

DECONSTRUCTING THE PESSIMISM OF AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

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Abstract

Sequel to the debilitating effects of historical events of slavery/slave trade, colonialism, neocolonialism and capitalism with their consequent exploitation in Africa, with the result of inferiority complex and its attendant ills among Africans, the perception, perhaps, especially among the West is that Africa cannot attain again the glorious height it had in the past. Arguably, it is in line with this perception that Ann Bernstein doubts the reality of African renaissance and postulates that if at all it will occur in this contemporary globalized world, it must primarily be western-driven. Against the preceding position of Ann Bernstein, this research work, with the philosophical method of deconstruction, and relying much on thoughts of eminent thinkers like C.B. Okolo, Nyerere, Oguejiofor, etc., is out to debunk the hopelessness Bernstein associates with African Renaissance.

Keywords: Africa, Renaissance, Pessimism, Globalization, Deconstruction

Introduction

From the outset, we wish to state that this study is purely a response to Ann Bernstein's ("Globalization, Culture and Development: can South Africa be more than an offshoot of the west?" In Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington (eds), *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) claim about African Renaissance that the authors of this research work have serious reservations for. That is why the work in which her claims is contained is copiously quoted here. Also, the study relied heavily on works of eminent African scholars like C.B. Okolo, Nyerere, Oguejiofor, etc., to buttress the stand against Bernstein.

Since the existence question of African philosophy, many African related issues have come to the fore of intellectual discourses. Among these issues are: African identity, African culture, African worldview, African development, etc. All these issues under discussions are ways through which Africans try to rediscover themselves after the historical

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catastrophes of slavery (slave trade), colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and capitalism with its exploitative nature. In all these, an average African's yearning is for Africa to bounce back to that stage of being reckoned with as was the case centuries ago, when she was noted with many enviable feats. It is this yearning for Africa's rebirth that Ann Bernstein associates with hopelessness, that is, pessimism of African renaissance. That is to say, Africa on her own cannot rise to the challenges of being sustainably developed and competing successfully in the comity of nations. It is therefore, the singular aim of this paper to prove Bernstein's position wrong and make clear the reality of African renaissance. Actualizing the set aim, this paper is divided into five sections. Section I conceptualizes the issue of African renaissance; section II lays bare Ann Bernstein's arguments showing that African renaissance is a mirage, in this section, the core objections raised by Bernstein are critically analyzed immediately; section III investigates the true nature of the pessimism of African renaissance; section IV x-rays the question whether Africa will ever rise again; and the paper wraps up with the summary and conclusion of the work in, section V.

Conceptualizing African Renaissance

African in the purview of this paper is understood in two dimensions: macro and micro dimensions. In the former, it signifies the black African mainly south of the Sahara. They are people who inhabit physically the continent of Africa and share the same world-view. The latter are more easily identifiable smaller groups within Africa who share much closer bonds in culture, religion, art, and world-view. Examples are: the Bantu speaking peoples of Africa or the black peoples of Africa, South of the Equator referred to in Placide Temple's *Bantu Philosophy*. Also, Edeh's *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics* which studied only a part of Nigeria and the people there, the Igbo people. No doubt, black peoples or black races of Africa (Black Africa) enjoy close bond of cultural unity, and as such, the Africa referred to in any piece of writing is best understood from the context (Celestine Mbaegbu 77) that is, either in its micro or macro sense. In the context of this discourse, the intent is on the values that cut across Africans both in macro and micro dimensions of it.

By renaissance is meant “a revival or rebirth, especially of culture and learning.” (Jeremy Butterly 1269) It connotes the idea of re-awakening, re-enactment of what used to be especially something positive. It is akin to “1.the great revival of art, literature, and learning in Europe in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.2. the spirit, culture, art, science, and thought of this period.” (Jeremy Butterly 1269) In the context of this discourse, African renaissance is best understood to mean rising to the enormous challenges facing Africa today in the manner of feats achieved by Africa in centuries past that earned her the exalted title of cradle of human civilization. It is a nostalgia struggling to rupture into real physical materialization of glorious moments-- as earlier witnessed in Africa’s history. The moments described by Oguejiofor thus:

Scientists no longer dispute that Africa is the cradle of the human race and its evolution to the stage of *homo sapiens* many hundreds of thousands of years ago, and before the beginning of the Neanderthal period in Europe. Africa was also the cradle of the technological evolution of humanity from the invention of wooden and bone tools to the momentous advance into the stone-age. “It is important to note,” writes Obafemi Awolowo, “that the use of stone tools was a technical revolution among primitive people of the old, middle and New stone age, and that, in this revolution, Africa was clearly in the lead.” With time, neopaleolithic Africa advanced into the era of farming, and pastoralism and thence into the iron-age. By 600BC, it was able to produce what has been described as “perhaps the best steel in the world of the time, and certainly equal to or even better than the steel produced in early modern Europe.” (24)

By African renaissance, therefore, is understood the earnest desire by Africans to prove to the globalized world dominated by the west that Africa, autochthonously, has things admirably positive to offer the world, especially in bettering her own lot.

