One

Decolonial Theory of Life

Introduction

> This then is what the ANC is fighting for. Their struggle is a truly national one.
>
> It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live.
> – Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*

> I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter. I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.
> – Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*

The decolonial theory of life is founded on the 'will to live' rather that the 'will to power'. It is fundamentally a decolonial humanistic expression that is opposed to the paradigm of war linked to coloniality. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was a living expression of the decolonial theory of life. This is why the Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka (2006: 24) characterized Mandela 'as

humanistic expression'. Indeed if Mandela was an expression of decolonial humanism and his life of struggle was for a new politics of life, then the African National Congress (ANC) was a decolonial political school and a site of political socialization of decolonial humanists, beginning with such leaders as Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Langalibalele Dube and Albert Luthuli. Even Mandela himself had to learn a lot from this decolonial school where narrow Africanism and reserve racism had to be transcended, and new decolonial humanist ideals and ethics, and gesturing towards the creation of an inclusive, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and post-apartheid society were inculcated. Mandela was well aware of the ANC as a school: 'I matured politically within the ranks of a movement and a leadership that were critical in shaping my outlook' (quoted in Sampson 1999: 495). These pluriversal ideals and others that were socialist-oriented were well captured in the Freedom Charter of 1955. The ANC as a school is also captured well in *Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself*, in which Mandela specifically wrote:

> I was twenty-one then and my subsequent association with the African National Congress and progressive ideas helped me to crawl out of the prejudice of my youth and to accept all people as equals. I came to accept that I have no right whatsoever to judge others in terms of my own customs, however much I may be proud of such customs; that to despise others because they have not observed particular customs is a dangerous form of chauvinism. (Mandela 2010: 26)

A decolonial school is against all fundamentalisms and egoisms. The ANC's ideology of racial inclusivity and equality is typically decolonial. The ANC decolonial political school made Mandela fully aware of challenges that faced and affected those who were committed to the decolonial struggle:

> My association with the African National Congress has taught me that a broad national movement has numerous and divergent contradictions, fundamental and otherwise. The presence in one organization of various classes and social groups with conflicting long-term interests many collide at crucial moments, and brings its own conflicts. (Mandela 2010: 26)

Because decoloniality is against all forms of fundamentalisms and egocentrisms, it enabled the ANC to easily become a home to socialists, liberals and Africanists as long as they all were committed to the decolonial struggle. While the socialist ideals lost some favour in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the implosion of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, other pluriversal ideals gained a further boost from the globalization process that was accompanied by denationalization and deterritorialization processes. The current leadership of the ANC, despite numerous criticisms, have vowed to continue the decolonial humanist struggle, building from where Mandela left off. All those from the Global South who have walked through the shadow of death and experienced and survived the devastating effects of the imperial/colonial/apartheid paradigm of war are still fighting for new humanism and a paradigm of peace. Mandela fought for the life of those who were consigned by global imperial designs to the category of 'the wretched of the earth'.

Beyond Hellenocentrism, Westernization and Eurocentrism

Mandela's decolonial humanist struggle was aimed at creating another civilization beyond the exclusivist modern world shaped by forces of Hellenocentrism, Westernization, Eurocentrism, imperial reason, and the paradigm of war. This is a world bereft of humanism. Therefore, at the centre of Mandela's life of struggle and legacy, one finds a very deep and profound humanism as the driving force of his political actions. One cannot therefore understand the Mandela phenomenon without deploying decoloniality as a theory of life. Decoloniality is a theory of life in the sense that it is founded on the need to decolonize being, to decolonize knowledge, and to decolonize power, which are imbricated in denial of life to those who were pushed into the zone of non-being.

'Being' was colonized through racial profiling, classification, and hierarchization of the human population. Knowledge was colonized through epistemicides and appropriations of other

knowledges while pretending that the only valid knowledge came from Europe and North America. Power was colonized in various ways including usurpation if not theft of world history and its rearticulation through the prism of Hellenocentrism, Eurocentrism and Westernization.

Decolonial theory is therefore ranged against various epistemological, ideological, political and social projects and processes imposed on the modern world by Euro-North American-centric modernity after 1492. The leading philosopher of liberation, Enrique Dussel (2011: xv), clearly identified the core contours of usurpation of world history by Europeans. The first process he termed 'Hellenocentrism', which laid the foundation for Eurocentrism. Hellenocentrism instantiated that: 'All start in Greece'. This Euro-North American-centric and egocentric conception of human history resulted in what the leading African historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (1997) termed the 'Athens-to-Washington' historiographical narrative, which privileged Greece (in particular Athens) as the beginning of human civilization. Hellenocentrism gave birth to Westernization as a process of imposing Euro-North American-centric values on other people accompanied by the displacement of some values and the expropriation of others. This is why the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano articulated the inscription of coloniality of power in these revealing words:

> The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns and instruments of formalized and objectivised expression, intellectual or visual. It was followed by the imposition of the use of the rulers' own patterns of expression, and of their beliefs and images with reference to the supernatural … The colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. Then European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction … European culture became a universal cultural model. The imaginary in the non-European cultures could

hardly exist today and, above all, reproduce itself outside of these relations. (Quijano 2007: 169)

In this articulation of human history, the United States of America (Washington) is the beacon of human civilizational achievement. Jack Goody in his *The Theft of History* (2006) presents the centrality of Europe in human history as predicated on 'theft of history'. This is how he put it:

> The 'theft of history' … refers to the takeover of history by the West. That is, the past is conceptualized and presented according to what happened on the provincial scale of Europe, often Western Europe, and then imposed upon the rest of the world. That continent makes many claims to having invented a range of value-laden institutions such as 'democracy', mercantile 'capitalism', freedom, individualism. (Goody 2006: 1)

At the centre of Westernization was an epistemological process of claiming knowledge as an artefact of Western societies. Westernization was driven by 'Eurocentrism', which 'is the label for all the beliefs that postulate past or present superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans (and over minority people of non-European descent) (Blaut 1993: 8). According to Dussel (2011: xvi), Eurocentrism was propelled by a deliberate forgetting 'through disdain and ignorance of everything that was achieved by other cultures, practically, politically and theoretically'. One of the most debated consequences of Eurocentrism is what the Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1978) described as 'orientalism' – a shorthand of the West's historical, cultural and political perceptions of the East. Eurocentrism resulted in routinization of global binary that the Nigerian decolonial thinker Chinweizu (1975) elucidated as 'the west and the rest of us'. The implications and consequences of Eurocentrism are well documented by James M. Blaut in *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusion and Eurocentric History* (1993). The first was that Europe (the West) has had some unique historical advantage including special racial qualities that gave it 'a permanent superiority over all other communities'. The second was that Europeans are the makers of human history. The third was that Europe is positioned on an eternal state of

human advancement, progression and modernization, while other parts of the world are stagnant and traditional. The final was that 'Europe is the source of most diffusion; non-Europe is the recipient' (Blaut 1993: 1).

The leading Egyptian economist Samir Amin (2009: 34) understood Eurocentrism as 'the great ideological deformations of our time'. What were deformed by Eurocentrism were ideas concerning the human itself. Europeans claimed 'being' for themselves and assigned 'becoming' for others (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013c). Taken together, these processes resulted in imperial reason that claimed secularism and rationality as its well spring but remaining deeply racist. Decoloniality as a theory of life invites all of us to 'learn to discover new questions in order to encounter new answers' (Dussel 2011: xviii). Decoloniality is against denial if not destruction of other people's ontological densities, resulting in such people being physically pushed out of the human ocumene. Decoloniality is founded on the will to live not the will to power.

