In introducing today’s topic, I wish to trace the lack of peace on the African continent arising from the establishment of colonialism. This I do based on a rather dangerous assumption that Advocate Gumbi will focus primarily on contemporary debates around peace-building on and for the continent. Therefore, my contribution will focus somewhat on the antecedents to the lack of peace.

In a 2009 study of 114 countries that were colonised, Matthew Lange and Andrew Dawson presented a statistical model to assess the extent to which the legacy of colonialism has given rise to forms of conflict that afflict many countries – communal violence, political rebellion and civil war.

While Lange and Dawson had intended to challenge what they regarded as a simplistic generalisation that colonialism causes post-
independence violence, their study indicates that there is indeed a direct link between colonialism and violence.

Lange and Dawson found that “...a history of colonial rule promotes either oppositional communal identities, communal divisions of labor, ethnic-based stratification, animosity between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, or some combination of the four”.¹

Many would agree that this is what manifests in most countries on the continent, where the largely British colonial strategy of divide-and-rule encouraged ethnic enclaves, some of which have been the sources of conflict.

The phenomenon of dividing indigenous peoples to rule over them effectively with little resistance from them has been eloquently theorised by Mahmood Mamdani. Mamdani argues that the first step was to define the indigenous people, categorising them into ethnic enclaves.² In that way, the colonialist could drive wedges between the indigenous peoples, who began to see themselves no longer as having a common plight but as

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varied ethnic groups with distinct identities and therefore different interests.

Dividing the people into different ethnic groups was, for Archie Mafeje, the creation of an artificial device of something that did not exist in real terms but has had to be invented in order to divide the people – tribal identities. Mafeje argues that tribal identities were a deliberate distortion of clans, to divide the people under colonial rule, and later in our case, under apartheid.³

Whereas the British adopted divide-and-rule as a strategy to maintain colonial rule, and later neocolonialism, the French used assimilation. Thus, indigenous peoples were made to aspire to become French. In that manner, the people would cease to see themselves in their own right and, instead, begin owing allegiance to French identity.

Portugal, on the other hand, largely because of its economic backwardness at the time, sought to turn its colonial conquests into extensions of itself, so that it could extract as much natural resources possible to build its own economy. It thus adopted a three-pronged strategy of: “destroy(ing) traditional African societies and cultures; infiltration and adulteration of African societies by Portuguese

culture; and integration of detribalized Africans to Portuguese society”.4

Lastly, Belgium created “two societies” within its colonial conquests, one white and privileged and the other black and impoverished. Emulating the British, the Belgians further divided the indigenous communities into rival social and ethnic categories that were “fixed” and made to compete against each other; hence the later Rwanda and Burundi genocides5 that emerged in the form of ethnic cleansing.

This brief assessment of how colonial power was practised is, however, not sufficient for us to arrive at the conclusion that colonialism gave rise to later post-independence violence and lack of peace. Let us consider another cause.

**The violence of colonialism**

In his seminal books *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon presents detailed analyses of the effects of the violence meted out by colonial powers on the psyche of the colonised.6 The brutality of colonial rule is so negative that it destroys the inner soul of the colonised, taking out their humanness and leaving them as “…a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated,

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5 Ibid, pp. 41-41
drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.”

It is this emptiness, which Paulo Freire terms dehumanisation, that leads to the self-hatred that both Fanon and Biko wrote about; the self-hatred that leads to so much violence between the colonised, the oppressed. Thus, the black person would not hesitate to take the life of another black person. The black person would not hesitate to destroy the property of another black person. The black man does not hesitate to violate the black sister. He does so because he sees no person; he sees a “thing” that deserves no respect but only violation.

It is this violence of colonialism that refused to die when Africa was “decolonised”. I say “decolonised” in a qualified manner because, as Kwame Nkrumah and others after him, including Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Oginga Odinga, Mohammed Babu and many others have noted, Africa must still be fully decolonised.

It is this state of neocolonialism, or what some now call coloniality, combined with the stubborn ethnic or tribal mentality left by

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colonialism, that contributes to the many conflicts that we see on the African continent.

Having considered the colonial strategies of control – divide-and-rule, assimilation, and destruction of African social structures and identities – let us now consider the third element, which hopefully brings us to contemporary considerations: continued extraction of the riches of the African continent.

**Continued extraction of the riches of the African continent**

If there is one example that one can give to any person who is a novice in African politics, of how Africa continues to be colonised, that would be the relationship that exists between France and its former colonies.