For Ann Bernstein, the call for African renaissance is championed by Thabo Mbeki while he was at the leadership position of South Africa. For Bernstein, the call for African renaissance has led to the establishment of an institute committed to studying African renaissance with the purpose of the “further liberation of Africa from its colonial heritage and the application of African thought systems to development challenges.” (Ann Bernstein 199) And the aim includes: Problem-solving research in pre-eminent areas (e.g. human resource development, governance and peace, health and cultural affairs), developing appropriate research databases, aiding African governments to carry out economic recovery and reforms, enabling job opportunities, advising on imminent grave economic unfoldings, expediting deliberation on economic recovery, and ‘work[ing] toward not feeling sorry for ourselves.’ (Ann Bernstein 199-200)

In furtherance, Bernstein maintains that in speeches of Thabo Mbeki, one could sense the core components that form his own ideas on African renaissance. The key components in those speeches include: “An Africa of poverty and backwardness; Recognition of the terrible legacy of ‘neocolonialism’; Continental renewal in the twenty-first century; All African countries are linked.” (231-232) Sequel to the preceding, Bernstein points that the tasks of African renaissance includes:

Establishing democratic political systems. Taking into account African specifics to these systems, while being truly democratic and protecting human rights, are nevertheless designed in ways that ensure political and peaceful means to address the continent interests of different social groups in each country. Establishing institutions and procedures that enable the continent collectively to deal with questions of democracy, peace, and stability. Achieving sustainable economic development that continuously improves people’s standards of living and quality of life. Changing Africa’s place in the world economy-free of its international debt burden, no longer a supplier of raw materials and an

importer of manufactured goods. Emancipating African women. Successfully confronting HIV/AIDS. Rediscovering Africa's creative past to recapture people's cultures, encourage artistic creativity, and advance science and technology. Strengthening genuine African independence in their relations with the major powers and enhancing their overall role in the global system. (232)

Having exposed thus far the notion of African renaissance as championed by Thabo Mbeki, Bernstein gives her own understanding of what African renaissance is all about.

The concept of the "renaissance" of Africa is a brilliant marketing idea. It does many tasks for South Africa and its political leadership at an important time in the country's history. It develops on old opinions (pan-Africanism, African Unity, African solutions to African problems) and accordingly shows a connection with an earlier and older set of leaders (revered for their contribution to colonial liberation), while transmitting a very different set of ideas informed by those of the past. The cover of the renaissance idea empowers its advocates to defend economic reform and democratic governance. This is the U.S. and EU programmes for Africa (and that too, of course, of many critics in Africa) as steps to be taken for the good of an African renaissance and as necessary conditions for the continent asserting its rightful position in the world.

Ultimately, the idea gives "face" while it advances inherently Western concepts about change for the continent. (234) Furthermore, she says, the concept of the renaissance gives a framework from which to involve the West and to attempt to secure continued positive interest in and aid to the continent. It is a courageous way to essay and put off expanding African pessimism in relation to Western capitalism, and it avails South Africa's most westernized leader ever with some security from Africanist opinions within his country (both within and without his own political movement and circle of traditional allies) and an African "face" by means of which to thrust demanding domestic reforms. (234)

From the submissions of Bernstein above, one can vividly see that for her the so called African renaissance is simply put, a borrowed concept. An idea an African leader, Thabo Mbeki, is using to salvage the continent of Africa. It is not autochthonous to Mbeki or Africa, it is rather western. Hence, she argues “Essentially, the concept provides ‘face’ while it promotes intrinsically Western ideas about change for the continent.” (234) Therefore, for Bernstein, African values embedded in African culture seem to be in dearth of the potency to propel renaissance of Africa. Even if the values can afford anything it must be secondary to the western ones. This is because for Bernstein, African thought system, that is, African values are community bound, restricted only to immediate African societies. They have no hope, potency of expansion or extension to other societies other than African ones in the face of globalization. The portrayal of Bernstein above is vividly seen, with regard to African value system, when she impresses that:

This pattern implies that the norms and values, family cohesion, and the work ethic of the traditional community will all be very vulnerable under conditions in which the close integration of community life is broken. This would particularly apply in the case of urbanization, the inter mingling of peoples from different backgrounds, and the atomization of the modern mass townships. (208)

The above thesis of Bernstein implies that African cultural values lack universalization capability, and as such, are unglobalizable, so to speak. Hence, the pessimism of African renaissance, that is, African values cannot liberate Africans out of their current political, economic, scientific and technological impasse unless primarily aided by western values. This is an impression of hopelessness for African renaissance. Bernstein even goes on to give the impression that the existence of Africa as a race is questionable, that Africa is hard to be characteristically defined in terms of values separate to them and, other arguments that portray African renaissance as a mirage. All these will be seen in the following section where she essays to bore hole on the idea of Africa renaissance.

Bernstein's Arguments Militating against African Renaissance

1.) Questionability of "Africa" and "African" and the Ungeneralizability of its Cultures

According to Bernstein, most historical and economic inquiries ask if there is any coherence to the idea of an African culture or cultures. "Certainly our research at the Centre for Development and Enterprise would indicate that the terms 'Africa' and 'African' are social constructs whose definition varies significantly according to the social purpose of those who construct them. It is very difficult to make generalizations about Africa." (236) In an attempt to buttress the foregoing point, she argues that one commentator noted that:

One final obstacle in the path of understanding the belief systems of Africa cultures is that it is very difficult to make generalizations about the continent. Both the highest and lowest divorce rate in the societies of the world are found there, the forms of political organization range from informal patterns of leadership in hunting and gathering bands to divine kings and bureaucratic states. (236)

She quotes McCarthy as questioning: "Why bother to generalize about Africa and why treat Africa as a construct with anything other than perhaps a geological coherence? Is it that there is an historical and racial association which unites Africa but which many are still too polite to confront?" (236) The answer to the above, that is, African distinctiveness, Bernstein maintains that most analyst find it in the political and institutional interests that have emanated around numerous shades of what might be tagged the "Africanist project". A project that seems to have mutated over time. Wrapping up on this, she quotes Anderson who: "argues that , looked at historically, pan-Africanist ideas ebbed and flowed , depending in part on their relationship with Western education." (236) She, again, points out the observation of Freund which culminated in the assertion that:

Stripped of racial determinism African history quickly loses the unity which common prejudices, positive and negative, assume for it. There is no foreordained Africa cultural oneness

that has been convincingly defined that suggests otherwise. The broadest themes of African history so reflect continent-wide developments precisely because they are themes that belong to the basic stock of social and economic developments of mankind elsewhere. (236)

Bernstein further supports her view by pointing out the observation of the experienced French anthropologist, Capans, who says that: "... the historical unity of black Africa is a colonial chimera. Social history in the last fifteen years has tried to draw another picture, more detailed more empirical but also better documented of local and global interactions. *To view Africa as a significant social arena of comparison is an ideological choice and a methodological blunder.*" (237)

From the foregoing, one sees Bernstein questioning the very idea of Africa whether it exists or should be identified as existing and goes further to point out with numerous instances the ungeneralizability of its cultures, nay, cultural values. First and foremost, the existence of Africa or people identified as Africans is unquestionable, whether it is a social construct of people or not. The two dimensional approach in understanding what is meant by Africa serve as an answer to the so called questionability of Africa or African existence by Bernstein. The two dimensions: macro and micro dimensions. In the former, it signifies the black African predominantly south of the Sahara. They are people who live physically on the continent of Africa and have common world-view. The latter are more easily recognized smaller groups within Africa with common commonality, much closer bonds in terms of culture, religion, art, and world outlook. Instances are: the Bantu speaking peoples of Africa or the black peoples of Africa, South of the Equator talked about in Placide Temple's *Bantu Philosophy*. And, Edeh's *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics* which centred its study only on a part of Nigeria and the people there, the Igbo people. Indubitably, black peoples or black races of Africa (Black Africa) enjoy close bond of cultural unity. As such, the Africa referred to in any piece of writing is best understood from the context (Celestine Mbaegbu 77), that is, either in its micro or macro dimension. Hence, Africa or African existence is neither a colonial chimera nor open for questioning.

