

AFRICAN UNION: MBEKI'S SOUTH AFRICA POLICY FOR AFRICA¹

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Introduction

Marked by tragedies that reinforce stereotypes about itself, especially those that portray it as dependent on developed countries and unable to solve its own dilemmas, the African continent still presents itself in the 21st century with challenges related to hunger and humanitarian calamities, more recurrent in some regions than others. The initiatives to deal with these issues arise right at the beginning of the second millennium primarily from South Africa. In this sense, it is possible to ask the following question: what political and economic measures were adopted by the African continent in order to combat these problems?

Based on the bibliographic review of qualitative secondary sources relevant to the theme and on the analysis of primary sources, such as speeches and official documents of the Organization of African Unity, the purpose of this article is to demonstrate changes in the political and economic dynamics. Those changes were materialized in the different principles incorporated by the Organization of African Unity (1963) and the African Union (2001), the two main organizations for political, economic and social cooperation at the continental level, which took place in Africa at the beginning of the 21st century. The specific objective of this article is to present the change of

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guidelines, politically and economically, adopted by the African Union at the time of the transition to the new millennium and the role of South Africa, during the administration of Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008) during the process. The historical period being analysed, therefore, dates from the mid-1990s to the end of Mbeki's presidential term in September 2008.

Thus, the study assumes the following hypothesis: in addition to the circumstantial issues, which, to a certain extent, demand solutions to the new challenges posed to Africa in the period, the changes in the African political and economic orientation, observed during the transition of the Organization of African Unity for the African Union, in the early 2000s, had a notable influence from South Africa.

For better understanding of the following arguments, the article will be divided into four sections. While the first provides historical contextualization of the African continent on arrival in the 21st century, the second will present the popularization of the term "African Renaissance" by the South African former president, Thabo Mbeki. Finally, concrete examples of institutional changes will be exposed in the last part, followed by final comments.

Africa in the 20th century: from pan-Africanism to Afro-pessimism

European domination in Africa, dating from the Berlin Conference in 1885, until the mid-1960s, lasted over 75 years. For almost this entire period, the continent was under the control of European industrial powers, reaching the end of World War II with only four states – nominally, at least – independent: Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and the South African Union (Meredith 2017; Pereira, Ribeiro and Visentini 2014). However, the extensive history of European interference on the continent does not begin in 1885, since it dates back to the enslavement of people and their trafficking in the Atlantic Ocean during the 16th century (Fonseca 2015; Macedo 2018).

The weakening of the old colonial empires, especially the French and English, and their consequent inability to project their power, due to the physical, political and economic destruction caused by the Second World War (1939-1945), had profound impacts on the African continent (Otávio 2013). Thus, much of Africa entered the second half of the 20th century "under the control of four European colonial powers – England, France, Belgium and Portugal –, all assuming that the trajectories they had chosen for their African colonies would last" (Meredith 2017, 543).

According to Martin Meredith (2017), there was also the participation of colonial armies in relevant conflict war theaters and their economic collaboration in the growing colonial urban centers. If World War I and the Russian Revolution, at the beginning of the century, already announced the beginning of the decline of the European colonial enterprise and influenced political movements in defense of the emancipation of the colonized peoples, the impacts and results of the Great Depression and World War II accelerated this process even more (Pereira, Ribeiro and Visentini 2014).

Before exploring the national liberation struggles that broke out in Africa since the 1950s, it is necessary to study pan-Africanism, the main catalyst for the continent's independence processes (Otávio 2013). Although the historical origins of pan-africanism are relatively defined the consensus around a unique understanding of the term is still something that is desired (Iroulo 2017). Arising in the Americas between the 18th and 19th centuries, Pan-Africanism had as its central purpose to fight against slavery and white domination. In Africa, pan-Africanism, already as a strong political-philosophical movement, can be dated from the "invasion of Ethiopia by fascist Italy in 1935, as well as, and above all, the fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, in October 1945", where, for the first time, the number of African representatives was higher than representatives from other countries (Chanaiwa and Kodjo 2010, 897; Mazrui 1967 apud Ahluwalia 2002).

