THE ANTICAPITALISM MOVEMENT AND AFRICAN RESISTANCE TO NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION

E. Osei Kwadwo Prempeh

Introduction As contemporary neoliberal globalization has intensified and consolidated since the 1980s, its hegemonic and exploitative nature has provoked new waves and modalities of contestation and resistance. The contested and politicized nature of neoliberal globalization, which Arturo Escobar aptly refers to as “a new US-based form of imperial globality, an economic-military-ideological order that subordinates regions, peoples, and economies world-wide,” has drawn attention to the challenge of resisting the global dominance of this process. The key political tension exists between the forces of globalization and the forces of resistance, and at the heart of this is a paradox: globalization both weakens and simultaneously reinvigorates the forces of contestation and resistance. Put another way, imperial globality is provoking the emergence of new grassroots-based social movements, which are engaged in counterhegemonic struggles that represent both a challenge and alternative to this new form of colonialism, especially specific African popular struggles and manifestations of the deglobalization of capital orientation. Indeed, the eruption of these emergent social movements and civil society groups, beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing to the present, has posed serious challenges to the hegemonic discourse and project of neoliberalism.

This can be seen in the resistance and struggles of the “movement of movements” engaged in the deglobalization movement that seeks to present a broader challenge to the hegemonic impulses of capitalism at the World Social Forum (WSF) and the African Social Forum (ASF), key sites at
which to reject the neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and commodification.

This paper attempts to provide a detailed account of how spaces are being opened up within emerging social movements in order to contest this imperial globality; in particular, the paper looks at movements emerging out of different cultures.

The WSF and the ASF both respond to the neoliberal position that there is no alternative to neoliberalism by suggesting in bold, assertive terms that indeed “Another World Is Possible, Another Africa Is Possible.” The argument is that the uneven and unequal nature of capitalist globalization has intensified both the need for, and the strength of, the convergence of new social movements rebelling against the system of imperial globality. The ASF is an example of specific African knowledges arising from activist practice with roots in an African culture of resistance that was on display during the anticolonial struggle. It has important significance for explaining and coming to terms with radical African progressive social movements in contestation and resistance to corporate globalization.

The first section of this paper provides a brief survey of some of the more progressive views on understanding resistance to the neoliberal project. This survey sets the stage for the following section, which aims to outline a more radical and progressive anticapitalist alternative to neoliberal globalization. This section has two main objectives. The first is to provide a detailed analysis of the political project of the global “movement of movements.” The second is to outline ways in which African civil society groups have mobilized to resist globalization.

**Understanding Resistance to Imperial Globality**

The consequences of globalization — arguably one of the most wide-ranging and unsettling systemic trends in contemporary history — remain quite open and will be considerably influenced by the sorts of knowledge constructed about, and fed into, the process. To date orthodox (and especially liberal) discourses have held an upper hand, but ample opportunities remain to salvage notions of globalization for critical theory and associated politics of emancipation.²
As Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs aptly point out, “globalization relates as much to a way of thinking about the world as it does to a description of the dynamics of political and economic relations within it. Globalization has opened up new imperatives for investigating power linkages between thought and action, knowledge and being, structure and process.”

The crux of the matter is globalization’s tendency to disempower and exclude marginalized groups and societies. Such exclusion and disempowerment serves as the basis for a politics of resistance whose main objective is to open up space for political mobilization in opposition to the globalizing logic of the market and finance. The general insight that provides a foundation for this section is that the increasing intensity and extent of globalization has generated a counterhegemonic critique.

Indeed, Scholte’s above-noted quote about the consequences of globalization highlights the growing body of critical work that seeks to establish an alternative, more critical discourse to challenge the hegemony of the prevailing neoliberal globalization discourse. Thus, Scholte makes the bold claim that “critical knowledge has as its primary conscious purpose to identify disempowerment and promote politics of emancipation.” The alternative critical discourse is said to expose the limits of the dominant discourse and its hegemonic power tendencies and effects. In so doing, this counterhegemonic discourse shakes the dominant discourse from its claimed timeless pedestal.

