

Theorising Mandela

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Summary

Nelson Mandela can be said to be the most celebrated leader so far to have emerged from the African continent. He has been variously written about in literary works and history books, differently presented in [auto] biographies and the mainstream media [newspapers and television], fictionalized and actualised in film, immortalised through art work such as painting and sculpture. In liberal-driven South African and Western media, Mandela is/was presented as a “messiah”, a superhuman character, a humanist, a philanthropist, and a *persona* who works as an ideal model for what should constitute modern African political leadership. Yet in some academic circles Mandela is viewed as “a terrorist-turned-politician” (Willcock 2013: 1), a political and ideological “construct” of the Western world; a framed “*dramatis persona*” by the Western media to project and deepen the colonialist agenda in Africa. This article seeks to theorise Mandela and in the process draw some justifications to the worthiness or the shallowness of labels attributed to Mandela as a symbolic figure that embodied the values of “Africanness” and “ubuntuism” or as an “African Cyborg” that was created and controlled by the Western world. The article also attempts to locate and expose to the surface the different layers of present day South African challenges – which can be attributed to the legacy left by Mandela, but are often concealed by the ruling government under the carpet of “Rainbow Nation” and a blind celebration of “National reconciliation”.

Opsomming

Nelson Mandela kan beskryf word as die beroemdste leier wat die Afrika-kontinent nóg opgelewer het. Daar is wyd oor hom geskryf in literêre werke en geskiedenisboeke, en hy word verskillend uitgebeeld in (outo-) biografieë en die hoofstroommedia (koerante en die televisie), fiktief gemaak en verwerklik in films, onsterflik gemaak deur kunswerke soos skilderye en beeldhouwerke. In liberaalgedrewe Suid-Afrikaanse en Westerse media is/was Mandela uitgebeeld as ’n “messias”, ’n bomenslike karakter, ’n humanis, ’n filantroop, en ’n persona wat werk as ’n ideale model vir wat moderne politieke leierskap in Afrika behoort te wees. Tog word Mandela in sommige akademiese sirkels beskou as “’n terroris wat ’n politikus geword het” (Willcock 2013: 1), ’n politieke en ideologiese “idee” van die Westerse wêreld; ’n *dramatis persona* wat deur die Westerse media aangewend is om die kolonialistiese agenda in Afrika te projekteer en te verdiep. Hierdie artikel het ten doel om Mandela te teoretiseer en in die proses ’n mate van regverdiging te gee vir die verdienstelikheid of vlakheid van etikette wat aan Mandela as ’n simboliese figuur toegeken is – wat die waardes van “Afrika uitleef en ubuntu uitleef” vergestalt; of as ’n “Afrika-kuborg” wat deur die Westerse wêreld geskep en beheer is. Die artikel poog ook om die verskillende lae van hedendaagse

uitdagings in Suid-Afrika, te vind en na die oppervlak te bring – uitdagings wat toegeskryf kan word aan Mandela se nalatenskap, maar wat dikwels verskans word deur die regering aan bewind, onder die mat van “reënboognasie” en ’n blinde viering van “nasionale versoening”.

Introduction: Africa: “Is it a Curse/Case of Leadership Crisis” or “Crisis of Leadership” or Both?

Africa is often criticised – justifiably or unjustifiably, as a continent that suffers from “leadership crisis and the crisis of leadership” (Issa & David 2012: 146). For those critics that cite “leadership crisis” as a contagion bedevilling the African continent often point to a lack of clear and redemptive governing programs among African leaders in which case, “[t]hey lack the more subtle institutional means that are at the disposal of a government in societies where the state is firmly rooted in the productive system of the country and where therefore, it can be used to shape the system at large” (Hyden 1983: 37). In this case, Hyden (1983) attributes “leadership crisis” among African leaders as mainly rooted in their lack of having institutional capacity to control the productive system of their countries. This “lack” can also be blamed partly on Western choreographed economic policies such as “Economic Structural Adjustment Programs” that are/were consciously deployed to Africa to undermine the potential of African leaders to implement sound and “home-grown” economic programs that can lead to a positive transformation of the lives of ordinary citizens. Western nations – particularly USA, Britain and France have influenced and continue to influence the way African leaders rule by installing “puppet” regimes that are mandated to serve the political and economic interests of the Western world. However, Hyden’s (1983) argument misses a crucial point that even in cases where economic resources are at disposal (Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Southern Sudan, Libya and DR Congo) African leaders have not meaningfully exploited those resources to economically and politically empower ordinary people. This failure to deliver constitutes to “the crisis of leadership” (Issa & David 2012: 146), that in many ways, has caused the emergence of dictatorship, tyranny, authoritarianism and totalitarianism – which in Africa, is exemplified by political systems practiced by Emperor Bokassa (Central African Republic), Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire), Idi Amin (Uganda), Muammar Gaddafi (Libya), Sani Abacha (Nigeria), Haile Mariam Mengistu (Ethiopia), Charles Taylor (Liberia), Kamuzu Banda (Malawi) and Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe).