Pan-Africanism, as an integration force that seeks cultural, political and economic cooperation on the continent, can be understood through three distinct stages: the colonial stage, between 1935 and 1957; the independence stage, regarding the liberation from colonial rule; and a third stage, initiated in the 1970s, in which pan-Africanism "was greatly reinforced by the spectacular changes that occurred in the world economy and by the heavy repercussions of these changes in African economies", with the main purpose of finding solutions for African development (Chanaiwa and Asante 2010, 873). In this sense, one can understand Pan-Africanism by looking at its common core: the economic, political and social liberation of the continent, just like its union to achieve this goal (Iroulo 2017).

The fifth Pan-African Congress (Manchester 1945), mentioned above, is considered the landmark of the first phase. The event was attended by important figures such as Peter Milliard (Guyana), RT Makonnen (Antilles), Kwame N'Krumah (Ghana), George Padmore (Trinidad and Tobago), Peter Abrahams (South Africa), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and the American W. E. B. Du Bois (Chanaiwa and Kodjo 2010). The deliberations and declarations made during the congress, aimed to the colonial administrations, claimed the following points:

the emancipation and total independence of Africans, and other racial groups; the immediate end of discriminatory and racist laws, as well as forced labor; freedom of association and expression; equal pay for equivalent positions; and political and social rights, such as health care and education⁴.

The transition of African societies to the phase of national liberation struggles is based on the independence of Ghana, which, in the past, had become the “ideal colony”, a status sought by other colonies in Africa. Under the guidance of Kwame N’Krumah, and his Convention People’s Party, the population of the Gold Coast gained independence in March 1957, taking the name of an ancient African empire (Meredith 2017).

However, for N’Krumah, the independence of his people from England would not represent its emancipatory potential if it remained an isolated event on the continent. “According to him, as he declared on the night of the conquest of sovereignty by his country, Ghana’s independence was meaningful only in the perspective of a complete liberation of the African continent” (Chanaiwa and Kodjo 2010, 900).

Three years after the achievement of Ghanaian autonomy, in the so-called *African Year*, other countries also had the same experience. In 1960, numerous colonies⁵ promoted their respective processes of independence from European metropolises. Between 1961 and 1966, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Gambia, Botswana and Lesotho also joined the group of newly released colonies (Macedo 2018).

Thus, the next step in the fight against colonial domination was debated: the adoption of an organized emancipation strategy on a continental scale (Iroulo 2017; N’Krumah 1969). Even after the development of national liberation struggles, colonial interference was still evident on the continent. An example of this, as presented by N’Krumah in *Neocolonialism: the last stage of imperialism* (1967), can be seen in the European attempt to fragment Africa after the beginning of decolonization. The objective, according to the author, was to guarantee corporate interests and access to the large African market.

At a global level, such structures can be observed in some international institutions, such as the League of Nations Mandates, that allowed

4 In South Africa, for example, the Native Urban Act and the Native Affairs Act were passed in 1923. The first limited the “possibility for blacks to settle in cities considered to be white strongholds”, while the second “crowned the complex establishment of a segregationist legislation, regulating the system of exploitation of black labor” (Pereira 2012, 57).

5 Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Chad, Central African Republic, Togo, Ivory Coast, Dahome (today’s Benin), Nigeria, Niger, Upper Volta (today’s Burkina Faso), Senegal, Mali, Madagascar, Somalia, Mauritania and Belgian Congo.

the continuation of colonial administration over territories for an indefinite period of time (Pereira, Ribeiro and Visentini 2014), and the United Nations Guardianship Council, whose purpose was to supervise the territories administration under the tutelage of the international community (UN 2019). This demonstrates the continuity of the Orientalist thought, exposed by Edward Said (2007), classically translated by Marx as “they are not able to represent themselves, therefore needing to be represented” (Marx 2011, 143). Furthermore, according to the Brazilian diplomat Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães (2001), the expansion of international agencies, such as the UN, IMF and World Bank, is one of the strategies adopted by hegemonic structures of power, a concept proposed by the author to refer to the asymmetric international dynamics in which the States operate, to perpetuate the center-periphery relationship in international politics. According to Guimarães, such organizations, conceived as neutral and universal, would endeavor to standardize and sanction behavior in the international arena according to the interests of the great powers that lead them.