While delving into the counterhegemonic discourse, it is trite to examine the underlying critique of globalization that has laid the groundwork for such a discourse. There are many underlying reasons for this new oppositional politics. Central to this is the unequal and uneven nature of globalization.

The political project of the countermovement is thus a struggle that seeks to transform the principles underlying globalization and radically reconfigure its foundations. This new political project has two main characteristics. First, it is an attempt at counterhegemonic mobilization and organizing in response to the hegemonic discourse of globalization. Second, the counterhegemonic discourse and literature seeks to articulate a different
vision of globalization by uncovering the countervailing political dynamics to the process of globalization.

How can we come to terms with the contestation and resistance to the neoliberal project? While much scholarly attention has focused on the homogenizing thrust of the current phase of capitalist globalization in the economic, political, social, cultural, and ideological landscapes through time-space compression, global commodity cultures, or a borderless world, critics have drawn attention to the increasing marginalization of subaltern groups and the establishment of new networks of social movements; movements that are engaged in a “new politics” of contestation with the new “empire” over the exercise of power. This critical view makes important contributions to understandings of the frameworks for resisting neoliberal globalization. According to David Harvey, contemporary capitalism, as it has unfolded in the neoliberal project, is distinguished by its tendency towards expanded reproduction and the process of “accumulation through dispossession” — accumulation by dispossession is the hallmark and defining element of the dominant form of primitive accumulation:

Accumulation by dispossession re-emerged from the shadowy position it had held prior to 1970 to become a major feature within the capitalist logic. … On the one hand, the release of low-cost assets [through privatization] provided vast fields for the absorption of surplus capitals. On the other, it provided a means to visit the costs of devaluation or surplus capitals upon the weakest and most vulnerable territories and populations.\(^5\)

Here, contemporary capitalism is marked by the persistence of primitive accumulation as a strategy for overcoming crises of overaccumulation. Harvey borrows from Marx’s views on primitive accumulation which, according to Marx, incorporates a whole range of processes:

These include the commodification of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights; the suppression of rights to the commons; the commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial, and imperial appropriation of assets
(including natural resources); the monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade; usury; the national debt, and ultimately the credit system as radical means of primitive accumulation.\textsuperscript{6}

The strength of Harvey’s intervention lies in his emphasis on the processes of accumulation by dispossession provoking the rise of new diverse social and political counterhegemonic struggles. The call to analyze and come to terms with these struggles in response to privatization, deregulation, and commodification, is summed up by Harvey this way: “With the core of the problem so clearly recognized, it should be possible to build outwards into a broader politics of creative destruction mobilized against the dominant regime of neoliberal imperialism foisted upon the world by the hegemonic capitalist powers.” In a similar vein, Castells seizes on the contradictions and disjunctures of contemporary globalization by highlighting the counterhegemonic processes of political activism that challenge the hegemony and disempowering effects of the neoliberal discourse and practice. For Castells:

People all over the world resent the loss of control over their lives, over their environment, over their jobs, and, ultimately, over the fate of the Earth. Thus, following an old law of social evolution, resistance confronts domination, empowerment reacts against powerlessness, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order, increasingly sensed as disorder by people around the planet.\textsuperscript{8}

The next section provides a brief overview of the possibilities of the evolving anticapitalist, antiimperialist, and deglobalization movements that have challenged the neoliberal project around the world. This set up the following section to examine some of these struggles that have emerged in Africa.

**The Deglobalization Movement and Alternative Visions** Since the late 1990s, new social movements in both the North and South encompassing environmentalists, workers groups, antisweatshop activists, human rights movements, etc. have come together to form coalitions to resist globalization. Employing tactics such as strikes, protests, and uprisings as part of a new wave of radicalism, this new “movement of movements” for global
justice and solidarity has collectively, through a struggle of resistance, articulated alternatives to the neoliberal project envisioned in the so-called Washington Consensus. These new social movements share a commitment to a common counterhegemonic discourse and project made possible by the antidemocratic nature of the globalization of capitalism. The bankruptcy and nonsustainability of the neoliberal hegemonic order has created the need for an alternative counterhegemonic discourse, and has helped connect dispersed groups and movements in their struggle against corporate globalization. The events at Seattle in 1999 signalled the beginning of a new phase of rebellion against neoliberal globalization. Social movements, such as the Alliance for Global Justice, Center for Economic and Policy Research, “50 Years Is Enough,” the Nader group Essential Action, and Jobs with Justice, among others, have mobilized globally against neoliberal globalization.