From the Will to Power to the Will to Live

The dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity universalized the will to power as the natural leitmotif of politics. This will to power enabled the naturalization of war, which was informed by what Dussel described as 'fetishism of power'.

> [This] consists of the moment in which the political actor (the member of the political community, whether citizens or representatives) believes that power affirms his or her subjectivity or the institution in which he or she functions – as a 'functionary', whether it be as president, representative, judge, governor, soldier, police officer – as the centre or source of political power. (Dussel 2008: 4)

The fetishism of power unfolded in terms of corruption of what Dussel (2008: xv) termed the 'noble vocation of politics'. This was founded on the will to live, but corrupted into the will to power. This is described by Dussel (ibid.: 4) as the 'originary corruption of the political', and is the first of Dussel's 'twenty theses on politics'. According to Dussel:

> The fetishization of power … consists of a 'Will-to-Power, as domination of the people, of the majority, of the weakest, of the poor. All other definitions must be rejected as idealistic, insufficiently realistic, moralistic, and ineffective. In this case, politics is the art of exercising power over antagonists who are subjected – at best, hegemonically – to the will of fetishized institutions in favour of some particular members of the community. (ibid.: 33)

Western classical philosophers beginning with those from ancient Greece such as Heraclitus, have been mobilized in the crusade to inscribe the paradigm of war as a natural feature of human life. In this paradigm of war, human beings are defined as 'homo polemos' (warrior, war-maker) whose humanity cascades from 'I kill, therefore I am' (Sonderling 2012: 49). Ramon Grosfoguel summarized the logic of the paradigm of war in a dramatic manner:

> During the last 510 years of capitalist/patriarchal western-centric, Christian-centric, modern-colonial system we went from the 16th century 'Christianize or I shoot you', to the 19th century 'civilize or I shoot you,' to 20th century 'develop or I shoot you,' to late 20th century 'neo-liberalize or I shoot you', to the early 21st century 'democratize or I shoot you'. (Grosfoguel 2011: 20)

This naturalization of the paradigm of war is a central theme of Western tradition of thought. For instance Thomas Hobbes (1958) popularized the idea that the original state of nature was a condition of permanent war in which life was short, nasty and brutish. Such classical works as Charles Darwin's *The Origins of Species* ([1879] 2011) were easily appropriated by advocates of the paradigm of war to give it an evolutionary-biological basis. Darwin's concept of the 'survival of the fittest' became useful in the work of later Social Darwinists who pushed forward the imperial agenda of scientific racism.

   Indeed Darwin might have been innocently using his knowledge as a naturalist to advance frontiers of scientific knowledge beyond religiously informed explanations of the origins of people, but his work was easily appropriated and mobilized to back up the paradigm of war, including imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. In the paradigm of war, slavery and the slave trade are justified as normal and natural. It is part of Nietzsche's meditations

on the practice of the will to power. Even the celebrated Marxist conception of human history as constituted by class struggles has a notion of a paradigm of war at its centre.

In short, the paradigm of war enabled imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. It is the paradigm of war that was and is at the heart of the arms race and the production of deadly nuclear weapons today. The present scourge of global terrorism is informed by the paradigm of war. In short, the paradigm of war constituted the leitmotif of Euro-North American-centric modernity. Its naturalization benefited from the fact that one of Euro-North American-centric modernity's successes has been the naturalization of the unnatural. Not only was the paradigm of war naturalized, but also an attendant racial hierarchization of being.

The paradigm of peace that was embodied by Mandela did not emerge from the Euro-North American world, where inordinate efforts were spent on naturalizing the paradigm of war. The paradigm of peace is genealogically traceable to those people who became victims to the paradigm of war. They include those who experienced the slave trade in the first instance, and those who have since experienced racialization. These became victims not only of the slave trade, but also of imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism and underdevelopment. What analysts from the Global South ought to avoid is buying into the Western tradition of thought that worked hard to naturalize the paradigm of war. Those people from the Global South have experienced the devastating effects of the naturalized paradigm of war and must vehemently reject it as a feature of human society. It is therefore important to understand human trajectory from a liberating decolonial humanist perspective because it enables one to see the fallacy of the naturality of the paradigm of war.

Towards a Third Humanist Revolution

Understood from a decolonial humanist perspective, the human trajectory has already undergone two humanist revolutions and is currently experiencing a third one which is not yet complete. These shifts, which are diagrammatically expressed in Figure 1.1, can be

Renaissance
▪ Shift from God-centered humanity
▪ Religion/theology

Enlightenment
▪ Man-centered humanism
▪ Rationality/science

Imperial Reason
▪ "I conquer, therefore I am."/*Homo polemos*
▪ Will to power
▪ Paradigm of war

Cartesianism
▪ "I think, therefore I am."/Cogito ergo sum.
▪ Egocentrism/racism/sexism
▪ Knowledge/science/discovery

European/North American-Centric Modernity
▪ Slavery/slave trade
▪ Mercantilism/imperialism/capitalism
▪ Colonialism/Christianisation/coloniality

Decolonial Humanism
▪ Decolonisation/deimperialisation
▪ Paradigm of peace/human development/humanism
▪ Ubuntu / "I am because you are." / will to live

Pluriversalism
▪ Co-humanness
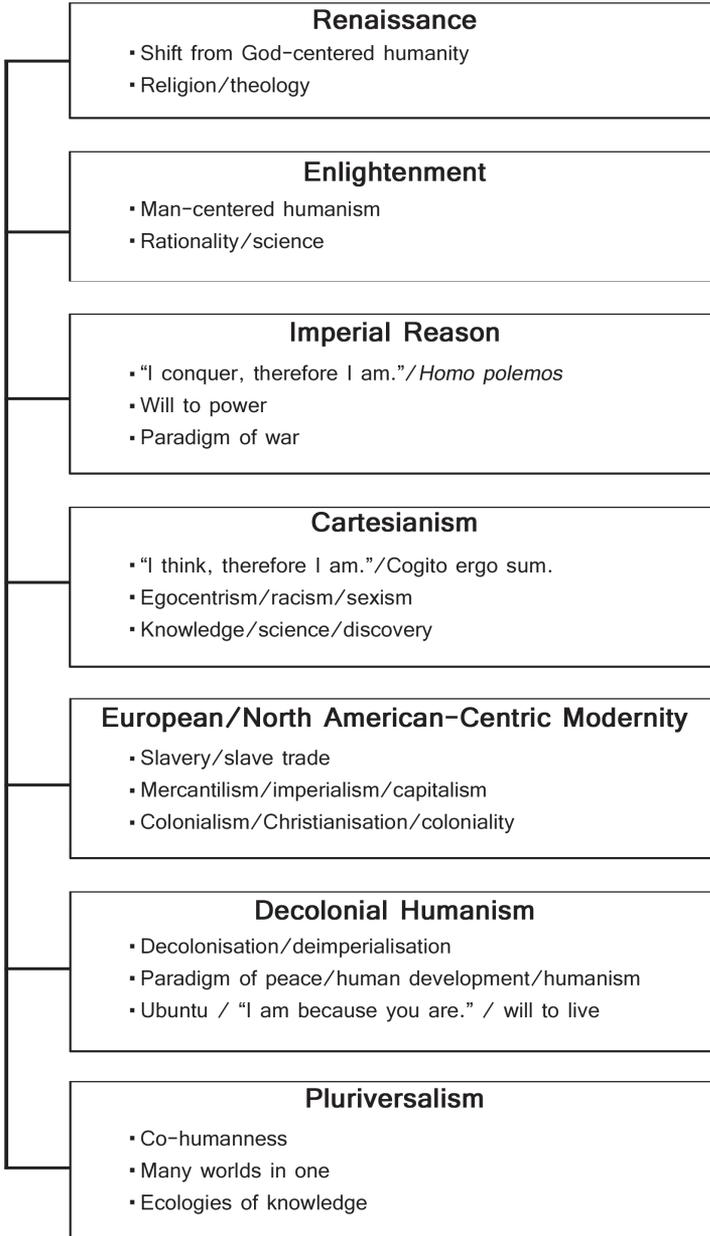▪ Many worlds in one
▪ Ecologies of knowledge

