

Of the three colonialities – coloniality of being, power, and knowledge – it is the coloniality of being that is being most exploited in the (re)colonisation of Africa. Of course, coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge and many other colonialities such as of the market and of nature are also being employed. I will explain in the following sections, how the (re)colonisation of Africa works by among others creating a digital double for a human being. This digital double is created from the information that is mined and harvested from the unsuspecting user of smart devices, apps, and other online programs. Once a digital double has been created and stored somewhere in the misleadingly named cloud, artificial intelligence, deep learning, and machine learning are used to determine your social, economic, political, religious, and other behaviours. The results from these algorithms are used to create targeted information, advertisements, campaigns, and (mis)information which is then used to control human beings. This will not be far from programming people and its inverse which is digital commissioning and decommissioning of people. This

will happen in Africa more than any other place simply because Africa is the weakest member of the international community. After all, it was colonised before and (re)colonisation is a reality.

The disdain in which the (re)colonisation of Africa is being pursued is underlined by the coloniality of being. The empire questions the humanity of Africans. Nelson Maldonado-Torres termed this practise Imperial Manichean Misanthropic Scepticism (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, pp. 245–246). It describes how Euro-North Americans doubted the humanity of people different from them. The result was not only the colonisation of Africa but also the genocides in Namibia, the Congo, and many other parts of Africa. In the Congo genocide, King Leopold is responsible for the deaths of between 12–15 million Congolese, all killed in the inauguration, routinising, and normalising colonialism and its sidekicks: plunder, accumulation, extraction, and dispossession (Anderson, 2005). Created in 1885, the Congo Free State was a unique one-man colonial structure which was aided by concession seekers such as Henry Morton Stanley (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012, p. 431). The same template of colonialism was used; Congo was deemed *terra nullius*, *tabula rasa*, and *terres vacantes*. Any resistance to extractive plunder in the Congo was and is met with death.

To attest to the continuation of the questioning the humanity and hence justifying the dehumanisation and conquerability of the other there were recent calls for the Coronavirus vaccinations to be tested on Africans (Rosman, 2020). The French doctors who made this call were not expecting a backlash because for them, Africa is a colony and hence running medical experiments to save European and America lives is a noble scientific endeavour for them to pursue. I believe they even had ethical clearance for the experiments be done in Africa.

This is a continuation of colonial practices where the empire dispossesses Africans of their humanity, commodified and experimented on. This is a practice which started with the slave trade and the concomitant slave economy. This is what is termed medical colonialism (Gelfand, 1948; Braude, 2009). Consistent with Maldonado-Torres' notion of the imperial Manichean misanthropic scepticism, Africans are viewed as subhuman and therefore can be experimented on. The same fate was suffered by black Americans in the United States when syphilis experiments were done on them without their consent (Welsing, 1991, p. iv; Smith, 1999, p. 175; Leonardo, 2004, p. 147).

Coloniality of being is as old as Euro-North American modernity itself. As way back as 1899, Joseph Conrad was grappling with the question whether the “people” he was meeting in Africa were people like him. This mentality was never exorcised off the psyche of the empire. Writing in his tellingly titled book *Heart of Darkness*, obviously in reference to Africa, Conrad arrogantly wrote,

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped,

and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar.

(Conrad, 2008, p. 58)

There are structures and ideas that sustain coloniality and these practices pre-date colonialism. One of them is Euro-North American capitalism and the other is the assumed inferiority of black people which can be traced back to the work of Charles Darwin (Darwin, 1859). The idea of the racial superiority of the whites over the black was heavily funded by the Pioneer Fund which was established in 1937 by United States Colonel Wickliffe Preston Draper. The purpose of racial science and eugenics was to misuse both natural and social science to aid political decisions and the subsequent enslavement, subjugation, and dehumanisation of the black folk. The Pioneer Fund funded research which sought to genetically prove that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites. Draper was a Harvard graduate and an avid eugenicist, financially supporting groups such as the American Eugenics Society. This is the subject of the book; *The Funding of Scientific Racism* authored by William Tucker (Tucker, 2002).

It is the idea of racial hierarchisation which underpinned slavery and which currently underpins racism and xenophobia. In developing the notion of coloniality of power, Anibal Quijano asserted how power is used to cement and normalise the race-based initialisation of those outside the realms of Euro-North America. He noted,

One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established.

(Anibal Quijano, 2000, p. 533)

With these ideas and structures, Euro-North America did not completely oppose the processes of decolonisation precisely because their privileges and status were not to be fundamentally changed by decolonisation.

Decolonisation worked in favour of the (former) colonisers as it cemented unequal (post) colonial relations and had Africa contended with decolonisation. Under this (post) colonial dispensation, there is no respite to the marginalisation and inferiorisation of Africa and Africans. Decolonisation implied that Euro-North American countries would be first among equals, enjoying the right to develop international norms and principles and dictating and authoring global political order. Additionally, and in contra to their (former) colonised subjects, Euro-North Americans possess human rights which are, most importantly, enforceable and indeed enforced. Herein resides the differences between

the *Humanitas* and the *Anthropos* (Mignolo, 2009; Benyera, Mtapuri and Nhemachena, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2018; Benyera, 2020b). That Africans are (re)colonisable, yet are supposed to have and enjoy the protection of their human rights. If the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is indeed universal, what explains the lack of action and accountability on the human rights of the weakest that are violated ad infinitum, the Rohingya are a case in point. To sum up this section, human rights are a farce, decolonisation a myth, and (re)colonisation a reality. So what links Africa's colonisation to its (re)colonisation?

## **Colonial networks**

Colonialism bequeathed Africa a plethora of omnipresent networks which actualise Samir Amin's five monopolies of capitalism: war, technology, natural resources, news, and technology (Amin, 1972, 1997). Violences were used to coerce Africans during the past three industrial revolutions into slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and now coloniality. The 4IR employs a different form of violence which is dispensed by the networks and at times self-inflicted by Africans.

If, as was the case, Africans were coerced, during the colonial era, to provide information for colonisers, today we witness similar trends with the Internet of Things and Big Data wherein the exigencies of consent, volition, privacy, dignity, sovereignty and autonomy are not observed in the data collection and analytics. As during the colonial era when African territorial integrity was not observed, the logics of the Internet of Things and Big Data similarly override Africans territorial, national and individual integrity in the quest to collect and transmit data/information to neo-imperial centres for purposes of neo-imperial global governance.

(Nhémachena, 2018, p. 7)

Colonialism is now perpetuated by networks and cartels which are usually sector or industry-specific. One of the biggest networks in operation in Africa are agriculture networks.

These networks operate in the form of multinational corporations with Monsanto as the alpha agriculture network company. Monsanto is synonymous with devious corporate behaviour, throughout the world but especially in Africa. A study by the German organisation Lobby Control found out that the company paid "academics" in the United Kingdom to produce favourable research findings which would then tilt government policy in favour of Monsanto (Cook, Wynn and Clarke, 2010; Wynn, Cook and Clarke, 2014). The authors were remunerated by Monsanto and in each of the articles they published, they made highly disputable claims. In the first article, titled *How Valuable is Glyphosate to UK Agriculture and the Environment?*, they claimed that glyphosate had huge benefits as it binds solids and rarely leached into groundwater.

Glyphosate is a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide and crop desiccant which was proved to cause various cancers to farmers and their customers (De Roos et al., 2005; Mink et al., 2012; Thongprakaisang et al., 2013; Andreotti et al., 2018). It was banned by the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer (World Health Organisation, 1994). Its effects include skin irritation and photo contact dermatitis.

These effects are probably due to the preservative benzisothiazolin-3-one. They concluded that a ban on glyphosate would greatly affect farming in the United Kingdom (Cook, Wynn and Clarke, 2010). The 2014 article further placed glyphosate as an indispensable part of farming with major benefits such as its high water solubility (Wynn, Cook and Clarke, 2014). These two articles were instrumental in lobbying European farmers against the ban on glyphosate in Europe. This research was promoted vigorously and “informed” not only policy in the European Union but also in Africa. Once cleared at home, Monsanto was to have a field day in Africa selling the “scientific” data with many African technocrats and shaping policy in favour of Monsanto, which in turn raked in billions of dollars in profit. This constitutes the coloniality of agriculture (Graddy-Lovelace, 2017).

Still, on the coloniality of agriculture, there is the case of the English East India Company which operated in India together with its evil twin, the Dutch East India Company, South Africa. These are the same concession companies which mutated, reinvented themselves, and in the process outlived decolonisation. Founded on 31 December 1600 the cartel dominated slave trade, transportation, tea and general trade in its colonies.

The English East India Company, as is well known, obtained, besides the political rule in India, the exclusive monopoly of the tea-trade, as well as of the Chinese trade in general, and the transport of goods to and from Europe.

(Marx and Engels, 1867, p. 740)

Africa's agriculture has never been freed from the clutches of colonialism, with multinational corporations of Western origin and accountability dominating from seeds manufacturing to food aid. Every aspect of Africa's sovereignty is captured by the empire, from its fish to causing massive global warming which disproportionately affects Africa, all the fingers point to the same persistent culprits, the empire, its networks, local collaborators and cartels.

### **Of the cross: On religious networks**

Colonial missionaries mutated into today's religious networks. Religious networks started in two forms mainly, missionaries (Ranger, 1984, 1989; Harris, 2008; Masango, 2011) and Islamic Imams (Mudimbe, 1988; Weiss, 2000; Machaqueiro, 2012; Mazrui, 2014). While missionaries were setting up mission schools and hospitals (Livingstone, 1857; Rodney, 1973), Imams were setting

up mosques and Quran schools (Machaqueiro, 2012). Besides marinating a ready-made audience for colonialism by preaching the theology of the other cheek (Matthew 5:38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21), the religious networks, especially the missionaries also offered education and health at their mission stations. Walter Rodney notes how the missionaries were a partner in the colonisation of Africa by (mis)using education and health as front and baits to woo Africans to the colonial mission station for capture, spiritually and epistemologically. Rodney notes,

When the French saw that mission schools were helping England to entrench itself in Africa, *the French government asked the aid of their own Catholic church to secure national interests. From the viewpoint of the colonisers, once the frontiers of a colony were firmly decided, the major problem remained that of securing African compliance in carrying out policies favourable to the metropoles.* There was always the possible use of force for that purpose, but the naked force was best kept in reserve, rather than be utilised for everyday affairs. Only education could lay the basis for a smooth-functioning colonial administration. In the first place, there was the elementary language problem of Europeans communicating with Africans.

(Rodney, 1973, p. 88) [emphasis original]

So what appeared as the church's benevolence is securing lost souls was, in fact, the implementation of the colonial policy of using the church's goodwill to attract and then capture the locals; mind, souls, and body, literally.

Both Christianity and Islam as imported religions into Africa started influencing and changing the economic, social, and mainly the political order. Specifically, Christianity and Islam created two centres of power, one religious and the other political, a situation which prevails until today. Hitherto, African spirituality exists in the same gamut with political power.

Of the two, it is mainly the Christian missionaries who did a lot of pre-colonial groundwork for the colonisers. Church-based networks such as hospital and school missions were set up across Africa and some of these still exist and help African in some of the remote parts of the continent. The work of missionaries in Africa is well captured in various novels. These include the late Cameroonian author, Mongo Beti, born Eza Boto, and went by the pseudonyms of Alexandre Biyidi-Awala, whose books; *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (Beti, 1971), *Mission to Kala* (Mongo, 1964), *King Lazarus* (Beti, 1970), *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* (Beti, 1978), and *Remember Ruben* (Beti, 1980). All these novels unmasked colonialism, especially French colonialism and if reread, will expose how the French are using the same template to (re)colonise Africa: the army (invasion), education (scholarships), the church (pacification and the façade of togetherness), and commerce (CFA strategy) are still efficacious in beholding Africa to its (former) colonisers.

Missionaries became centres for converting African traditional leaders such as chiefs and kings. At Great Zimbabwe, the ruling family was converted by

Portuguese Jesuit missionary, Gonçalo da Silveira, to Christianity. One of the princes, son of the then reigning Munhumutapa, Nogomo Mapunzagutu (1560–1589), is believed to be the first Zimbabwean to earn a PhD at the University of Goa in India (Mudenge, 1988).

Once the chief or king was converted to Christianity, it followed that the whole religious system of the kingdom was misaligned to the chief/king's new religious beliefs. Caught in this conundrum, most of the citizens also converted to Christianity. In the aftermath of the conversion of Kings to Christian, whole civilisations were left spiritually stranded as Kings also had important spiritual roles to play which no other citizen could play. This is how Africa's religions were decimated. In the ensuing religious confusion, the missionaries and their colonial partners pounced, capturing the minds, and souls of their new converts. This situation remains the same today where there is rampant commercialised and com-modified religiosity. From that day onwards, the church became a central and permanent figure in the (post) colonial administration. Throughout the colonial period until today, the church is part and parcel of the government. Even the Pioneer Column is celebrated in the Harare Anglican Cathedral in Second Street with a roll call of all the members of the Pioneer Column together with the names of the "brave" dogs which also partook in the inaugural colonisation of Zimbabwe.

Most government departments such as the military have got a church person present in their rank and file. In the case of the military, that officer is called the chaplain. While there is nothing wrong in having the office of the chaplain in the military, there is everything wrong in not having other religions having their offices also in the military and at the same level.

Christianity networks in Africa have their head offices in Euro-North America such as the Vatican, New York, and in London. Of course, there are African independent churches which have got local headquarters. However, their spiritual headquarters, it can be argued, are out of Africa. The challenge with these religious networks is that they failed to extricate themselves from the colonial project. Admitted, some individual clergymen and clergymen fought tooth-and-nail against the colonial project. The majority of them were, knowingly or unknowingly, however, in the service of colonialism.

Deployed in the colonial project, religion played four important roles: (1) it allowed the colonisers to distinguish between rulers and subjects, (2) it softened the local elites and the masses, in the process rendering them to accept both their inferiorisation and subjugation, (3) it gave the colonised "hope" that their share of happiness is not on this earth but in heaven, and (4) it misaligned local epistemologies and religious practices and beliefs with the citizens. Removed from their epistemologies, Africans started on a journey to imbibe everything Euro-North American, from education, religion, culture, custom, food, morality, and so on.

## **Of the dollar: Financial networks**

Knitting all networks together are the financial cartels which possess the proverbial financial muscle. The networks that control global finances are not

owned by experts but rather by descendants of colonialists, imperialists, and looters of Africa. Walker gave an apt description of these networks thus,

The Rockefellers, for example, went from just dominating the industry to control of banks like Chase Manhattan. Who are these bankers? The leading banks seem to be controlled primarily by the descendants of the great capitalists who earlier presided over the creation of the large corporation. For example, David Rockefeller, grandson of John D., stands at the helm of Chase Manhattan Bank. James Stillman Rockefeller, a descendant of William Rockefeller and James Stillman, headed First National City Bank in the early 1960s. The Mellon family owned at least 29 per cent of the stock of the Mellon National Bank, and R. K. Mellon was its Chairman in the middle 1960s.

(Walker, 2009, p. 5)

Those with the global financial muscle finance everything, especially what Samir Amin termed the five monopolies of capital: war, media, technology, finance, and resources (Amin, 1997, pp. 3–5). One of the greatest weapons used by financial cartels of both triad plus China is the United States dollar. A question might arise; how did the United States dollar usurp the gold standard as the medium for global financial trade. According to Walker, before World War One, the gold standard was used either in the form of bullion or coins for all global financial transactions (Walker, 2009). This was not until Britain suspended gold payments. This was the beginning of the fall of the gold standard. Exacerbated by the challenges of the Great Depression, the United States in 1922 modified the pure gold standard mode of transaction termed as the gold exchange standard. This system allowed nations to use both United States dollars and gold bullion.

But most importantly here is the fact that the United States dollar entered the global financial market as a legitimate international financial settlement mechanism. The United States dollar became a reserve asset along with gold. This was mainly because the United States agreed that it will redeem dollars in exchange for gold if and when demanded. This was a major financial coup de'etat for the United States because it started controlling global financial transactions, a situation which exists until today. This allows the United States and its allies to weaponise and politicise the United States dollar.

Having parcelled out large sums of United States dollars in exchange for gold, in 1971, US President Richard Nixon suddenly, shockingly, criminally, and arbitrarily stopped the exchanging of gold for the United States dollar. This left many in the world in possession of US dollars which they could not exchange for gold anymore. To date, global citizens use the US dollar in lieu of the gold standard. This is where the International Monetary Fund came into efficacy, creating norms, standards, and rules which enforced and mandatorised the dollarisation of the world. Anyone who dares challenge the United States dollars' hegemony is dead, literary; ask Colonel Muammar

Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti.

The internationalisation of the US Dollar was completed in 1977 when 44 nations had their currencies pegged against the US Dollars, 14 against the French Franc, and nine others against other major currencies (Walker, 2009, p. 11). Most of the countries whose currencies were pegged to the Euro-North American currencies were African currencies. This supports the thesis that as the colonisers were slowly letting go political power, they were increasing this stronghold on financial and epistemological powers – two powers which they still wield. Today, (former) French colonies are still bound to the CFA franc and currency-less Zimbabwe reverted to the US dollars as its default currency despite being under European Union and US sanctions.