The important role of these social movements — contesting the agenda of economic liberalization and the market and financial power of neoliberalism — is reflected in this nuanced and powerful account by Cecelia Lynch:

The type of normative/discursive contestation of contemporary social, economic, and political practices advanced by the antiglobalization movement at base provides an example of what social movements are able to do most effectively in world politics, that is, delegitimize particular discourse and paths of action in order to legitimate alternatives.9

The “movement of movements” against neoliberal globalization is therefore a struggle epitomized by political engagement and activism, inspired to reinvigorate the process of envisioning an alternative to neoliberal globalization. The crux of the political project is to challenge global capitalism and its inherently exploitative nature, and to seek to establish the conditions for a new and radical counterhegemonic vision of deglobalization. The counterpoint to capitalist globalization is a new front of anticapitalist struggle deconstructing what some in the progressive movement refer to as “the empire.” The objective of the anticapitalist movement is not to reform, but to shut down international financial institutions and provide a distinctly anticapitalist alternative by reconstructing and realigning power relations to the benefit of grassroots and progressive democratic political movements.
Implicit in this is rebellion against the neoliberal globalization project and its distinctly capitalist manifestations. The resiliency of this movement is aptly noted in this poignant declaration by Thomas Ponniah and William F. Fisher:

In a world of rapid globalization, where large corporations grow more powerful in their pursuit of economic expansion and profits, there are growing networks of concerned activists who are not dazzled by the promised land of globalization. They are alert instead to the dangers globalization presents to justice, cultural autonomy and the environment. These networks find themselves pitted against well-financed and well-staffed institutions, multilateral development banks, governments and transnational corporations. With limited resources but great tenaciousness, they work to make visible the damage and dangers wrought by rampant and unexamined economic expansion.¹⁰

It is in this light that one should view the actions at the Mobilization for Global Justice campaign and the World Social Forum. The Mobilization for Global Justice campaign in Washington, DC (16-17 April 2000) was very effective in bringing international attention to the campaign against the IFIs and the WTO. Adopting a far more militant and radical platform, the broad coalition of Third World and Northern activists’ successful grassroots campaign drew attention to the Southern agenda in a way best captured in this statement by Patrick Bond:

The Mobilization drew the eco-socio-economic concerns of the Global South far deeper into the fabric of the US movement than ever before . . . . Granted the protest failed to obstruct the IMF/World Bank meetings . . . . No matter, the combination of thorough preparation and the large size of the turnout in Washington: helped raise public awareness about the IMF/World Bank to unprecedented levels; brought sympathetic activists from different constituencies into successful coalition; taught organizers a great deal about Washington logistics (and how they can be gummed up next time); showed South allies the extent of solidarity possibilities, encouraging them to intensify their own local critiques of the IMF/World Bank; and also facilitated a long-overdue split amongst development NGOs (a group of 22 conservative organizations sent a bizarre self-discrediting endorsement note to the IMF and the World Bank).¹¹
The power of the deglobalization movement and its oppositional agenda to envision another world is celebrated in the World Social Forum (WSF). As the political and ideological nemesis of the neoliberal ideology, the WSF initiated in Porto Alegre, Brazil, has provided an annual forum since 2001 for deglobalization activists to espouse an alternative ideological counterpoint. It has, above all, provided a foundation for a new form of social solidarity beyond the market:

Porto Alegre embodies and personifies the progressive movement against neoliberal globalization and the struggle to deconstruct the processes, structures, and institutions of global capitalism. For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the WSF represents a “new democratic cosmopolitanism, a new anti-capitalist transnationalism, a new intellectual nomadism, a great movement of the multitude.”