Thus, two groups emerged with the common goal of breaking with the domination structures inherited from imperialism: the Casablanca Group (Guinea, Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Libya, exiled government from Algeria and Ghana) and the Monrovia or Brazzaville Group (Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Liberia). While the former sought the creation of the United States of Africa, with the planning and centralization of economic development, in addition to forming a continental security system, the Monrovia/Brazzaville Group advocated for a more moderate strategy and respect for sovereignty and integrity of independent states (Otávio 2013; Pereira, Ribeiro and Visentini 2014).

The influence of the Monrovia Group can be seen in “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for its inalienable right to independent existence” (OAU 1963, 4), one of the founding principles of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Created in 1963, in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, the organization aimed to coordinate efforts to improve the quality of life of African peoples; to eradicate all forms of colonialism from the continent; to defend the right to sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and to promote unity and solidarity among African states.

The OAU’s role as a mediator proved to be efficient in matters of establishing borders between its member states, but in other situations, divergences and hesitations ended up revealing its fragility and, consequently, causing its weakening. It is precisely the possibility for states to act within a realist system, where, due to international anarchy, there are no legitimate

mechanisms to constraint the state actions, that contributed to situations of humanitarian calamity in the continent after 1963 (Farmer 2012; Macedo 2018; Paterson 2012 apud Rabelo and Guimarães 2014). In order to combat such occurrences, in 1992, for example, Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the institution in the period, submitted a proposal to the OAU Council of Ministers, the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The Mechanism, whose main objective was to anticipate and prevent conflicts by engaging in peace-making and peace-building missions, was one of the points incorporated into the OAU jurisdiction in June 1993, in the Cairo Declaration, which also commemorated the organization's 30th anniversary (OAU 1993).

In addition to the absence of an institutional device to deal with the aforementioned issues, the Cold War, due to the strategic importance of allied states in the bipolar competition for zones of influence, also contributed to the permanence of authoritarian governments on the continent. USA and USSR accepted, when they did not encourage regimes such as those installed in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Chad and Equatorial Guinea (Hobsbawm 1995; Pereira 2012; Pereira, Ribeiro and Visentini 2014). In addition, the American and Soviet dispute over the support of allied African governments offered the continent numerous assistance programs, of different matrices, and contributed to the strengthening of the borders, artificially established by Europe in the 19th century. Under the influence of Washington and Moscow, such demarcations were maintained after the recognition of independence by the international community (Guimarães 2001). As a result, the African scenario since the 1970s, to a large extent, is characterized by the rise and consolidation of authoritarian regimes, such as Togo, Daomé (Benin), Alto Volta (Burkina Faso) and Central African Republic (Meredith 2017).

In the sphere of international economy, the period was also marked by the oil crises, in 1973 and 1979, and the collapse of the Welfare State, events that, given the restricted export agenda of African States and the contraction of European consumption, put the continuity of African economic development at risk (Fonseca 2015). The economic growth rate of sub-Saharan Africa between 1973 and 1983, for example, fell from 4.38% to a negative -2.49%, only returning to stable growth rates in 1996 (World Bank 2019).

Another element that represents the African scenario in the last quarter of the 20th century, as pointed out in the report "Trade liberalization and economic reform in developing countries: structural change or de-industrialization?", published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2005), is the incorporation of economic reform programs developed

by international financial institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, and based on the Washington Consensus neoliberal agenda. In addition to calling attention to the adoption of liberalizing programs in an uncritical way, without taking into account the disparity between the levels of development of the countries, the document highlights deindustrialization trends in these economies.

The Rwandan Genocide (1994), portrayed in *We would like to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, by Philip Gourevitch (2006), seems to exemplify the last two decades of the 20th century in Africa. The period, which also witnesses the Second Congo War (1998-2003), known as the African World War, demonstrates the process of converting a remarkable optimism, experienced during decolonization, to a growing pessimism about the future of the region (Castellano da Silva 2012; Döpcke 2002).