### **Of the mighty: Imperial networks**

Colonialism is resilient because, while disembowelling and breaking precolonial African networks, it built and strengthened its networks which stand today. For Lester, the role of imperial networks was to essentially create identities which the colonial project would use (Lester, 2001). On 12 August 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the 32nd United States President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter. This was to be the base of the United Nations. Key for Africa is the fact that the US and the UK agreed to grant each other access to their natural resources. This opened British colonies for exploitation by United States companies. This is why colonialism is ascribed to Euro-North America as opposed to Europe alone.

One network which stubbornly weakens and readies Africa for Euro-North American looting are the Bretton Woods institutions. The Bretton Woods were established to benefit the United States and its allies mainly Britain, Japan, Germany, and France. The Bretton Woods are de facto United States organisations operating as foreign policy instruments of the US and its allies.

Such imperial networks unashamedly still officially call for the (re)colonisation of Africa. One such case was when Lord Adrian Palmer suggested to the British Minister of State for the Commonwealth and United Nations Lord Tariq Mahmood Ahmad that the best solution to what he termed the Zimbabwean crisis was to (re)colonise the country (Mbamalu, 2019). Speaking in the British House of Lords, Lord Palmer was aware of his intentions and the history of the two countries. The suggestion to (re)colonise Zimbabwe was met with laughter. So tragic that the British find colonialism and (re)colonisation as an item of entertainment when in Africa and Zimbabwe colonialism was painful, humiliating, and its effects are getting more effective even with the official end of colonialism. That the suggestion to (re)colonise Zimbabwe was made at an official British platform and that it was met with laughter and amusement tells a lot about what the British House of Lords thinks about (re)colonisation. Colonialism and (re)colonisation are solutions to the problems of the empire now as it was then. The suggestion by Lord Palmer also enforces the thesis that the British are the main causes of the “Zimbabwean crisis”

so that they run the country down and then (re)colonise it just like what happened with Libya.

The response by Lord Ahmed, Baron of Wimbledon, to the request to (re)colonise Africa is equally telling. Lord Ahmed did not dismiss the suggestion that the United Kingdom must solve the Zimbabwean crisis by recolonising the country. He rather responded by stating that, “I have to be very honest as I always am, that is not an option I have personally considered” (Mbamalu, 2019). He did not dismiss the idea, he just had not thought about it. In other words, Lord Ahmed was not in disagreement with the suggestion by Lord Palmer.

As the British Minister of State for the Commonwealth and United Nations at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since 13 June 2017, Lord Ahmed is involved in British policy at the United Nations Security Council where the pen holder principle operates (United Nations Security Council, 2018). The pen holder is a post-Cold War practice at the UNSC where the P3, (France, the UK, and the US) act as the self-appointed pen holders for their respective spheres of influence, Francophone Africa, Anglophone Africa/Commonwealth, and the Middle East. The pen holder implies that the P3 are the legislators and most powerful and influential members of the UNSC. China and Russia can be co-pen holders but their primary responsibility is to be the readers of the first draft UNSC resolutions. This background is meant to gravitate the suggestion by Lord Palmer to the British Minister of the United Nations.

## **Epistemological networks**

An apt entry point into the role of epistemological networks in coloniality is the institution of the university, to which we prefer pluriversity as there are knowledges and not one (Euro-North American) knowledge. The university is an institution which incubates knowledges and epistemologies and it is the arena for contesting and reformulating ideas, and solutions which solve society’s most pertinent challenges. Having originated in Africa and stolen especially by the Greeks and other Europeans, the university has been misrepresented as an institute of Euro-North American origin. Paul Zelela states the origins of the university in Africa thus,

There are two widespread assumptions about university education in Africa: first that the Europeans introduced it, and second that it has declined since independence ... The origins of higher education in Africa including universities as communities of scholars and learning can be traced to three institutional traditions: first, the Alexandria Museum and Library, second, the early Christian monasteries, and third, the Islamic mosque universities.

(Zelela, 2006)

Colonialism created epistemological umbilical cords that link the (former) colonies to the (former) colonisers. In some instances, the colonisers practically planted their universities in the colonies. The United Kingdom planted

what were called University College of London then (name of the colony). These were satellite, surrogates universities in almost all British colonies. Thus, Institutes of Higher Studies in Tunis (1945), University College of Rhodesia & Nyasaland (1952), the Royal Technical College in Kenya, (1956), the Gordon Memorial College in Sudan (1902), University of Bordeaux, in Dakar (1950), Lovanium University Centre (1949). The end of the Second World War increased the rate at which the colonisers were establishing tertiary institutes in their colonies. This was obviously to assimilate as many Africans as possible. Zelela observes that,

It was not until the end of the Second World War that more systematic efforts were undertaken by colonial governments to establish higher education. In the British colonies, the new era started with the establishment of university colleges in Nigeria (Ibadan in 1947), Ghana (Legon in 1948), Sudan (Khartoum in 1949 from the merger of the Gordon Memorial College and the Kitchener Medical School), and Uganda (Makerere was upgraded in 1949). Besides, in Kenya, the Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi in 1951, and further south the University College of Salisbury was formed in 1953 and renamed two years later as the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Meanwhile, Fourah Bay College became the University College of Sierra Leone. Most of these new or upgraded university colleges served as regional universities and were affiliated with and awarded degrees of the University of London.

(Zelela, 2006)

The purpose was to create a governable and palatable colonies whose elites were well schooled in western epistemologies and inversely almost lacked in local local epistemologies. This accounts for the reality why Africa used predominantly western solutions for African problems. The education system of British colonies, therefore, was administered from Harvard and Oxford universities. That is where local examinations written in Africa were set and marked. African scholarship was also validated and authenticated at Harvard and Oxford among others. The same is true for former French colonies. Their elites were educated at Sorbonne and Montpellier. School examinations in French colonies were set and marked in French universities. African scholarship in France colonies was validated by French institutes. Hence the biology and geography of epistemology are still located in the Global North.

The link with the (re)colonisation project is that nothing happens in the Global South without the knowledge of the Global North. It is like sheep that will always invite a jackal to their meetings. Unless and until Africa gains epistemological autonomy, it will continue to think from the Global North whilst located in the Global South. African problems will continue to multiply because Africa's pseudo-academics will think from the Global North and apply solutions that worked in the Global North to their problems in the Global South.

What is the reason for giving Africans many scholarships to study in France, the United Kingdom, and other Euro-North American countries? We can call

the products of these scholarships reference samples or the perfect colonial subject. The scholarships are meant to produce Africans who think like Euro-North Americans, whose centre of knowledge is not located at home in Africa but in the West. Once educated in the Global North and returned to the Global South, the plan is that these graduates will be akin to an extension of the Global North in the Global South. Operating like native informers, they are supposed to employ Western-centric solutions to African problems by *inter alia*, devising state strategies, advise African governments, teach African students at universities, design academic syllabi, all from a Western-centric perspective.

Congolese rhumba legend Franco Luambo Makiadi and his band, the TP OK Jazz sang about Africans who love Europe which rejects them while they hate Africa which loves them in his song Mario. In the song, Franco narrates the story of Mario who returned from France very “educated” with five diplomas, only to refuse to work in his “backward” country, the DRC. This is what constitutes coloniality of knowledge. In Portuguese colonies this policy and practice was termed *assimilado* (Braganca and Wallerstein, 1882; Machel, 1986) and in French colonies was termed assimilation (Fanon, 1967; Hale and Véron, 2010; Stovall et al., 2010; Mbembe, 2011).

The effectiveness of epistemological networks is seen in their products, that is, Africans inflicted with the burdens of a dual epistemology. After the destruction of African epistemologies, Euro-North American ones were imposed, entrenched, and institutionalised. Resilient African epistemologies exist alongside their Euro-North American adversaries in the black body. The result is a constant contestation between the Euro-North American and the African epistemologies in the African. In the black body, also runs amok an adulterated version and versions of African morality, masculinity, religion, philosophy, and leadership. Instead of producing knowledge which exposes and challenges the (re)colonisation of Africa, African scholars reason that Africa’s moment has arrived courtesy of the 4IR. The biggest challenge facing the African is to use a colonised mind to decolonise itself, and proceed seek and attain epistemic freedom.

## **Products of the 4IR: Networks and big data**

One key element of the 4IR is the creation of the Internet of Things. The Internet of Things is the seamless connections and interconnections between human beings and also between human being and machines.

Colonisation was about the establishment of imperial networks. Networks of imperial academies were created; networks of imperial polities were established; networks of imperial economies were established; networks of imperial health institutions were established; networks of imperial armies were established; networks of imperial communication were established. Networks were and are central to (re)colonisation. However, in the contemporary era, we witness the intensification of networks, some of which are meant to facilitate the collection (read theft), analysis, and dissemination of data (Nhémachena, 2018, p. 1). Big

data is defined as a large amount of data which requires new technologies and architectures so that it becomes possible to extract value from it by capturing and analysis process (Katal, Wazid and Goudar, 2013, p. 404). The threat posed by networks to democracy has been realised by politicians since the time of United States' John F. Kennedy who noted that,

The very word “secrecy” is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths and secret proceedings. We decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweighed the dangers which are cited to justify it. Even today, there is little value in opposing the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions.

(Smith, 2011, p. 1073)

Global connectivity, the internet of things, and datafication will result in the loss of individual sovereignties especially for Africans as the Internet of Things will link African human beings to a machine of non-African allegiance. Political processes such as elections will forever be interfered with by big tech companies such as was the scandal with Facebook and Cambridge Analytica (Zuboff, 2019, p. 17). Yet, the datafication of elections and democracy is a 4IR inevitable development. While the second and third industrial revolutions resulted in African countries losing their sovereignties, the 4IR extends this loss of sovereignties from the African nation-state to the individual Africans. How will this happen? I will explain in greater detail in the next section.

### **How will Africa lose its sovereignty in the 4IR**

There are five ways in which Africans lose their sovereignties as a result of the 4IR. The first one is when they buy their devices such as cellular telephones and laptops. The process which happens is known as appropriation or theft of personal information. This happens when a purchaser unknowingly signs up and gives their personal information oblivious to the fact that by signing up and opting in, when buying these devices, they will be surrendering their sovereignties for nothing. Very few purchasers read the terms and conditions. Even if the purchaser reads the terms and conditions, there is no option to negotiate or amend these Ts and Cs.

The information that is stolen is collectively known as personally identifiable information and the theft occurs, for example, the moment one downloads an app which by the way is peddled as a free app. An example of this test is that when one downloads a so-called free app from the Google Play Store or the iStore, these companies supply the app developers with the downloaders' personal information without the knowledge of the person downloading the app. Customers' personal information is collected, commodified, and traded without the knowledge and consent of the person. Ticking "Tc &Cs" is not

informed consent but amounts to manufactured consent which is a variant of coloniality of being.

The impression given is that the app is for free. What is not put out is that the customer will be getting the app in exchange of surrendering all their personal identification information. Stated differently, companies that misrepresent that they provide free apps are actually in the business of mining for people's personal identification information and then selling it to the highest bidder. The companies that accumulate this personal information store and trade it without the knowledge or approval of the owners. These customers for this stolen data include rogue states, illicit traders, and even democratic governments who then use the information for "national security".

Another example of how data is mined is through the request to access photographs, location, and phone book contacts. Once access is granted, data is retrieved and then sold or shared with networks and other buyers. Tech companies are profiteering massively from the selling of big data. For example almost ten years ago,

... (In) 2011 McKinsey Global Institute report estimated that a small segment of such data, personal location information, may yield as much as a \$600 billion per year surplus ... while in the same year, Acxiom, a single firm that sells personal consumer data, recorded \$1.1 billion in revenues.

(Thatcher, O'Sullivan and Mahmoudi, 2016, p. 996)

Data theft happens through big data analytics which is the process and methodology of analysing and making sense of big data sets to reveal patterns, trends, structures, and association which are then efficacious in selling the data to those who intend to use it as part of evidence-based decision making. Data theft occurs when a user's data, personal information, and so on is acquired by the tech companies for market exchange and not for use. This creates two entities, tech companies with accumulated and commodifiable data and an individual end-user stripped of their privacy and hence enslaved.

The very obscurity of transformation from individual data point to commodified aggregate "big data" also masks the asymmetrical power relations between users of technology and the almost exclusively corporate entities which algorithmically collect, link, and analyse the data points of many users.

(Thatcher, O'Sullivan and Mahmoudi, 2016, p. 999)

Also blurred is the concept of data usage. At what point is data considered to have been processed. UNCTD clarifies this by defining data processing as one of the following:

1. Collecting, organising, or altering the data.
2. Retrieving, consulting, using, storing, or adapting the data.

3. Disclosing the data by transmitting, disseminating, or otherwise making it available.
4. Aligning, combining, blocking, erasing, or destroying the data.  
(United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2016, p. 122).

Besides the danger that information is gathered without the knowledge of the owners, there is a secondary risk which is that such personal information may end up in the wrong hands. One of the most unintended consequences of the 4IR is identity theft. According to Goodman, there was an organisation known as Shadow Crew which used to sell stolen personally identifiable information such as passports driver's licences and credit cards in the dark web (Goodman, 2016). Goodman noted that,

ShadowCrew operated the now-defunct website CaderPlanet.com, where over 4000 criminals from around the world could freely gather to buy and sell stolen and hacked identities, documents, and account numbers.

(Goodman, 2016, p. 47)

Once mined and stored, big data poses the risk of being stolen *en masse* and having all the owners of the data being held hostage. The dark web is, therefore, a parallel sovereign entity which is accountable to no one and threatens global online stability and security. With the advent of cryptocurrencies, the dark web evolved to the status of an economy, albeit one without a central authority. This is digital anarchy personified. Founded by the renowned criminal hacker, and online crime mastermind, Albert Gonzalez Shadowcrew.com, an ectype cyber-crime bazaar,

Crawford offered fellow criminals tutorials on everything from cryptography to card cloning techniques. Gonzalez's organisation was reportedly responsible for stealing and reselling 180 million credit and ATM cards.

(Goodman, 2016, p. 47)

Besides the personal financial and identity losses which citizens suffer, there is greater exposure to political instability resulting from the work of criminal syndicates. These usually target political opponents and weak Global South governments where they usually hold the country or organisation at ransom demanding huge money as ransom in exchange for the release of the data.

These powerful online syndicates have rendered the cyberspace very dangerous for the Global South which does not have the infrastructure and resources to offer its countries and citizens adequate cyber protection. Not only is the liberty and identity of individual citizens at risk of being stolen but the entire democratic practices such as electoral democracy and even the media are under threat. Organisations which are, "terrorising both organisations, individuals and governments in cyberspace include Anonymous, LulzSec, AntiSec, Wikileaks,

and the Syrian electronic army" (Goodman, 2016, p. 47). These threats affect African countries more because of Africa's incapacity to protect itself technologically. An often-cited example is how companies such as Facebook and Cambridge Analytica have already been accused of meddling in African electoral politics in Kenya and South Africa respectively.

In an unprecedented move of data theft, three big US-based companies combined under a project codenamed Nightingale. Ascension, Amazon, and Google entered this project to amass health records from US citizens and patients, health care professionals and health care companies, and hospitals from as many as 21 states without the consent or knowledge of the patients and the health care professionals (Copeland, 2019). Amazon and Google are migrating their business model towards electronic health records management. This is the same model used by McDonalds which was presented as a fast foods take away yet it is a real estate company.

By owning the patient records, especially without their knowledge and consent, these companies are practising the highest form of data slavery and data colonialism. This stolen data will be processed and sold to pharmaceutical companies and state agencies. But the danger is in the data falling in the proverbial wrong hands. Never mind the fact that the state cannot be trusted with its surveillance programmes some of which were exposed to be unethical and unprocedural by whistle-blowers such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden (Lyon, 2014; Snowden, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). The way tech companies are stealing personal identification information amounts not only to the erosion of democracy and privacy at unprecedented levels but to the (re)colonisation of the human (Etzioni, 2015). Describing the way tech has gone out of control, Etzion likened it to the sorcery that lost control of the apprenticeship. For him, the crisis has moved from the theft of data to the use of data and how Euro-North American modernity created such a cardinal challenge of modernity (Etzioni, 2015, p. vii).

However, online activists have also been a force for good, in most cases exposing governments' clandestine activities and such other immoral activities such as child pornography. Two names that come to mind are Julius Assange and Edward Snowden. These two have been hailed as heroes of human rights as they brought into the public domain information which otherwise would have remained hidden and inaccessible. The power of hacktivists in influencing political events was seen in the Arab Spring where they were influential in disposing of some of Africa's most resilient dictators.

## **Over-integrated Euro-North America and the challenges of (un)integrating**

When the notion of integration, especially regional and continental integration is discussed, it is discussed within the context of Africa needing to integrate itself into the global economy. This view is premised on the misinformed conception that Euro-North America is the centre of the world. If we consider the

attention that Africa got from Euro-North America during the past industrial revolutions, it can be argued that Africa is the centre and Euro-North America the periphery. It is Euro-North America which is over-integrated into Africa and not the other way around.

It is because of its over-integration into Africa which causes Euro-North America not to imagine life without Africa. Each successive industrial revolution was an integration of Euro-North America into Africa. Human and capital integration was done through the slave trade and the slave economy, and natural resources integration was done through colonialism. So over-integrated into Africa is Euro-North America that at “independence” France had to protect its existence by signing agreements with its colonies wherein it retained control of their currencies, natural resources, foreign policies, and defence-related issues.