Figure 1.1 Decolonial humanism.

documented as from God-centred conceptions of humanism that was challenged during the Renaissance to a Man-centred society that became ubiquitous during the age of Enlightenment. At the centre of this shift one can decipher particular philosophies such as the famous Cartesian notion of the cogito: 'I think, therefore I am' (Descartes 2013). According to Ramon Grosfoguel (2013: 75), Descartes' thought on being also constituted 'a new foundation of knowledge that challenged Christendom's authority of knowledge since the Roman Empire'. This was preceded by what Grosfoguel describes as 'I exterminate, therefore I am' that culminated in 'I conquer, therefore I am'. These two logics authorized what Grosfoguel (ibid.: 73–74) identified as the 'the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century'.

These genocides/epistemicides took the historical-imperial form of conquest of Al-Andalusia involving the extermination of Jewish and Muslim people; the conquest of the Americas and the extermination of indigenous peoples; the kidnapping and enslavement of Africans; and the burning of books and white women in Indo-Europe who were accused of witchcraft (Grosfoguel 2013: 73–74). Imperial reason was feeding all these conceptions of Cartesian being. Imperial reason became the nerve centre of the paradigm of war. It was further boosted by Darwinian notions of the survival of the fittest and the proliferation of scientific racism in the nineteenth century.

Beyond the Paradigm of War, Towards a Paradigm of Peace

A paradigm of war is defined as 'a way of conceiving humanity, knowledge, and social relations that privileges conflict or *polemos*' (Maldonado-Torres 2008b: 3). In his groundbreaking book *Against War*, the philosopher and decolonial theorist Maldonado-Torres articulated the core contours of the paradigm of war that are constitutive of 'coloniality'. Coloniality, which is defined in the Preface and prologue of this book, is genealogically traceable to the emergence Euro-North American-centric modernity in 1492, the date that decolonial theorists identified as

figuratively marking the birth of the modern world system and its shifting global orders (Blaut 1993; Mignolo 1995, 2000, 2011; Quijano 2000; Grosfoguel 2007, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a).

Christopher Columbus's breakthrough, which saw him accidentally reaching the Americas while trying to reach the East Indies and became known as the discovery of the 'New World' in imperial/colonial discourse, is interpreted by decolonial theorists as paradigmatic in a number of ways. In the first instance, it is said to have marked the birth of a world capitalist economy whose nerve centre was the Atlantic region. In the second instance, it opened the resources of Latin America to colonial exploitation by Europe. In the third instance, it marked the beginning of the rise of Europe and the crystallization of its notion of being the centre of the world. Taken together, these developments marked the birth of a peculiar Euro-North American-centric modernity and a new world system founded on racism (Blaut 1993; Mignolo 1995, 2000, 2011; Quijano 2000, 2007; Amin 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b, 2013c).

The rise of Euro-North American-centric modernity enabled the birth of modern subjectivity mediated by race as an organizing principle. A unique modernist consciousness that manifested itself in terms of a radical ontological unevenness between Euro-North Americans and non-Europeans emerged. A world system that Ramon Grosfoguel (2007, 2011) characterized as racially hierarchized, patriarchal, sexist, hetero-normative, Euro-North American-centric, Christian-centric, capitalist, imperial, colonial and modern was also born.

This world system was managed by what became known as Cartesian subjects (Euro-North American people) who had elevated themselves into a master race that was capable of using secular knowledge and science to overcome all obstacles to human happiness. These Cartesian subjects claimed 'being' for themselves and relegated all other people who were not of European stock and descent to the realm of 'becoming' human (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Grosfoguel 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b, 2013c). At the centre of this Euro-North American-centric world was what Maldonado-Torres (2007: 245) articulated as the 'imperial

Manichean misanthropic skepticism' that was naturalized through use of natural science to produce scientific racism. As elaborated by Maldonado-Torres: 'Manichean misanthropic skepticism is not skeptical about the existence of the world or the normative status of logics and mathematics. It is rather a form of questioning the very humanity of colonized peoples' (ibid.). Constitutively, the paradigm of war is fed by racism and is inextricably tied to 'a peculiar death ethic that renders massacre and different forms of genocide as natural' (Maldonado-Torres 2008b: xi).

Thus while the paradigm of war is traceable to the birth of Euro-North American-centric modernity and capitalism, the paradigm of peace originated in the Global South as an epistemic site in which the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid were practised, contested and resisted. The paradigm of peace is informed by what Maldonado-Torres (2008a) has termed the third humanist revolution founded on the philosophy 'I am, because you are'. This is constitutive of decolonial humanism of which Mandela became a leading advocate in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. But the paradigm of peace has a long pedigree.

It is traceable to such people as the ex-slaves, like Ottobah Cugoano who wrote *Thoughts on the Evils of Slavery and Other Writings* (1789), where he expressed his dismay at how Europeans who claimed to be Christians had embarked on the slave trade. The paradigm of peace is founded on what the philosopher, historian and theologian Enrique Dussel in his *Twenty Theses on Politics* (2008) described as the politics of life. Eduardo Mendieta (2008: viii) elaborated on what Dussel (1989, 2011) termed 'philosophy of liberation / politics of liberation', highlighting what he termed 'a politics of life with others and for others' and 'a politics of life and for life, a politics from the underside of necrophilic globalization'.

Mandela was not the first leader emerging from the Global South to embrace and articulate critical decolonial ethics of liberation as the foundation of a new politics of life as opposed to imperial politics of death. Previous decolonial humanists like Mahatma Gandhi, Aime Cesaire, William E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Albert Luthuli, Thomas Sankara, Frantz Fanon, Kenneth

Kaunda, and many others, were also opposed to the paradigm of war (Cesaire 1955; James 1963; Du Bois 1965; Fanon 1968; Falola 2001; Rabaka 2010). For decolonization and deimperialization were considered to be essential prerequisites for the paradigm of peace to prevail. It had to be followed by the return of humanism as a foundation of a socialist society where there was no exploitation of human beings by others.

This is why former president Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, despite being criticized in some quarters for being a dictator who presided over a one-party state, is in other circles celebrated as one of the leading advocates of humanism, as indicated in the Mulugushi Declaration (Kaunda and Morris 1966). Others, like former president Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, articulated humanism in terms of negritude and socialism. Notably, it was Senghor (1967) who described socialism as a form of humanism. It was also Senghor who explained that when he and Aime Cesaire formulated the term 'negritude' in the 1930s they were plunged into a state of panic and despair as the horizon of liberation was blocked, and colonialists were justifying colonialism using the theory of the *tabula rasa*. Negritude as a liberatory utopia emerged in struggle, as Africans struggled 'to divest ourselves of our borrowed attire – that of assimilation – and assert our being; that is to say our *negritude*' (Senghor, cited in Ahluwalia 2003: 32).