The growing wave of optimism and self-confidence noted in the African continent since the 1960s, after the beginning of the process of achieving independence from the former European metropolises, finds a hindrance to its continuation in the rise of authoritarian regimes and the development of an economic crisis. Thus, at that moment, the recurring word in the international community to designate the future of the continent, after a reversal of expectations that has unfolded for little more than three decades, is clear in itself: afro-pessimism.

South African protagonism during the Mbeki administration

An important landmark for the African continent in the 1990s is South Africa's democratic transition. The end of the apartheid regime is symbolized by the historic 1994 election, in which, for the first time in the country's history, blacks were able to vote (Pereira 2012). The choice for Nelson Mandela as the first president of a democratic South Africa became a symbol of the country's integration into the African community and of the black victory over segregationist regimes, in addition to keeping alive vestiges of optimism to combat Afro-pessimism (Vale and Maseko 1998).

As vice president of the Mandela government, Thabo Mbeki, president of South Africa between 1999 and 2008, articulated a strategy to "build a counterweight to the widely publicized image of Africa as a continent incapable of combating its ills and inclined to the emergence of dictatorial governments" (Otávio 2013, 94). His proposal, the so-called "African Renaissance", gains name and form during a speech given at the University of the United

Nations in 1998, entitled *The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World*. Note that the term has antecedents in history, in authors such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Cheikh Anta Diop and Pixley Seme, but it was popularized by Mbeki in the 1990's (Adebajo 2016).

According to Mbeki (1998), African self-esteem to alter its image before the international community would come from an umbilical relationship between the past and the future. This is observed in Landsberg and Hlophe (1999), who present two dimensions of the project and its historical and multifaceted approach. The first dimension stems from a conservative view that advocates a return to the roots and values of pre-colonial Africa, since there was an understanding that this would reorient the continent to a prosperous future. The second puts democratization and economic development at the heart of the renaissance, which are necessary to create a stable environment for peace and sustainable economic activity. According to Iroulo (2017), the African Renaissance represents not only the desire to modify the portrait of the continent, fighting the democratic and economic stagnation characteristic of afro-pessimism, but also the search for political and economic independence, regional integration and increased quality of life.

The longing for a genuine liberation, an aspiration that guides contemporary Africans, demands two crucial elements for its success. The first is the consolidation and maintenance of good governance systems, based on multiparty democracies and periodic elections, and the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The intention was simple: to prevent the occurrence of cases such as Rwanda, Liberia and Somalia, which marked the African transition to the 21st century (Mbeki 1998).

The second essential element for the restoration of African dignity is the eradication of hunger, in order to fight the narrative that presents Africa as a place exclusively dependent on external charity. According to Mbeki (1998), this victory would come through economic modernization, with policies that guarantee foreign investments and encourage the private sector, reducing state participation in the economy.

During the speech, Mbeki also conditions the success of the African Renaissance to its elaboration by the Africans themselves, highlighting the failure of the inflexible importation of external models, "like the structural reforms driven by the liberal genius, the restructuring plans carried out by the economists of the West or even the carbon paper copy of real socialism and the Stalinist single-party model" (Saraiva 2008, 92).

In this sense, there is a divergence between Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, because, although both preach the importance of inte-

grating Africa to face its challenges, especially that of economic development, the African Renaissance “encourages African countries to accept the globalized world and its conditions, to link democracy with economic development and to forge partnerships with industrialized countries” (Otávio 2013, 94).

In this way, it is possible to interpret the African Renaissance in three ways (Evans 1999 apud Ahluwalia 2002). The first version places the African Renaissance as a mere political instrument to consolidate Thabo Mbeki’s position in South Africa. Wishing to demonstrate that the country would not fall into crises after Mandela’s departure from the presidency, Mbeki appeals to romanticized images of an Africa prior to the colonization to leave the shadow of Mandela and endorse his place (Adebajo 2016).