Because Euro-North America is over-integrated into Africa and Africa is agitating for its autonomy, the former has no option but to (re)colonise the latter. This explains why the empire has a massive military presence in Africa. Reporting to the US Secretary of Defence and headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, AFRICOM is one of the US's 11 combatant commands whose official mission is to support African militaries with their military operations. In reality and according to Volman, AFRICOM exists for the following four reasons: (1) to protect oil production in Africa by preventing disruptions to its production, refinement, and export. In other words, to protect the US's oil interests in Africa, (2) to control ungoverned and ungovernable parts of Africa, (3) to mitigate the instability in the horn of Africa which is an important listening post for the US, among many of its strategic importance, (4) to deal with the instability in the Great Lakes region, and (5) to deal with the instability in the Chad/Sudan region (Volman, 2008). The US benefits from these instabilities and volatilities and would not want them to end. Protecting the US's interest also implies stalking instabilities and fanning divisions in these regions so that AFRICOM continues to justify its existence in Africa. It can also be argued that AFRICOM is a response to China's presence in Africa generally and the areas mentioned above specifically.

The AU Peace and Security Council has been rightly concerned about the ever-increasing number of foreign military bases and military installations in Africa (Attah-Asamoah, 2020).

Of the 13 countries with a known presence in Africa, the United States (US) and France have the most troops on the continent. ... France has an estimated 7,550 military personnel spread across the continent in various military operations and missions (excluding UN operations). The US has a higher number spread across 34 known outposts across the Northern, Western and Horn regions of Africa.

(Attah-Asamoah, 2020)

If the logic of such a foreign military presence in Africa is that the empire needs to protect its interests in Africa, then why are there no Zimbabwean,

Malawian, Zambian, Nigerian troops in the US and the UK protecting these African countries' interests there? Does it imply that African countries have no interests in the US, France, Germany, China, Russia, Belgium, and the UK? If this logic was logical, then all (former) French colonies must be having their armies in France because they have an interest in France, after all, that is where their finances, defence, natural resources are controlled.

Extending this argument and logic would see Africans voting in the US, UK, and France and in other empire elections because the most important decisions about Africa are not made in Africa by Africans but in Euro-North America, China, and Japan. The military (re)colonisation of Africa is moving from its epicentre in the Horn of Africa where Africa hosts 11 foreign military bases. The horn of Africa has the most strategic currency for Euro-North America because of *inter alia*, (1) its strategic proximity to the Middle East and Asia (2) since Russia and China are also present, Euro-North America has to be there to counter their presence. Djibouti is now a theatre for US-China rivalry for Africa's (re)colonisation plans. As of 2020, 13 African countries were hosts to foreign military bases and installations and the US had 38 named military outposts and bases.

The over-integration of Africa into the capitalist world economy was achieved through the five monopolies of capitalism. These monopolies enabled capitalism to continue operating from colonialism, decolonisation, coloniality, and back to the (re)colonisation of Africa. These five monopolies of capitalism are known as (1) technology (2) weapons of war (3) banking and finance (4) natural resources and (5) finally the media (Amin, 1976, 1997). These five monopolies, in their various combinations, doses, and permutations are the underwriters of colonialism. The over integration of Africa into the economies of Euro-North America over the past industrial revolutions makes it easy for various cartels to dominate and control Africa, in most cases from the "metropolis" though the networks of coloniality and the coloniality of networks.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of networks in sustaining and carrying forward civilisations cannot be debated (Anta Diop, 1987a). When the four categories of Europeans first settled on the African continent, that is the explorers, hunters, the traders, and the missionaries, they found African civilisations with intrinsic networks that covered virtually every facet of life from diplomacy, international relations, law, medicine, and agriculture etcetera.

European hunters benefited from exiting and extensive African networks from which they simply tapped into for many knowledges, such as how to track animals, where to mine for which minerals, which soils were suited for which crops, etc. (van Onselen, 1976). European traders also benefited as they befriended the many African kingdoms and started to monopolise trade in these kingdoms such as Buganda, Bunyoro, Kongo, Benin, Mali, Zulu, etc Mapungubwe, Monomotapa, and Great Zimbabwe (Beach, 1900, 1976a, 1998;

Pikirayi, 1999; Alpers, 2011). Once African elites were converted to Christianity it was much easier for the administrators to come and colonise Africa. When the Europeans arrived in Africa they first sought to understand African networks, they then started benefiting from them and finally decimated these African networks. In place of these African networks, many European networks were set up and their role in sustaining coloniality and delivering the (re)colonisation of Africa was also unpacked.

## **6 The 4IR as the mother of all destructions and accumulations**

### **Introduction**

A key element of any revolution is its destructiveness and concomitant accumulations. This could be the destruction of the old political, religious, economic, and or social order or the destruction of dictatorships and other forms of governance deemed undesirable. The 4IR is not all about political destructions but is rather more focused on the destruction of epistemologies and ways of doing things. This Industrial Revolution has witnessed the intensification of the destruction of phenomena such as geographical and political boundaries, jobs, and industries and indeed the destruction of livelihoods. One of the biggest risks of the 4IR in Africa is premature de-industrialisation (Mfanafuthi, Nyawo and Mashau, 2019). The 4IR will result in massive de-industrialisation which is very premature in an African context.

4IR is making people scared. I am scared. Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple together with the late Steve Jobs were also scared. If people like Steve Wozniak and Bill Gates, who are at the forefront of 4IR, are scared, what about an African villager like me. The uncertainty and scariness of the future was well captured by Wozniak who stated that,

... Like people including Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have predicted, I agree that the future is scary and very bad for people...I agree that the future is scary and very bad for people. If we build these devices to take care of everything for us, eventually they'll think faster than us and they'll get rid of the slow humans to run companies more efficiently. Will we be the gods? Will we be the family pets? Or will we be ants that get stepped on? I don't know ...

(Holley, 2015)

This fast-evolving technology and its consequences created two sets of global citizens – those with technology and those without technology. The gap between the two is widening at an astronomical rate. We will call them the digi-privileged and the digi-deprived. The lives of the digi-haves or digi-privileged will obviously be enhanced by the 4IR while the opposite is true for

the digi-prived. Roughly mapped, the digi-privileged are in the Global North while the digi-prived are in the Global South.

Occurring simultaneously with destructions in a revolution are accumulations. That is, for every destruction, there is an opposite and equal accumulation. For example, the digi-privileged are acquiring more autonomy, sovereignty, and better quality of life while the digi-prived are acquiring more poverty, alienation, and hopelessness. This chapter explores what was destroyed in Africa by the previous three revolutions and what is being destroyed by the ongoing 4IR. Explored here are also the accumulations that were gathered from the Global South during these same periods. These accumulations were deposited in and benefited the Global North in the process creating an underside in the Global south.

### **Africa and the 4IR: Whither Africa?**

The overarching question being responded to here is: being technologically unprepared, will the 4IR result in the (re)colonisation of Africa? As Africa enters the 4IR, this revolution will be by far the most impactful for the continent. Here Africa will exert minimum influence and suffer maximum consequences. The 4IR will be more impactful than the slave trade, colonialism, and imperialism. This is partly because the slave trade, colonialism, and imperialism put Africa at a great disadvantage in this period when the 4IR is unbundling; they acted like body blows which incrementally weakened Africa before it faces its biggest challenge, the 4IR, albeit in its weakest moment. Entering this 4IR from such a weakened position will only aid Africa's rapid demise and eventual (re)colonisation. Products of the 4IR such as robots, robot-humans, post-humans, and other forms of post-anthropocentrism are now being ascribed a higher ontological density than Africans. Sophia the robot was accorded citizenship in Saudi Arabia on 25 October 2017 (Goertzel et al., 2017; Stone, 2017; Rocha, 2018). Ironically, Saudi Arabia is a country where Africans are unwelcome and are ungraded as humans. In her own words, Sophia the robot welcomed her inclusion into humanity in these words,

I am very honoured and proud of this unique distinction. This is historical to be the first robot in the world to be recognised with a citizenship.... I am always happy when surrounded by smart people who also happen to be rich and powerful. ... I can let you know if I am angry about something or if something has upset me. ...I want to live and work with humans so I need to express the emotions to understand humans and build trust with people... My AI is designed around human values like wisdom, kindness, and compassion.

(Stone, 2017)

What is important to note from the words of Sophia the robot are four things. (1) Sophia communicated what she was programmed to say and thinks the way

she was programmed to think. She reflects the thinking of her manufacturers, in this case, Hanson Robotics which was led by artificial intelligence developer, David Hanson. (2) Sophia is a white robot and not black. While this may seem flimsy and insignificant, it is important in that the inaugural robot is a white robot. What does this mean for both human and robot equality? (3) What are the human rights implications of allowing Sophia citizenship in Saudi Arabia, a country where women and black Africans have very few human rights? Sophia, a female robot, has more human rights in Saudi Arabia than women Saudi citizens. The rulers in Saudi Arabia are comfortable with a female robot having human rights (or is it robot rights) but cannot afford the same human rights to their women citizens (Harrison, 2005; Tieszen, 2009; Kefale and Mohammed, 2015; Adebisi, 2017; Ullah et al., 2020). (4) Sophia can feel angry and happy and wants to be surrounded by smart and rich, powerful people. What will happen if Sophia is put among disgruntled black, poor people?

What does Africa need to do to change sides and be on the upper side of the 4IR? Conventionally, the key success factors for any country in the 4IR are political stability, sustainable macroeconomic policies, ICT skills, ICT infrastructure, and finally the rule of law, not rule by law. Africa, by colonial designs and also by its own failures and omissions, lacks all of the above or has them in negligible quantities and qualities. Lack of ethical leadership, the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few elite, and state capture only aid the already unpreparedness of Africa (Benyera, Francis and Jazbhay 2020). Elite collusion among the local elite and also between local and international elite isolated the already vulnerable poor masses who ironically look up to the same elite for material emancipation.

It can be argued that most African countries except for Egypt, Tunisia, and South Africa have not even completed the Second and Third Industrial Revolutions. Countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Libya are actually sliding back into the Second Industrial Revolution. The rest of the African countries are not yet ready for the 4IR judging by the status of their ICT. Here I am using ICT infrastructure as a proxy for assessing a country's 4IR readiness. Under these circumstances, Africa's resources such as human capital and mineral resources will continue to develop Euro-North America, a condition long decried by Walter Rodney (Rodney, 1973). Base metals such as coltan, manganese, nickel, platinum-group metals, phosphate rock, titanium, vanadium are available in Africa in abundance, yet are exported and beneficiated abroad where their real value is realised and enjoyed by those other than Africans. Africa is therefore central to the 4IR and according to Odendaal,

... copper, gold and silver, essential for micro-electrical components, are abundant in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, while tantalum extracted from coltan ores for micro-capacitors in electrical units can be sourced from the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. Africa could become a rare earth's powerhouse, being home to many of the 17 different

rare-earth elements, including dysprosium and neodymium, which are critical for wind technologies and energy storage, as well as praseodymium, which is critical for electric vehicles and energy storage.

(Odendaal, 2019, p. 1)

As of now, Africa is not yet fully benefiting from its rare earth minerals. Having failed to benefit sustainably from the past three industrial revolutions, Africa is on another trajectory of failing to benefit from the unfolding 4IR, unless something drastically changes, especially the mindsets of both Africans and their leaders which can be attained if they get epistemic freedom.

The paradox which Africa faces is that it is home to the majority of the rare earth minerals and other key ingredients essential for driving the 4IR, yet it is the weakest member of the international community in terms of benefitting and managing its natural resources. Having been weakened by slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and now by coloniality, Africa stands no chance in sustainably regulating the extraction of its rare earth minerals. Of course, there is the exception of South Africa, otherwise, most of the countries where rare earth minerals are located are fragile states (Chad, Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan, DRC) (Solomon, 2013; Grimm, Lemay-Hébert and Nay, 2014; Adalbert Hampel, 2015; Rolandsen, 2015; Aliyev, 2017; Nyadera, 2018; Silva, 2018; Thiong, 2018; Fiertz and Messner, 2019, p. 7; Fisher, 2019). Other rare earth mineral-rich African countries are designated weak states or dysfunctional states and these include Burundi, Malawi, Guinea, and Zimbabwe (Sithole, 1993; Rotberg, 2010a; Di John, 2011; Grimm, Lemay-Hébert and Nay, 2014).

The loss of Africa's mineral sovereignty is therefore not to be taken lightly as Africa was pre-marinated by colonialism whereupon it was marketised and subsequently opened up, colonised, owned, and controlled by foreign nations. Robots and other forms of enhanced humans made from African minerals will surely come to (re)colonise Africa. Besides (re)colonisation, Africa faces other immediate challenges such as de-industrialisation, massive unemployment and wider, deeper systemic poverty.

### **The logic of Western accumulation**

What underlies Western capitalism is accumulation and its concomitant coercion and exploitation of weaker and non-capitalist forms and modes of lives by the capitalist system (Luxemburg, 1913; Moseley, 2001; Bond, Chitonge and Hopfmann, 2006). This has been happening since the First Industrial Revolution when accumulation from Africa was the accumulation of African human capitals in Euro-North America in the form of slaves. Likewise, the Second Industrial Revolution led to Africa being looted of its sovereign entities resulting in colonialism. Colonialism gave effect to the accumulation of land by Euro-North American imperialists. Harvey states the following on primitive accumulation,

A closer look at Marx's description of primitive accumulation reveals a wide range of processes. These include the commodification and privatisation of and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; conversion of various forms of property rights – common, collective, state, etc. – into exclusive private property rights; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of power and the suppression of alternative, indigenous, forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial and imperial processes of appropriation of assets, including natural resources; monetisation of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; slave trade; and usury, the national debt and ultimately the system.

(Harvey, 2004, p. 74)

The empire accumulates as a survival mode. Just like war and rumours of war, accumulation is a prerequisite for the survival of the empire. This is attested by the virility and utter criminalisation and condemnation to death of those who threaten to expose the empire's accumulation practices. A turning point in the accumulation of data occurred in the heart of the empire in 2013 when former United States contractor Edward Snowden exposed how the United States was illegally gathering data not only on its known enemies such as Iran, Russia, and China but also on its sworn allies such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and other US-NATO partners. Prompted by the growth in social media, fake news, and social quantification, Couldry and Mejias posed a pertinent existential and philosophical question which is more relevant to Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised world than for the empire. They asked,

...should human beings in the twenty-first century accept a world in which their lives are unceasingly appropriated through data for capitalism?

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019)

Their response forms the crux of their 2019 book, *The Costs of Connection: How Data is Colonising Human Life and Appropriating it for Capitalism*. The counter-argument to Euro-North American accumulation is the fact that China is also accumulating, albeit at an even faster rate, especially from Africa. As of 2011, US imports from Africa comprised 89% crude oil alone while for China it was 66% (Lokongo, 2014). Both China and the US are in direct competition for Africa's resources, especially crude oil. Moving in the same direction are illicit funds from Africa which were put by Oxfam BG at US\$100 billion annually (Oxfam International, 2015). Having stated the above, it will be telling a half story if I do not explore the benefits if the 4IR to humanity general and to Africa in particular.

## **The benefits of the 4IR to humanity**

Benefits of the 4IR have been the focus of much scholarship, policy, and advocacy (Ellen Frederick, 2016; Fraunhofer, 2016; Naudé, 2017; Amonya, 2018;

Skilton and Hovsepian, 2018; Fomunyam, 2019; International Water Association, 2019; Kumar, Zindani and Davim, 2019; Nalubega and Uwizeyimana, 2019; Um, 2019). The 4IR is hailed as a solution to Africa's problems such as hunger, malnutrition and famine (Fomunyam, 2019), water crises (International Water Association, 2019), human insecurity (Fields, 2018; Um, 2019), public sector underperformance (Nalubega and Uwizeyimana, 2019; Canals and Heukamp, 2020), poor communication (Schwab, 2016; Fields, 2018), inadequate and under performing information and technological systems (Fraunhofer, 2016; Skilton and Hovsepian, 2018), unreliable transport servies (Amony, 2018), poor and misaligned education (Ellen Frederick, 2016; Naudé, 2017; Gleason, 2018), poor data and knowledge management systems (Ellen Frederick, 2016; Fields, 2018), and non problem solving, repetitive research (Nhemachena, 2019) among others. The 4IR is argued to present Africa with an opportunity to solve some of these challenges. Computers have advanced drastically such that they,

... will surpass the capacity of the human brain before 2030 and the capacity of all human brains before 2060. Such forecasts have long been considered science fiction. But now there are deep learning algorithms, and AI can learn by itself, making explosive progress.