Just like Senghor, the former president of Tanzania Julius Nyerere understood humanism in terms of African socialism, which he tried to implement in the form of *Ujamaa villages* (Nyerere 1968). In like manner, Kwame Nkrumah, former president of Ghana, articulated humanism in terms of African personality, concienscism and pan-Africanism. Nkrumah (1964: 70) advocated for a new harmonious African society born out of a synthesis of Islamic, Euro-Christian and African values. Mandela understood humanism as *Ubuntu* as a foundation for a rainbow nation (Mandela 1994). Therefore here the concept of humanism is used to mean all those progressive efforts evolved by colonized and racialized subjects in the course of their struggle to regain their lost ontological density. This point was well captured by the

leading African novelist and humanist Chinua Achebe when he said:

> You have all heard of the African personality; of African democracy; of African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Satre has called anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are as good as the next man but that we are better. (Achebe, in Ahluwalia 2001: 61)

The paradigm of peace is therefore inextricably linked with decoloniality. It is made possible by 'decolonial turn'. Du Bois in 1903 announced decolonial turn as a rebellion against what he termed the 'colour line' that was constitutive of the core problems of the twentieth century. By the problem of the 'colour line', Du Bois was speaking of increasing racism and the forms of resistance and opposition that it was provoking. But broadly stated, a decolonial turn embodies critical decolonial ethics of liberation:

> It posits the primacy of ethics as an antidote to problems with Western conceptions of freedom, autonomy and equality, as well as the necessity of politics to forge a world where ethical relations become the norm rather than the exception. The de-colonial turn highlights the epistemic relevance of the enslaved and colonized search for humanity. (Maldonado-Torres 2008b: 7)

The leading African scholar and novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993, 2009) expressed the decolonial turn in terms of 'moving the centre' (from Eurocentrism/Europhonism to a plurality of cultures) towards 're-membering Africa' (addressing Africa's fragmentation that was imposed by imperialism and colonialism, and restoring African ontological density and cultural identity). Decolonial turn is rooted in struggles against racism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. But as noted by Maldonado-Torres (2008b: 7), the decolonial turn 'began to take definitive form after the end of the Second World War and the beginnings of the wars for liberation of many colonised countries soon after'.

Critical Decolonial Ethics vs. Postcolonialism

A critical decolonial ethics of liberation differs from postcolonial approaches that became dominant in the 1990s in a number of ways. Genealogically, decoloniality and critical decolonial ethics of liberation are traceable to the anti-slave trade, anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-apartheid thinkers originating from the Global South, whereas postcolonialism is traceable from thinkers from the Global North, such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Antonio Gramsci, among many others. Built on top of poststructuralism and postmodernism, postcolonialism was then popularized by those scholars from the Global South working in North American academies, such as Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), Gayatri Spivak (1994), Achille Mbembe (2001) and others.

While decoloniality begins its interventions from 1492 covering Spanish and Portuguese imperialism that was constitutive of the first phase of the rise of Eurocentric modernity, postcolonial interventions are focused on later British and to some extent French colonialism of the nineteenth century as their departure point. Decoloniality traces coloniality to the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity. Coloniality is in fact articulated in decoloniality as the underside of modernity. As such, modernity is unmasked by decoloniality whereas postcolonialism, because of its genealogical relationship with poststructuralism and postmodernism, is concerned with attacking meta-narratives and ideological certitudes. Decoloniality grapples with what Grosfoguel (2007) terms heterarchies of power, knowledge and being that sustain an asymmetrical world system and its imperial/colonial global orders.

In terms of horizon, decoloniality seeks to attain a decolonized and deimperialized world in which new pluriversal humanity is possible. Postcolonialism is part of a 'critique of modernity within modernity'. As such, postcolonialism becomes just another critical social theory cascading from the centre of the Euro-North American world just like liberalism, Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. These critical social theoretical interventions

do not adequately address what decolonial theorists term coloniality as the underside/darker side of Euro-North American-centric modernity. Decoloniality gestures towards pluriversality (a world within which many worlds fit harmoniously and coexist peacefully). This is in tandem with Mandela's push for *ubuntu* (the African ethic of community, co-humanness, unity and harmony) and 'rainbow nation' (Campbell 2013). Chinweizu (2008) wrote of 'ubuntology', which he defined as the Afrocentric human sciences for black redemption that privileges African experience as its locus of enunciation.

Mandela as an Embodiment of the Paradigm of Peace

A paradigm of peace is founded of humanism and justice. Mandela's life of struggle and his legacy is an embodiment of a consistent and active search for peace and harmony. In his autobiography, Mandela stated:

> I always know that deep down in every human heart, there [is] mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to assure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished. (Mandela 1994: 609)

Mandela in a typical decolonial ethics of liberation interpreted the anti-colonial/anti-apartheid struggle as a humanistic movement for restoration of human life. This is how he put it: 'This then is what the ANC is fighting for. Their struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their own experience. *It is a struggle for the right to live* (my emphasis) (ibid.: 352). This paradigm of peace marks a radical humanistic-oriented departure from the paradigm of war. It is premised on a radically humanistic phenomenology of

liberation aimed at rescuing those people reduced by racism to the category of the 'wretched of the earth' through recovery of their lost ontological density, epistemic virtues, and agency. Thus what one gleans from Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* is that, in the face of apartheid officials and institutionalized racism as well as brutality and intolerance of dissent, he emerged as the advocate of decolonization, a fighter for freedom, and the face of new non-racial inclusive humanism.

It would also seem that Mandela was ahead of his time. This is evident from his clear articulation of the discourse of democracy and human rights long before it became a major global normative issue for many other political actors and leaders at the end of the Cold War. But Mandela had already vowed to die for democracy and free society as far back as the 1960s.

What is also distinctive about Mandela is that he did not easily dismiss the Euro-North American modernist project of emancipation. He fought for the realization of those positive aspects of it that were denied to Africans but were enjoyed in Europe and North America. Here was an African located in the 'zone of non-being' (Fanon 1968) claiming entitlement to the fruits of Euro-North American-centric modernity on the basis of being a human being with equal ontological density to those residing in Europe and the white colonialists resident in Africa. In this way Mandela was directly challenging the Euro-North American-centric global order founded on racism. During this time, some leading African freedom fighters like Julius Nyerere (1968) were speaking of such other ideologies as African socialism and African forms of democracy as more authentic projects for the continent.

Mandela just pushed for democracy and human rights without putting 'African' as the adjective. This is why Slavoj Zizek (2013) has credited Mandela for providing a model of how to liberate a country from apartheid colonialism 'without succumbing to the temptation of dictatorial power and anti-capitalist posturing'. He elaborated that 'Mandela was not Mugabe' as he maintained South Africa as a multi-party democracy, ensuring that the vibrancy of the national economy was insulated from

'hasty socialist experiments' (ibid.). Mandela was worried more about denial of democracy rather than its Euro-North American genealogy and articulation. It seemed to Mandela that democracy and freedom were simple positive human values that have to be enjoyed by every human being, irrespective of race and location.

Interestingly, in his autobiography, Mandela also credited his Xhosa traditional society's mode of governance, which he described as 'democracy in its purest form' where everyone irrespective of societal rank was allowed space to 'voice their opinions and were [*sic*] equal in their value as citizens' (Mandela 1994: 20). At the same time, Mandela described himself as 'being something of an Anglophile', and confessed that '[w]hile I abhorred the notion of British imperialism, I never rejected the trappings of British style and manners' (ibid.: 48). Mandela always admired British parliamentary democracy. This became evident when he said:

> From the reading of Marxist literature and from conversations with Marxists, I have gained the impression that communists regard the parliamentary system of the West as undemocratic and reactionary. But, on the contrary, I am an admirer of such a system.
>
> The Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights and the Bill of Rights are documents which are held in veneration by democrats throughout the world. I have great respect for British political institutions, and for the country's system of justice. I regard the British Parliament as the most democratic institution in the world, and the independence and impartiality of its judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration. The American Congress, the country's doctrine of separation of powers, as well as the independence of its judiciary, arouse in me similar sentiments. (ibid.: 351)

The important point is that democracy must not be understood as an artefact or invention of Europeans. Europeans only appropriated it just like all other positive products of human history. Following this logic, Mandela was correct not to reject democracy. But he did not need to be an 'Anglophile' to claim democracy as a human value. Anyway, the English denied democracy to African people for centuries until Mandela and other African decolonial humanists fought for liberation, freedom and democracy.