The second interpretation portrays Mbeki as a radical Africanist who aims to reconstruct the continent’s identity, placing Africa in its rightful place in the international arena. This analysis argues that Mbeki would be following the work of Kwame N’Krumah, with the African Renaissance being the conclusion of the pan-Africanist movement. Adekeye Adebajo (2016), for example, lists, among other similarities, the attempt to build modern states, as an instrument for the restoration of African ancestral glory, as a common point between the two leaders.

Finally, the last reading sees Mbeki as the modernizer that would make the African continent internationally competitive and put an end to its marginalization during the deepening of globalization. It is precisely in this context that South Africa, with its capital and infrastructure, would place itself as the natural leader of the continent, a view that is celebrated by the South African business community and received with caution by African neighbors (Vale and Masejo 1998; Murthy, Soares and Vernoeven 2014). The alleged representation of Africa by Pretoria can be exemplified in the country’s association with the BRICS group, which, in 2011, officially adds the letter “S”. Superficially, the main efforts of the group, composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, are aimed at the democratization of the world order consolidated with the end of the Cold War (Stuenkel 2017).

In this sense, Wolfgang Döpcke (2002) emphasizes that the African Renaissance must in no way be understood as a mere humanitarianism of South Africa in appreciating African societies, enjoying the advantages of political and economic modernization. Whether to guarantee this country’s economic interests or to present an Africa “palatable to Western tastes”, the African Renaissance must be understood as part of South Africa’s political strategy for Africa. Still, according to the author, this argument would explain

Pretoria's efforts to be the main protagonist in the creation of a modernizing project, supposedly progressive and neutral, at the continental level.

Combining the scenario of afro-pessimism with the orientation of South African foreign policy, the context described above allowed South Africa to play an influential role as an architect of the African Union and its projects, especially the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Adebajo 2016; Landsberg 2007). Thus, in accordance to the central hypothesis of this paper, the changes observed at the time of transition from the OAU to the AU had great South African influence.

African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development

The OAU's adoption of the principle of inviolability of national sovereignty has enabled humanitarian crises and *coups d'état* to occur throughout the continent (Meredith 2017). The bipolar dynamics of the Cold War also contributed to the rise of these regimes, supported both by the capitalist bloc, led by the USA, and by the communist, under the leadership of the USSR (Macedo 2018).

In line with South Africa's political orientation project in the period, the troubled African scenario in the early 21st century motivates the creation of an institution capable of effectively solve the presented challenges (Adebajo 2016; Landsberg 2007). Thus, in order to combat economic marginalization in the globalized world and problems related to good governance and international indebtedness, in addition to promoting peace through democratic principles, the African Union is created in 2002 (OAU 2000; Akokpari 2016).

Precisely because of its character of humanitarian interventionism, combined with the principle of "non-indifference", the predecessor of Responsibility to Protect⁶, a vast academic literature places the African Union as the materialization of the ideals of the African Renaissance (Adams 2014; Murthy,

6 Coined in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), the concept, Responsibility to Protect was unanimously adopted by the heads of state and government at the UN World Summit in 2005. At that time, state leaders have shown a willingness to take swift and collective action to protect a population against war crimes, ethnic cleansing and threats of genocide when peaceful means are ineffective in resolving such problems or the failure of national authorities to safeguard life of the population itself. Thus, it was established that it would be the responsibility of the international community to guarantee human security, even if, for this, it was necessary to break the national sovereignty of states incapable, if not violators, of protecting their population (Stuenkel 2017).

Soares and Vernoeven 2014). While providing for the defense of sovereignty and respect for the territorial integrity of the Member States, the AU sees Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as an important mechanism for maintaining stability, peace and security on the African continent, the organization's right to "intervene in a Member State in accordance with a Conference decision in serious situations, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity". In addition, the institution also guarantees, in article 30 of the same document, the suspension of "governments that come to power through unconstitutional means" (OAU 2000, 8, 19)⁷.