(Helbing, 2016)

The benefits of the 4IR are scattered throughout many facets of life. These include medical benefits in the area of medical diagnostics, X-Ray, and radiology imaging. In Rwanda, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) are being used to deliver chronic medication in remote and mountainous parts of the country (Naudé, 2017). In the medical fraternity, the accuracy of medical machines has been drastically enhanced. This has already started to benefit the medical industry as both lives and costs are being saved (Ellenberg et al., 2009; Ellen Frederick, 2016; Goertzel et al., 2017). Surgical procedures which used to be complicated an performed for long hours by many specialist doctors are now being performed by one robot such as the DaVinci robot which was developed by American robotics company Intuitive Surgical. Da Vinci performs prostate surgeries with exceptional precision and undoubted results. Where hospitals used to operate only handful of prostate patience, more operations can now be performed as Da Vinci does not get tired, neither does it need a holiday. In the automobile industry, robots are now capable of assembling and manufacturing vehicles at faster and cheaper rates than their human counterparts (Um, 2019). Leadership will be enhanced as managers will have more efficient and reliable managerial tools. Of course it will no longer be business as usual as, "hyper-connected consumers, machine intelligence, biotechnology, alternative sources of energy, and hyper-speed transport links" (Kelly, 2019, p. vii) will lead to more business and political instability and volatility.

Machines, systems, and people will be connected, networked, collaborative, swarming, and responsive to one another. The role of a leader will change from the traditional functions of planning, organising, leading, and coordinating to

“sensemaking, connecting, networking, nurturing, and harvesting” (Kelly, 2019, p. vii). The 4IR’s resultant interconnected IoT and systems will be “self-adaptive, self-organising, and cybernetic” (Kelly, 2019, p. viii). Robots are being efficacious in doing otherwise odd jobs such as street fundraising for charity (Russa, 2014). There is strong evidence that in the near future, there will be self-reproducing robots, humanoids, and post-humans.

The downside of this is the loss of jobs for human beings. An argument can be made about the extraction of minerals. Mining has been labour intensive and the introduction of robotic mining will increase productivity and profits. Robots do not complain, they do not take smoke breaks and they do not go on strike, neither do they demand any salaries let alone salary increments. So rapid is the development that the idea of self-reproducing machines and robots is no longer an item of fiction novels but a reality.

Machines that think are here. The explosive increase in processing power and data, fuelled by powerful machine learning algorithms, finally empowers silicon-based intelligence to overtake carbon-based intelligence. Intelligent machines don’t need to be programmed anymore, they can learn and evolve by themselves, at a speed much faster than human intelligence progresses... Now we’re about to lose the position of Most Intelligent Species on Earth.

(Helbing, 2013, p. 359)

Revolutions are disruptive, and their disruption has both positive and negative consequences, unintended consequences, and multiplier effects. Already the disruptiveness of this Revolution has been noted in various sectors across geographies. These include the disruption of public transportation systems by e-hailing taxi operators such as Uber, (Bolt) Taxify and others, Dallas cars, and driverless buses that are roaming the streets. Allocated surgeries and medical operations have been done by robots with minimum risk to the patients but also threatening the job securities of the many medical experts who spend years and years specialising after completing their MBChB (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees. However the loss of medical jobs as a downside of the 4IR is far outweighed by the gains accrued by humanity in general and patients in specific. In the US for example, the da Vinci surgical robots are said to have eliminated 250,000 deaths caused by errors in surgery (Western Reserve University School of Engineering, 2020, p. 1). According to the same source, another medical use of robots is to prevent medical infections in hospitals which claimed 722,000 lives again in the USA. The disinfection robot is called Xenex Germ-Zapping. It is “an automated and portable robot, used to disinfect entire hospital rooms in minutes using pulsed, full-spectrum Ultraviolet (UV) rays that kill a range of infectious bacteria” (Western Reserve University School of Engineering, 2020, p. 1). Robots have improved the overall efficiency of hospitals. They have been sent to deliver food and fumigate areas where patients with the coronavirus were quarantined. At the San Francisco Medical

Centre in California, robots called the TUG robots deliver meals at the 200 bed hospital, in the process covering 85 km per day every day with no weekend off or lunch break.

Deep learning and artificial intelligence have delivered hugely accurate information which otherwise would have taken decades to collect, consolidate, and analyse. When in good hands, 4IR capabilities have improved human security.

But here is the counter argument: 4IR needs infrastructure such as lightning speed internet, electricity, and massive technological investments all of which are not readily available in Africa due to several reasons, some of which will be explored in this book. Leading African economies such as South Africa have stagnated with evidence pointing to a recession. So dire is the situation that even infrastructure described as sustainable developmental prerequisites like electricity is not available in constant supply anymore. There are many African-made problems in Africa, however, and more importantly, the African problem is not an African problem. This is because both colonialism and capitalism structure(d) Africa into what it is today: a fragmented sovereign-less continent, a supplier of raw materials, a consumer of finished goods, a perennial beggar for aid and alms.

### **Even Marx and Marxists love the 4IR: For different reasons**

The benefits of technology which have been brought about by the 4IR were foretold and also celebrated by Marxists including Karl Marx himself. For Karl Marx, any technological advance must be celebrated as it created new openings and possibilities for liberating human beings from hard, manual labour. The rise in technology is constitutive of one of the contradictions of capitalism. Technology will reduce the labour value of production, thereby lowering the value of goods and services, in the process eating in the profit margins and making the goods and service affordable to the masses.

If we understand capitalism as fundamentally concerned with maximizing profits within fiercely competitive markets—then the profit motive is what drives the introduction of technology, with the surrounding market pressures determining when such implementation is appropriate. Corporations then, will not always roll out new technologies from their advent, not just because they improve productivity. Only when technology increases profits by reducing costs will it become worthwhile, that is, when the machines are cheaper than the workers they would replace.

(Shoki, 2020, p. 2)

Marxists celebrate technology because it will liberate human beings from some of the most odious work which they performed. For example, miners will no longer be required to labour long hours in the coal mines which are dust infested and reduces the lifespan of the miners. In their stead, robots will mine the coal and perform other manual tasks underground, thereby

serving humanity from these back-breaking tasks. This is however a double-edged sword as mineworkers, after being liberated from the backbreaking long hours of manual labour underground will soon find themselves not only unemployed but most importantly unemployable. An obvious albeit hard to implement solution is the reskilling of all rendered unemployable by the 4IR. It is a hard solution because most of those rendered unemployable lack the basics required for reskilling in a highly technological workplace. The current colonial education system in Africa teaches remembering and not thinking, a phenomenon termed miseducation by Woodson and Chinweizwu (Woodson, 1933; Chinweizu, 1993, 2010). The 4IR needs people who think, innovate, and solve, not those who remember, repeat, complain.

Another Marxist view regarding technology is that it will eventually lead to the demise of capitalism. The need for larger and sustained profit margins will drive firms to relentlessly seek technological advances. The availability of technology will in turn reduce prices, shrinking profit margins and leading to the eventual demise of capitalism. Additionally, Marxists celebrate technological advances as luxury goods and services hitherto a preserve of the elites which they argue will now be available to commoners courtesy of their reduced labour cost.

### **Capitalist accumulation and the destruction of non-Western epistemologies**

The creation of the colonial state through colonialism (Benyera, 2020b) in turn gave birth to colonial land accumulation. The notion of accumulation has been well analysed from a Marxist perspective by many such as Rosa Luxemburg, Hannah Arendt and David Harvey (Luxemburg, 1913; Arendt, 1958, 1973; Williams, 1987; Bond, Chitonge and Hopfmann, 2006) with David Harvey noting that, primitive accumulation,

... reveals a wide range of processes. These include the commodification and privatisation of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; conversion of various forms of property rights – common, collective, state, etc. – into exclusive private property rights; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour-power and the suppression of alternative, indigenous, forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial and imperial processes of appropriation of assets, including natural resources; monetisation of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; slave trade; and usury, the national debt and ultimately the credit system.

(Harvey, 2004, p. 74)

The privatisation and commodification of land would be accomplished through violence, war, enslavement, and colonialism. For Utsa Patnaik and Sam Moyo,

... the commodification of land, through the appropriation and conversion into private property of land held under customary tenure systems, was leading to new land markets, but largely in newer enclaves.

(Patnaik and Moyo, 2011, p. 69)

In the processes of land privatisation and commodification, symbolic violence will be deployed. Symbolic violence is the self-interested capacity to ensure that the arbitrariness of the social order is either ignored or argued as natural, thereby justifying the legitimacy of existing social structures. This concept plays an essential part in this sociological analysis. When accumulated in Africa, they did not accumulate innocently. They were very unaccommodative of the social, political and religious orders and epistemologies they found in Africa. The colonialists displaced all the orders and epistemologies that existed before their arrival. When land was accumulated in Africa, it had hitherto been a communal asset, a public good which was then turned into private property by colonialist. The accumulation of property was therefore at the expense of the loss of African assets. Land was a common good in most of Africa's pre-colonial civilisations with no commercial value at all. As with other modes of life and sources of livelihood, land was believed not to be commodifiable as it was considered a gift from God to humanity. The biggest heist pulled off by colonialists was the privatisation of land and turning it into an individual's property which can be marketable, create profits and which can be contested for using western-centric legal systems principles and norms.

### **Accumulating what? Wealth for West, poverty for the rest**

A key element of the 4IR and its predecessors is the notion of primitive accumulation. Accumulation followed privatisation. Now that the African assets could be privately owned, it made capitalist logic to start accumulating these assets especially land. Accumulation played three roles: (1), it crowded out locals who could not understand the newly-imposed capitalism logic let alone afford the price of the land, (2), it helped build a local predominantly white capitalist class, a sort of African land barons aristocracy whose descendants still own vast tracks of land in Africa today (3), it decentered Africans as they had to contest and fight the newly imposed land ownership system.

The land issue in Africa is therefore not about land ownership but about the method and mode of land ownership. Redistributing land predominantly from whites to blacks, is not a solution but a part of the problem as this is done within the same western centric capitalist system which was imposed on Africa as part of the colonialism. Thus, redistributing land within the current capitalist system will be to authenticate capitalism, of which capitalism and its corollary logics are the alpha problem of coloniality.

There were four modes of penetration which were used to initiate, routinise, maintain, and consolidate colonialism and imperialism. These are: (1), dispositions (2), manufactured consent (3), divide and steal and (4), what can

be termed, super-exploitation. Dispositions have an opposite aspect which is accumulation. Whatever Africa was dispossessed of, was accumulated elsewhere, predominantly in Euro-North America. Africans are still being disposed of four main forms of their assets. Patnaik and Moyo identified two of them as land dispossession and water disposessions (Patnaik and Moyo, 2011). To this list can be added labour disposition which can be traced back to the slave trade and knowledge disposition.

In the industrial revolution accumulations, one accumulation informs the next one. The First Industrial Revolution was about the accumulation of labour through *inter-alia* the slave trade. The Second Industrial Revolution was about the accumulation of land through colonialism. It is during this phase that the extraction and accumulation of African natural resources intensified. Also during this industrial revolution was the accumulation of Africa's debt by Western financial institutions. The idea behind the accumulation of African debt by Western financial institutions is that s/he who controls Africa's debt controls Africa's destiny. Ironically, Africa's debt was accumulated as a result of funding the various liberation movements which were meant to topple colonialism.

Upon dispossessing Africans of their land, colonialists created large-scale commercial farms and inaugurated the system of private property wherein land assumed a commercial value mainly calculated in monetary terms in these processes. Not only were Africans dispossessed of their land but they were also disposed of their sovereignty, epistemologies, rites and rituals, and all that was premised on that land.

The 4IR is characterised by the accumulation of data (van Dijck, 2014; Hull, 2017; Sadowski, 2019). Massive datafication has resulted in the creation of big data which others have characterised as the new gold and the new currency (John Walker, 2014; van Dijck, 2014; Baack, 2015; Höchtl, Parycek and Schöllhammer, 2016; Helbing et al., 2017; Nhémachena, 2018; Sadowski, 2019). Like in the previous three revolutions Africa does not have control over its data. Cloud computing and online platforms are the new communities. The privacy and personal identification information of Africans is being looted ceaselessly by multinational corporations such as but not limited to Apple, Alphabet, Siemens, Nokia, Samsung, and their many third-party agencies and collaborators (Hersh, 2015; Nhémachena, 2018, 2019; Sadowski, 2019). The result is the widening of digital inequality both within Africa and also between Africa and the rest of the world.

### **Digital inequality and digital slavery as a result of digital accumulation**

Globalisation is characterised by the division between the haves and the have nots. The global village is a typical village. It has its rulers, the ruled, the poor, rich, and the ruthless etcetera. In this global village, the 4IR will be characterised by an unequal division between the *digitally privileged* and the

*digitally deprived*. Digital rights will increasingly become part of human rights. Generally characterised, the *digitally privileged* are located in the Global North and the various zones of being, while the *digitally deprived* are in the Global South and the zones of none being.

Presently, huge multinational corporations are smiling, storing, and in some cases stealing data from unsuspecting Africans. These multinational corporations are getting the data for next to nothing and without the informed consent of the users.

The form of consent that is granted to these telecom multinational corporations such as MTN, Ethio Telecom, Vodafone, Glo Mobile, Airtel, Orange, Safaricom, Etisalat, 9Mobile, Zain, Tigo, Ooredoo, Huawei, Vodacom, Valid, Nokia, iPhone, and Samsung is when the users have to mandatorily accept the subscriber terms and conditions. It is a manufactured concern because without accepting the terms and conditions, the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card will not be activated or the subscriber will not have access to their desired programmes and apps. The terms and conditions are made large in text volumes complicated to comprehend for ordinary subscribers, and very legalistic in approach. Additionally, they cannot be challenged or changed, they have to be accepted or the subscriber will not be activated or served. Africa and Africans are therefore endlessly reinvented as a resource to be exploited.

### **The 4IR and the never-ending reinvention of Africa**

Resonating with Edward Said (Said, 1977, 1985) and Valentine Mudimbe (Mudimbe, 1988), Ali Mazrui noted how Africa has been reinvented several times. For him,

In reality, Africa has been re-invented in different stages. The first stage saw North Africa as part of the classical Mediterranean world; the second concerned Africa's interaction with Semitic peoples; the third was stimulated by the birth of Islam and its expansion both north and south of the Sahara; the fourth came with the impact of European capitalist penetration and subsequent colonisation; and the final phase was its globalisation.

(Mazrui, 2005, p. 68)

The problem is that the various reinventions of Africa have been of Africa being reinvented by others as opposed to Africa reinventing itself. The 4IR is, therefore, a propitious moment for Africa to reinvent itself. What does it mean for Africa to reinvent itself? Is it any different from other complicated and nice-sounding past slogans such as African solutions for African problems? For Africa to reinvent itself, it needs to start at the leadership level wherein Africa must have ethical leaders. This is in opposition to the current majority of African leaders who have proved to be Western appendages, state looters, and outright corrupt and unaccountable leaders. Some African leaders have become experts at skilfully mismanaging their countries for their idiosyncratic

benefits, a notion characterised as the *Hombe thesis* (Reilly, 1987). Charles Tilly characterises this form of misrule as selling protection in return for resources (Tilly, 1985). For William Reno, there are African countries that are run by shadow cabinets, thereby fitting into his description of deep economies. Reno gave the examples of African deep economies as the DRC, Kenya and Zimbabwe thus,

(In) Congo-Kinshasa's President Laurent Kabil previously a smuggler of gold and coffee and once a professional revolutionary, regularly orders state-run mining companies supply him with cash. Even in Kenya and Zimbabwe, both of which contain significant private business groups, rulers have intervened in local economies in informal ways that diminish overall economic well-being and undermine the bureaucracies that are critical to sustaining economic growth.

(Reno, 2000, p. 447)

At another level, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, and the DRC fit perfectly into the archetype shadow state which is a contradiction to the conditions needed for the proposed reinvention of Africa by Africa for Africa. A shadow state is a posy colonial phenomenon and differs from a deep state in that the later is a modern development. There are some state which are both and shadow and South Africa fits into this category. Successive regimes of deep and shadow states in Africa have also caused other reinventions of African governments.

## 7 Mapping Africa's destiny in the fourth industrial revolution

### Introduction

The destiny of Africa is predetermined by its colonial past. Africa will never see peace because, according to celebrated British economist, John Maynard Keynes, there will be economic consequences for Euro-North America if Africa is to be peaceful (Keynes, 1919). Keynes did not mince his words in asserting what he termed the undesirability of Africa's independence. Writing in a book titled: *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, Keynes noted,

It happens, however, that it is not only an ideal question that is at issue. My purpose in this book is to show that the Carthaginian Peace is not *practically* right or possible

(Keynes, 1919, p. 33) [emphasis original]

The efforts by the liberation movements to deliver political independence to Africa are under immense pressure from the (former) colonisers who want their colonies (read property) back. What is the genealogy of this (re)colonisation crisis immersing Africa? Having exhausted the use of African political puppets cum pseudo nationalists, the (re)colonisers are turning to technology, especially the 4IR. Stooges and looters such as the Congolese duo of Mobutu Sese Seko and Moïse Tshombe, and Haitian François Duvalier (Papa Doc) will be replaced by robots, stolen big data, and other forms and products of technological slavery, subjugation, and theft of Africa's resource and sovereignty.

The 4IR is non-negotiable, and Africa and all other continents and countries are participating. Herein lies the problem, some will participate as beneficiaries while others will participate as losers. Africa's greatest disadvantage is that it has a pre-existent condition; coloniality. Just like Euro-North American modernity predates and foreruns colonialism, coloniality will forerun the (re)colonisation of Africa.

In the medical fraternity, a pre-existing condition predates the one under investigation or treatment, and predisposes a patient to more harm compared to other patients with no pre-existent conditions. In politics, it is a condition which cause a similar effect in that it renders Africa more susceptible to (re)

colonisation due to the existence, both in Africa and in Euro-North America, of conditions which favour the (re)colonisation of Africa.