The critical importance of the WSF as a popular alternative to neoliberalism is expressed with particular trenchancy by Walden Bello:

Porto Alegre, of course, was one moment of a larger process of charting alternatives. It was a macrocosm of so many smaller but equally significant enterprises going on throughout the world by millions who have told the reformists, cynics and “realists” to move aside because indeed another world is possible. And necessary…. Today, corporate-driven globalization is creating much of the same instability, resentment and crisis that serves as the breeding ground of fascist, fanatical and authoritarian populist forces. Globalization has not only lost its promise but it is embittering many. The forces representing genuine solidarity and community have no choice but to step in quickly and convince the disenchanted that another, better world is indeed possible...

Global civil society has mobilized to challenge neoliberal globalization and its hegemonic discourse of domination and economic totalitarianism. In its stead, the deglobalization movement has built a counterhegemonic discourse on a foundation of social and economic justice, ecological sustainability, and human rights. While emphasis has been placed on the global nature of these voices of protest and resistance, efforts to open up citizen spaces and mobilize at the local and national levels have been at the heart of the process
of building alternatives. Indeed, one of the major strengths of the deglobalization movement is its embrace of, and respect for, difference. The vision is one that allows movements to maintain their difference. The saliency of this strategy is reinforced by Vandana Shiva:

We need international solidarity and autonomous organizing. Our politics needs to reflect the principle of subsidiarity .... We need stronger movements that combine resistance and constructive action, protests and building of alternatives, non-cooperation with unjust rule and cooperation within society. The global, for us, must strengthen the local and national, not undermine it. The two tendencies that we demand of the economic system need to be central to people’s politics — localization and alternatives. Both are not just economic alternatives, they are democratic alternatives. Without them forces for change cannot be mobilized in the new context.  

If the movement to resist neoliberal globalization is to be a genuinely representative one and not a discourse initiated and dominated by the North, then it is essential to capture the grassroots struggles and resistance of African social movements, civil society organizations, and trade unions. How have African resistances and struggles against neoliberal globalization manifested themselves? How have African progressive forces operating within the anticapitalist struggle responded to accumulation by “dispossession” (Harvey), which is the defining hallmark of the continent’s incorporation into the capitalist system? To these questions we now turn.

**African Resistance to Neoliberal Globalization** Attempts at deglobalization through protest and resistance in response to the uneven development of global capitalism did not just burst onto the world stage at Seattle in 1999. Anticapitalist resistance has been common in African since the liberation struggles that culminated in political independence began in the late 1950s. African social movements and the working class have been mobilizing to challenge state power, develop new strategies, and reject colonial rule and its resultant imperialist exploitation and capitalism. Central to this activism is a culture of resistance that merges subsistence struggle with the language, strategies, and tactics of the global movement, but with a distinctly locally based action drawn from African traditions of resistance. While a
new wave of resistance to contemporary neoliberal policies is evident, it
draws from the traditions and strategies of resistance of the liberation struggle
in Africa. As Patrick Bond notes, the effect of imperialism’s exploitation of
Africa in the colonial period engendered a progressive, radical tradition that
included “vibrant nationalist liberation insurgencies, political parties that
claimed one or another variants of socialism, mass movement (sometimes
peasant-based, sometimes emerging from degraded urban ghettos), and
powerful unions. Religious protesters, women’s groups, students and youths
also played catalytic roles that changed history in given locales.”

In contemporary times, the progressive force’s critiques of neoliberalism
and imperialism remain strong. The contradictions of capitalism and the
continued accumulation by dispossession and appropriation that are endemic
features of corporate globalization and neoliberal policies have generated
new sites of conflict and resistance by African anticapitalists on the Left,
through their new social movements. This could be traced back to the so-
called IMF riots against the neoliberal emphasis on austerity, privatization,
deregulation, and trade liberalization in the early 1980s. From this perspec-
tive, mass consciousness against neoliberal globalization in Africa began to
take shape in the early 1980s. Since 2000, the movement has broadened
beyond a patchwork of diverse struggles into a coordinated framework with
a strong progressive grassroots base.