Mawuna Remarque Koutonin has produced an excellent summary on how France controls the economies of its former colonies. Literally, it does so by:

- Forcing the former colonies to pay for the infrastructure that France built during colonisation
- Automatic confiscation of national reserves, which must be deposited into France’s central bank
- Right of first refusal by France on any raw or natural resource discovered in the country
• Priority to French interest and companies in public procurement and public bidding
• Exclusive right to supply military equipment and train the country’s military officers
• Right of France to pre-deploy troops and intervene in the country to defend its interests
• Obligation to make French the official language of the country and the language of education
• Obligation to use French colonial money, the CFA
• Obligation to send France annual balance and reserve report
• Renunciation to enter military alliance with any other country unless authorised by France
• Obligation to align with France in situation of war or global crisis.¹⁰

If there is still any doubt that there is a direct link between neocolonialism and the lack of peace on the continent, characterised by coups and civil wars, let alone ethnic wars, Koutonin provides conclusive analysis and assists us to understand the plight of Africa better. We have seen many coups in West Africa, alongside civil wars

and terrorist aggression. Koutonin recorded twenty-two (22) coups up to 2014.

Apart from the three causes that we have thus far outlined as being responsible for the lack of peace on the continent – the divide-and-rule strategy of colonial powers, the inherited violence of colonialism, and the continued extraction of the wealth of Africa – what is at the core of the ongoing conflicts, and therefore lack of peace?

**Africa’s “resource curse”: The source of our calamity**

Whereas it does not rank amongst the top ten countries with the most natural resources in the world, and occupies the third place in Africa, it is estimated that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has the most unexplored mineral resources of any country, estimated at $24 trillion\(^{11}\), or R454 trillion. Do we think international capital will ever allow the Congolese to enjoy such wealth alone, and in peace?

The fate of the DRC, and many other African countries, is a direct result of what many term Africa’s “resource curse”. The argument here is that the continent, particularly the sub-Saharan region, suffers from civil wars and other forms of conflict, primarily as a result of

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natural resource endowment. Different arguments exist on the causes of this conflict, still in relation to the endowment.

For some, poor governance and irresponsible economic behaviour on the side of African leaders and governments is the primary cause.12 Others, however, have pointed at the limitation of this orthodox resource curse approach (ORCA) for its limited uncritical, ahistorical and reductionist view. In its place, some political economists advocate for a critical look at the nature of capitalist or imperialist exploitation and its negative structural effects on the economy. To this end, they advance what is known as the critical political economy approach (PEA).13

It is beyond my brief to go into detail and therefore offer an analysis of the two schools of thought, and others around the “resource curse” theory. Neither am I at liberty to adopt an Aristotelian binary approach of arguing which school of thought posits better arguments. We will hear from Advocate Gumbi on some of the practical experiences that she has had working on the continent, and what solutions we might consider to get out of the “morass” that we find ourselves in.

12 Englebert, Pierre & Ron, James (2004) Primary Commodities of War: Congo-Brazzaville’s Ambivalent Resource Curse, Comparative Politics, Volume 37, Number 1, pp. 61-81
I do hope, though, that we will, during this lecture, consider these two schools of thought, and many others, and how they may assist us to understand why peace is so elusive on our continent.

What I do wish to submit, as I draw towards a conclusion, is that the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism are felt by the ordinary people on the continent. Lack of peace, and therefore constant conflict, denies the continent their right to enjoy its abundant wealth.

**How lack of peace denies Africa reaching its potential**

I wish to submit the following as negative consequences of lack of peace on the continent.

First, the continent is unable to extract value out of the abundant mineral and other natural resources that it has. As Nkrumah wrote: “Although most Africans are poor, our continent is potentially extremely rich” and yet “…we have the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty, and scarcity in the midst of abundance. Never before have a people had within their grasp so great an opportunity for developing a continent endowed with so much wealth”.14

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Wars and conflict have resulted in the total freedom of Africa being postponed. We are unable to lift millions of our people out of poverty, like what China started doing forty years ago. Africans are poor amidst riches. Perpetual dependence on the Bretton Woods Institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, individual Northern countries and their financial institutions, should have long been ended if Africa was able to maximise value out of her wealth.

Second, and because of the aforementioned, Africa is unable to keep up with innovations that humanity is introducing and advancing. In the era of innovations in technology, from 5G to Artificial Intelligence (AI), Africa is still “grappling” with basic technological developments. Thus, her peoples, especially young people, are denied the beauty of science which their peers all over the world are enjoying.

Third, the lack of peace is “stripping” Africa of its human resources. Most of the best minds leave the continent for better opportunities. Some of our most brilliant young people opt to pursue postgraduate studies in the North, where they are retained by the universities, science institutions such as NASA and many others.

These, and other challenges, are a direct result of our lack of peace on the continent. I look forward to learning from Advocate Gumbi’s experience.
On behalf of the Council, Management, staff and students of the University of South Africa, I welcome you, Advocate Gumbi, and esteemed guests.

Thank you!