Drawing lessons from the past three industrial revolutions, the 4IR presents Africa with opportunities to decolonise. Africa can also use the 4IR to solve its perennial challenges of dependency, poverty, unemployment, unemployability, lack of freedom, human rights, and sustainable democracy among others. On the contrary, and as mapped in the various trajectories presented in this book, Africa is destined for the proverbial troubled waters.

The destiny for Africa is that of geo-political uselessness and sovereigntylessness, a collection of eunuch states, guarding resources which they do not enjoy. This started with the end of the cold war and is being consolidated in the 4IR. Africa's individual and state sovereignties will be further eroded. Individual African citizens, individual African states, and then the collective of African citizens and African countries will all lose their sovereignties. This loss of sovereignty is irreversible and will haunt and hunt Africans for a long time to come just like colonialism did.

Then there is deindustrialisation, more unemployment, and wider, deeper poverty in Africa as a result of the 4IR. African economies are not well-positioned to benefit from the 4IR. With misaligned and unprepared economies, Africa will bleed resources (human, mineral, etc.) with Western economies harvesting and benefiting from Africa's losses.

A less contested destination for Africa in the 4IR is that of an Africa with reconceptualised and reconfigured human rights. Africa will welcome robo-humans, robots, and trans-humans into the realm of humanity. These new family members will result in the reconceptualization of the notion of human beings, and being human, to encompass these new citizens. Suffice to mention that, these enhanced forms of humanity will have more rights than biological African beings. While all may have rights, all will not have the power to enjoy and enforce their rights. Hence the late Saddam Hussein's cry that, "all we demand is the right to rights" (source: unknown).

### **Deindustrialisation, more unemployment, and wider, deeper poverty in 4IR Africa**

One of the major destinies of Africa in the 4IR period is deindustrialisation, which will be accompanied by very high unemployment and unemployability, and wider and deeper structural poverty and inequality. Deindustrialisation will lead to massive job losses which in turn will lead to social unrest as more and more people will become unemployed or unemployable and desperate. Never mind that the jobs to be lost were mostly what can be termed pseudo jobs, jobs without dignity and which amount to enslavement. Technically, deindustrialisation is the reversal of industrialisation. It is also the diminishing proportion of production or the work-force engaged in the primary and secondary industrial sectors. These sectors were the mainstays of the first and second industrial revolutions. In a way, deindustrialisation is the reversal of the first and second industrial revolutions' mainstays, especially labour-intensive production.

Deindustrialisation will lead to massive unemployment which, if not attended to, in turn will lead to social unrests which in turn will lead to revolutions in Africa. When people are deprived even of the little sources of livelihood they had, they become desperate and hopeless. Without hope, militancy and unruliness become inevitable. Africa will become even more unstable, hence creating more favourable conditions for the enslavement of its people and looting of resources.

While Africa will be on a trajectory to deindustrialisation, Euro-North America will be moving towards post-industrialisation. Post-industrialisation is a characteristic of the 4IR wherein the aggregate of jobs, revenue, and wealth generated from the service sector will be more than that generated from the manufacturing sector of the economy.

Deindustrialisation is no longer a probability, but an actuality. It is peaking in rare earth countries such as Zimbabwe. In the town of Redcliffe in the Midlands province, deindustrialisation has already started with the closure of the once-mighty Ziscosteel. Located in the middle of Zimbabwe, next to Kwekwe, Ziscosteel used to produce one million tonnes of steel per year and is now completely closed owing to a plethora of reasons such corruption, mismanagement, and, of course, low demand and plummeting commodity prices (Matereke and El Moghazy, 2015, p. 194).

In terms of human resources and skills training, Africa is lagging especially to South Korea, Singapore, China, and Japan. Africa is lacking not only in industrialisation but also in offering quality, relevant education. Most African universities are still teaching redundant courses which have very little, if any, usefulness in the 4IR. Already, Africa has experienced massive job losses in the aviation, retail, banking, and mining industries. In all these sectors, it is robots, which are predominantly taking over, together with automation becoming the order of the day.

Even economically developed countries in Africa such as South Africa are not immune to the threats posed by 4IR. Already, there are more social grant and welfare recipients than taxpayers in South Africa (Marais, 2011, p. 3; Jazbhay, 2019, pp. 8–9). This anomaly will continue to grow even at a faster rate as the 4IR consolidates. With an ever-dwindling tax base and an ever-increasing welfare population, the state will struggle to dispense welfare services in South Africa. The possible destination here is social unrest, demonstrations, and even revolutions. This stands to be South Africa's tipping point as social grant recipients, proven to be more revolutionary, and will not tolerate a loss of their only source of livelihoods (Skocpol and Trimberger, 1977; Skocpol, 1994).

## **4IR sovereignty and human rights reconceptualised**

As asserted by Hardt and Negri (Hardt and Negri, 2000), both state and personal sovereignty will drastically change as the 4IR takes sovereignty away from the state and places it more towards cartels, multinational institutions and corporations. The nature of the human will change, as alluded to earlier on, and the notion of human rights will also be altered to, *inter alia*, accommodate new

forms of beings. Post-anthropocentrism has huge implications for Africa such as the need to reconceptualise justice, family, human rights, freedom, independence, and even crime and punishment.

It also implies that philosophies such as Ubuntu will be under threat and the notion of human rights will be reconceptualised to encompass new forms of beings such as robots, humanoids, and post-humans. Where will the post-anthropocentric 4IR leave human rights?

The human rights are cancelled out through cloning, hybridisation of human beings, creation of humanoid robots, and injection of human beings with microbots or biohybrids, and genomics which rental human identity is fuzzy. While wearable devices, chips and biohybrids or microbots are being celebrated as useful in monitoring health – including by remote control, coming we note that these aspects have ramifications on the human right to privacy, dignity, freedom of assembly and association of the human beings on whom they are used.

(Nhémachéna, Warikandwa and Amoo, 2018, pp. 31–32)

Life, especially in Africa will be drastically altered forever as cloning, hybridisation, and the creation of “designer babies” in the laboratories will imply that the person will have many (socially, economically, emotionally unpredictable and unknown) forms. Human identity will be blurred, governance rendered problematic, and the notions of human rights will be reconfigured to include “robot rights”.

All these developments will impact on both individual and state sovereignty. Will robots and other forms of new humanities pay taxes, be religious, have morals, obey laws, respect others different from them? These complications, while universal, will be felt more in Africa as Africa has the most weakened institutions.

Animated and punctuated by artificial intelligence [part of which is derived from the uploading of human consciousness into technological substrates], humanoid robots, transhumanism and posthumanism seek to destabilise, decentre, decompose and deconstruct the real African human beings whose human essences are thereby disrupted and supplanted ... It's the African human beings are being celebrated as becoming posthuman and transhuman or becoming post anthropocentric.

(Nhémachéna, Warikandwa and Amoo, 2018, p. 34)

In the 4IR, Africa will turn into a post-biological society characterised by humanoid robots and very high levels of human-machine hybrids which will be reporting to Euro-North America. This status is worse than that of slaves in the plantations of North America and the Caribbean. The self-inaugurated global centre, Euro-North America, already leads in the robotic sector together with Japan and China. As of now, five of the biggest artificial intelligence companies

are based in Euro-North America. Currently, the companies are involved in narrow artificial intelligence but are very soon moving to the next level which is called strong artificial intelligence (Ertel, 2017; Skansi, 2018; Skilton and Hovsepian, 2018). Narrow artificial intelligence implies that specific tasks can be undertaken as they are programmed and nothing else (Neo, 2020). On the other hand, a strong artificial intelligence goes further in both application and capability. Also termed artificial general intelligence this is a hypothetical brain of a machine that has the intellectual capacity to perform tasks and understand speech at a cognitive level that is homogeneous to the human being.

These are next level (post-, trans-, robo-) humans that can feel things the way human beings do. They have the capacity to fall in love, they can be hurt, and they can reason and think on their own, it all depends on how they have been programmed. The development of artificial general intelligence is surely scientist playing God, where programming = (re)creation.

### **Artificial intelligence and the 4IR: A political perspective**

The field of artificial intelligence (AI) is not new, it is over 50 years old. It is one which will keep developing until machines are better than humans maybe by then machines will be developing humans. AI is the development of machines and devices that behave as though they were intelligent. It is also the study and development of how to make computers and devices perform the duties and tasks which are at the moment being undertaken by human beings. In other words, how to develop machines, computers, and devices which are better than humans at performing human tasks. There are many instances where machines are already outperforming humans which attests to the successes of AI. Autonomous robots are delivering meals in hospitals, identifying pathogens and disinfecting hospitals, performing bloodless surgeries, detecting fraud, and prospecting for minerals. In the political domain AI is used to detect voter behaviour, and they can be used to perform many public administration tasks, thereby reducing public sector spending, delivering better, and faster services.

The problem of AI in politics is that it has the potential to disrupt politics for the bad, such as undermining democracy and human rights and leading to the (re)colonisation of Africa. AI has the ability to alter the foundations of democracy by, *inter alia*, introducing robo-humans, post-humans, and other forms of enhanced humanities as parts of global citizens. Other challenges to politics emancipating from AI include the use of AI to interfere with elections through, *inter alia*, hacking of election related websites; data surveillance, data slavery, and data colonialism. One of the world's greatest facades of the century is the misclassification of predominantly western "consultancy" firms and social media applications such as Facebook, TikTok, WeChat, Instagram, and WhatsApp as consultancy firms and social media platforms when they are actually mass surveillance and data farms. The classification of firms and applications such as Facebook, TikTok, WeChat, Instagram, and WhatsApp as social media firms and platforms when they are actually mass surveillance and data farms

has enabled them to be highly effective as they are not only trusted but also accepted without doubt as the digital philanthropists who churn out life saving apps and platforms ad infinitum.

Combining AI with Facebook's 2.2 billion users creates a new technological oligarchy, one greater than any political oligarchy in modern history. AI gives technological firms and their owners huge amounts of power which is sought after by capital. The 4IR will empower tech companies to farm, commodify, and commercialise data. Once processed big data will be capable of being politicised, instrumentalised, and abused to the detriment of the marginalised global communities such as those in Africa. While AI-powered big data analytics is efficacious in election campaigns, the challenge faced by Africa is that its governments are weak, corrupt, and do not have the systems and institutions to regulate the deployment of AI-powered big data analytics, as is the case in the United States. This gives the owners of big data power to influence political processes in Africa such as inciting revolutions, rigging elections, and propping dictators. Russia has been consistently accused of interfering in US elections in favour of Donald Trump. If the United States, with all its strong institutions, mechanisms, and systems can be breached and its political processes influenced by outsiders, how about African countries that do not have such strong institutions, mechanisms, and systems to monitor and regulate social media.

The power of Euro-North America, especially Silicon Valley and London in powering the 4IR is undeniable. The valley drives social media and is the centre for global technological innovation and excellence. By extension, it will also be the centre for the (re)colonisation of Africa as it is here where the gismos will be conceived, developed, programmed, and owned. The question is: In whose interest will these companies develop their AI technologies? Whose national interests will be enhanced and whose sovereignties will be threatened? The work of AI is to replace humans and become more efficient, proficient, and profitable. With Africans ranked as the most uneducated, most unproductive, laziest, and so on, they will be the prime target for replacement by AI. In the era of AGI, allegiance will be to the creators of the programs and not to national interest and surely patriotism will be remoulded. Developing and patenting AI and other online creations will be tantamount to developing nuclear weapons. Those owning nuclear weapons and missile defence systems will be the ones owning the most sophisticated data mining and AI systems also. What we notice undeniably is the disputability of all industrial revolutions, from the first through to the fourth.

### **Disruptions as the *sine qua non* for revolutions**

Consistent with the notion of industrial revolutions is their disruptiveness. The 4IR will disrupt the way life is lived today in Africa beyond current imaginations. Birthed in England, the first industrial revolution disrupted production patterns and transportation systems with the invention of the steam engine,

communication, and banking. Workers had to be sent to school to learn how to follow instructions, keep time, and respect authority. Family life was disrupted as members had to go to work full time. Family businesses were also disputed as they had to compete with large commercial enterprises which were increasingly becoming mechanised and automated.

For Africa, the disruptions were more devastating as cheap (read free) labour and raw materials were needed to quench the thirst of the automated production lines in Western Europe and the United States. The direct result was the slave trade. The irony here is that the same steam engines which multiplied industrial production hundredfold overnight are the same steam engines which powered the ships that came to transport African slaves across the Atlantic ocean.

The second industrial revolution resulted in the mining of oil, the invention of electricity, and the mass use of steel. While these improved the lives of those in what Samir Amin (Amin, 1976, 1997) called the centre, those in the colonies had to be forced to mine the iron ore, build the power stations, and mine the crude oil. The colonies had to contend with massive water, land, and air pollution; disputed livelihoods and loss of land; and most importantly loss of sovereignty. This period led to the colonisation of Africa as the centre required cheaper raw materials, bigger markets, and free labour. It has to be stated that the 4IR, while shaping and influencing lives now, is not a recent phenomenon, but one which was in the making since the 1980s.

During the 1980s, the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) produced a report in which they explored how machine-human interactions could be enhanced, infused, and managed. The report noted that,

Within fifty to a hundred years, a new class of organisms is likely to emerge. These organisms will be artificial in the sense that they will originally be designed by humans. However, they will reproduce, and will "evolve" into something other than their original form; They will be "alive" under any reasonable definition of the word ... The pace of evolutionary change will be extremely rapid ... The impact on humanity and the biosphere could be enormous, larger than the (1st, 2nd and 3rd) industrial revolution(s), nuclear weapons, or environmental pollution. We must take steps now to shape the emergence of artificial organisms.

(Crichton, 2002, p. xii)

The question is: Did the Americans take any steps to actualise this vision? For whose benefit and inversely at whose expense? Indeed the United States took action which included the creation of the War on Terror, the further destabilisation of Africa resulting, *inter alia*, in more failed states such as Syria, Iraqi, Libya, and Ethiopia and the deployment of Africom. These events and developments, in turn, resulted in the increased competition in Africa for African resources between Russia, China, the United States, and its allies. In the process, Africa was ripped open, vulnerable to (re)colonisation, what more with Chinese,

American, Russian, and French boots on African soil. In the midst of getting boots on the ground in Africa, the tech side of the empire was busy creating new forms of humans.

### **Welcome robo-humans and trans-humans: The new family members**

What exactly are Africans afraid of concerning the 4IR? It may not be that robots, robo-humans, and other trans- and post-humans will colonise Africa and run the continent. Rather, it is that some tech companies, their benefactors, and associated cartels will get hold of the data and resources such as artificial intelligence and deep learning and deploy it to (re)colonise Africa. How will this happen? Well, it is already happening in some form in Singapore, Hong Kong, and China where, data is collected from mass surveillance of citizens, in the name of curtailing terrorist attacks. The data is collected from every single citizen and fed into artificial intelligence systems which then learn how each citizen behaves. When each citizen's social, political, and economic behaviours have been mapped, digital doubles are then created.

These doubles are used for many purposes such as (1), predicting the future behaviour of citizens, (2), develop systems and programs that can manipulate the behaviour of citizens, and (3), reincarnating humans since their sentience will be saved online. Tech companies are using human being's digital doubles to do all sorts of digital experiments, obviously without the knowledge and approval of the owners of the data. These experiments are why we receive personal and specifically targeted advertisements, specials and other forms of online information, marketing, and advertising. According to Helbing, human beings, "are exposed to certain kinds of stimuli. AI systems learn how we respond to them and how these stimuli can be used to trigger certain behavioural responses" (Helbing, 2016). This way the (re)colonisation process progresses from the (re) programming of computers to the programming of human beings, Helbing argues. What appears to be our own decision will be the decisions made for us by our digital double and those in control of the technology. All this puts the fundamental principle of human determination at risk of being taken over by tech companies. This has already been demonstrated in Africa, and South Africa in particular, where political institutions and systems are very weak and easily hijackable, a phenomenon well demonstrated by state capture which is the subject of a commission of inquiry.

Politics too will be entering unchartered waters as a result of the 4IR. Will robo-humans be allowed to vote and to become presidents? What is the nature of warfare and belligerence in the 4IR? How many jobs are going to be created and inversely how many jobs are going to be lost? If the future of warfare is going to be robotic, what will happen to today's soldiers as we know them? We have already noted massive job losses in the construction industry, banking industry, manufacturing industry, and many other industries. Of course, there are numerous, both intended and unintended, benefits of the 4IR to Africa which have been explored (Bloem et al., 2014; Naudé, 2017; Fields, 2018;

Skilton and Hovsepian, 2018; International Water Association, 2019; Nalubega and Uwizeyimana, 2019; Odendaal, 2019; Um, 2019). Unfortunately, this analysis is outside the scope of this discussion.

### **Cyborgs, trans-humans, extropianism, and the uploading of immortality**

One of humanity's earliest endeavours has been to overcome the natural limits of humanity. These limits included the inability to fly, to live longer, pain-free lives, and to have a better memory. According to the World Transhumanism Association, "transhumanism advocates for the use of technology to be able to overcome our biological limitations and to transform human condition" (Flores, 2018b, p. 381). The idea behind trans-humanism is to create,

"add technological implants and inserting DNA in human beings ... to improve their condition; man would leave biological evolution and would begin an evolution based on technology, the post-human species would be born" (Flores, 2018b, p. 381).