Achille Mbembe uses terms such as the, “aesthetics of vulgarity and banality of power” (2001: 102) to describe how African leaders draw pleasure from using excess political power in controlling ordinary citizens. Although Mbembe (2001) attempts to draw attention to political issues that “vulgarise” post-colonial Africa, it appears he has earned himself a place inside the

“house” of an African critical canon that tend to, “... homogenize the continent’s [Africa] postcolonial space as one uniform site of dysfunctionality” (Adesanmi 2004: 5). Homogenisation conditions in Africa is in itself a condition of “postcoloniality” (Achebe 1995: 55) embraced by some African intellectuals schooled in Western epistemologies which do not permit their analysis to go beyond the binary of “Us” (Europeans) versus “Them” (Africans). According to Fattou (1988) the bane of “crisis of leadership” in Africa is also manifested through intolerance to democracy, less regard to the rule of law, high levels of corruption, political patronage, violent practices and abuse of human rights, cronyism, factional politics and clientelism. The spectacle of excessive (Ndebele 1991) application of political power often associated with African leaders such as Kamuzu Banda, Idi Amin, Sani Abacha and Mobutu Sese Seko was felt through a manifest display of violence and brutality which defied every form of logic. The spectacle of excessive violence reminds ordinary citizens of their powerlessness while affirming the cruelty and powerfulness of the leaders since their actions are rationalised by “political sycophants” who tell the leaders that killing is part of carrying out a “national duty” of protecting the country from political saboteurs (Mirzoeff 2005). Yet to view dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko as “monsters” of their own creation is to miss the critical point that he was actually “hand-picked” by Western powers (USA, Britain and Belgium) to become their Cold War ally in Africa in order to make Congo a staging post for CIA operations against Soviet-backed African regimes (Rwafa & Tarugarira 2013). Among the debris of “leadership crisis” and “the crisis of leadership” in Africa, Nelson Mandela emerged in post-independent South Africa to pose as an ideal model that is said to represent the type of values which can inspire modern Africa political leadership. Theorising Mandela, therefore, permits us to have deeper insights into Mandela’s type of leadership; assess his legacy as well as ask the [dis]comforting question: Why was Mandela often viewed as a “darling” of the Western world? But before attempting to answer the foregoing question, it is pertinent to theorise on Mandela’s achievements as the first democratically elected leader in post-apartheid South Africa.

Mandela: An Ideal Model for African Political Leadership

Ever since Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa after winning his country’s first democratic elections in April 1994, there has been an influx of literature that presents him as an embodiment of the values that should inform modern African political leadership. For Maanga (2013) Nelson Mandela proved beyond reasonable doubt that he is a role model for good political leadership, good governance, champion of peace and democracy, architecture of love and national reconciliation. Kirk and Bolden (2015) point out that there has been a paradigm shift from viewing leadership focused on

individual effort to a broader and more comprehensive position that views leadership as a result of political, economic and social contexts. On a political level, Mandela has proved his mettle and wisdom by reaching out to the old enemy, repress any vengeful impulse he might have accumulated during his 27 years in prison as well as consolidate South Africa's transition from tyranny to democracy. According to Carlin (2013) the triumphant expression of Mandela's political system is that it allowed the rule of law, freedom of expression, free and fair elections to prevail, which were conditions unheard of during the era of apartheid. By freeing black people of the tethers of apartheid, Mandela is likened to Abraham Lincoln who viciously fought against slavery in America.