The dilution and relativization of national sovereignty in favor of individuals and security, simultaneously with the incorporation of democratic principles and respect for human rights, foreseen in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, also finds materialization in the structuring of the African Peace and Security Architecture (Döpcke 2002; Haffner and Viana 2013). Its main body, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), operates similarly to the UN Security Council, authorizing operations necessary to prevent crimes against humanity and human rights violations (Murthy, Soares and Vernoeven 2014). The instrument, created to implement PSC decisions, is called the African Standby Force (ASF), an African multinational force whose headquarters would be located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, made up of five regional brigades. ASF, which also finds a fraction of its scope of activity in peace-keeping and peace-building operations, should go into action by 2010 (Geldenhuys 2010).

Since the creation of the AU, four missions of the organization have been issued and nine mandates for Peace Support Operations (African Union 2019) have been authorized. For example, the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB), created in 2003 with substantial participation of Ethiopian, Mozambican and South African officials, stands out. In 2004, AMIB is replaced by the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB), as stated in UN Security Council Resolution number 1545 (UNSC, 2004). Also worth mentioning are the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), approved, respectively, in 2004 and 2006. After receiving logistical support from the UN for about three years, the AMIS management is transferred to the United Nations and African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), whose mandate, like that of AMISOM, was renewed in 2019 (AMISOM, 2019; ISS, 2019; UNAMID, 2019).

7 Sudan, for example, was suspended from the African Union in June 2019 after escalating tensions between the military and civilians, intensified by the fall of former Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir (Burke 2019).

When analyzing one of the main projects of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), one can see, more explicitly, the great role of Pretoria in structuring the new political and economic dynamics in Africa. Supported by Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt, Mbeki institutionalised the ideals of the African Renaissance in a continental socio-economic development program, the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Program (MAP), which, for a long time, competed with the Omega Plan, a similar proposal by Abdoulaye Wade, Senegalese President in the period (Döpcke 2002). In 2001, the two proposals are compiled in the New African Initiative (NAI), renamed NEPAD and ratified by member states of the African Union in 2002 as a continental development strategy for the 21st century (African Union 2019).

Combining sustainable development, security and democracy (Pereira, Ribeiro and Visentini 2014), NEPAD's main objective is to provide a common mechanism, led by African leaders, to eradicate poverty; to promote sustainable growth on the continent; to stop Africa's marginalization from globalization; to accelerate women's empowerment and to integrate the continent into the global economy (African Union 2019).

From this, Döpcke (2002) argues that, to understand NEPAD, it is necessary to interpret it in three different contexts. The first context is that of the global insertion of Africa in the 21st century, since its inventors proposed to resume the international negotiations between African heads of government and the leaders of developed states. Therefore, NEPAD's strategy accepts, and internalizes to its proposals the liberal globalization, which is, in fact, a kind of "Africanization" of Western proposals. Such "Africanization" is also noticeable in the inclusion of a "set of political and social values such as democracy, human rights and good governance" (Döpcke 2002, 149).

The second context of interpretation is South African foreign policy after the fall of apartheid. The author observes in the African Renaissance the incorporation of values such as the fight against apartheid and the new South Africa, which turns the African Renaissance into an instrument of South African foreign policy. As already mentioned, this would explain Mbeki's desire to be the actor that will transform and lead Africa in the 21st century, under a project of domestic and continental modernization.

Another interpretation that can be made in this analysis is the economic interests of South African in its interaction with Africa. Since several African countries receive their manufactured goods, the adoption of NEPAD by these states would benefit the South African business community. Thus,

Mbeki's insistence on spreading the African Renaissance, that South Africa's future is inextricably linked to that of the entire continent not only reflects a concern for the West's image of Africa, of a junction between South Africa and the continent, but it reveals first of all the economic interests of this country (Döpcke 2002, 151).

As Joseph Nye (2002) points out, the creation of a system with common values and principles is a remarkable tool for maintaining political stability and economic growth. Therefore, it is believed that the institutionalization of the African Renaissance was part of South Africa's strategic calculations, to guarantee Africa's political and economic security, as well as to change the continent's image before the international system. Thus, there is a South African preponderance in the construction of the new African political and economic dynamics at the beginning of the 21st century, especially in the ordering of the African Union and NEPAD.

Conclusion

The present study sought to answer the following question: was there a participation of Pretoria in the incorporation of new political and economic paradigms, materialized in the change of posture of the African Union in relation to national sovereignty, for example, by the African continent in the 21st century? The affirmative answer to that question is supported by three arguments.