Characterizing Africa as a place where both highest and lowest level of divorce is experienced, and as such, unable to be generalized as known entity is rather unfounded. If it is true that it has divorce level in those extremes then that is its identity and as well-being generalizable. However, the categorization of Africa by Bernstein in that manner is rather absurd. This is because, there is no empirical or statistical data she used to buttress this point. If this could be said of Africa, one wonders what could be said of United States of America and some European countries in terms of divorce rate. It is safer to say that Africa is polygamous rather than prone to divorce. The phenomenon of divorce as is seen today in Africa is rather as a result of western incursion. In answering Bernstein that “Africa” or “African” exists and has cultural values that can be generalizable, one remembers Chukwudum B. Okolo when he argues thus: “Whether the African is one people or many is insignificant in this essay. We rather assert that the African is easily identifiable ontologically or as a being –in-the-African world. *He is not just a being but a ‘being-with’.*” (Chukwudum B. Okolo 3-4) Furthermore he says: “What is easily said about self in African metaphysics is that its horizon is essentially towards others. It is self-in-relation-to-others, a being-with –others.” (5-6)

This fundamental understanding of who an African is, is confirmed by Tempels when he argues thus: “just as Bantus [black African] ontology is opposed to the European concept of individuated things existing in themselves, isolated from others, so Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual, as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationship with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate forces around it.” (103) One may argue that relating to the other is not an exclusive preserve of an African, hence, what is the point stressing it. But Okolo’s argument here suffices to prove the distinguishability, distinctiveness of an African.

In process, naturalistic, and even in existentialist philosophies (as Heidegger’s) it must be admitted that “dynamic’ rather than “static’ is indeed a fundamental category of understanding and interpreting all reality, man inclusive but much unlike in African philosophy, reality is at bottom monistic consisting only the tangible , the visible,

the verifiable; whereas the African universe includes the visible and invisible; material and spiritual; time and eternity, all interconnected and mutually interacting. It is a universe, as we said above, “in which everybody, likewise, everything, is linked up to every other person or thing through a complex net-work of spiritual relationships into a kind of mystical body’. (8-9)

“In sum, the African as a being-with is simply his tendency to stick together as a member of a family, with its roots in the extended family system. It means feeling-involved-with-others, existing with and for others through participatory living” (12) says Okolo. The submission of Okolo above must not be mistaken to be limited to Africans alone. African being-with-others is extendable and extends to all humanity and, that is the beginning and end of Nyerere’s Ujamaa socialism. It is a principle that advocates the brotherhood of humankind and not Africans alone. (11) The foregoing submissions prove wrong Ann Bernstein’s position that “Africa” or “African” existence is questionable, and also the generalizability of its culture and cultural values.

More so, there are other elements of being-with or relation-to-other that characterize all Africans, and as such, are culturally generalizable thereby distinguishing Africans as distinctive entity. They are among others already pointed out, elements that prove Bernstein wrong in holding that there are no cultural values among Africans that are unique to them, that is, capable of generalization. Apart from the common belief in the Supreme Being; belief in dead relatives or ancestors; Africans have distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from the white men.

Unlike the existentialists particularly of the radical type, the African does not regard the universe or the nature ‘out there’ as merely thrown into being. Nature is the product of a good God. Nature is not there simply and solely to be exploited, subdued, and absolutely conquered. But for the African, it is to be venerated as the source of his material needs, the

tombs of his ancestors and shrines of his gods. He obtains his needed material goods not so much by conquering and mastering it as by submitting to it and venerating it as well. Injury or damage to nature is a breach of cosmic harmony and order which attracts penalties from the gods and when venerated, good fortune and blessings, material and spiritual, abound.... The attitude of the white man to nature, on the other hand, is defiant. Nature is there to be mastered and completely subjugated in the service of man. Man is the minister and interpreter of nature, Francis Bacon said, though he also advised obedience to it as a condition for subduing it. But the task of man is however to exploit nature and to the full, too. (Chukwudum B. Okolo 21-22)

Summarily dismissing the position of Bernstein and others that Africa has no cultural values capable of generalization, as such, distinguishing them as a unique people; the thought of C.B. Okolo comes in handy here. He says, in essence, when we analyzed “being-with” as the cultural shtick of the African, we narrowed down to the human element, the humane attitude or simply the involvement of man-with-man, as its existential epitome *par-excellence*. It is this human element in interpersonal interactions and its use to other spheres of human life, viz; politics, economy, religion, etc., that such prominent African leaders as Nkrumah, Kaunda and certainly Nyerere in number of ways call “Our [African] original socialist mentality”, “African brotherhood”, “African Socialism”, “African Communalism” or “Communitary way of life”, “Sense of Communion”, etc. Quintessentially, for thinkers like Leopold Sedar Senghor, these attributes encapsulate African identity for Africans. (34-35)