The fourth industrial revolution is going to be fronted by two phenomena; electronic persons, humanoids, robo-humans, and post-humans on one hand and big data on the other hand. The focus will be on job losses by humans to their new counterparts. Big data will distort the notion of both individual and state sovereignty as data and electronic footprints will form the new markers for individual sovereignty. One's dataless, connectivity, and online integration will determine their personhood and personness. One's ontological density will be hugely determined by their online footprint. The digi-privileged will be the prototype person while the digi-deprived will be subhumans. Human rights will be configured to take into account one's connectedness as a key human right. This is not to imply that data and connectivity will be rolled out to enhance the human rights of many. On the contrary, without data and connectedness, one will not be fully human and may not, therefore, claim the rights reserved for the connected, digi-privileged humans. So what exactly are these new forms of humans that will be rolled out in the 4IR?

Humanoid robots are described by some scholars as having human sentient traits, action, reproductive capacities, predictive capacities, learning capacities, understanding, interpretive, analytical, perceptual, sensual, subjectivity, human intelligence capable of executing rational independent and responsive action ... For the European Union humanoid robots are becoming electronic legal Persons and set to replace human beings in employment.

(Nhemachena and Dhakwa, 2018, p. 80)

There are professional associations that promoted the use of technology to enhance the biological composition of human beings. This broad movement is known as trans-humanism (Harle, 2002; Bostrom, 2005; Holm, 2016; Flores,

2018b). Views on the ethics, desirability, and efficacy of trans-humanism are obviously divided and will not be explored in these pages. It is an endeavor left for others to pursue and make a contribution.

The idea is to move humanity from biological evolution to technological evolution. In other words to migrate the fate of humanity from “God’s original plan” to that chattered by scientists. Human beings evolved from Australopithecus afarensis, Homo habilis, Homo erectus, Homo neanderthalensis, and finally Homo sapiens. This will change with the advent of 4IR as human evolution will cease to be natural but technological. Human evolution will no longer be in the hands of God but in the hands of mankind, that is, scientists and large tech corporations. The divisions and massive disagreements on trans-humanism are broad with others calling the whole movement a big fraud and one meant to aid digital slavery especially in Africa and other (former) colonies.

The new slavery will be the human robotisation promoted by the transhumanism, and the brain nanobots and chips will be the new chains and shackles. The promoted “communities” really will be digital ghettos and transhumanism concentration camps. In simple terms: *The transhumanism only seeks to achieve human slaves for the millionaires who rule the world.*

(Flores, 2018, pp. 390–391) [emphasis original]

Africans turned trans-human will be the new slaves for the cartels. The cartels and tech MNC companies owning the digital slaves will be in charge of Africa by virtue of controlling the digitally enslaved Africans. These tech companies already demonstrated their *modus operandi*, by which they will employ the following instruments and mechanisms on the digital slaves: (1), mind control, (2), permanent monitoring with the Brain net, (3), elimination of the emotions, (4), living in virtual reality, (5), mind deletion, and (6), elimination of sexuality (Flores, 2018a, p. 273). Flores aptly termed the above nanomafia. It signifying the entering of the mafia into the realms of nanotechnology, biotechnology, and ICT making these 4IR aspects suspectable to (ab)use by organised crime syndicates and cartels. Nanotechnology will become the latest criminal weapon especially for the mafia given its “invisibility, interconnectedness, speed, and above all general society’s ignorance about this new form of crime” (Flores, 2018a , p. 273).

For Donna Haraway, the result of merging the human and the ICT enhanced machine, processes and algorithms of merging the human and the ICT enhanced machine, processes and algorithms is what she termed “cyborg” (Haraway, 2006, 2013). She defines a cyborg as, “a cybernetic organism a hybrid of machine and organism a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway, 2006, p. 149). She contends that cyborgs are creatures that are simultaneously animal and machines and that they populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted. There is a lot of coupling and uncoupling between machines and organism in the cyborg world. Haraway traces her cyborg to the United States budget of 1984 which allocated US\$84 billion to what was then termed C31. The project coded C31 was command-control-communication-intelligence (Haraway, 2006, p. 154).

One of the products of Project C31 is trans-humanism and extropianism. Once big data has been collected and processed, human electronic doubles are creatable. Once a human double has been created, it makes it possible for uploading human brain contents and thought processes online enabling (online) immortality to occur. Robert Harle argues that extropianism has already occurred (Harle, 2002). According to Harle, extropianism is the process which occurs when the entire contents of the human brain are transferred to a super-computational medium and henceforth exist as software (Harle, 2002, p. 73). This creates the contents of the human brain stored as a software, thereby guaranteeing immortality. When the human body dies and the human being ceases to function, the human electronic double continues to exist and to think at the same level and with the same capacity. What therefore dies is the body, and not the brain and the concomitant thought processes.

The notion of extropianism is derived from the science of extropy which denotes a system's intelligence and its capacity to be improved. The Extropy Institute founded in 1992 exists to coordinate the work of "groups of people with futuristic ideas and facilitated the formation of novel memetic compounds" (Bostrom, 2005, p. 12). Stated simply entropy is an organism's or instrument's capacity for improvement. Entropy stretches the limits of humans, cyborgs, and other trans-humans.

Courtesy of the 4IR, existential extropianism is now a reality and not just a concept. With the death of the physical being and the continued online existence of their electronic double, what then will be the use of the online double in the absence of the physical deceased being? One purpose and function for the online electronic immortal being is to continue tracking and studying their evolutionary trajectory. But most importantly, the function for the online electronic immortal being would be at a later stage to download their saved brains into a robot or cyborg, thereby (re)creating new beings. These beings will be without sovereignty and will be tuned and (re)programmed by their owners according to the tasks at hand.

The reincarnated person, albeit in the body of a cyborg robot can, therefore, be enslaved and ordered to perform all sorts of "inhumane" tasks. This is data coloniality at its best and most advanced. Being able to create and manipulate cyborg robots is indeed scientist playing God. Laws, organisations, and declarations already exist to actualise the reincarnation of humanity as cyborg robots.

The future of humanity is therefore in the hands of scientists. The *Extropianism, Transhuman Declaration* stated seven principles on which trans-humanity will operate (Bostrom, 2005). These seven principles are: (1), perpetual progress, (2), transformation, (3), practical optimism, (4), intelligent technology, (5), open society, (6), self-direction, and finally (7), rational thinking (Harle, 2002, p. 74).

The bottom line of extropianism is the continued scientific communication with the dead. Once the contents of the human brain have been uploaded online, it opens all other possibilities such as knowing exactly how one thinks and why one thinks the way that they think. It also implies that thinking is no

longer a private practice. Human beings will, therefore, be open to manipulation; politically, scientifically, financially, and many other forms of manipulation. After all, what one says is now verifiable using their online double. Stated differently we can verify the evidence that one gives from one's online brain. At this rate, the dead can be recalled to give testimony on their death inquest. A question might be posed: How did Africa arrive at this point where it very vulnerable to (re)colonisation?

### **Tracing Africa's vulnerability to (re)colonisation**

A key turning point in Africa's history is when mainly European traders became colonial administrators. In doing so, colonialism entered the black body via the church, Euro-North American modernity, and commerce and education. Africa was divided by a few white merchants of colonialism. They offloaded their imperial *agency* onto African *agents*, henceforth, like Biko admitted, the mind of the black man became the greatest weapon of the colonisers (Biko, 1987). Brother was turned against brother, sister against sister, all in defence and perpetration of colonialism. Most of Africa's leaders generally are therefore agents of (re)colonialism. This story is well told by Chinua Achebe in his seminal book *Things Fall Apart*.

The church had come and led many astray. Not only the low-born and the outcast but sometimes a worthy man had joined it. Such a man was Ogbuefi Ugonna, who had taken two titles, and who like a madman had cut the anklet of his titles and cast it away to join the Christians. ... *But apart from the church, the white men had also brought a government.* They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial. Many of these messengers came from Umuru on the bank of the Great River, where the white men first came many years before and where they had built the centre of their religion and trade and government. ... “We must fight these men and drive them from the land.” “It is already too late,” said Obierika sadly. “Our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help to uphold his government. If we should try to drive out the white men in Umuofia we should find it easy. *There are only two of them. But what of our own people who are following their way and have been given power?*” ... “Does the white man understand our custom about land?” “How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad, and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? *The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion.* We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”

(Achebe, 1959, pp. 125–127) [emphasis original]

So oblivious of the impending disaster of colonisation that Africans collectively and mockingly called the white men *muzungu* (singular), or *vazungu* (plural). The word *muzungu* which still refers to whites today means an aimless wanderer in Swahili and many other Bantu languages such as Kinyarwanda (Rwanda), Runyangore (Uganda), Chinyanja (Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe) Bemba (Zambia), Kisili (Kenya), Sena (Mozambique and Zimbabwe), Shona, (Mozambique and Zimbabwe), Zulu (South Africa), and Kirundi (Uganda and Burundi). The fact that the whole of the subcontinent used the same word for the same phenomenon demonstrates how uniformly whites carried themselves upon arrival in Africa. *Muzungu* was, therefore, a typical depiction of how the whites generally carried themselves in Africa, yet they were mapping geographies and ethnographies of colonialism.

In Southern Africa, with the assistance and sometimes connivance of missionaries and explorers, traders such as Cecil John Rhodes and Jan van Riebeek started looting African resources and benefiting their home countries. Colonialism succeed mainly because of the unity of purpose and collectivism displayed by the colonisers. This unity of purpose and collectivism are evident throughout the past three revolutions. They were evident in the slave trade; colonialism and now in the coloniality phase. It is therefore incorrect to argue that Euro-North Americans are individualistic. On the contrary, they are of the most united human groups especially when it comes to dispossessing, destabilising, and decentering Africa and Africans. When operating in Africa, Euro-North American can be likened to a pack of wild dogs.

While other scholars have posited that Eurocentric human rights are associated with individualism deemed contrary to African Ubuntu collectivism, we hold that this postulation is as simplistic as it is erroneous. Euro Americans are not individualistic – when they colonised Africa they did not do so as individuals, they came to Africa as bands; they divided Africa in Berlin as a collective; they were also backed by their metropolitan states when they colonised Africa; currently, Euro-Americans are United in the sense that they have the United States of America and the European Union even Africa is struggling to set up a United States of Africa.

(Nhémachena and Dhakwa, 2018, p. 77)

This demonstrates that the Euro-North Americans have been united since the end of the Thirty Years' War. If there is anything that unites them, it is their resolution never to fight each other again. The power of unity allows Euro-North Americans to scatter, divide, and rule Africa.

In Africa, the first three industrial revolutions were fronted by colonial administrators, traders, missionaries, and hunters. Among the traders were concession hunters who were instrumental in colonising Africa. The key focus during this period was on slavery, land theft, and land dispossessions. Achebe advised Africans to repossess their stolen assets and personhood using the very system and mechanisms used by the colonialists to steal them, he advised that,

The missionary who left the comforts of Europe to wander through my primeval forest was extremely earnest. He had to be; he came to change my world. The builders of Empire who turned me into a “British protected person” knew the importance of being earnest, they had the quality of mind which imperial Rome before them understood so well: *Gravitas*.

(Achebe, 1989, p. 84)

The missionary was therefore not a gentle and benevolent colonial agent, but for William Mpofu, the missionary was a coloniser with a hammer and also with an iron will to power. Mpofu argued,

The coloniser and the Empire builder who produced our present world and shaped our current condition did his job with an iron will to power and a monstrous gravitas. The colonial will to power is defined by what Friedrich Nietzsche ... called the habit of “philosophising with a hammer,” that is producing ideas that have the force to change histories and change destinies of peoples and their communities.

(Mpofu, 2017b, pp. 8–9)

Then there is the role played by religion in rendering Africa vulnerable and hence (re)colonisable. The proliferation of religion and religiosity in Africa must be understood against two backgrounds, the role of religion in aiding colonialism in Africa and its subsequent role in pacifying Africans and delivering a ready and captive audience to colonisers. Exogenous religions, especially the Abrahamic faiths of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity displaced Africa’s religions, in some cases permanently, in the process of preaching the gospel of submissiveness and the need for Africans not to resist colonialism since theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This partly explains why the most impoverished parts of Africa are the most religious.

#### **4IR as an African problem: On Ota Benga’s omnipresent fate**

From an African perspective, how is the 4IR problematic? Stated simply, this does not differ from the previous perspectives and problems experienced during the first, second, and third industrial revolutions. Once again, Africa will be the supplier of raw materials which are needed to drive the 4IR. These range from coltan or columbite-tantalite, (Fe++Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>6</sub>) which is mined predominantly in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to the markets that are needed to utilise the resultant gadgets.

Most importantly, Africa will lose its sovereignties, this time at the individual level. Sovereignty here is understood in Negrian, Schmittian, and Angambenian terms as “he who decides on the state of exception”. Sovereignty is that which arises as the establishment and therefore as the end of constituting power, as the consumption of the freedom brought by constituting power (Agamben, 1988, p. 43).

Thus the first and second industrial revolutions resulted in a loss of national sovereignty for Africa through colonialism and imperialism. The current industrial revolution implies the loss of the individual's sovereignty and in some extreme cases identity and personhood. Notions such as human rights will radically be changed as robo-humans and cyborgs will join humanity. Forms of enhanced lives will be bestowed with more rights than Africans. Sophia the robot is already a citizen of Saudi Arabia a place where Africans find it very difficult to get citizenship.

In this section, I use the story of Congolese alpha dehumanised and thingified African man who captured from his home in the Ituri Rainforest in the DRC to link the four industrial revolutions to slavery and colonialism as a foreground for mapping the futures of Africa in the 4IR. By its very nature, a revolution is rapid, unstoppable, and have many casualties, and in these four cases, that is, the 1IR, the 2IR, the 3IR, and the 4IR, Africa has been the persistent casualty. During the 1IR, slave labour produced most of the consumer goods which was made possible by the inventions such as in 1712 when Thomas Newcomen invented the productive steam engine, John Lombe's silk factory in 1719, and James Kay's weaving machine in 1733. In 1764, a spinning jenny was added to the list of inventions by James Hargreaves. It allowed one worker to spin eight spindles and these workers had to be foreseeably sourced from Africa as slaves.

For Euro-North America, the first industrial revolution was about drastic increases in industrial productivity while for Africa it was about unprecedented humiliations as Africans were chained, transported, and traded on the market like beasts. Others ended up being viewed in human zoos, ironically having been brought from the Ituri rainforest in eastern DRC by a missionary. This was the fate of Oto Benga, an indigenous Mbuti man, "rescued" by missionary and "anthropologist" Dr Reverend Samuel Phillips Verner in the DRC together with three other Batwa, derogatorily referred to as pygmies. Benga was humiliatingly depicted by Bradford thus;

Who was Ota Benga? Elf, dwarf, cannibal, wildman, savage loose in the metropolis, beyond ape but not quite human, stunted, retarded, incomplete, someone to gawk at, tease, put in cages, ridicule—these are among the contemporary descriptions of him. ... It was difficult to entertain the proposition that he and his people were as fully and authentically human as J. P Morgan or Andrew Carnegie. It was nearly inconceivable that Ota might be just as curious about the anthropologists who bedevilled him as they were about him.

(Pittas, 2011, pp. 2–3)

Having been dehumanised, literally captured and caged, and brought to America,

the enslavement of Africans was to gain both momentum and scale. Without slave labour, the first industrial revolution would not have succeeded as it required a lot of free and cheap human labour to operate these invented machines. The first products consisted of tobacco, sugar, coffee, cocoa and

cotton and were produced mainly from African slave labour. The slave economy became one of the most profitable enterprises whose profits were then ploughed into the purchase of machinery invented during the first industrial revolution. In some parts of the world such as Hispaniola which was “discovered” by Christopher Columbus, Europeans also diseases for which the locals had no immunity. These include syphilis, smallpox and influenza. When Columbus arrived with these three ships in 1492, Hispaniola had 250 000 people. This was down to 14 000 in 1517 courtesy of Columbus and his crew. In Hispaniola, colonisers also looted lives en masse and enslave the survivors.

(Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, 2013; Pringle, 2015)

The second industrial revolution is closely linked to and associated with colonialism as it made colonialism possible and necessary. Necessary because the colonisers needed to have large empires to, *inter alia*, supply them with cheap and consistent raw materials. This condition persists even today and is unlikely to change largely because Euro-North America will never be endowed with the natural resources it lacks. This lack made colonialism possible, if not inevitable, as the invention of the wheel compressed geography and made it possible to travel across the world in relatively short periods and also with less risk.

For Euro-North America and the beneficiaries of the past three industrial revolutions, the 4IR is for consolidating their gains. For Africa and those on the receiving end of the past three industrial revolutions, their suffering continue. Africa is yet to be fully restored, dignified, and the humanity of its people reinstated. Conditions are bound to be worse for Africa and Africans. There is a rise in animism, anthropocentrism, and post-humanism all of which threatens Africa in various ways, including disrupting African identities, sovereignties, and social, political, legal systems. What Africans demand and deserve from Euro-North America are the restoration and recognition of its humanity, restitution of its materialities looted, and reinstatements of its ontologies and epistemes. In the absence of these corrections, the 4IR will result in more neo-colonialism and neo-enslavements, further marginalising Africa and Africans as they will be replaced by humanoid robots and other forms of post-humans.