One bold step that Mandela took was to convince the white population as a whole that they belonged fully in "the new South Africa", and that a black-led government would not treat them the way previous white rulers had treated blacks. In South African political context that was so delicate that anything could happen, Mandela pointed out: "... you had to be very careful with the messages you put out. Strike a false note and you risked undermining the nation's stability; make the right gesture and national unity would be reinforced" (Carlin 2013: 1). Such a redeeming statement coming as it were from a leader that was thought to be "anti-white" created a conducive environment for national reconciliation and the creation of what Mandela termed the "rainbow nation". Kirk and Bolden (2015) developed an Afro-centric perspective on leadership by proposing development activities that promote relational, critical and constructionist perspectives on leadership, with an emphasis on dialogue and sharing experience that could be an important means for surfacing new insights and understandings. Mandela's knowledge about the political history of South Africa; his understanding of the South African community, his vision of what should constitute effective political leadership in a volatile South African society, gained him international popularity and recognition at a time when other African leaders such as Robert Mugabe were being lampooned by the Western media for practicing "reverse-racism" following his seizure of white-owned farms during land reform program which started in the year 2000.

On the economic front, there are some gains that were achieved since Mandela got the reins of power. For South Africa to be placed on the path of rapid economic development, Mandela identified three problematic areas which are: severe poverty among economically disadvantaged groups, slow growth and extreme economic inequalities between blacks and whites (Mandela 1993). His first move was to encourage blacks to venture into businesses that were previously reserved for whites without necessarily intimidating businesses that were owned by whites. His argument was that since South Africa was a democratic country that promotes free business enterprise, anyone could start a business as long as it was legitimately supported by the terms that govern business investment. In the post-apartheid era robust

measures ranging from slowing down population growth in the black community to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) have been initiated to address issues of poverty and inequality.

By the beginning of the new century the South African government had increased the social grants, which form the safety net for the poor, to 22 Billion Rand (Berg, Burger, Louw & Yu, 2006: 23). By early 1996 it had become clear that without new macroeconomic initiatives by the government, economic growth rates could not be attained that were both sustainable and high enough for effective poverty alleviation, income redistribution, employment creation and financing of essential social services (Padayachee & Desai 2012). The government then formulated the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. GEAR reiterated government's commitment to the existing economic policy framework, identified many of the structural weaknesses inhibiting economic growth and employment, and focused attention on market-based policies to address them. This helped to address employment creation, public works programmes, equity and discrimination, labour standards and job security, minimum wages and training for skilled labour (Padayachee & Desai 2012).

On the social platform, Mandela's government initiated different projects that were meant to improve the health delivery system to reach areas that were previously neglected by the apartheid regime. In 1995 the government also introduced universal access to primary health care in South Africa the aim of which was to address inequalities engendered by apartheid in terms of access to health services. In the Education sector Mandela's government gave leniency to Black South Africans' access to tertiary education, allowing them to be enrolled despite having low academic grades. This was very important since during apartheid most black South Africans were discriminated against through the "Bantu Education system" (Mandela 1993: 1) that was meant to offer sub-standard education to black South Africans. However, despite some achievements gained by Mandela within the social, political, economic spheres, his critics has often accused him of being "framed" by the Western world to serve the interests of capitalism in South Africa.

The Triumph of Global Cultism: Western Media and the "Framing" of Nelson Mandela

The political tenure of Nelson Mandela was characterised by much celebration, praise-singing and "hero-worshipping" of his political exploits that resulted in national reconciliation and the creation of "the rainbow nation". As one may have guessed, much praise-singing emanated from liberal-driven South African and Western media such as e-TV, The Sunday Times, Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Agence France Presse (AFP) and Associated Press (AP). The idea was to construct or