2.) **Bad leadership in Africa**

For Bernstein, there appeared in 1990s signs of improvement in Africa. World Bank statistics portrayed a handful of African nations attaining economic growth rates greater than 6 percent, which according to the source, is sufficient to lift the majority of African people out of

poverty in years instead of decades. Simultaneously, different degrees of multiparty democracy circulated across the various countries of Africa, and a new class of leaders appeared to give hope to the continent. Over and above, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, there existed Yoweri Museveni in Uganda, Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia, Fredrick Chiluba in Zambia, and Laurent Kabila in now Congo Republic. This new crop of leaders showed the willingness to better the lot of African people by making available basic health care and education and by attracting foreign investors to the continent. They avowed peace and good government and were friendly toward markets and investors even though some of them still maintained their claim to socialism. However, according to Bernstein, the first year of a new century portrayed all this to be a mirage.

The new leaders became embroiled in wars, some with each other and the cheerful statistics were the result of good rains and bad accounting, Sub-Sahara Africa as a whole had a growth rate of less than 3 percent in that period, which just about kept step with the rate of population increase. So no-one was getting richer. The figures—not to mention the recent crop of disasters and wars—now suggest that Africa is losing the battle. All the bottom places in the world league tables are filled by African countries and the gap between them and the rest of the world is widening. According to Paul Collier of the World Bank, only 15 percent of Africans today live in an “environment considered minimally adequate for sustainable growth and development.” At least 45 percent of Africans live in poverty and African countries need growth rates of 7 percent or more to cut that figure in half in 15 years. (238)

With the gloomy picture above, Bernstein argues that “It is much harder to talk plausibly of an African renaissance at the beginning of the new millennium than ever.” (238) There is no doubt that most African leaders are corrupt and think more of themselves, immediate families and their cronies; and think less, if at all, of the general people they

ought to lead. But are they not encouraged by the powers that be in the developed nations who allow African leaders siphon these funds into foreign accounts especially when these so-called African leaders are in their good books?—knowing full well that these funds through capital flight further improve their economies. The wars in Africa mentioned above by Bernstein, are they not most times stage-managed by the developed nations who incite oppositions for ruling governments in Africa especially when those governments refuse to be tied to the draconian policies of the developed nations that have no real future for Africans? A case in point is Zimbabwe and especially Nigeria. (“Soyinka’s 60 Reasons—An Investigative Report” 10th February, 2015) To illustrate this, during the build up to 2015 general elections in Nigeria, Chinweizu wrote a rejoinder to Wole Soyinka’s 60 reasons why he was not going to vote for President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. In that piece, Chinweizu made it clear that President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was under attack by the West through Soyinka because he signed a deal with Chinese government which primarily served the interest of ordinary Nigerians instead of the West’s economic interests. At the end of the day, President Jonathan lost the election and the person supported by the West was inaugurated. Unfortunately, today, Nigeria is worse than ever under the new administration sponsored by the west. This is the pattern in Africa especially where there are natural resources of interest to the West. The point we are making here is that, African problems are not entirely of the makings of Africans. Those who point to these faults of Africans are most times the architects of those faults though surreptitiously.

3.) Renaissance is more obtainable in South Africa

Bernstein avers that, a South African renaissance is a more attainable project than a continental wide one. That attaining such a renaissance will be difficult enough and will demand a good measure of political will, hard work, and some luck. In the economic angle, at least, she says, it is likely to imagine the word “renaissance” with regard to the country’s economy: whatever its moral and other limitations, the South African economy has in the past appeared to be a modern engine room of a kind, and it is imaginable that this could be the situation – relatively speaking and in comparison to other average-income developing states—again. (239)

Even without it being made open, one sees the glimpse of hope given to South Africa in terms of African renaissance as a result of the mixture of whites with black South Africans. That is to say, the ingenuity of the whites will make such renaissance possible not the blacks; otherwise why not African–continent-wide renaissance? This is implicit in the next point.

4.) Western mindedness of South Africa

South Africa is “receptive” to Western cultural models. The effect of the basic processes of change and transformation that have occurred in the society since 1652, and mostly in the last two centuries, have made it quite difficult to maintain any connected and obviously separate kind of traditional indigenous culture. Accordingly, the controlling culture of South Africa’s new ruling elite is a Western one. South African opposition to the apartheid regime was spearheaded internationally by individuals who lived in great proportion in nonAfrican states and in the course of time lost contact with many aspects of “home.”