Some of the most sustained anticapitalist campaigns and struggles in
response to accumulation by dispossession and appropriation in Africa have
been waged through the African Social Forum, which has brought together
progressive NGOs and social movements from all parts of the continent. The
first ASF (5-9 January 2002) brought representatives of more than 200
African social movements from 45 countries to Bamako, Mali, to exchange
ideas, experiences, and strategies in order to generate an African alternative
to neoliberal globalization and to challenge the dominant economic policies
encapsulated in the so-called Washington Consensus, as a prelude to the
WSF in Porto Alegre in late January 2002. That initial gathering has since
been followed up by African Social Forums in Johannesburg (August 2002),
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (January 2003), and Lusaka, Zambia, (December
2004). Under the theme “Another Africa Is Possible,” participants at the Bamako Forum engaged in analysis and proposed alternatives to the prevailing neoliberal world order. The objective of the Forum has been to engage, enrich, and strengthen African civil society and social movements and consolidate the world social movement.

The 2002 Bamako Declaration’s position on Africa’s increasing deprivation through accumulation by dispossession and appropriation was as unambiguous as it was straightforward:

A strong consensus emerged at the Bamako Forum that the values, practices, structures and institutions of the currently dominant neoliberal order are inimical to and incompatible with the realization of Africa’s dignity, values and aspirations. The Forum rejected neoliberal globalization and further integration of Africa into an unjust system as the basis for its growth and development. In this context, there was a strong consensus [about] initiatives such as Nepad [New Partnership for African Development] that are inspired by the IMF-WB strategies of Structural Adjustment Programmes, trade liberalization that continues to subject Africa to an unequal exchange, and strictures on governance borrowed from the practices of Western countries and not rooted in the culture and history of the peoples of Africa. The Forum further noted that the global architecture on financial and capital movements is seriously flawed and has led to repeated crises of the kind that happened in East Asia and more recently in Argentina. Africa too is exposed to the fragility of the system of global governance of the financial market. The Forum demands of its political leaders that they do not further inflict on Africa the unjust system of the Bretton Woods institutions in the name of financing Africa’s development. Africa should, first and foremost, demand that its outstanding debts are cancelled forthwith. Africa has not only paid the financial debts many times over already, but it is the countries of the West that owe Africa debts arising from slavery and colonialism.16

The Addis Ababa Consensus (issued on 9 January 2003), following the Second African Social Forum (ASF) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (5-9 January 2003), reaffirmed the following as the philosophical and moral basis of the movement:

We conclude that only a dynamic civil society organized in strong and active social movements can and must challenge the neoliberal political economy
of globalization. The Consensus was that we need to build a new African state and society where public institutions and policies will guarantee cultural, economic, political and social rights for all citizens. The ASF challenges national, regional and global institutions that continue to undermine our efforts to build a democratic society based on gender equality and social and economic justice. In that perspective, the African Social Forum commits itself to developing, promoting and popularizing, in a participatory manner, an alternative development paradigm based on fundamental principles of democracy, human rights, gender equality and social justice. A development process designed and controlled by the African people and based on their historical experiences. That paradigm will therefore be built on the following principles:

- The maximum participation of the African working classes, peasants, women and youth in decision-making processes, at local, national and regional levels in matters that affect their lives.
- The use of African cultures, not only as means of resistance to foreign domination, but also as a tool for building the economic, social and political framework for the Other Africa.
- The rejection of the privatization of basic services in Africa...
- The rejection of Africa’s illegitimate external debt.17

The ASF has provided an enabling space and environment for African social movements to voice their opinions and concerns, examine the stakes, and articulate their visions and alternatives. The defining characteristic of the ASF is the creation of open and diverse spaces for the generation of grassroots, progressive ideas and practices for challenging, deconstructing, and ultimately displacing contemporary neoliberalism. In particular, the Forum has established a link between the debt problem and neoliberal globalization, and has mobilized African social movements around a broad agenda to address the fundamental roots and causes of the debt problem. The focus of their struggles has been not only the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the G-8 for debt cancellation, but also their own governments for sustaining and reproducing the debt crisis. By linking the struggle and campaign against debt with the neoliberal policies of participants’ governments, the ASF has brought into sharp focus the need for a broad-based campaign to unite popular progressive movements on the continent. It is a testament to the growing relevance of the ASF and its commitment to provide space for alternative visions of Africa that the Forum
held in Lusaka, Zambia, (10-14 December 2004) attracted approximately 650 social movement activists representing trade unions, churches, women, environmentalists, and progressive NGOs.