“frame” the image of Mandela so that, as a newly elected president of South Africa, he would think and act the way expected by his “framers” in order to promote Western capitalism and its modes of defining democracy, what it calls “good governance and rule of law” (Issa & David 2012: 146). In media, “framing” is a term that is used to refer to the way news reporters shape the content and context of news items by focusing on what should be thought about and the range of acceptable debate on a particular topic/event (Lippman in Wicks 2001). When Nelson Mandela was democratically elected in 1994 to become the first president of independent South Africa, the international media beamed its screens to report on the celebrations that heralded the dawn of a new era in South Africa. This was in spite of the reality that during the same year that Mandela was inaugurated as president, Rwanda was experiencing a devastating genocide in which the lives of more than 800 000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were decimated under the hands of Hutu extremists. The international media chose to downplay the significance of that event in preference to the crowning of Mandela. Mandela himself squandered a rare moment of defining his identity as the “true father of the African revolution” (Ntalaja 1987: 5) by mourning political conditions in Rwanda even when he was receiving exaggerated praises from the Western media. The conscious decisions by the international media to “particularize” celebrations in South Africa rather than other newsworthy events that were taking place in Africa, is how Mandela and his global cultism was “shaped or framed” by the Western world. Of course, framing the “Mandela personality cult” was not done in vain simply because, “... frames themselves work alongside political and socio-economic interests” (Jaworski 2012: 361) which had always pre-occupied Western fantasies about the need to exploit mineral resources in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Focusing on South Africa in general, and on Mandela in particular, was a conscious process of “framing” a leader who would be used by the Western nations as an alternative example in the process of vilifying and demonising other African leaders, such as Robert Mugabe, that fail to conform to the dictates of the Western world. Parenti (1993: 200) views framing more as a technique of “inventing reality” – which in a way, is a propaganda technique. Parenti puts that:

... One common framing method is to select labels and vocabulary designed to convey politically loaded images. These labels and phrases like masks in a Greek dance convey positive or negative image cues regarding events and persona, often without benefit and usually as substitutes for supportive information.

(1993: 200)

As part framing Mandela, the liberal-driven South African and Western media labelled him a “messiah”, a superhuman character, a humanist, a philanthropist, and an astute political leader who should be viewed as an ideal

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model for what can constitute modern African leadership. According to Butler the labels worked, "... as an editorial embellishment of the images" (2010: 8) that countered apartheid-engineered labels of Mandela as a "terrorist", or "a political saboteur". Many, however, wonder why, if Mandela was as "super-human" as the Western media framed him, it would be difficult for him to put in place concrete economic measures that would positively change the lives of black people in South Africa? In addition, a legacy of being "silent" about xenophobia which later reared its ugly head in 2008 and 2015 can be attributed to Mandela's lack of "voice" in addressing critical issues of what constitute "nationhood and citizenship" (Neocosmos 2006: 45) relating to the fate of black foreign immigrants in post-independent South Africa. Of course, the blame should also be put squarely on the "door-step" of Mbeki and Zuma for taking a non-committal attitude towards dealing with the plight of black foreign immigrants during xenophobic attacks in 2008 and 2015. Subversive readings of Mandela's political tenure take into cognisance Butler's assertions that:

As the frame constantly breaks from its context, this self-breaking becomes part of the very definition. This leads us to a different way of understanding both the frame's efficacy and its vulnerability to reversal, to subversion, even to critical instrumentation.

(2010: 10)

Words and expressions from Butler's (2010) characterisation of a frame such as that the "... frame constantly breaks from its context"... and "... frame's efficacy and vulnerability ..." indicates clearly about the "precarity and precariousness" (Butler 2010: 3) of frames constructed by the Western world to described the nature of African leadership. Thinking through Western-constructed frames allows us to see the vulnerability of the images attributed to Mandela because they constantly break from their contexts aligned to a "blind celebration" of post-independent South Africa in order to take an openly subversive reading of the social, economic and political situation epitomised by the dastard shooting of demonstrating miners at Marikana on the 16th of August 2012. Subversive readings are also begging answers from South African leaders about the "forces" behind xenophobic and barbaric bludgeoning of foreigners in Johannesburg, Kwa-Zulu Natal and other parts of South in 2008 and 2015. The foregoing incidences are cited here to demonstrate the legacy bequeathed to the ANC by Mandela's failure to define and practically apply the values of "ubuntu" which views spilling of blood as sacrilegious especially that of African brothers and sisters from neighbouring African countries. In this context, Mandela's failure, during his political tenure, to articulate clearly the position of black foreign immigrants working in South Africa, much as he has done about race relations in the new South Africa, seems to put the lives of black foreigners in a precarious position. The

vulnerability was later to be reflected, years after Mandela has gotten out of power.