Corollarily, the exiled leadership battled against apartheid with dominantly Western thoughts and instruments and released in its wake the quickest Western reasoning back into the country. They have, for instance, trail blazed the country’s quest to be abreast with the world of telecommunications, and it is fascinating to note that the one aspect in which the ANC has outrivalled has been its usage of the Internet as a medium of communication, limited not only to its millions of sympathizers, some 40-50 percent (or more) of whom are uneducated, but to its predominantly foreign “Western” audiences, (240) argues Bernstein.

Just like the argument before this, Bernstein’s singular claim purports the idea that Africa has nothing to offer again and if she is to re-birth, it must be done by western mind, hence, the pessimism of African renaissance. Whether the claim is true is to be ascertained in this discourse shortly.

5.) Posture of superior mentality of South African-Africans against other Africans

From live experiences, Bernstein maintains that:

South African Africans are generally not popular in the rest of the continent. They are perceived as “looking down” on other African countries as “backward” in services, infrastructure, and other areas. It is significant that Mbeki talks of “shame” with respect to what has happened in the rest of Africa. If we were to probe South African Africans’ attitudes of superiority toward other Africans on the continent would we find, “We are proud of the country we and the whites have built in South Africa, which is so much better than what you have done”? And if so, how would a proud South African-African nationalist put that together? (241)

The point Bernstein is making here is that even the ray of hope of African Renaissance is further dimmed with the supposed leader of this re-birth, South Africa, having a repulsive attitude towards other African nations. The xenophobia attacks in South Africa in recent times are eloquent testimony to this claim. The arrogation of this leadership position to South Africa by Bernstein, and invariably, the possibility of renaissance in Africa by extension, is only possible because of white South Africans in South Africa. It still means for Bernstein, African renaissance will be possible, if and only if, western ideas are copied and that is why for her the so-called principles enumerated by Thabo Mbeki as the recipes for African renaissance are borrowed from the west, they are unautochtonous to Africa.

From the submissions of Bernstein above, can one convincingly argue that Africans can never re-launch themselves to the position of being reckoned with again? Are there measures put in place, overtly or covertly to get African renaissance bogged down?

Pessimism of African Renaissance: An Investigation

It is the position of this paper that there are measures in place that bog down African development and consequently leading to the impression

of African hopelessness, hence, the pessimism of African renaissance. These measures are, arguably, seen vividly in the phenomenon of globalization. There are many definitions of globalization, but in this piece, the researcher adopts the definition of globalization as articulated by Dukor. According to Dukor, "... globalization is a process by which a network of cultural, political and economic advantages and interests of the different peoples of the world work naturalistically for their mutual benefits." (V) In terms of the origin of globalization, Zaator M.Knor notes that, Globalization began in the 15th Century with Christopher Columbus and John Cobot's expeditions around the globe in quest of novel lands and continents. Also that similar effort by persons such as Richard Steele at bringing forth Free port in 1711 which gave the idea of Free Trade in our own time equally heralded the concept of globalization as it is today.

Furthermore, a close examination of the European evangelical Christian missionaries in Africa, colonialism, imperialism and later on, neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism, together indicate the idea of globalization. That these quantitative and qualitative phenomena vary from globalization only in nomenclature but not in essence since in intent, purpose and execution they are not in radical opposition with the harbingers of globalization. Conclusively, Knor states that the predecessors of globalization like globalization itself emanated from the Northern hemisphere. (79) With the brief excursus on the origin of globalization and particularly with the definition of globalization by Dukor above, one may ask, has globalization actually lived out its lofty goal of naturalistically working for the mutual benefits of the people of the world? To this question many scholars have answered in the negative and with the particular emphasis that globalization, in its dynamic ramifications, has been both the overt and covert tool, contemporarily, the western powers have designed to hold Africa perpetually down, hence, making it extremely difficult for Africa to rise up to its enormous challenges, and as such, dashing the hope of African renaissance. Citing Robinson Rajas, Ogugua and Oduah argue that:

The history of the last fifty-years relating African States to former colonial masters and new imperial centres is a history of dependence and domination. Trans-national corporations, the

World Bank, the International monetary fund, and the government in Washington, London and Paris have had more-influence on policies adopted by African governments than any sector of the African population in any African State. (12)