Mandela Phenomenon as a Synthesis of Various Ideologies

Raymond Suttner (2007: 119) warns us about trying 'to fit him into a specific political orientation'. He emphasizes that 'Mandela made his statements as a leader of a liberation movement trying to rally support from all quarters, especially those that had been hostile or indifferent to the struggle of the ANC. It was part of his mission to win them over to support the organization' (ibid.: 121). But it was Tom Lodge in his *Mandela: A Critical Life* (2006) who tried to specify Mandela's ideological orientation based on the statements he made. He even argued that Mandela embraced liberal ideas. Suttner (2007) challenged such a reading of Mandela, arguing that when Mandela spoke he did not do so as an individual expressing his own political ideological orientation and preferences. Instead, Mandela spoke as a leader of a movement that was involved in mobilizing the world to its own side:

> Mandela's court statements addressed the world as a national leader. Mandela did not speak as a 'dissident', that is, a representative of a minority view, but projected a national vision to the people of South Africa and the world at large. As indicated, such self-representation required an attempt to reach many audiences and could not be sectarian or limited in its appeal. (Suttner 2007: 121)

Other scholars like Stephen Ellis in *Comrades Against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* (1992, with T. Sechaba) and in *External Mission: The ANC in Exile* (2013) tried to highlight that Mandela was a communist. Ellis elaborated: 'The revelation that Mandela was a prominent Communist Party member does not distract from his historic stature. It does, however, mean that the version of history propagated by the ANC, which [has] governed South Africa since 1994, is seriously flawed' (Ellis 2011: 1). To buttress his argument that Mandela was a communist, Ellis quoted Joe Slovo, a leading member of SACP, who said: 'We sent Nelson off to Africa a communist, and he came back an African Nationalist (Ellis 2013: 33). Perhaps Slovo did not understand Mandela's deep nationalist decolonial humanist political orientation. Garth le Pere, in an

elongated review of Ellis's book *The External Mission: The ANC in Exile*, correctly noted that 'Mandela's real or imagined SACP membership is really much ado about nothing by Ellis' (le Pere 2014: 4). If one reads Ellis's book closely it is dominated by a frantic attempt to discredit the ANC and to project the SACP as the dominant political force that spearheaded the liberation struggle in exile, while at the same time appropriating Mandela as a communist. But Ellis fails to sustain the argument, particularly with regards to how the ANC emerged as the leading voice during the CODESA negotiations if it was indeed playing second fiddle to the SACP during the course of the liberation struggle. Worse still, Ellis seems to take the SACP position uncritically in a struggle in which liberation forces were in competition for dominance and leadership.

The question of whether Mandela was a communist or not, is indeed 'much ado about nothing by Ellis' as advanced by le Pere. It adds nothing to a deeper understanding of the Mandela phenomenon except to reveal that Mandela, like all other anti-colonial/ decolonial humanists, was open to various ideological resources as long as they had a potential to enrich the people's struggle for liberation. Ellis's intention is revealed when he writes that 'the ANC in power has remained little interested in understanding the world as it is or has become', and also when he argues that 'the ANC has blithely continued since 1994 to suppose that the rest of the world still has special regard for the ANC as the bearer of the moral torch' (Ellis 2013: 300–4). If these two arguments are closely examined, one cannot avoid reaching a conclusion that Ellis's project has been one of doing everything to discredit the ANC as a liberation movement, including robbing it of Mandela's membership. Le Pere provides a convincing rebuttal to this take on the ANC:

> This is an astounding assertion for a party that can justifiably claim a progressive foreign policy that has positioned South Africa in the epicenter of world politics and international relations … The ANC under the presidencies of Mandela and Mbeki enjoyed strong international support because the ANC had an unassailable moral claim to govern by virtue of its growing international legitimacy and its

subsequent electoral victories. The strength of this moral currency has only recently depreciated with the poor administration, rising levels of corruption and misrule under President Jacob Zuma. (Le Pere 2014: 5)

Mandela's views on communism are detailed in his autobiography and conversations with himself. He revealed that he read Marxist literature, attended Communist Party meetings, questioned communism as a foreign ideology and still attended night schools on communism. There is abundant evidence of how the ANC and SACP worked closely with each other throughout the liberation struggle. Ellis's intervention on this issue is another attempt to ideologically tag Mandela at any cost. On Robben Island, Mandela even taught a course on political economy that was informed by Marxist thought (Mandela 1994: 455). It is also public knowledge that Mandela met Moses Kotane (by then Secretary General of the South African Communist Party) every night before the Rivonia Trials (Suttner 2003: 134–35).

The point is that there is no doubt that Mandela like many African leaders was influenced by many ideological currents ranging from African tradition to Christianity, liberalism and communism. Whether this must lead scholars to try and pin down such leaders as Mandela to a particular ideology is another matter. Depicting Mandela as a decolonial humanist par excellence might partly solve the problem of his ideological orientation because decolonial humanism is constituted by a family of ideologies that privilege 'being' as the main issue.

What must be emphasized is that Mandela's political thought and ideological orientation was forged in the crucible of racial oppression, at the centre of which were complex questions of defining 'the people', the nation, belonging, political community, citizenship and ideology. Mandela was an active actor resisting the narrow and exclusivist racial definition and articulation of all these questions as well as an active builder of a broader inclusive South African nationalism. C.R.D. Halisi (1999) identified two dominant ideological strands that dominated the South African decolonial-nationalist struggle. The first was what he termed 'racial nationalism', which 'persisted as a potent political force

throughout the colonial, postcolonial and apartheid eras of racial domination' (ibid.: 1). The second was the multiracial nationalism that gestured towards a multiracial nation within a singular, unitary, democratic and post-apartheid state.

According to Halisi, black racial nationalism just like white racial nationalism portended a particular conception of citizenship. This form of citizenship took the form of republican exclusivist orientation. Multiracial nationalism gestured towards liberal inclusive citizenship. He identified this as 'a core antinomy of black thought for Africans'. He elaborated:

> In a very fundamental sense, the struggle for liberation required black activists to confront nascent questions of citizenship and national identity – how the 'people' are to be defined, who belongs to the political community, and what are the criteria of inclusion and exclusion. In brief, differences between multiracialists and black nationalists over the social character of the liberation struggle were often predicated on rival conceptions of citizenship. (Halisi 1999: 4)

Understanding these complex issues enables us to gain a deeper understanding of the socio-political milieu within which Mandela's ideological formation emerged. The tension between race-consciousness and non-racial perspectives emerged as political actors tried to interpret black condition and map the contours of black liberation. The catalytic debates were 'over the meanings of liberation, democracy and, by extension, citizenship' (ibid.: 7). By the 1970s, the Marxist class struggle oriented discourse of liberation complicated the ideological debates even further, as did the rise of black consciousness discourse of liberation. It is clear from his biography that Mandela's political and ideological orientation shifted from a radical Africanism of the 1940s that was suspicious of the inclusion of whites and Indians in the African liberation struggle, to the Charterist ideology of the 1950s. What emerged poignantly was an ANC–SACP nationalist-liberal-Marxism that was gesturing towards a non-racial post-apartheid nation. This hybrid brand of revolutionary thought sought to accommodate the topical race–class controversy.