The reality of the frames constructed around Mandela is that they alienated him from Africa; gave him sanctuary in Western symbolic and imaginary creations where his image is/was immortalised, contained and selectively [re]produced to punish so-called “rogue African leaders” (French 2004: 34). Butler confirms the viciousness of frames constructed by the liberal media in South Africa and the West about Mandela when he argues that: “Although framing cannot always contain what it seeks to make visible or readable, it remains structured by the aim of instrumentalizing certain versions of reality” (2010: xiii). Versions of reality that can be read from the framing of Mandela by the Western media are that: (1) he was framed to echo capitalist interests in South Africa, and indeed he echoed by not talking about socialism and the nationalisation of economy, (2) he was framed to be emphatic about national reconciliation and “rainbow nation” and less vocal about economic inequalities in South Africa, (3) he was framed to condemn fellow African leaders who helped ANC cadres to get sanctuary from the atrocities of the apartheid regime, and (4) he was framed to pose as an example of alternative African leadership thereby overshadowing the political and economic achievements of socialist and Pan African leaders such as Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana).

An assessment of the framing of Nelson Mandela by the Western media shows that he was meant to be an “African Cyborg” that could be controlled in order to serve the interests of the Western world. In other words, the ‘cult of personality’ created around Mandela’s name exemplifies the triumph of global cultism in which the Western world has got the power to install an African leader who act as a “demigod” supported by angels of capitalism. These “angels” have power to describe the so-called African “primitivity and disorderliness” (Steyn 2001: 8) such that part of “The White man’s Burden” (Kipling in Mayer 2002: 3) is to shower some blessings to African leaders who project the agenda of capitalism while demonising those that fail to conform. The unfortunate case about South Africa is that it is in Africa and that no-matter what the country does to become part of the Western world; it can still be stereotyped as “that” African country belonging to a dark continent inhabited by savages who “kill each other indiscriminately as well as boil human flesh in clay pots” (Mayer 2002: 20). Thus, the failure of Mandela to unequivocally dismiss Western frames of how he should think and act as an African bearing the historical baggage of being looked upon as “inferior” is a reflection of how the condition of “postcoloniality” (Achebe 1995: 55) continues to frame and shape the direction of politics in some African countries. Apart from being accused for being a “darling” of the Western world, Mandela may also be criticised for leaving behind a legacy of economic inequalities, violence, xenophobia, Afro-phobia, racial acrimony

and corruption among the ranks of ANC – all camouflaged under the term “democracy”.

Mandela’s Legacy: Cracks and Fissures in Post-Independent South Africa

The newly found state of South Africa emerged in 1994 after Nelson Mandela was released to participate in the first democratic elections in which he won by a majority vote. But ever since South Africa got independence, there was not much improvement experienced by ordinary people especially in the sphere of economics. Bhorat and Kanbur (2005) carried out a research to find out the level of economic progress in South Africa during a period of ten years after independence. The research revealed that although the political transition from apartheid systems of oppression to independence brought some significant changes to the lives of ordinary black South Africans, most of the changes remained political with little or no economic changes that benefitted previously disadvantaged groups of people such as blacks and coloureds. When Mandela got the reins of power he was expected to put together a fragmented society torn apart by racial policies of apartheid which promoted economic, social and political inequalities among South Africans. In their article *Post-Apartheid South Africa and the Crisis of Expectation-DPRN Four* Padayachee and Desai write that:

The collapse of the apartheid state and the ushering in of democratic rule in 1994 represented a new beginning for the new South Africa and the Southern African region. There were widespread expectations and hopes that the elaboration of democratic institutions would also inaugurate policies that would progressively alleviate poverty and inequality. Fourteen years into the momentous events that saw Nelson Mandela become the president of South Africa, critical questions are being asked about the country’s transition, especially about its performance in meeting the targets laid down in its own macro-economic programmes in terms of poverty and inequality, and the consequences of the fact that the expectations of South Africans have not been met.

(2014: 1)

Nelson Mandela had a very short political stint in office, and no one would have expected him to address “all” burning issues that were affecting South Africans which had been inherited from the separatist policies of apartheid. Yet, according to Padayachee and Desai (2014) the last years of Mandela in office could have presented him with lots of headaches as underprivileged South African began to ask critical questions about the country’s failure to meet her targets laid down in the macro-economic programs in terms of the rising levels of poverty and the widening gaps of economic inequalities

between whites and blacks. In addition, the rising levels of unemployment, gnawing effects of HIV and the burgeoning violent crimes were all symptomatic of the ANC's failure to address economic fundamentals that could bring positive change to the lives of ordinary South Africans. The "cracks" and "fissures" witnessed by Mandela's government and the crisis of expecting (Padayachee & Desai 2014) better life following years of suffering made Altbeker to view South Africa as "a country at war with itself" (2007: 34). South Africans had trusted democracy with the hard task to deliver jobs, wealth, healthcare, better housing and services to the people.

