To talk globally about the African continent, as it was articulated during the Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora of 2004 and in the second conference in 2006, Africa will not be able to find its salvation in terms of political, economic, and social development if it does not gather all her living forces around African governments. Thus, intellectuals and academics of Africa must be at the forefront of African political, social, and economic debates to make a real contribution to building a strong African continent in a globalised world. Wherever they come from, intellectuals and academics of the diaspora are also expected to contribute, alongside their colleagues in Africa, to the continent's influence, while promoting the African renaissance.

It is in this context, as part of the diaspora, someone who has already resolved her own identity 'challenge' and has been influenced by the concept of the African renaissance since 1996, I now have the opportunity to review the works of colleagues of Africa. I take a critical look at the challenges the African continent faces, while acknowledging the potential Africa would achieve through solid cooperation between intellectuals and academics from various disciplines, and policy makers. This cooperation should be based on trust and on a genuine will from all African states to promote the impact of intellectuals on the development of the continent. It is with this in mind that I review this 559-page book, which comprises four parts and 20 chapters that are perfectly balanced, consistent, and accessible.

To start with, the book is made up of chapters by senior as well as younger researchers or scholars. As Professor Shadrack Gutto puts it in the foreword, 'The peoples of Africa are questioning the relevance of the knowledge they are generating and what they are teaching.' Thus, 'Academics, scholars and intellectuals are expected to inform and influence Africa’s governance and developmental paths. They have to fertilise the acceleration of transforming the continent and reposition it in the cruel, fiercely competitive, and globalised world....' With such an appeal to the intellectuals and academics of Africa and the diaspora, the scientific paradigms – usually based on a Western model of thought – shall now become an African approach within the context of 'decolonising African universities and knowledge' (p.xiii).

The book editors address the Eurocentric tendency to unbalanced analyses of the African context, informed by extreme pessimism. The continent needs a fair and balance analysis. It is time to oppose the tendency to see Africa – its education, economy, human rights, relationships, and
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The authors of these excellent 20 chapters, divided in four parts, take the opposite view of ‘universal’ thought and impose their own visions of African reality. In doing so they restore a new intellectual breath and assert themselves strongly in the globalised, scientific, and intellectual arena. In a balanced way, the four parts of the book cover all the themes that lead to a better understanding of the challenges facing the African continent and how to find sustainable solutions in using paradigms specific to the African context.

The first part of the book comprises six chapters that question coloniality, and more specifically the ill-fated nature of development due to the negative impact the global North has had on Africa. Adopting historical and political perspectives in the first chapter, Sabelo J Ndlrovu-Gatsheni shows that after fifty years of independence the continent is still struggling to achieve real decolonisation and sustainable development. This struggle is the outcome of imperial domination that ruins the prospects of real African development. To reverse this trend, the continent needs to build its own African counter-hegemony to fight the Eurocentric hegemony.

The second chapter moves in the same direction as the first one. Author Tendayi Sithole explains that the idea of development is, in reality, a need for the West to fix the disorder that is linked to its colonial infrastructures. Sithole stresses the urgent need to decolonise the mind and allow Africans to create their own concept of development.

In the third chapter, William J Mpofu provides the tools for Africans to perform this decolonisation of the mind. According to the author, it is crucial to abandon the Eurocentric epistemologies that penetrate the continent – especially African universities – in favour of more African epistemologies that reverse negative perceptions facing African people.

In the fourth chapter Siphamandla Zondi revisits the perspective of Cheikh Anta Diop regarding African integration – through the contribution initiated by Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. In this context the author promotes enhancement of African history, civilisation, development, science, and heritage through a much more Afrocentric vision. In my opinion, in doing so, Africa would ensure that it never again faces the censure epitomised by the so-called Dakar speech in 2007 by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who suggested that Africa had failed to embrace progress: ‘The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history... They have never really launched themselves into the future,’ Sarkozy told university students in Dakar, leaving many of them opened-mouthed. ‘The African peasant only knew the eternal renewal of time, marked by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words,’ Sarkozy said, ‘In this realm of fancy... there is neither room for human endeavour nor the idea of progress.’

Indeed, the continent shall shine in the global world through the promotion of the African Renaissance. In the fifth chapter Akhona Nkenkana analyses the importance of Afrocentric institutions that influence education with their African paradigms and epistemologies. In chapter six Asanda Fotoyi represents education as a vector of African development – if it abandons Western perspectives and is influenced by African culture and tradition.

The second part of the book examines democratic governance, peace, security, and Africa’s development. It calls on Africans to face up to their responsibilities. Consisting of four chapters, this part highlights the need for a stable political context free from bad governance, corruption,
and political patronage. It also highlights the need for strong constitutions to prevent power being captured by minorities who misuse natural resources and violate people’s rights.

In his chapter Paul Kwengwere questions the concept of good governance in the context of African development. He demonstrates the need for real development in Africa; empowerment of civil society; and freeing of the media to ensure a third power in African societies. African states should also facilitate growth of the private sector on the continent. Regarding potential development partners, the author calls for the local African context to be respected. The following chapter analyses constitutional, democratic governance, showing that Africa does need checks and balances imposed on power. According to Joy Alemazung, a separation of powers fosters African institutions and prevents African leaders from abusing their powers. To this end the author advocates constitutionalism and the rule of law as the basis of strong African institutions. The chapter written by Western Shilaho addresses the question of ‘rebuilding’ African democracy through a free and fair electoral process to shield African countries from permanent takeover by so-call ‘Big Men’. This context should ease economic growth and benefit all African people through a better redistribution of natural wealth. Finally, in the second part of the book, Madeleine Fomba uses the example of the public-private partnership (PPP) in South Africa to argue for use of private-sector management and governance principles to transform the African public sector.