On the other hand, there was a strong Africanism which had foundations in a radical Africanist reading of the South African situation. The Africanist reading of South African history of oppression, exploitation and domination emphasized that European settlers had dispossessed Africans of their ancestral lands, in the process making the African people constitute a homogenous community of dispossessed people that had to fight for liberation as a cohesive force. This cohesive force must operate as an intra-racial multi-class alliance (Halisi 1999: 62). The liberation of workers was a subset of the broader liberation of the black nation from domination by a white nation. What was needed for both race-conscious nationalism and non-racial nationalism was the ability to stretched and indigenized Marxist revolutionary theory to reflect the African reality. This is why Halisi (ibid.: 63) writes of 'reconstructed versions of Marxism resulting in a melding of anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-racist ideologies'.

Mandela was ideologically caught up in the alchemy of South African struggle, with its ability not only to transcend the legacy of bifurcated citizenship but also to carefully synthesize various ideological traditions ranging from liberalism to Marxism, Africanism, ethnic republicanism, black consciousness and pan-Africanism. This point is very important for one to gain a deeper understanding of Mandela, whose ideological orientation was constituted by a synthesis and a compromise of all usable floating political resources for a decolonial humanist struggle for a post-racial society. The long-standing challenge, however, is well captured by Halisi when he writes that:

> Rival populisms, nourished by the competing visions of liberation, are bound to have an impact on the evolution of South African citizenship. In addition, popular democratic traditions, of which populism is one manifestation, are among the most durable sources of inspiration for democratic thinkers. After centuries of racial domination, it would be unrealistic to expect an ethos of nonracial citizenship to prevail unchallenged by older political perceptions. Eventually, the black liberation struggle may come to be viewed by all South Africans as a national achievement and, therefore, a cornerstone of nonracial citizenship identity. For the immediate

future, however, successive governments will have to cope with the implications of both nonracial and race-conscious political sensibilities. (Halisi 1999: 133)

The Mandela phenomenon existed as an attempt to bridge the long-standing liberal–republican dichotomy. This attempt raised the next challenge for a moderate Mandela who lived to mediated forces of separation versus integration, racial consciousness versus non-racialism, as well as black power versus civil rights. This challenge is linked to that of his ideological orientation. As noted by Alexander Beresford (2014: 1), 'One dominant narrative that emerged in tributes to Mandela was his famed capacity to moderate between competing social forces during the transition'. This characterization of Mandela was reinforced by those who credited Mandela with preventing a full-scale racial war in South Africa. For example, Richard Stengel (2009: 121) depicted Mandela as that politician that 'always saw both sides of every issue, and his default position was to find some course in between, some way of reconciling both sides'. Does this make Mandela a moderate? Beresford (2014: 2) defined moderates as people who 'occupy the ideological centre ground or "soft-end" of a political extreme, reconcile competing political views or ideological standpoints, and/or defend and maintain the political and economic status quo'.

Mandela did not struggle to 'defend and maintain the political and economic status quo' of apartheid. But at the same time he worked hard to moderate extreme political standpoints. Mandela was not ideologically neutral. He was a nationalist-liberal-decolonial humanist who also embraced positive African qualities and values cascading from precolonial times. As far as the economy is concerned, Mandela initially embraced the ideology of nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy but later, after his release from prison, he favoured 'a mixed economy approach with a heavy presence of the state in crucial economic sectors' (Beresford 2014: 4; see also Peet 2002: 71). Mandela had this to say about his approach to politics and leadership:

The masses like to see someone who is responsible and who speaks to them in a responsible manner. They like that, and I want to avoid

rabble-rousing speech. I don't want to incite the crowd. I want the crowd to understand what we are doing and I want to infuse a spirit of reconciliation … I have mellowed, very definitely, and as a young man, you know, I was very radical and using high-flown language, and fighting everybody. But now, you know, one has to lead. (Mandela 2010: 54)

Mandela was not so much a moderate as a pragmatist. This pragmatism even explains his approach to the use of violence in a liberation struggle. In the face of the full wrath and violence of the notorious apartheid system that directly threatened to cut short his own life through charging him for treason, Mandela maintained a steadfast commitment to decolonial ethics of liberation, and refused to compromise on his humanist principles. He lamented how the apartheid system was leaving him with no option but to engage in counter-violence as form of defence for those fighting against apartheid. Does Mandela fit into the mould of Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, who strongly believed in non-violent civil disobedience?

Suttner (2007: 120) outrightly dismisses the applicability of Gandhism to Mandela: 'Clearly in the case of Mandela, the notion of Gandhism is quite inapplicable'. Mandela was instrumental in the formation of 'uMkonto We Sizwe' (Spear of the Nation) and became its commander-in-chief. This was the armed wing of the African National Congress. The MK fighting forces were expected to adhere to strict ethical conduct of only engaging in destabilization and not in killing people. Even when Mandela was being tried for treason, he continued to tower above the apartheid system's provocations, brutality and violence, and was able to invite the architects of apartheid to return to humanity in a moving speech delivered during the course of the Rivonia Trials:

During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to see realized. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Mandela 1994: 352)

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Mandela and the Question of Violent Struggle

Mandela made it clear that the continued use of brutality and violence by the apartheid regime against unarmed anti-apartheid freedom fighters left them with no choice but 'to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom' (Mandela 1994: 78). The historical record indicates that there were long debates within the ANC over the question of adoption of the armed struggle, and Mandela and many others participated actively in these debates. What has often been ignored in these debates is that various forms of violent resistance were underway in such places as Zeerust, Sekhukhuneland, Mpondoland, Natal and Zululand that assumed the form of popular rural insurrections, and indicated the preparedness of a colonized people to fight for life within a killing apartheid colonial context (Magubane et al. 2004: 52–59). The consequence of these developments was that 'the ANC in the 1950s and early 1960s found itself facing demands not only for political support, but also military assistance. First the Sekhukhuneland rebels and then their Mpondo counterparts asked the ANC leadership for guns so that they could pursue their goals more effectively' (ibid.: 53–54). It would seem that events on the ground were moving too fast for the ANC leadership to embrace anti-colonial violence as a redemptive option. Mandela played a leading role in motivating for a shift from non-violent resistance to violent resistance. Was Mandela therefore thinking and acting like a Fanonian who appreciated redemptive qualities of anti-colonial violence? Suttner (2007: 120) argued that '[f]or Mandela there was a clear preference for non-violence, as is the case with most revolutionaries'. But he elaborated that 'the question whether or not one can continue to pursue non-violence is not decided in the first place by those who experience oppressive rule. Whether or not one can continue to pursue a non-violent path and achieve political goals is determined by the character and extent of the space allowed for legal public activity' (ibid.).

The ANC maintained throughout the anti-apartheid struggle that it adopted violence and the armed struggle as a last resort.

Mandela's ideas on violence might therefore fit into the Fanonian notions of anti-colonial violence, which is often misunderstood to mean that Fanon was an advocate of violence as the only solution to the colonizer–colonized problem. Fanon distinguished between colonial violence and anti-colonial violence, in that the latter is not 'ideological' but 'is the absolute opposite of colonial violence' (Mbembe 2013: 14; Fanon 1968). Achille Mbembe puts the logic of Fanonian anti-colonial violence more clearly when he says: 'It takes the form of pure discharge – ad hoc violence, reptilian and convulsive, a deadly gesture and elemental affect that results in the "hunted man", "back to the wall", "knife to his throat" or, to be more specific, confusedly to "show he is poised to fight for his life"' (Mbembe 2013: 14).