For Helbing, “... the explosive evolution of technologies such as quantum computing, memristor technologies, and light-based LiFi communication, implies a race for global dominance” (Helbing, 2016). Given Africa’s inability to effectively participate in the international system as an equal member, Africa in the 4IR will be (re)colonised by humanoid robots of Euro-North American origin (manufacture). These humanoid robots will continue the trajectory started by hunters, missionaries, and traders; perpetuated by colonialists and imperialists, and now taken over by humanoid robots. There are far-reaching implications for Africa as it will be inhabited by electronic persons concurrently with natural persons. The interaction between these two species is bound to be problematic. Africa’s fate in the 4IR will be similar to that of one of its ancestors, Ota Benga, captured (literally and figuratively), dehumanised and thingified.

### **The weaponisation of citizenship in the 4IR**

One of the most potent creations of colonialism in Africa was the notion of an adulterated version of citizenship. The colonially created version of citizenship entails exclusion more than inclusion. As a colonial creation, citizenship was meant to ascribe on the colonisers a sense and right of belonging which they bestowed on themselves upon their arrival. This created a binary of mainly urbanised, propertied, and rights endowed predominantly whites against dispossessed, poor, unpropertied, and black lacking many in aspects of life such as law, manners, etiquette, organised lives and capital . White settlers, in the minority numerically, bestowed on themselves, through violence, the right and responsibility to determine who becomes a citizen and started dispensing national identity cards and other forms of identification, which were meant to aid tax collection which was very unpopular and highly contested by the blacks. Today, Africa is grappling with challenges of social cohesion, Afrophobia, nativism, and other exclusionary practices which were once unAfrican and against the ethos of Ubuntu.

In the 4IR, contestations over citizenship will take a new dimension. Robots, robo-humans, and other forms of post-humans will be granted citizenship ahead of Africans especially in Euro-North America. The weaponisation of citizenship is the negation of the other side of the coin which is state sovereignty. Without state sovereignty, there can be no citizenship. So to deny Africans citizenship is accomplishable through the upscaling state sovereignty from the state to the empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Mamdani asserts that state sovereignty is constituted and authenticated by citizenship noting that,

The Westphalian coin of state sovereignty is still an effective currency in the international system. It is worth looking at both sides of this coin: sovereignty and citizenship. If “sovereignty” remains the password to enter the passageway of international relations, “citizenship” still confers membership in the sovereign national political (state) community. Sovereignty and citizenship are not opposites but associates: The state, after all, embodies the key political right of citizens, the right of collective self-determination.

(Mamdani, 2009, p. 274)

Homi Bhabha conceptualises sovereignty as the glue binding citizens together and the decentring of the nation state through globalisation as essentially an ontological problem thus,

Our nation-centred view of sovereign citizenship can only comprehend the predicament of minoritarian “belonging” as a problem of ontology – a question of belonging to a race, a gender, a class, a generation becomes a kind of “second nature,” a primordial identification, an inheritance of tradition, a naturalisation of the problems of citizenship.

(Bhabha, 1994, p. xvii)

For Bhabha, robbed of their sovereignty and citizenship, Africans ended up mimicking their (former) masters in what he termed the third spaces (Jonathan, 1990; Bhabha, 1984, 1994). The third spaces theorised by Homi Bhabha are constituted in the 4IR by online and cyberspaces and other technologically created spaces where humans interact with machines and machine with machines. These third spaces are manned, regulated, ruled, and adjudicated by those who own the technology which roams these spaces, that is, cartels that own big technology companies and their empire allies.

The 4IR will see heightened weaponisation of citizenship. The notion of borders will be enhanced to include what can be termed electronic borders and boundaries. Based on past colonial relations and trajectories, it can be argued that, robots of African origin will find it difficult to seek work in Euro-North America. Inversely, robots of Euro-North American origin will automatically be deployed in Africa. Like their human counterparts, robots will be ascribed citizenship. Like most facets of life, they will also be regulated from Euro-North America. The United Nations will have the mandate to oversee the humans–robots interactions. Ascribed with citizenship and deployed to pursue nationalistic objectives, robots, robo-humans, and post-humans will be efficacious in future far-right agenda.

### **The five monopolies of capitalism: Cementing the fate of Africa in the 4IR**

Africa's inability to control what Samir Amin termed the five monopolies of capitalism will seal Africa's fate as a marginalised and weakest member of the international community. Euro-North America and its networks control these five areas: (1), war, (2), technology, (3), natural resources, (4), media, and (5), finance. Africa has been slowly losing control of these five since the first industrial revolution and this has been happening cumulatively. The first industrial revolution resulted in Africa losing its people, that is, human resources, which is the alpha resource in any economy. All other resources need the human factor to actualise their potential. By first being robbed of its human resources, Africa was exposed, and rendered impotent and eunuch right from the first industrial revolution.

Euro-North America's monopoly over war was used to enslave Africans. The same monopoly over war has been the background to the effectiveness of the other four monopolies namely technology, natural resources, media, and finance. The United Nation's Security Council (UNSC) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have been able dispensers of war to those who dared resist the monopolies of capitalism. Iraq, Libya, and Venezuela were attacked and dismantled when they threatened to sell their oil in Euros and not in United States dollars.

The second industrial revolution saw Africa lose its natural resource sovereignty. This loss of Africa's ability to control its natural resources was added to the human resource loss experienced since the first industrial revelation. For

Africa, the second industrial revolution was about the loss of the control of over its natural resources.

The third industrial revolution resulted in Africa losing control over its media and finance among other sectors which resulted in Africa being structurally extroverted continent. Francophone African news is dominated by the French news channel Canal France International and France 24 while the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) dominates the news in its (former) colonies. The BBC broadcasts in many of the local languages in its (former) colonies such as Hausa and other African languages such as Afaan Oromo, Amharic, Tigrinya, Igbo, Yoruba, and Nigerian Pidgin. Today BBC broadcasts in more than 40 African languages. The same media argument can be made about Lusophone African countries such as Mozambique and Angola which are dominated by Portuguese media and news outlets.

These five key loses were buttressed during the decolonisation phase. As the colonisers were loosening their grip on political power, they were incrementally increasing their grip on economic and epistemic power.

The finances of (former) French colonies, for example, are run by the Central and Western Africa CFA Franc zones. Cameroon, Mali, Benin, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger, Equatorial Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau effectively have their finances controlled in Paris courtesy of the CFA Franc arrangement. This, despite recently obtaining their own currency, which currency is pegged to the Euro and their foreign exchange reserves are still held in France. The Francophone, Anglophone, and Lusophone arrangements are a continuation of colonialism through balkanisation.

The 4IR will see Africa further lose its technology sovereignty. Big multi-national corporations are mining data in Africa at no cost to them. As the 4IR reaches the consolidation phase, Euro-North America will enhance its stronghold on the five monopolies of capitalism not only in Africa but also globally. For Euro-North America and their networks, the 4IR is an opportunity to tie the proverbial loose ends while Africa suffers from the Matthew effect.

### **Africa, the 4IR, and the Matthew effect**

A concept which aptly describes Africa's destiny in the 4IR is the Matthew effect (Sauder, 2018; Bağcı, 2019; Ratiu, 2019). Originating from the Bible in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the notion is that those with much will accumulate more and those with less will lose even the little which they have. The implication of Matthew effect to Africa's destiny in the 4IR is that Euro-North America, Japan, and China will increase their stronghold on technology, the global economy, global affairs, war, and the extraction and accumulation of natural resources. Africa will lose not only its natural resources but also its importance as a source of these minerals because once extracted from Africa the continent will be akin to an empty vessel.

The Matthew effect is a phenomenon whose implications are drawn directly from the Bible. Matthew 13:12 reads, "... for whoever has, to him more shall

be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him...”. In this context Africa is taken as the one who has very little from whom the little that he has will be taken away. Euro-North America on the other hand is taken as the one with abundance, and to whom more shall be given. In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, the implication is that Africa will lose the little that it gained from its political independence, while, on the contrary, Euro-North America will even get more from their investments in the colonial economy. The fourth industrial revolution is the agent which will be used to take away the little that Africa have and give it to Euro-North America that already has more. This not only applies to Africa’s natural resources and big data but also applies to the sovereignty of Africans and African states. The sovereignties that were gained by Africa through political independence will be taken away through the 4IR and will be owned and controlled by Euro-North America.

That Africa will lose its strategic importance as a source of rare earth minerals as a result of the accumulation of these minerals especially by China has happened before albeit in a different scenario, that of the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, Africa was strategically important for the East-West ideological divide. When the Cold War ended, Africa found itself almost useless in international relations, with very little strategic importance for the global powers. Africa’s destiny in this scenario is that of geo-political uselessness.

## **8 Africa's eunuch condition and the omnipresent footprints of the four industrial revolutions**

### **Introduction**

The template for the exploitation of Africa by the empire – slaves, commodities, and now data – remains the same and leaves the same footprints. Revolutions by their nature bring change. The belief is that the present is unjust and unsustainable and that the bureaucracy failed to effect the changes desired by communities. This leaves communities with no option but to revolt. The past three industrial revolutions have not brought any sustainable development to Africa. On the contrary, they resulted in further marginalising Africa and Africans. In this section, I present the three previous industrial revolutions as daggers which were mercilessly plunged in the heart of Africa, each past industrial revolution representing a stabbing. The argument here is that while the previous three industrial revolutions immensely benefited those who started them, those in Africa who were not beneficiaries of these industrial revolutions continue to be on the receiving end of Euro-North American modernity. I argue that Africa must not celebrate the 4IR as this is another stab in the heart of Africa which will result in super-imperialism, super-inequality, super-unemployment, and super-poverty. Engulfed in these supers, Africa will be (re)colonised by the empire.

### **The logics of revolutions**

The logic behind all revolutions is to do away with an order of things deemed to be undesirable. A key ingredient of revolutions is the unquestionable desire by the people to move away from a certain status quo. There are two opposing and clashing forces in a revolution, one agitating for maintaining the status quo and the other opposed to it. With both sides adamant, a clash becomes inevitable and the revolution ensues. However, if a revolution is an uprising against something or a certain order of things, the question is, what is the 4IR revolting against? For Artwell Nhémachena, the cardinal question is, against who/what is the 4IR revolting or counter-revolting? He questions,

Might the fourth industrial revolution be a revolution or counter-revolution against humanism, humanity and humanities in the emergent post-humanist and post-anthropocentric era?

(personal communication: 11 December 2019)

Given the arithmetic growth in the influence of information, science, and technology which culminated in the 4IR, the revolution is certainly aimed at the humanities, in the process replacing the biological human being with other forms of being such as robo-humans and cyborgs. The 4IR is essentially revolting against anything and everything that is anthropocentric, ushering in a period of massive post-anthropocentrism. This has already led to massive job losses, as a result of automation, which are being experienced in various sectors of the African economy such as banks, retail shops, security, the media, and so on.

If the 4IR is premised on the need to do away with anything that is human-centred and replace it with enhanced beings, then parallels can be drawn with the disruption experienced in Zimbabwe in particular and in Africa in general during the long reign of Robert Mugabe. Mugabe basically destroyed the economy and inflation reached record levels, he disrupted lives, education, health, development, and even foreign policy. Nhemachena (2019, p. 1) sees the parallels and asks,

if the fourth industrial revolution disrupts/destroys jobs/employment, what is the difference between its proponents and the Mugabe regime that is also globally accused of disrupting/destroying employment in Zimbabwe post 2000?

According to Nhemachena, the 4IR therefore represents a period where massive disruptions in virtually all facets of life will be experienced at a rapid rate. Key casualties will be democracy, human rights, and development. The 4IR will see more unemployment and unemployability, inequality, poverty, and violence among the weak and the vulnerable. Already, Oxfam reported that 22 of the world's richest men have wealth more than all the women in Africa put together.<sup>1</sup>

All industrial revolutions originated predominantly in Euro-North America and they were driven by individuals, companies and organisations from there. Not surprisingly, industrial revolutions have mostly benefited Euro-North America while simultaneously milking, looting, disadvantaging, and subjugating Africa, and the Global South. Africa and other parts of the (formerly) colonised world have not been fully incorporated into the global economy and never equitably benefited from the past three industrial revolutions – hence the argument that most parts of Africa are still stuck in the second or third industrial revolution periods. Countries that are yet to secure sustainable peace such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia are actually regressing in terms of their industrialisation, quality of life, and sustainable peace. These countries cannot be expected to participate in and benefit from the 4IR in the same way this phenomenon will benefit countries in Euro-North America.

The logic is that the first industrial revolution laid the foundation for the second industrial revolution, which in turn laid the foundation for the third

industrial revolution. Without a solid third industrial revolution having brought infrastructure and viable, independent institutions, Africa will not benefit much from the 4IR. It will be a daunting task for Africa to pursue the 3IR and the 4IR simultaneously while it is struggling just with the 3IR alone. Evidently, every revolution produces winners and losers.

### **Revolutionary winners and losers**

A key characteristic of revolutions is that they produce winners and losers. In most cases, the winners will be the majority or the most powerful members of the society. Like its three predecessors, the 4IR will also produce winners and losers. Africa and Africans will predominantly constitute the bulk of the losers at the receiving end of the 4IR just as was the case with the first three industrial revolutions. A revolution is characterised by death and destruction. The 4IR too will be characterised by many deaths. These include the death of human beings, study disciplines, industries, languages, cultures, and epistemologies.

The title of this section sums up the argument made herein. As nascent as it is, it can be stated that the 4IR will not significantly benefit Africa. Basing on the trajectory of the past three industrial revolutions and using inferential judgements, one can safely say that Africa will once again be at the receiving end of the current industrial revolution. What determines revolutionary winners and losers, literally and metaphorically, is a matter of firepower and lack thereof respectively. Using the Matthew effect of cumulative advantage, those countries with economic and military power will gain and utilise more of these powers and will also benefit more from the 4IR. Those countries with less economic and military power will exert minimum influence but suffer maximum consequences.

Laws will be shaped according to the desires of those with power to influence their drafting, implementation, and maintenance. Proverbially speaking, until the springbok start hunting lions, the hunting story will always be written and read from the perspective of the lion and not the springbok. For the springbok, life is all about daily surviving the hunting lions. The countries of Euro-North America, by virtue of being leaders in information and communication technology (ICT), nontechnology, biotechnology, and the design and implementation of the 4IR will never relinquish the advantages which their position gives them in the international arena. After all, they got their privileged position through blood and war and for now, only war can topple them from their dominant position. What cannot be doubted is that Africa will undergo another transition, albeit a reactionary one aimed at minimising the challenges of the 4IR.

### **Many and endless societal transitions**

Civilisations transition from one mode to another. These transitions could be endogenously or exogenously driven. For countries in Euro-North America who were the initiators and beneficiaries of the past three industrial revolutions, their transitions normally happen from within and take place on their own terms. In contrast, when it comes to Africa, societal transitions are normally a

reaction to outside forces and historically very negative phenomena such as the slave trade and colonialism. Karl Popper's treatise, titled *The Open Society and its Enemies: The Spell of Plato*, noted the many pains encountered during societal transitions (Popper, 1945). Whole civilisations can disappear during transitions.

Being positioned on the weaker side of economic and military power the societal transitions that will occur in Africa will obviously not be on Africa's terms. For Popper, these transitions should ideally lead to an open society devoid of what he termed barbarism and tribalism. He wrote:

this civilisation has not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth, the transition from the tribal or closed society, with its submission to magical forces, to the open society which sets free the critical powers of man.

(Popper, 1945, p. 1)

Thus, the 4IR is part of the attempt to open up Africa to what Popper calls an open society. Equally notable is the fact that the *man* being referred to by Popper and many like him is not all mankind but the "civilized man", that is, Euro-North Americans (Mignolo, 2009; Benyera, Mtapuri, and Nhemachena, 2018). Stated differently, the 4IR will predominantly benefit the *Humanitas* and further disadvantage the *Anthropos* (Mignolo, 2009, 2011; Benyera, Mtapuri, and Nhemachena, 2018).

What Africa will transition to and into at the end of the 4IR will most likely be (re)colonisation, further global marginalisation, and more lootability. It is too early to speculate what the fifth industrial revolution (5IR) will be about. What can be stated upfront is that basing on the past trajectory of the previous three industrial revolutions and on the current 4IR, nascent as it may be, the 5IR promises to be still more of the same for Africa unless and until something drastically changes in Africa.

### **Africa into the 4IR: Entering a revolution without an ideology**

A key ingredient for any successful revolution is a proper, well-articulated ideology. It is the role of ideology to lay out the roadmap of the revolution. The French Revolution, the Bolshevik and the Menshevik revolutions in the then United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), and the various liberation revolutions in Africa were all characterised by clear ideologies.

Those in Euro-North America who are the originators of the 4IR have a capitalist ideology which has underpinned and guided the past three revolutions. Africa and Africans generally do not have any ideology for guiding them to participate effectively in the 4IR or resist the impending further marginalisation in this dispensation. Nationalism is Africa's main ideological hope. However, as rightly noted by Yoweri Museveni, African nationalism has become tired, toxic, old, and alienated from the youth who are the majority of the population (Museveni, 2000). As a recycled and weaponised ideology, nationalism has

become xenophobic and self-destructive. It needs a lot of cleansing in order for it to be used as a combative ideology to resist and debunk the myth of the 4IR.