When Mandela signed a deal that ended apartheid, he was expected to quickly and practically apply economic policies that would result in positive development among ordinary people. In his interview with Dali Tambo (2013) during the program *People of the South*, Robert Mugabe accused Mandela of, "ceding too much" to his erstwhile colonizers such that he was left little power to bargain with. Although this statement came from Mugabe – also accused of running down Zimbabwe's economy, the statement does certainly hold a grain of truth considering a legacy of racial divisions, poverty among blacks, economic inequalities, violence and crime left by Mandela. However, to criticize Mandela as if he achieved virtually nothing during his political tenure is to become narrow in theorising challenges that South Africa faced immediately following the demise of apartheid. The challenges included harmonising relations among races that previously saw each other as enemies, addressing economic inequalities, providing education and health services to ordinary South Africans, creating employment, addressing issues about violence and crime. To show that the ANC was committed towards development, Padayachee and Desai note:

Since 1994, the ANC government has passed a significant amount of social legislation that claims to help address the inequities of the past. Starting from 1992-1993, spending on social services has grown from 44.4% of general government expenditure to 56.7% in 2002-2003. The government has facilitated the construction of 1.6 million new houses, supplied water to nine million households and sanitation to 6.4 million, and created two million net new jobs. Government also embarked on policies and programmes geared toward ensuring economic development.

(2014: 2)

However, in spite of the effort that the government of Mandela put to address the plight of the underprivileged, Mandela is criticized for creating uncontrolled "personality cult" which slowly trickled down to the rank and file of ANC leadership. Since the ANC was/is viewed as a revolutionary party that fought against apartheid system, some of its members began to use their "political clout" to unlawfully acquire properties and amass wealth through corrupt means. To substantiate the foregoing, Nyamnjoh bemoans the

spectacle of excessive affluence and consumerism among the black elite class and black leadership in South African when writing that:

While a small but bustling black can wallow in the conspicuous consumption of prized commodities such as fancy houses and cars, televisions, multimedia, internet connectivity, cellphones, Jacuzzis, money-laundering partnerships, sumptuous deals and frequent-flyer privileges, most ordinary South Africans are still trapped in shacks, shanty towns, joblessness, poverty, uncertainty and the illusion of citizenship, and have to struggle even with black African immigrants for consumer.

(2006: 17)

The above statement by Nyamnjoh (2006) exposes to the surface how a country weighed down by the burdens of “post-colonialism” and “neo-colonialism” will gradually show signs of exhaustion following some hopeful years brought about by independence. In other words, the emergence of a coterie of corrupt leaders in South Africa, whose origins can be traced from the period of Mandela, shows that after all South Africa is not very different from all other African countries that have run down their economies due to corruption and bad governance. Yet, in the case of South Africa, the message seems to be far from being heard because of the pretention by the leadership that all could be well if black immigrants are sent back to their countries. The politics of “scape-goating” will not help South Africans because in the final analysis, they will still have to face up to the reality that their economy is inaccessible to the majority of blacks some of whom are unfortunately used as political pawns to vent their frustration on black foreign immigrants.

Mandela and the “Pitfalls” of Neocolonialism in Africa

In Africa, formal colonialism has come and gone, and yet it left in its wake other forms of domination manifesting as neocolonialism. The existence of neocolonialism in Africa has enabled Western nations to install “puppet” regimes as well as support rebel movements in Africa that are used to further the agenda of capitalist Europe (Shohat & Stam 1994). It is not a misnomer to say that dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire) and Idi Amin (Uganda) were used to siphon African resources that were used to build the “economic power house” of Europe while leaders of rebel movements such as Jonas Savimbi (Angola) and Alfonso Dlakama (Mozambique) were planted by the Western world to destabilise peace such that the idea of total independence for Angola and Mozambique will continue to remain in the fringes. The continued destabilisation of peace in DR Congo has always been attributed to the Western powers that are believed to be working with regional powers such as Rwanda and Uganda (French 2005; Newbury 2001; Pottier 2000). Evidently, over the years European colonialism mutated in different ways that

are very “subtle” and “not-so-visible” to the eye unless subjects have made a concerted effort to understand its ontology and tropological discourses of power (Varadharajan 2008) that colonialism uses to entrap African leaders into thinking that they are very much loved by the Western powers.