For these scholars, globalization is a myth. “Reconstructed into pseudo-reality and transmitted to Africa and developing nations as absolute facts to be believed without doubting. This Eurocentric universalism has led to the economic, political and social projects that denigrate non-European values and construct a world under European control....” (13) One doubts if the submissions of Bernstein in this discourse do not portray her as a bulwark of this myth. Continuing Ogugua and Oduah, they said that the goal of this myth is “European control, and globalization which is the resultant effect of this waves of relationship is then the means.” (13) Propping up their claim, they cited Uroh in Igbafe thus: “The underlying philosophy of new-liberal economy, a major component of globalization, is that state intervention in the economic life of the people however well-intentioned is ‘counter-productive’ and therefore ‘undesirable’.” (12-13) “There is globalization, but whose culture is globalized? No doubt, the western culture. It shows globalization as western hegemony and as such the pinnacle of imperialism,” (14) argued Ogugua and Oduah. To show how Africa renaissance, progress is hamstrung by the people who give the impression of the pessimism of African renaissance, Ugwueye’s argument is quite insightful here:

With globalization, world goods, factors of production and financial assets would be almost perfect substitutes in Africa and everywhere in the world. Hence it could be difficult to identify a national economy and consider nation states as distinct economic identities with autonomous decision-making power in the pursuit of national objectives. In Akinde’s (2002) opinion, this, indeed, explains why the IMF issued a query to Nigeria in respect of over 400 billion naira meant for capital expenditure into the 2001 budget, and why IMF and World Bank (two bodies that are

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driving forces of globalization) contributed
enormously in the drafting of Nigeria's 2001
budget. (104)

Furthermore Ugwueye says that Africans nowadays, can scarcely dictate the rules and regulations of their economy, production, credits and exchanges of goods and services as a result of damaging threat of globalization. Globalization has foisted weighty burdens on the internal administration dynamics of most polities in Africa. He instantiates his facts with Nigeria saying that the government now finds it hard to satisfy the real demands of the led on several aspects of national urgency, for instance, the recent 18th May, 2007 increase in prices of petroleum products and its accompanying destructive national strike by Nigerian workers. The situation in Nigeria today, continues Ugwueye, as it is found in almost all African countries, is that globalization has made it extremely hard for governments to make available social insurance – one of their cardinal roles and one that has assisted numerous developed nations to sustain oneness and domestic political solidarity. “Trends like this have been largely dictated by inequality in the status of the members of the villagized world, and their inability to resist imposed policy options. The heavy burden of foreign debt has greatly eroded the capacity of most African countries to run their own affairs and respond to the demands of the people.” (104-105)

The question one may ask from the preceding discourse is, is Bernstein not aware of these planned measures against Africa in the face of Africa's genuine struggle to develop or is she not seeing any element of injustice in them? What is being done to redress the anomaly? Is she unaware of the debilitating effects of globalization on Africa as planned by the west? For Ugwueye, Globalization has unremorsefully eaten deep into the core of African cultures. He cites Kipngeno who maintained that the phenomenon menaces to entirely swallow and completely make obsolete the African worldview. Continuing, Ugwueye says, the newly imbibed and almost current habitual tastes among Africans in clothing, language, food and other social activities is evidence of how entrenched the western culture is in African society. African songs and dances have been adulterated with the western beats of Michael Jackson and others. The youth go for the western artists instead of the local ones and almost always keep to the trajectory of the

western fashion scene. Those who are foot-dragging are left behind and all seems to be in such a huge haste not to be left behind. The resultant effect is not just being false to one's culture but a serious scene of dehumanization and complete self-ruining with regard to both dignity and self-esteem. (106) Using Nigeria, again, as an example, Ugwueye points that: "Soft drinks such as Coke, Fanta, brewed by the multinationals have systematically eliminated the locally manufactured ones like Reno drink. Today the Seven up Bottling Company has taken possession of the factory built to produce Reno soft drink." (106) Pointing out further the lopsidedness and the planned crippling effects of globalization on Africa, Ugwueye says that, globalization dictates, promotes privatization of state owned projects. It is difficult to see a country without a privatization in her agenda. However, the difference between the privatization in Africa and America is that in latter, they buy their state owned businesses, engage their own people to handle them and in the course of this improve their society. But in the former, these state-owned businesses are normally sold to foreigners who take over the running of these enterprises in accordance with their own interests. In most situations, less than handfuls of Nigerians are employed. Globalization in this light encourages unemployment and penury in Africa. (106). Quoting Felix Wilfred, P.I. Ogugua maintains that:

Globalization is solely the current stage and manifestation of this undisrupted history of domination and subjugation of nations, countries and cultures via the conquistadors and colonizers. It is a norm of political, economic and cultural overbearing control of some countries over others. It is a polite self-designation of imperialism in our contemporary era, which is readjusted to outpace the evils of its own earlier personifications. (74)

Looking at the principles of globalization as orchestrated by America and Europe, as being in sharp contrast to its practical realities, nay, as a designed plan to hold Africa perpetually down and hopeless, Ogugua P.I. has this to say: "...that is why the emerging new world order engineered by America and Europe is not human and anchored on love.