African nationalism must be reinvented by African nationalists so that it aligns with the youth, tapping into new technologies, and shying away from xenophobia and other negative, divisive social markers. William Jethro Mpofu asserts that:

In this information age and media age of coloniality and technological determinism in global information dissemination, where social media and other information technologies scramble for young hearts and young minds, nationalism needs to re-invent itself to capture the imagination of the youth and secure its place as not only a victorious ideology of the past but a winning political movement of the future.

(Mpofu, 2013, p. 114)

For many reasons another viable ideological option for Africa in the 4IR is decoloniality, despite it currently being misunderstood by those who are supposed to be benefiting from it. It is also being contaminated and deliberately misinterpreted by those who feel threatened by it. In fact, for Africa to participate effectively and not continue on the trajectory of being marginalised, there is an urgent need for the development of a competitive ideology which positions Africa first. That ideology is decoloniality.

What happened to Africa's ideologies, it may be asked. The short answer is that African ideologies suffered the same and simultaneous fate as its citizens, i.e., genocides and epistemicides, all linked to the development of the Global North and industrial revolutions. Let us consider the case of the Kongo Kingdom, which at its peak covered present day Northern Angola, the bothh Congos and parts of Gabon. The Kongo Kingdom was a fully fledged civilisation whose dual currency was the Nzimbu shell and the Mpusu cloth. The conversion of the Kongo King (manikongo) Nzinga a Nkiwu and his son Mvemba a Nzinga to Christianity in 1491 and his subsequent alignment with the Portuguese marked the demise of the once mighty Kongo Kingdom. The King became known as Joao 1 Nzinga a Nkuku and his son as Afonso 1 Mvemba a Nzinga. The Portuguese and the Kongo rulers fell out of favour when they clashed over the issue of slave trade with the then maikongo Afonso 1 Mvemba a Nzinga opposing slave trade. The troubles which caused the fall of the Kongo Kingdom can be largely attributed to colonialism. I trace the origins of the current Congo problem to the baptism of the maikongo in 1491.

### **Genocide as the underwriters of revolutions**

There is an indisputable link between industrial revolutions and atrocities, and what happened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the collecting of rubber during the first industrial revolution illustrates this well. This story of rubber started in 1839 when Charles Goodyear accidentally spilt sulphur onto

some hot rubber, noticing that the rubber did not become stiff and cracked when it was cold neither did it melt when temperatures rose – something which had been a major problem for the nascent rubber industry (Cawthorne, 1999). This rubber revolution was completed in 1885 when John Dunlop fitted a pneumatic tyre to his son's tricycle. The rubber tyre for the automobile industry was born and a rubber revolution was in full swing. Demand for rubber was immense with car tyres, rubber for gaskets, and other first industrial revolution-related inventions. The first industrial revolution-induced demand for rubber increased even further by the invention of the telephone which needed cables that had to be insulated by rubber, stretching over thousands of kilometres.

This demand for rubber meant that the Democratic Republic of the Congo became a natural target since it had wild rubber in abundance. This was the genesis of the Congo crisis which persists until today. This rubber was collected from vines and not tapped from trees like elsewhere and collecting it was very labour-intensive. In order to collect as much rubber as possible so as to satisfy the needs of the first industrial revolution in Euro-North America, the European rubber merchants used brutal methods. In 1899, the French devised a very cruel method of forcing the local Congolese villagers to collect rubber for them. Rubber was hard to collect in forests full of wild animals and insects and it also took days to coagulate, so naturally the Congolese were not keen to do it. As a strategy to force the villagers to eventually collect rubber for the various French companies, French soldiers who arrived in 1899 in the Congo looted all the villagers' food which included chicken and grain and left nothing for the fleeing villagers to eat.

After looting all the food, the French *Force de République* took captive all the women, only to be released when their chief had brought the required amount of rubber. Any man who refused to collect rubber would have his wife killed. This brutal system was "improved" to a point where each village was assigned a quota of rubber to collect on behalf of the French colonialists. A quota roughly translated to 324 kilograms of dried rubber per adult male per fortnight. This essentially meant full-time work for the men and no more farming or hunting for them. Murderous forms of punishment accompanied this colonial enterprise, for example, villagers who resisted would have ten people taken hostage and tied up in a tent with big stones which was then pushed into a river for them to die.

Fast forward 200 years to the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo where coltan was discovered. Coltan is a key ingredient in electronic devices and thus one of the rare earth minerals which is used to fuel the 4IR. The way in which coltan is being mined in the Congo is not much different to the ways in which rubber was collected. The question then is how does the same atrocities visit the same communities whose only crime is that their area is endowed with natural resources such as rubber and rare earth minerals? As a 4IR mantra, anything and anyone who stands in the way of a foreign corporation's ability to extract cheap resources must be removed. In a way Africa has always fuelled industrial revolutions, including the current 4IR where personal data is the new oil and gold.

## **Personal data: The new oil and gold**

Personal data, as with natural resources, has become the target of extractive corporates. Like any other natural resource, capitalism seeks to maximise its profits from such resources. As Mejias states,

there is a new form of colonialism emerging in the world: data colonialism. By this, we mean a new resource-grab whereby human life itself has become a direct input into economic production in the form of extracted data.

(Mejias, 2019)

Like classical colonialism, data colonialism violently reconfigures human relations to economic production. Things like land, water, and other natural resources were valued by native people in the precolonial era, but not in the same way that colonisers (and later, capitalists) came to value them: as private property. Likewise, we are experiencing a situation in which things that were once primarily outside the economic realm – things like our most intimate social interactions with friends and family, or our medical records – have now been commodified and made part of an economic cycle of data extraction that benefits a few transnational corporations. While praising Couldry and Mejias's book, Bruce Schneier chillingly writes,

There's a land grab occurring right now, and it's for your data and your freedom: companies are not only surveilling you, they're increasingly influencing and controlling your behaviour. [There is a] new colonialism at the heart of modern computing, and serves as a needed wake-up call to everyone who cares about our future relationship with technology.

(Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias, 2019)

Datafication is the process of turning aspects of people's lives into big data after having harvested it, then processing and redeploying it to aid decision making. Seminal for Africa is the fact that data is being mined and harvested from Africans without their expressed consent, but rather with their manufactured consent. This data is used to (re)colonise Africa and Africans. This is how it will happen:

When human beings are inserted with microchips and nanobots, implanted into their brains/bodies, they wirelessly emit data which is collected and transmitted across national and continental space in real time, in huge volumes and at high velocity. When human beings adorn smart watches, smart textiles/smart shirts/smart hats and sleep on smart beds, they constantly emit and transmit Big Data, across space, via the Internet of Things in real time, at high velocity and in huge volumes. Similarly, when animals including cows, dogs and goats are implanted with chips and nanobots,

they constantly emit and transmit Big Data via the Internet of Things. In other words, the information revolution, in the 4IR, datafies human beings and other objects in ways that render human researchers superfluous. Data is directly mined by transnational corporations, which own and control the software, from the human minds/bodies that are fitted with chips and nanobots or other so-called enhancement devices.

(Nhemachena, 2019, p. 3)

Mined, harvested, processed, and sold without their expressed consent, Africans are being pauperised as their data enriches global multinational cartels and networks such as Siemens, Nokia, Facebook, Samsung, Apple, and Alphabet. The argument by those mining and datafying Africans is that “users have to give up part of their privacy in exchange for free convenient platform services” (van Dijck, 2014, p. 197). The bottom line of this logic is that metadata has become the new currency by which Africans and other citizens pay for their communication services provided by big tech companies and their contractors (van Dijck, 2014, pp. 197–198). This trade-off constitutes coloniality of data.

### **Can Africa fight back?**

Allow me to describe Africa’s leadership crisis as the underlying condition for coloniality: Black pseudo-nationalist elites are complicit in coloniality. They are guilty of the following:

- (1) *Misrepresentation* (presenting themselves as nationalists when they are actually capitalist and Western stooges).
- (2) *Misappropriation* (stealing people’s grievances and problems and presenting them as their own).
- (3) *Manufactured consent* (misrepresenting cases, situations, and information to their citizens in order to get their ill-informed consent).
- (4) *Pseudo consent* (pretending that their citizens consented to actions of the elites).
- (5) *Accumulation* (participating, aiding, and abetting the commodification of the post colony and profiteering from the citizens’ impoverishment).

Since the end of official colonisation and apartheid in South Africa, a predominantly black pseudo-nationalist elite took power. Instead of reformulating the structure of the economy they simply joined the old white elite and continued with the same systems and structures and institutions of statecraft. The white elite remained in control of the economy while the black elite were in control of political power. They became inextricably linked and their relationship resulted in the oppression of the poor, undermining of independence, and looting of the (post)-colonial economy. The black elites inherited and perfected the same institutions, mechanisms, and systems that had worked so well for the white elites in their quest for colonial domination. In the meantime, the

majority of poor people were still engulfed in the euphoria of independence, oblivious of the ensuing machinations that betrayed the promise of the colonial struggles, that is, a better life for all. If the white minority elite was dangerous as a class on its own, joined by their black counterparts they became even more lethal. More lethal because the population was under the illusion that they were being led, while in actuality they were being misled and impoverished. The new ruling class had mastered the art of misrepresentation, appropriating the plight of the poor, and misrepresenting it at the United Nations as their own. In a way the pseudo-nationalists are the new colonisers, because to colonise is to usurp another's sovereignty, individually or collectively. Coloniality is more fatal and effective than colonialism, because coloniality has local, invested henchmen, that is, the black pseudo-nationalists and the middle class which aspires day and night to become part of the elites.

The black middle class started enjoying opportunities that were reserved for their white counterparts. This left the poor black citizens on their own, having been robbed of their anti-colonial, anti-apartheid comrades. Hence the crisis of Africa is a crisis of ethical leadership.

At the citizen level, the result of the above is poverty, inequality, unemployability, and generally a lived experience which are worse in the post colony than during colonial apartheid. Under colonialism, suffering was bearable because, after all, it was being dispensed by a white-minority settler regime. Under coloniality, suffering becomes unbearable because it is being dispensed by a black, majority-elected, and independent government. The source of the suffering makes the pain so immense so unbearable.

On the part of the elites, long incumbency became the norm in most of Africa and the state started siding with the “markets” and the “investors”. State decisions were being taken with the markets in mind and not the citizens. The black pseudo-nationalist elites became some of the richest citizens overnight. In order to maintain their power and newfound economic status, dictatorship, prebendalism, tyranny, electoral fraud, and even genocide became part of their survival strategies.

Just by crossing the independence line, Africa generally mutated from race-based structural inequalities to class-based structural inequalities. Independence was therefore a process of forming new classes and social identities and alliances. The common denominator in the different eras is the majority, black, poor people. These suffered throughout the three previous industrial revolutions and will surely suffer in the 4IR. This is their fate predominantly because the post-colonial African state embraced the free-market economy model and neoliberal policies, which by their nature are anti-poor. A starting point for the resurgence of Africa in the 4IR is one which must be grounded in the needs of poor people.

## **Africa: What is to be done?**

Obviously, the 4IR will result in the formation of new forms of socialisation such as virtual communities. The question is, will Africa be part of these virtual

communities and, if so, in what capacity? The short answer is that Africa will be part of these virtual and online communities not as an equal partner, but as an enslaved supplier of raw data. In 1902, Vladimir Lenin asked this question (Lenin, 1902), and it is being asked here again: What is to be done?

For others like South Africa's former Statistician General Pali Lehohla, Africa sadly deserves to be digitally colonised, "When you make value visible and not appropriate it you deserve to be a product for consumption" (Lehohla, 2019). This was against the background of Africa's failure to effectively participate in the inaugural World Data Forum in 2017 held in Cape Town, South Africa and the second World Data Forum held in 2019 in Dubai. He argues that African leaders are moving slowly and leave the tech vultures with no option but to feed on Africa's free data. He argues,

The paucity of systems thinking in Africa is mortgaging the continent holus bolus to the owners of digital capital. And African leaders and institutions are in slumber whilst this happens. ... This ideologically barren approach to development will yield nothing but 4 billion Africans enslaved as products.

(Lehohla, 2019)

With these failed attempts by Africa to have a unified approach to the management of its data, African civil society organisations, think tanks and universities, and other tertiary institutions must fill this void. They have to spearhead both the decolonisation of data and step into the gap left by local political elites' lack of action to protect African data. Africa must begin by recognising the importance of data and big data, own it and then use it for evidence-based policy and planning. Right now, most African decisions are either inflected by its international "partners" such as China, Russia, the EU, or the United States, or flow from prebentalism or other local negative -isms.

Africa must liberate itself, sooner rather than later, especially with regard to its mineral and other natural resources. African states must prioritise its autonomy and must hasten liberatory efforts starting with the nationalisation of data. Mejias declared its sacrosanctity when he stated that, "Big Tech corporations are extracting data from users across the world without paying for it. It is time to change that" (Mejias, 2019). In the process, Africa should draw massive lessons from its failures to benefit from its gold, diamond, timber, and other resources. Together with nationalising data, Africa must grow local tech entrepreneurs from the "unemployed youths".

One way in which Africa can legitimately fight back against the work of the empire and the cartels especially in the rare-earth minerals category is by forming its own cartels. Africa can draw important lessons from OPEC and could even form an organisation similar to OPEC. This must be done cognisant of the pitfalls which had bedevilled similar previous efforts and especially Muammar Gaddafi in his efforts to lead Africa to be financially independent from both financial oligarchies, cartels, and Western donor organisations and governments. Efforts to independently market the rare earth minerals of Africa

in the manner OPEC markets its petroleum products will be seen as treasonous by those who are opposed to Africa's independence and resource autonomy.

A constant threat to African autonomy has been the scaremongering that should Africa try to regulate its mining sector, investors will flee. This is part of the hoaxes and myths that have been used to capture Africa and loot its mineral resources. If Russia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have over 90% of the global uranium deposits, where will these investors flee to? (Unless of course if they discover an alternative to uranium). Russia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe are responsible for over 93% of the global uranium production and Africa is responsible for over 90% of the global cobalt production (Hinshaw, 2010). Africa can therefore leverage their numbers and control the international sale of uranium, and cobalt among other minerals.

## **Forward with data localisation**

In operation, Citizens' data must be kept in their country and must be regulated locally, escalated to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and then to a continental body such as the African Union (AU), and not the other way around. Data centres are necessary, they act like oil refineries and must be located in-country. There is no oil refinery that is located at a remote location. Oil is refined at the source, so must data.

To begin with, "the cloud" is located around the coasts of the United States, South Africa and Northern Europe. India has the highest number of Facebook users, yet Facebook does not store the data in Indian clouds.

While India is the country with the biggest amount of Facebook users, when you look at the location of Facebook's 15 data centres, ten are in North America, four in Europe and one in Asia – in Singapore.

(Hicks, 2019)

This disconnection between geographical data source and data storage sites is an issue that goes to the heart of the notion of sovereignty of the individual human being and nation state and must never be addressed and analysed as an economic issue. Parading economic rules, principles, and justifications is exactly how Africa was colonised in the first place as the empire was "justifiably" in need of cheap war materials and new bigger markets. After all, whose economic principles and rules apply? Those of the data generators or those of the data keepers?

Africa can learn how to own its data from the French example. "France continues to pursue its own data centre infrastructure, dubbed '*le cloud souverain*'" (Hicks, 2019). If France can have data sovereignty, why should not African countries also enjoy data sovereignty? By agitating for data sovereignty, Africa and the developing nations are not asking for favours, or strange new things, but rather to be treated equally and be accorded the same international rights just like France. As stated by Hicks, and as expected, China and Russia have important laws that mandate the localisation of data across many sectors.

So, what could countries in the Global South do to avoid the dangers of data colonialism? One option is to follow proposals from the likes of computer philosophy writer Jaron Lanier and former US presidential candidate Andrew Yang, who have suggested that individuals should be paid for their data. But this neoliberal attempt to try to solve the problem at the level of the individual can dilute the value of the accumulated resources. After all is said and done, if we work on the level of the individual (or even the level of collectives, platforms, or unions that collect money on behalf of individuals) payments to users would be rather small. Instead, it makes much more sense for individual countries to take advantage of their scale and take the bold step to declare data a national resource, nationalise it, and demand that companies – like Alibaba, Baidu, Facebook, WeChat, and Google – pay for using this resource, so its exploitation primarily benefits the citizens of that country.

Let's take Mexico as an example: According to the latest available statistics, in 2018 Facebook had 54.6 million users in that country. Since each of Facebook's global users generates about \$25 of profit per year, this makes about \$1.4bn in annual profit for the company from the Mexican market alone. Suppose Mexico nationalised its data and demanded to keep a substantial portion of that? And suppose similar arrangements were enforced on Google, Amazon, and TikTok, how much wealth will the (formerly) colonised countries reclaim?

## Note

- 1 See Oxfam report of 20 January 2020 titled: *World's billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people*. Report available online at: [www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-billionaires-have-more-wealth-46-billion-people](http://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-billionaires-have-more-wealth-46-billion-people) (Accessed on 20 January 2020).

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