

# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE 2018 APAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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**President, Association for the Promotion of African Studies**

Distinguished guests, respected colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and very warm welcome to the 2018 APAS International Conference. This year, we have convened in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, because of what she represents: a centre of academic excellence and a citadel of learning and research in African Studies.

The context of this 2018 APAS International Conference is a living and dynamic potential of energies, and values ready to be dynamized as it provides us a wonderful opportunity to renew long - standing acquaintances, and creates the aperture for scholars of various interests to connect with a person or group of persons they have not met before. Herein, we might find some valuable insights and fresh ideas to reflect upon when we return to our regular environments. From these new connections we might identify further opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

I convey the Association's affectionate, but respectful sentiments of welcome to:

1. Professor Jerome Okonkwo, the Chairman of this year's Conference
2. Professor Chima Iwuchukwu, the Keynote Presenter
3. Professor Philip Njemanze, the Lead Paper Presenter

I welcome in a very special way the members of the International Advisory board of this Association.

The theme for this year's conference is: **African Ideologies in a World of Change**. A cursory glance at the historical development of Africa reveals that Africa's recent history has been marked by some dramatic but significant developments. These developments have been as varied as they have been contradictory.

They have also constituted a major source of challenge to scholars as different schools of thought grapple with them in terms of their weight and meaning. As can be imagined, there is no consensus on the most appropriate approach for interpreting the changes that are taking place in the structure, content and dynamics of African life.

Indeed, efforts at conceptualizing the changes have produced a veritable Tower of Babel, with commentators not only speaking in different tongues but frequently past one another<sup>1</sup>. The contradictoriness of the changes, at once inspiring hope and generating despair, has polarized the scholarly and policy communities into Afro-optimist and Afro-pessimist camps. But for all the insights which they may offer into the problems and prospects of progressive change in Africa, both the Afro-pessimist and Afro-optimist frames are far too simplistic and subjective to serve as an enduring basis for capturing the dialectics of the multifaceted change and transformation in Africa<sup>2</sup>. In his poem titled: **the Second Coming**, William Butler Yeats **describes** the present changes thus:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity<sup>3</sup>

A more careful, historically grounded interpretation of the changes occurring on the continent is, therefore, needed and for it to be useful, it should enable us to transcend the narrow and narrowing parameters that currently dominate the discourse on the processes and structures of change occurring in contemporary Africa<sup>4</sup>. William Butler Yeats was hopeful of a better future when he wrote:

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand<sup>5</sup>.

Today we have convened in Awka because there is hope, and our 2018 APAS International Conference provides a context for a grounded hermeneutics of the structures of changes taking place in Africa. Indeed, this is the moment of 'Revelation'; this is the moment of the 'Second Coming'. I, therefore, welcome you to APAS 2018 International Conference as we all look forward to a fruitful academic experience. Thank you and welcome.

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<sup>1</sup> Thandika MKANDAWIRE, 2002, The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa: Towards an Explanation of the Violence Against the Peasantry. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40 (2), pp. 181-215.

<sup>2</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi, Changing Patterns of Politics in Africa, *Cadernos De Estudos Africanos*, 5. 6. 15-38, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> William Butler Yeats, The Second Coming. <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/second-coming>

<sup>4</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi, Changing Patterns of Politics in Africa, *Cadernos De Estudos Africanos*, 5. 6. 15-38, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> William Butler Yeats, The Second Coming. <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/second-coming>