Anti-colonial violence must therefore be understood as part of a human instinct for self-preservation. It is informed by the will to live. It is meant to produce life and new humanism. As Mbembe (ibid.) puts it: 'The Fanonian theory of violence has no meaning without a greater framework, that of the ascent towards humanity'. It is a violence discharged by those people who have been pushed by coloniality against the hall – a people fighting for life itself. But Jonathan Hyslop dismissed the identity of Mandela as a Fanonian:

> In recent years, an antithetical view has arisen among some writers in the tradition of postcolonial theory: a conception of Mandela as an anti-colonial revolutionary in the lineage of Frantz Fanon, favouring the purifying violence of insurrection by the oppressed. And in some cases, he is portrayed as oscillating between a violent Fanonism and a peaceful Gandhianism. But Mandela was no Fanonian either. Unlike the revolutionary psychoanalysts, he never thought of armed resistance as offering any healing power for the colonized. Mandela's ideas about the use of force were pragmatic and instrumental. He was, indeed, influenced by leaders of the anti-colonial movement in which Fanon participated, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). But their advice pointed him in a very different direction from that suggested by Fanon's theories. And Mandela's ethical approach to the use of force was informed by exactly the kind of humanist ideas that Fanon and postcolonial theorists eschew. (Hyslop 2014: 163)

Just like in his ability to draw inspiration from different ideological springs in his advancement of the anti-colonial struggle, Mandela was also open to different military doctrines. He read Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as well as Clausewitz's magnum opus *On War*, while at the same time expressing a deep appreciation of precolonial African leaders like King Shaka of the Zulu's tactics and strategies. He made it clear that he read military literature as part of his search for principles of starting an armed revolution (Mandela 2010: 53). Hyslop (2014: 162–65) prefers to label Mandela as 'Clausewitzian' and a pragmatic 'Nehruist' rather than a 'utopian Gandhi' or a 'violent Fanon'. But Mandela also said: 'Heroes like the Khoi leader [Autshumayo], Maqoma of the Rharhabe, Bambatha, Cetshwayo of the Zulu, Mampuru of the Pedis, Tshivashe of the Vendas and a host of others were in the forefront of wars of resistance, and we speak of them with respect and admiration' (Mandela 2010: 31). This historical knowledge proved that Mandela read widely about African primary resistance too. So it is difficult to assign him a catch-all label like 'Clausewitzian', just like it is difficult to pigeonhole him into one ideological strand such as liberalism. To label him a decolonial humanist is more appropriate because it is open ended. Mandela's preparedness to die for a democratic and free society cast him more as a 'radical' African humanist who fully embraced the ideals of ethics, democracy, equality, freedom, and human rights. Colonial powers denied Africans these values. For Africa, these values were part of the rhetoric of Euro-American-centric modernity and were never extended to black people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013c). These values were only practised in Europe and North America.

As noted by Maldonado-Torres (2007, 2008b) and other decolonial theorists, ethics were suspended when it came to dealing with Africans who inhabited what Fanon termed the 'zone of nonbeing' (Fanon 1968). Should those fighting against colonialism and its legacy also suspend ethics? Should white settler colonial conquest be re-conquered violently for Africans to realize social and economic justice? How should those fighting for decolonial civilization deal with unrepentant racists? These are some of the difficult questions that haunt the Mandela phenomenon. Should

those who denied 'being' itself to Africans, who wrote them out of the nation and excluded them from citizenship, be made to test their medicine as has been the case in Zimbabwe? Perhaps a useful way to deal with these questions is to compare and contrast the approaches used by Mandela and Robert Gabriel Mugabe to deal with complex native and settler questions in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively. Mugabe is not chosen randomly here. He is another leading African leader who has been caught up in controversial politics because of his continued anti-colonial and anti-imperialist position that has seen him leading his Zimbabwean people in new struggle for economic freedom in the twenty-first century.

What Set Mandela Apart from Mugabe?

Mandela and Mugabe are both leading African nationalists. They both sacrificed a lot for those people who inhabited the 'zones of non-being'. They both pursued a policy of reconciliation. But Mugabe's 'policy' of reconciliation was never written down. It was pronounced as part of his Independence Speech in April 1980. Mugabe repudiated the 'policy' of reconciliation in 1997. The reason given for repudiation was that the whites minority Zimbabweans had refused to embrace reconciliation. The repudiation came at a time when Zimbabwe was preparing for a compulsory redistribution of land without compensation. Before Mugabe and Mandela, President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania pursued the policies of reconciliation. Before Mandela was released from prison in 1990, Mugabe was the dominant leader in Southern Africa and a respected statesman in many parts of the world. Mugabe had spent ten years in prison and had also led the armed guerrilla liberation struggle for fifteen years. He became the first black leader of Zimbabwe in 1980. Just like Mandela, Mugabe had pronounced a policy of reconciliation in 1980, and also emphasized national unity, as leitmotifs of his nation-building and state-making processes (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). But the policy of reconciliation, despite being proclaimed from

a high moral ground, might fundamentally reproduce coloniality, particularly in a context where negotiations tended to be in defence of the colonial status quo. The Lancaster House negotiations involved Western superpowers who were intent on protecting white minority rights.

The Patriotic Front of Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo did not push hard enough for a genuine decolonial outcome in which it was possible to destroy the colonial economic power structures that privileges white settlers over black indigenous people of Zimbabwe. The fundamental question for both Mugabe and Mandela was about their approach towards becoming decolonial humanists. For Zimbabwe, it is clear that the policy of reconciliation was somehow imposed on Mugabe, hence it remained just a proclamation and was never written into any substantive national policy. But what became even more worrying in Mugabe's postcolonial governance practice was the reproduction of colonial violence in dealing with those excluded from the nation. For example, his emphasis on national unity was compromised by the way he deployed a highly partisan army into Matebeleland and Midlands regions, which then committed horrendous atrocities, killing over twenty thousand Ndebele-speaking people (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation Report 1997). The pretext for this was that there were dissidents operating in Matebeleland and the Midlands regions who sought to destabilize the country.

However, the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December 1987 that resulted in the ending of Fifth Brigade atrocities in Matebeleland and the Midlands regions boosted Mugabe's stature as a statesman and a nation builder who managed to unite his people and brought to an end a low-intensity civil war without external intervention. The reality, however, is that the statesman was not Mugabe but Joshua Nkomo who withstood extreme provocations and direct threats to his own life and spoke the language of national unity during a time when Mugabe and his government were speaking of eradicating the entire Ndebele-speaking population and were entertaining tribalization of the nation from above.

It would seem that Mugabe's leadership of a protracted armed guerrilla struggle led him to embrace the paradigm of war as a solution to intractable political questions. His ideology of *Chimurenga* articulated the history of Zimbabwe as dominated by a series of armed nationalist revolutions from 1896 right up to his widely condemned *Third Chimurenga* of the 2000s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012b). Because of Mugabe's embrace of the paradigm of war, governance in Zimbabwe has been dominated by what Martin Rupiya (2005) termed 'governance by military operations'. His celebration of the *Third Chimurenga*, particularly the Fast Track Land Reform Programme facet of it, in terms of prevailing sovereignty of Zimbabwean nationalism over settler colonialism as well as triumph of conquest of conquest, support the idea of Mugabe as a Nietzschean thinker who fully embraced the paradigm of war. This is how he put it: 'We are now talking of conquest of conquest, the prevailing sovereignty of the people of Zimbabwe over settler minority rule and all it stood for including the possession of our land … Power to the people must now be followed by land to the people' (The *Herald*, 6 December 1997). Consequently, in Zimbabwe the paradigm of war is celebrated in music to the extent that those in ZANU-PF, including Mugabe, have openly told the nation that they have a proud history in violence and they have earned 'degrees in violence' (Blair 2002). The degrees in violence gained as Zimbabwean African nationalists were forced to confront white colonial violence with nationalist violence.