Africa and other third world nations have no place in this their new world order dressed in attractive attire. Odozor recognized this and remarked: The level of Afro-pessimism that is becoming apparent as the world becomes more and more a single place is alarming.” (74)

From the foregoing musings, one sees a cog in the wheel of African development, African renaissance. Is it that Bernstein has not seen these ugly measures or for her they are not enough stumbling blocks?

Will Africa Ever Rise Again?

Before answering the question above, it is imperative that Bernstein’s assertion that basically, the concept of African renaissance provides “face” while it promotes intrinsically Western ideas about change for the continent, be addressed. One may ask, is the concept providing “face” because it was first voiced out by the West to the world due to their technological edge or that Africans were not really in a situation that warranted them to speak of African renaissance? That A’s situation was first made known by B to the public due to B’s means of communication that A has not got, does it make A not to have the situation and be thinking of possible solutions to it? Importantly too, is it not possible that the seeming provision of “face” , according to Bernstein, of the concept of African renaissance because it was voiced by African scholars and leaders themselves is, as a result of the concept and its recipes being communicated with the language of the West who colonized most African countries? In the light of the foregoing musings, it is clear that Bernstein’s assertion is baseless and unfounded because Africans have intelligence to articulate their situations. The coincidence of same articulation does not in any way nullify the genuineness and originality of one’s articulation over the other’s articulation. With this said, how will Africa rise again?

The priority for African renaissance is the project of sincere unity of all Africans especially African leaders. It is a common feature of imperial powers to work against the unity of any country they found themselves in, that is, the policy of divide and rule. So many African countries have been torn apart by wars that seemed to be internal but in reality are wars sponsored by imperial powers. For Africa to rise again, it must of necessity work against these tactics of the imperial powers, and

sincerely and formidably unite in purpose. It is this unity that will help Africans to stand up to the imperial powers and reject their negative influences which have bedeviled African continent.

Through the unity achieved, Africans can thence form realistic regional blocks in the fashion of EU, through which they can objectively resist the negative policies initiated by the imperial powers by, first and foremost, divesting themselves of the apron-string mentality they have imbibed over the years. When these projects of sincere African unity and real independence from imperial apron-string are achieved, Africa will be solidly poised to showcase her rich cultural values that are needed in today's globalized world.

Against Bernstein's claim that the principles of caring, sharing and being in harmony with all creation encapsulated in *Ubuntu* is only applicable to African communities and not in today's urbanized world; these principles championed by African culture are desiderata in our globalized world ravaged by wars, famine and man's inhumanity to man. As amply illustrated in Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, these values are not exclusive preserves of Africans. These African values stand to be globalized today in view of millions of immigrants all over the world, especially in Europe, longing for care and to share in those resources that they are in dire need of.

African traditional medicine can equally be a contribution to globalization and a means of rising to prominence again. Instances are of the situations whereby orthodox medicine and its attendants of sophisticated hospital equipment have been found wanting in the face of some defying diseases and their diagnosis. In these situations, African traditional medicines, by diviners and healers, proved more helpful. An instance is the referring of patients with broken bones to traditional healers after failed efforts from orthodox modern hospitals. Africans can successfully project this to the world.

From the foregoing, African renaissance is not only a possibility but a reality, if and only if, Africans will take the right steps as emphasized in this research work.

Summary and Conclusion

In this discourse, the writers set out primarily to prove wrong the thesis that African renaissance is a mirage, with other attendant issues. Earnestly, the researchers tackle the issues by showing that Africa as a continent is characterized by certain features that distinguish it from other distinct continents, hence, debunking the existence question of “Africa” or “African.” Similarly, the work shows that African values are generalizable with ample instances drawn from several scholars to prove the point. The work proceeded further to point out the fact that the people giving the impression of pessimism of African renaissance are, invariably, the ones stalling it through their design of phenomenon known as globalization. With that said, the researchers moved on to show the ways for African renaissance, after making the case that the concept of African renaissance is genuine and original with Africans.

In conclusion, first and foremost, African renaissance is a possible reality. But this can come about when Africans have truly and sincerely united as a common people with a common destiny, without any room for stoogeness to the imperial powers that be. It is after this that they can form regional blocks through different umbrellas in terms of politics, economy, culture, etc., and reasonably bargain among other continents of the globalized world. Until then, what Africans have now in terms of regional associations are apologies of what regional blocks are meant to serve. It is in the face of unity of purpose and independence of mind of Africans, that Africa can really give birth again to enviable feats like those of the centuries past.

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