The first is based on the need for the adoption of a new political and economic model by Africa in the late 1990s. The consolidation of a liberal world order and the marginalization of the continent in the process of economic interdependence, in addition to mitigating the strategic importance of the African continent, disputed by the USA and the USSR during the bipolarity of the Cold War, presented African states with new challenges. Such problems found a solution in the African Renaissance, popularized by Mbeki when he was vice president of Nelson Mandela government. As noted, the African Renaissance combined revisiting the pre-colonial past with multiparty democracies and liberalizing economic reforms.

The second, largely due to the scenario of afro-pessimism and the urgency to participate in globalization actively, is based on the institutionalization of the African Renaissance in the African Union. This institutionalization can be seen both in its socioeconomic projects, such as NEPAD, and in its new stance towards potential interventions in the name of human security and peacekeeping on the continent.

Finally, there was also an intense South African commitment to the dissemination of the proposed reforms and the structuring of the African Union. Likewise, in the bilateral field, Mbeki engaged in mediating political crises during the period in which he was the head of the South African presidency, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire.

The arguments presented above, in addition to confirming the hypothesis of notable South African action in structuring African political and economic dynamics in the 21st century, also open the possibility to conclude one more thing: Pretoria's movements were not unnoticed, but carefully absorbed by countless African governments that saw such moves as attempts to consolidate regional hegemony.

One of the obstacles, recognized by Mbeki himself, that hinders the recognition of South Africa as a representative of Africa in international forums, responsibility delegated to a large extent by the international community during the negotiations for the end of apartheid, is economic asymmetry, and its consequences, between the country and the continent. While, since the 1990s, South African society has looked down on immigrants from other African countries⁸, especially from neighbors to the north and east, African governments fear the flooding of their economies by South African manufactures⁹. In this regard, one last point deserves mention.

On January 29, 2018, the African Union adopted its main program, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want¹⁰, the Protocol Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, a project started in 1991, with the former OAU. Similar to the Schengen Agreement of the European Union, the protocol signed in Ethiopia establishes, in article 6° (1), the right of citizens of a certain AU member state to enter, stay, move and leave the territory of another member state, where it would be forbidden to the receiving states, in accordance with article 3° (2a) of the treaty, any type of discrimination in relation to these people. In addition, the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a continental free trade bloc that came into force in May 2019, fourteen months after its signature by

8 Suggested reading: Neocosmos, Michael. 2010. From 'Foreign Natives' to 'Native Foreigners': explaining Xenophobia in Post-Apartheid South Africa.

9 Suggested reading: Geldenhuys, Deon. South Africa: the idea-driven foreign policy of a regional power. In: Flandes, Daniel (Coord.). Regional leadership in the global system: ideas, interests and strategies of regional powers. Farnham Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010, p.151-168.

10 Suggested reading: African Union. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. 2019. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

54 of the 55 AU members in March 2018, should also be noted. In an article published by the International Monetary Fund in the same month of implementation of the AfCFTA, for example, it is highlighted that, between 2000 and 2017, intra-African trade had as main object of exchange manufactured products, mainly from South Africa followed by Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire. These questions exemplify one of the challenges faced by Pretoria for years: the immigration-economy trade-off.

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ABSTRACT

Marked by calamities that emphasize stereotyped views about itself, Africa presents itself to the 21st century with a growing pessimistic expectation regarding its future and potential in the international arena. In response to this challenge, among others, Thabo Mbeki, president of South Africa in the period, popularizes the concept of African Renaissance, whose proposal offers solutions, in the political and economic sphere, to face adversity. In addition to political and economic guidance, the African Renaissance, understood as part of Pretoria's strategy for Africa, also has a remarkable role in structuring the African Union, created in 2002 as a deepening of the Organization of African Unity. Thus, this paper seeks to analyze the South African role in changing the political and economic dynamics observed in Africa at the beginning of the 21st century.

KEYWORDS

South Africa; Thabo Mbeki; Africa; Political and economic dynamics.

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