Besides this, a toxic, xenophobic and racist national discourse has been promoted as a necessary ideological resource in the struggle to complete the unfinished decolonization project and reverse the legacy of white settler colonialism. The consequences have, on the one hand, been the alienation of the Ndebele-speaking community from the nation and the disfranchisement of white commercial farmers, and on the other hand, a 'successful' land reform and ongoing indigenization of the national economy drive (Muzondidya 2010). Mugabe has lamented that his policy of reconciliation has never been reciprocated by the minority

whites who continued to own large tracks of land and were never prepared to share it with the indigenous black people.

Is Mugabe wrong to use the paradigm of war to take the decolonization project to the realm of economic independence? Is there another option? These are difficult questions to answer. But the land-hungry peasants have welcomed Mugabe's solution as pragmatic. Mugabe himself has criticized Mandela's solution as informed by saintly discourse that made him fail to confront and transform white economic power in South Africa. Mugabe is very popular among the unemployed youth and land-hungry South Africans. Mugabe always receives a hero's welcome when he visits South Africa. Perhaps this popular support for Mugabe reflects the limits of Mandela's approach?

Mandela's liberation struggle was also aimed at the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressors from the cul-de-sac of racialism in the truly Freireian resolution of the oppressor–oppressed contradiction created by colonialism and coloniality (Freire 1970). On this Mandela wrote:

> It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I know anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. (Mandela 1994: 611)

This set him apart from Mugabe who ended up frustrated by the policy of reconciliation and finally reproduced the colonial paradigm of war of conquest predicated on race. By the end of 1990s, President Mugabe increasingly articulated the decolonial project in Zimbabwe in racist, nativist and even xenophobic terms predicated on the idea of 'conquest of conquest', 'prevailing sovereignty of Zimbabwe over settler colonialism, and the notion of 'Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a, 2009b). Perhaps if Mandela had been young when he took over the reins

of power and if he had served long presidential terms as Mugabe, maybe he also would have been frustrated by a lack of transformative movement, and revoked the policy of reconciliation? But he only served one presidential term and voluntarily retired from active politics, making it somewhat unfair to compare and contrast him with Mugabe who has been in power for over three decades.

But one cannot escape commenting that unlike Mandela's nationalism, Mugabe's nationalism had escalated to what appeared like 'reverse racism' as a form of liberation as he pushed for a fast-track land reform programme predicated on compulsory land acquisition from white commercial farmers to give it to black Zimbabweans (Mugabe 2001). Mugabe justified his actions in this way: 'This country is our country and this land is our land … They think because they are white they have a divine right to our resources. Not here. The white man is not indigenous to Africa. Africa is for Africans. Zimbabwe is for Zimbabweans' (Quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a: 67). Unlike Mandela, Mugabe was openly articulating that land reform discourse in a somewhat reverse-black-racism. But despite the racist sentiments in Mugabe's justifications of his land reform programme, that he committed himself to making sure that land was fairly distributed to the landless Zimbabweans was a progressive decolonial idea. Such a move is part of furthering decoloniality. What became open to intense debates were the methods used. But no one has offered an alternative methodology of dealing with the emotive land question. The discourse of 'willing-buyer' and 'willing-seller' seems not to be effective. A large constituency of black people never expected to buy the land that they consider to have been stolen from their ancestors by white colonialists. This is why James Muzondidya argued that:

> Far from being exhausted, the political rhetoric on race, black economic empowerment and radical, exclusive black nationalism, despite all the ambiguities and contradictions, continued to resonate with many Zimbabweans in both rural and urban areas who recognized the unfair balance of ownership of land and other important economic resources between blacks and whites. (Muzondidya 2010: 13)

But the overt use of reverse-racial language rather than ethical decolonial humanist discourse that is free from racism nearly spoiled a progressive land reform programme in Zimbabwe. Fanon (1968) had warned of the dangers of degeneration of African nationalism into chauvinism, reverse racism, and xenophobia. He characterized this regressive process as 'repetition without change' cascading from pitfalls of national consciousness (Fanon 1968). It would seem Mandela carefully managed to distinguish himself as committed decolonial ethical leader and successfully avoided degeneration into reverse racism, nativism and xenophobia until his death, but at what cost to the decolonial transformation agenda remains a difficult question to answer.

Mandela on the Question of Being Free

Mandela articulated the struggle for freedom as a 'long walk'. The concept of a 'long walk' captures how the struggle involved expenditure of human energy. In the concept of a 'long walk' there is the element of sacrifice and commitment towards reaching a certain destination. To Mandela the 'long walk' included 'walking through the shadow of death' in search of freedom. It would seem from the allegory of the struggle of freedom as a 'long walk', Mandela understood freedom as a form of 'arrival'. Indeed since the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity and the colonial encounters, black people have been walking a 'long walk' to freedom. Such events and processes as the slave trade, imperialism, partition, colonialism and apartheid constituted the 'shadows of death'. Prosecution and imprisonment of those who decided to lead in this 'long walk' directly threatened life of the African leaders.

But Mandela also meditated deeply and critically on the question of being free. This is what he wrote:

> *I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free – free in every way that I could know.* Free to run in the fields near my mother's hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and

abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God.

It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it … It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live their lives with dignity and self-respect that animated my life, that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, that forced a life-loving man to live like a monk. (Mandela 1994: 610; my emphasis)

Mandela's meditation on freedom – which he enjoyed in childhood but later realized was nominal, even false and illusionary – is illuminating on the black experience. It remind us that men and women were indeed all born equal but they did not remain equal the rest of their lives because of historical circumstances of patriarchy, colonialism and coloniality (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 155). This take on freedom speaks to the fundamental question of who is the 'human' that is evoked in the human rights discourse.

The question of who is the 'human' in the global human rights discourse is a pertinent one in a world where people from the (ex)-colonized world had to fight to be accepted as human beings. It invites decolonial thinkers and theorists to delve deeper into the histories of 'losing equality since the origins of the world' (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 155). The slave trade might be the best beginning on this history in which black people began to lose their ontological density, equality and rights.

This approach might inaugurate another discourse of human rights cascading from those parts of the world inhabited by people who experienced denial of their humanity, who Tlostanova and Mignolo (ibid.: 164) have depicted as 'the *anthropos* of the planet' as opposed to the 'humitas'. What Mandela was fighting against is a system of power that transformed black people who were born free into 'anthropos of the planet'. But Mandela has been clear on the deeper meaning of what it entails to be free – it involves regaining lost ontological density (human dignity and self-respect) and agency (ability to decide and shape one's life). This struggle is not yet won. Mandela was also clear that 1994

was not a moment of 'arrival'. This is clear from the concluding paragraphs of his *Long Walk to Freedom*:

> When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that is not the case. The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.
>
> I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibility, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended. (Mandela 1994: 611)

Indeed the African decolonial struggle is still on course mainly because the post-1945 decolonization project failed to deliver a genuinely decolonized and deimperialized world. The idea of a decolonized post-1945 world that was defined in simplistic terms of elimination of direct colonial administrations and their replacement with African-led government amounted to what Grosfoguel depicted as 'the most powerful myths of the twentieth century'. No postcolonial world was born because:

> The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix'. With juridical-political decolonization we moved from a period of 'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality'. (Grosfoguel 2007: 219)

Mandela was fully aware of this. This is why he concluded his autobiography by saying 'for my long walk is not yet ended'.