Taking a cue from the ASF and its position on debt, the radical African Jubilee South (AJS), a social movement with an activist base, has for years campaigned for the cancellation of Africa’s debt, not just the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative for a write-off of unserviceable debt. Jubilee South challenges the IMF, World Bank, and Northern governments’ framework of Third World debt on the grounds that it fails to address the historical, social, and ecological debts of the North to the South — debts accumulated from years of slavery, colonization, and neocolonization — and from the more contemporary relationships of domination, inequality, and aggression. The movement’s December 2000 conference in Senegal, “Dakar 2000: From Resistance to Alternatives,” was a major watershed in this campaign because civil society, social movements, trade unions, and NGOs from Africa were united not only in their critique of the African debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes in general, but also in their articulation of strategies of resistance to neoliberal globalization and alternative visions. It is worth noting the following aspects of the conference resolution:

Third World debt is illegitimate and must be cancelled without conditions; structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and the World Bank, under whatever name, including the new Poverty reduction Strategy Papers, must be rejected; that no conditionalities should be placed on the debt cancellation process by Northern governments or creditors; and that we must more consciously take account of the ecological impacts of the debt.18

The Forum has served as a space where African social movements can grow to be vanguards of social, political, and economic justice and to outline alternatives through resistance strategies. Symptomatic of this role has been the vociferous resistance of African social movements to the 2002 New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the Blair Commission for Africa Report entitled “Our Common Interest,” released on 11 March 2005. African social movements have argued that the underdevelopment
of Africa is the result of a process of exploitation by Western imperialism and the plundering of resources by Western multinational capital. Working from this perspective, these movements point out that NEPAD embraced the principles of neoliberalism and the process of neoliberal globalization as the cure for Africa’s development. They have criticized NEPAD as an elite-driven, top-down program developed by African elites in alliance with Western corporate forces and institutional instruments of globalization. A communiqué issued after a meeting of social movements, trade unions, faith-based organizations, youth and women’s organizations, progressive NGOs, and other populist civil society organizations in Africa in Port Shepstone, South Africa, (4-8 July 2002) noted that NEPAD:

Ignores the way the state has, itself, been undermined as a social provider and vehicle for development, particularly under the World bank’s tutelage; ignores the way that the structurally adjusted African state has, in turn, been undermining institutions and processes of democracy in Africa; does not reflect the historic struggles in Africa for participatory forms of democracy and decentralization of power; promises of democracy and good governance are largely intended to satisfy foreign donors and to give guarantees to foreign investment.  

 Rejecting NEPAD as a development path for the continent and stressing that “Africa was not for sale,” the social movements concluded that:

We do not accept the NEPAD plan, as a process and in its content. We are committed to joint efforts for Africa’s development and emancipation, and we call upon all African people’s organizations and movements to continue their longstanding efforts to produce sustainable, just and viable alternatives that will benefit all the people of Africa.

There was also a clarion call encouraging progressive forces in Africa to campaign against NEPAD and raise awareness about the danger it poses for the continent and its people.

Soweto political activist Trevor Ngwane has drawn attention to the problematic underlying assumptions of NEPAD and called for a rejection of the plan. Encouraging African social movements to initiate a campaign of “education and denunciation against NEPAD,” Ngwane reminds us that
civil society was not consulted when the Plan was put together, and that “the document uses euphemisms and camouflage language such as ‘a globalizing world,’ ‘exclusion,’ ‘globalisation’ and such like; it avoids the critical language which points to the real cause of Africa’s problems such as ‘imperialism,’ ‘neocolonialism’ and ‘capitalism.’”\textsuperscript{21} This analysis focuses light on the contradictions of neoliberal logic and the uneven and exploitative nature of the existing international economic system into which Africa has been integrated and which NEPAD deepens. For Ngwane:

The relationship between Africa and Western Europe has been one between colonizer and colonized, exploiter and exploited. While the exact terms of this predatory relationship have evolved over time, it seems foolhardy for Mbeki and company to ask for partnership with people who still benefit from Africa’s wealth at the expense of the African people. Imperialism is the problem, a partnership with it cannot be a solution. He who sups with the devil must have a long spoon. NEPAD calls for closer relations with the rich countries, it wants Africa to be “integrated” more into the global economic system. But economic development theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin have long shown how integration leads to growing poverty and underdevelopment because the structure of insertion is designed to benefit the rich; they get richer and the poor get poorer.\textsuperscript{22}

Most recently, the Blair Commission for Africa report, “Our Common Interest,” called for further action on debt relief. The so-called Marshall Plan for Africa places a great deal of emphasis on deep debt relief as the cornerstone of a poverty-reduction strategy. The centrepiece of that plan was the 11 June 2005 agreement by seven G-8 finance ministers for a $50-to-$55 billion debt write-off, later endorsed at the G-8 meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland, (6-8 July 2005). There was a lot of enthusiastic support for these measures, including media headlines such as “Debtor Nations Freed of Burdens” (\textit{Los Angeles Times} 12 June 2005); “Victory for Millions” (\textit{Observer} 12 June 2005), and “Blair, Bono Win One for Africa” (\textit{Christian Science Monitor} 13 June 2005). The \textit{Los Angeles Times} enthused that the deal “fulfilled a decades-old dream of anti-poverty activists”\textsuperscript{23} and Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, proudly hinted that “it is the intention of world leaders to forge a new and better relationship
— a new deal — between the rich and poor countries of the world and I believe that the advances we have made can be built upon … This is not the time for timidity, but a time for boldness, and not a time for settling for second best, but aiming high.”

In response to the lavish claims and hype surrounding the announcement, African social movements were pained to emphasize that this version of the so-called Marshall Plan for Africa did not address the root causes of Africa’s underdevelopment. African Jubilee South pointed out that the debt forgiveness scheme “involves the implementation of stringent free market reforms such as health and education budget cuts, financial and trade liberalization, privatization and other reforms that ensure elimination of impediments to private investment, both domestic and foreign.” Indeed, the $50 billion-to-$55 billion debt cancellation pales in light of Africa’s estimated total external debt of $300 billion, and the fact that the conditions for eligibility for debt write-off require adopting the very neoliberal policies at the root of the malaise means debt relief is premised on imposing the same harmful policies on African countries. In an ironic twist, therefore, the G-8’s antipoverty plan will ensure the continued exploitation of Africa. The G-8 plan does not change the fundamental relationship between Africa and the Western world, which is one of unequal exploitation.

The Southern African People’s Solidarity Network, in reaction to the G-8 plan, reminds us that “the so-called debt cancellations … will lead to further accumulation of debts [because] these countries still have to toe the line and respond to demands to open up their economies for more exploitation, capital flight and other related imbalances that come with further liberalization.” On 14 June 2005, the AJS stated in stark terms that:

The costs of structural adjustment programs and creditor-imposed conditionality far outweigh the amount of debt to be cancelled. Are we to cheer when these additional promises can go the same route of other G-8 pledges, that is, unfulfilled? Should we applaud when the 18 countries affected represent a tiny fraction of the world’s poor? Are we to praise the G-8 when these debts are not being serviced in any case [because of the countries’ inability to pay], and when they would have been repudiated a long time ago as illegitimate debts if our governments had real political and economic independence. The illegitimacy of the debt resides in that they were incurred
by dictatorships of various kinds, were used in consolidating and furthering their undemocratic regimes against the interests of their people and in implementing policies that have put millions of lives at risk.\textsuperscript{27}

For well-known Tanzanian professor Issa Shivji, the only alternative is to fight against the neoliberal ideology and imperialist policies that have impoverished Africa. Expressing his pessimism about the G-8 initiative, Shivji draws attention to the need for an alternative nationalist, pan-Africanist vision:

And this vision has to be in opposition to the domination of imperialism, read globalization, just as the nationalist vision in the last century was in opposition to colonialism. More than ever before, we need Nkrumahs and Fanons who saw in African unity and in the unity of the oppressed people and exploited classes a counter-force, which would be the harbinger of an alternative vision and an alternative path of development.\textsuperscript{28}

The power and potential of the ASF as a new political form of counter-hegemonic force against the new imperialism rests on four features: first, it provides a forum for studying, and educating the African masses about the devastating impact of neoliberalism, and alternatives to it; second, it provides for mass mobilization and struggles in contestation to neoliberalism and in defence of African economic, social, political, and cultural interests; third, it provides a new site for African social movements to champion alternative notions and visions of democracy that are not tied to the market economy, and to articulate new notions of power that facilitate and transform, and, fourth, it provides an avenue for redefining Africa through a discourse of dissent based on an African culture of resistance that disrupts and decen-tres the dominant discourse. The ASF offers space to social movements opposed to neoliberalism so they can foster networks to challenge the new global coloniality and articulate emergent alternatives to empire. In the face of accumulation by dispossession and appropriation, the Forum represents a site for a new praxis of emancipatory, democratic politics.

Such examples of popular resistance to the Washington Consensus and neoliberal globalization in Africa capture the essence of African civil society, social movements, and working-class challenges to neoliberal policies. They
are also a reflection of, and testament to, the way that grassroots mobilization and organizing can strive to end the neoliberal experiment and establish sustainable alternatives as articulated by the anticapitalist movement.

**Conclusion**  Indeed, it can be argued that the hegemony of neoliberal globalization is being attacked by a coalition of progressive social movements articulating a radical counterhegemonic vision. The impetus for the radical alternative of deglobalization is the destructive capacities of corporate-driven globalization. This paper has made the case for engaging with the counterhegemonic strategies and tactics of the deglobalization movement and the deglobalization battles being waged by African activists; these battles are not about mediation, but rather the explicit rejection and roll-back of neoliberal globalization.

The deglobalization movement’s arguments, globally and in Africa, are impressive. The terms of their engagement and contestation of neoliberal globalization are extraordinarily contemporary. Their emphasis on deglobalization through solidarity, that is, globalization of people, is at once consistent with the global civil society contestation, yet unique and distinctly African. However, to take a provocative stand, the radical claims and critiques coming from the deglobalization movement should not be confused with their general acceptability as a force of grassroots empowerment and change. The deglobalization account is itself contestable; the representativeness and accountability of the movement are still subject to debate. Furthermore, given the critical importance of civil society to the deglobalization movement, we would do well to heed Rita Abrahamsen’s cautionary note about overstating African civil society’s democratic credentials: “representation of civil society as inherently democratic is too romantic and optimistic.”

Indeed, one prominent criticism of the ASF in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2004 was that the speakers did not represent broadly based, progressive grassroots organizations and that the plenaries were dominated by the same speakers, mostly from well organized and financed national movements and NGOs. Trade unions and environmental and women’s groups engaged in resistance to privatization, the negative environmental consequences of multinational mining corporations, and violence against women in the host
country did not feature prominently on panels. This raises the question of how the ASF can hope to become truly representative of local campaigns against debt, trade, land sales, privatization of basic services, environmental degradation, and other manifestations of global capitalism on the continent. As Miles Larmer cautions:

The ASF was affected by the same ambiguities and contradictions that run through the global social justice movement as a whole, but which are particularly marked in sub-Saharan Africa. One such issue is the dominant role of international NGOs in terms of the agenda of the ASF, and its organization and funding. Many participants, for example from Malawi, were able to attend the Forum only because of NGO funding. The financial dependency of southern civil society organizations on northern NGOs, whose raison d’etre remains critical engagement with the policy and practice of the international financial organizations, continues to influence the positions they adopt.30

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that space is being forged in Africa and elsewhere to promote radical, progressive alternatives through popular struggles of resistance through the deglobalization movement.

Notes

6. Ibid., p. 145.
20. Ibid., p. 5.
22. Ibid., p. 3.
26. Ibid., p. 5.
27. Ibid.