Nelson Mandela has made little effort to position himself as “true father of the African revolution” (Ntalaja 1987: 5) by distancing himself from the hypocritical and hypnotising comments that he was receiving from the Western world through Western media. Critics such as Willcock (2013) have no kind words for Mandela for squandering a rare moment by not using his newly found popularity to demystify images constructed by the Western as well as clarify his position in African and international politics. Willcock comments that:

Mandela has been buried deep beneath the media-created myth of the man, who for decades has been given such a whitewashing by the western liberal media that the **real** Mandela disappeared from the world’s eyes, and in his place appeared a messiah, a saviour, a demigod, whose only resemblance to the real Mandela was the outer shell.

(2013: 2)

Getting positive comments when one has done something right is not a problem, and yet Pottier (2002: 2) reminds us that, “... even where it is clear to all that an image has a story to tell we still need to ask ‘whose story’ does it tell?” Willcock (2013) believes that most stories that were told by the Western media about Mandela were actually “cooked” for the Western economic interests in South Africa and not for the benefit of ordinary South Africans. His criticism of neocolonialism in South Africa is evident when he writes that:

... when Mandela from prison, the worldwide liberal/leftist media had repackaged him, presenting him to the world as a wise, big-hearted, moderate, decent man, who had been unjustly imprisoned for his stand against apartheid, and who would, when he became president of South Africa, govern this complex and diverse country with wisdom and magnanimity, creating a wonderful earthly paradise where all would live happily ever after.

(2013: 2)

Like Mandela, Morgan Tsvangirai – the leader of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zimbabwe has also been receiving exaggerated praises from Britain and America. And because of that the ruling elite class in Zimbabwe has often accused and criticised him for pandering to the whims of British and Americans. Mandela is an ambivalent and contestable figure who occupied South African political landscape. It remains to be seen whether his death also marked the “death” of his vision of a free South Africa that he so much loved or that his death actually cemented the need to work together to

achieve national goals. At present, increasing signs of frustration with social, economic and political conditions that can be traced from Mandela's times point to the reality that the government of Jacob Zuma has a lot of work to do before South Africa deteriorates to levels of Southern African countries such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique that have failed to turn independence into something meaningful for ordinary citizens.

Conclusion

This article theorised Mandela to reveal “myths” and “realities” that have been constructed regarding his personality, leadership qualities and his symbolic representation in South African and Western media. The article problematised the “crisis of leadership and the leadership crisis” in Africa. It was found out that much as the crisis can be attributed to lack of clarity among African leaders of what constitute effective leadership; the Western world can also be blamed for “planting” some Africans in leadership positions so that they further the agenda of Western capitalism. This brief background about leadership crisis in African was then used to locate the origins of Nelson Mandela – who to some critics, remain the ideal model of what should constitute modern African leadership. The article explored the achievements that were realised by Mandela during his tenure as the first president of post-independent South Africa. It was, however, argued that although Mandela worked hard to bring democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression in South Africa, he has not done much to eliminate economic inequalities and racial acrimony that continue to haunt post-independent South Africa. It was also argued that although Mandela deserved international media attention for the sterling job that he did in South Africa to bring peace and democracy, some critics view Mandela as a “framed” character that was made to appear like a “larger-than-life” figure – which was a way in which the Western world safe-guarded its interest in South Africa from a person who was thought to be “anti-white”, and therefore, against private and foreign investment in South Africa. It was, therefore, concluded that if the Western world has something that it stands to benefit from an African country, it would be very persistent in painting exaggerated images about an individual chosen to act as a conduit of capitalist interests. Mandela, unfortunately, got ensnared inside a tangled media “web” that was meant to project economic interests of Western powers in Africa. The post-Mandela period is beginning to show some “cracks” and “fissures” that for a long time have often been concealed under the carpet of “rainbow nation” and “national reconciliation” engendered by Nelson Mandela.

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