The third part of the book explores African political economy, regional integration, trade, and development through six chapters. It calls for an end to dependence on external donor funding in the interests of focusing on real African cooperation. In their chapter, O Ajoku and SB Magashi call for total withdrawal from Western development ideology. In doing so, the authors argue, African economies would improve themselves through self-determination – by using African regional integration as the foundation of stronger institutional frameworks across all African states.

In a similar perspective, Babatunde Fagbayibo focuses on the African Union Commission (AUC) and its integrative functions. While denouncing the aberration of the AUC’s dependence on external donor funding, the author calls on African states to pay their member-state contributions in the interests of implementing a better process of regional/continental integration to further African development. As in the second part of this book, the PPP is revisited by Mubarak T Adekilekun and Ching C Gan – through the prism of African infrastructural development – as a magic wand for socio-economic growth and development. Addressing Africa’s poor infrastructure, which is exacerbated by lack of skills and technical know-how, inefficiencies and corruption, the authors argue that partnership between the private and public sectors should ease development of infrastructures in Africa: the private sector, the authors point out, in contrast to the public sector, has the capacity through private capital to respond to the huge demand for public infrastructure.

Dejo Olowu analyses the impact of democratic governance/good governance as the architecture that will aid human development in Africa. Although Africa as a continent receives substantial development aid from the richest countries, there is very little progress on the ground in improving infrastructure and eradicating poverty. According to the author, development aid tends to curb the continent’s capacity to draft its own development schemes. Olowu argues for reversal of this trend through improved monitoring to measure the impact of development aid on the ground.

Contrary to the previous chapter, the last two chapters examine African development through the prism of an economic/trade partnership. In her chapter, Victoria Qhobosheane studies the
potential impact of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between Europe and the African continent. She strongly denounces the EPAs, arguing that the African continent is not yet ready to compete effectively with the EU as equal partner. It would be better for the continent to encourage regional integration, she argues. This would improve the competitive capacity of African countries vis-à-vis Europe, protect their own revenue, and promote their own industrial development.

The last chapter argues for an alternative to the EPAs. Analysing the BRICS consortium – comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – Amos Saurombe demonstrates the importance and advantages of South-South cooperation by pointing to BRICS investments in Africa. Nevertheless, while recognising the positive impact of this South-South cooperation through BRICS, the author warns against a new form of natural-resource capture and what could be seen as South Africa’s hegemony as the only African member in BRICS. The author advises that BRICS should be considered as an instrument to promote long-term economic growth and development in Africa.

The last part of the book deals with land, human rights, and justice. The first of the four chapters demonstrates how the complex issue of land in Africa is central to African development. Menzi Sithuli Dlamini links governance and land grabs, to show how Africans lose their own land to profiteering corporates – with the complicity of corrupt leaders within the context of weak governance. This phenomenon tends to impoverish African populations, especially the most vulnerable, while the West continues to enjoy its natural resources. To avoid a long-term land shortage, Africa needs to adopt good governance regarding the land to halt underdevelopment of its populations. This is what Robert Home terms ‘pro-poor land governance’ in his chapter: a range of participatory local strategies and land management to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

In the chapter on economic and institutional determinants of foreign land acquisition in Africa, Ayodele Odusola explains that developed countries are securing food and materials for their own industries – as well as inland water – to the detriment of African populations. To avoid the drift of these land grabs, African governments must legislate on land acquisition to protect development of African countries and their populations and to involve civil society organisations that protect the poor and champion land reforms. A strong and non-corrupt political class is also needed to protect the land and enlist the support of local chiefs or landlords in confronting foreign pressure on African land.

The last chapter linked to the land problematic focuses on tensions between state and citizens. Chadzimula Otsetswe Molebatsi, through the example of Botswana, shows the negative impact of systematic land dispossession on San communities. Expropriation motivated by national development has impoverished San communities. Nevertheless, as vulnerable groups, these communities are able to take action, aided by civic society, to challenge the state and to benefit from a more inclusive social transformation.

Human rights and justice are also essential to development in Africa. Addressing climate change and its consequences for the continent, Ademola Oluborode Jegede emphasises the need to consider human rights, which are guaranteed under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Climate change threatens the rights to food, water, housing, peace, health and environment listed in the African Charter. Because of this, the AUC must address the urgency of climate change, which has impacted in a negative way on the continent.
The last chapter by Serges Djoyou Kamga examines ways of reducing xenophobia by adopting positive attitudes towards migrants and refugees and their human rights. This chapter is important in the context of recent xenophobic riots in South Africa. The author argues that it is essential to address inequalities and to educate local populations on respect for the human rights of migrants and refugees in South Africa. Implementation of the Bill of Rights should benefit everyone. If South Africans must be made aware of the rights of migrants and refugees, political leaders and the government must be their guarantors in order to avoid threats to the holders of these rights. Failure to address xenophobia will hinder the unity of the continent.

In conclusion, the book must become a reference, not only for researchers of Africa and its diaspora who are central to the debates, but also for all politicians, who have the opportunity to build their political programmes and implement public policies on the African continent based on some of the recommendations in this book. The private and public sectors should also be inspired to take into account the opinions and expertise expressed by the authors. Similarly, African civil society should also rely on this book in seeking solutions for the development of the continent. To summarise, the authors/editors demonstrate that for Africa to develop it is imperative to take on board African perspectives – and not simply to consider the Western approach as the mantra for development.

Notes and References
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3 Caribbean – Martinique and French Guyana – and European Diaspora.
4 Two years before my very first experience on the continent, and specifically in South Africa, for a research field, among others, at the University of the Western Cape.