



Decolonization of Africa as an Illusion and as a Noble Dream: The Case of Nigeria

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Abstract

Emmanuel Ayandele it was, who described early African Nationalists as “diluted hybrids and collaborators.” His description, although suitable, confirmed the nature of their training. Colonialism can be compared to a deforestation and re-forestation of a place or mixed cropping of a garden. Trees for re-forestation and crops for mixed cropping are determined solely by the forester and the gardener. The concomitant effect of this process is the birth of new trees and crops that are neither of the old stock, the by-product, the semblance of the old. The socio-political, economic, cultural, religious and, indeed, all departments of life were tailored to fit the size of the colonists in all their ramifications. The people’s psyche was not spared either as a mental surgery was carried out, reducing Africans to mere robots or zombies. This was passed on from generation to generation who must behave like Europeans to either be recognised, attended to, etc. Doing the opposite would spell doom for that African. This was and is where Africans are. Is it possible to change a mentally diluted mind? “Control the man who controls his mind,” Mbube adage goes. The Colonialists threatened Africans with a “superior” God. Is it possible to learn how to write with a different hand at an advanced age? This paper elucidates the above using the socio-historical framework backed up by Oral Tradition.

Introduction

The European “civilizing” and “Evangelizing” mission surreptitiously snowballed into a crack down on Africans with European forces marching on Africa, which culminated finally into the rape of the tradition of the people, ravaging their customs and norms, associating and assimilating them and, then “colonizing” them. The marriage, which produced the above result started with a number of treaties between African Chiefs on the one side

hand and European traders and missionaries on the other hand; these treaties were drawn usually with or without the consent of Africans and to the advantage of the European folk. The treaties, however, were signed by African Chiefs. When this did not yield the expected result, Chartered Companies were called in. J. C. Anene opines that the colonialists' decision to use Chartered Companies to cut cost and that, private enterprise could take risk being an unofficial body. For instance, Anene continued:

Royal Niger Company was able to contravene the international regulation for the free navigation of the Niger without precipitating as much international crisis as could have been the case if the breach had been committed by an official administration.

In Nigeria, for example, Goldie continued the task of colonization by amalgamating the four British companies into one and called it United African Company. The need for political power became expedient as the amalgamation couldn't stop competition for the Niger among European Nations. Goldie achieved this in 1882 when he collected a number of what he called "impressive" bunch of treaties that gave him political power over the Niger area. The stage was set for colonization.

Change in Worship and View of God

Karl Marx's thesis that "Religion is the Opium of the Masses" is indisputably correct as demonstrated by Arabs and Europeans in Nigeria. Northern Nigeria was earlier penetrated by Arab Merchants, Scholars and Jihadists who Islamized the area. Europeans took their turn in the 19th century. The passage of these sets of religion over Nigeria was so ravaging and "remarkable" that all was not the same again. The impulse of this "new" teaching was a tapestry of delusion and outright confusion that those who survived it simply existed because Europeans and Arabs were alive. The indigenous religion was relegated and, in some cases, completely outlawed, its adherents made to believe terrible stories, viewed as second class citizens and people without a social status. It is a known fact that he who controls one's religious life controls the person's social, economic and political life. The new religions secured wide spread popularity because of the scholarship that went with it. The scholarship produced the group of people Ayandele described above. This was passed on from generation to generation. It is,

therefore, impossible to change or reversed to the old religion after about a century and half years of practice.

Colonialism and the Psychology of Africans

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour, mental processes and experiences of living organisms (Eriega 2001). The psychology of man is majorly influenced by society and environment. Isangedighi (2010) argued that the home serves the important function of providing the needs of the child. Irrespective of the culture, some children find themselves in enviably endowed homes that are well equipped to meet their needs; some find themselves in improvised home environments where their needs are hardly adequately satisfied... so each grows toward adulthood with his own peculiar nature and unique environmental influences. Isangedighi continued that "children have needs which emerge from situational variables; they also have those that are universal. The universal needs are those that are common to all children irrespective of rearing practices in their own culture." This clearly illustrated how people can be psychologically influence by society and environment.

Against this backdrop therefore, the over a century and the half of European domination, exploration, intimidation, rape and plundering of Africa greatly eroded and diluted them. She did not escape the impact of this empiricist, exploitive and elitist model of colonial experience. The societies grew on this template, and far-reaching economic, social, political and cultural impacts followed. Frantz Fanon saw how the psychology of the colonized was messed up by the growth of society on this template. In *Black Skins White Masks*, he observes how the black man's inner world of thought, images, values and perception is taken over by this western mode of thought and "civilization." The black man, as it were, is dehumanized and cannot really discover for himself his own future unless he decolonizes his mind. This psychological colonization inhibits the African from advancing technologically, giving up science as something beyond his reach, and being content to go only as far as administering the instruments of oppression that white colonialism has put up to keep him in positions of servitude.

In analyzing the history of Africa from pre-colonial to post-colonial times, Walter Rodney sees the incorporation of Africa into European development through imperialism as essentially a process of under-developing Africa. This process has not really come to an end. It continues given the technological

superiority of the west over Africans, and the unequal trade and exchange that globalization imposes on Africans. Combined with the psychological oppression, this objective underdevelopment creates a much more burdensome situation for Africa to develop than can easily be discerned from casual observation.

Thus both at the subjective level of conceptualizing reality and the objective level of interacting with other human societies through trade, politics and economic well being, the African person has to deal with this historical past and structural intermeshing with western civilizations. It comes in the form of language and of thought. It also comes in the form of institutions and what we regard as modern. And it comes, finally, in terms of what we regard as belonging to the public domain and the private one; what government exist to do and what families, individuals and communities should do for themselves. Oral interview conducted in Nigeria early in 2016 by this writer reveals that, majority of Nigerians believe that what the country is going through today is the manifestation of colonialism. Although some argued in favour of colonialism and wished that the Europeans should be called back, stressing that there was more law and order in the colonial times than it is now. This investigation further reveals that, holders of the view of the latter school of thought are very poorly enlightened, exposed and are mainly artisans and defeated politicians. Infact, the people under this category are like the Biblical Israelites who, because of cucumbers, wanted to remain in Egypt. Those in the former school of thought are scholars, technocrats, bureaucrats and diplomats. For these ones, colonialism has greatly punished Nigeria and Nigerians.

Corruption, Capitalism and Neo-Colonialism as By-Products of Colonialism

Corruption is an act of dishonest and illegal behaviour especially by people in authority, while Capitalism is defined by Oxford Advance Leaner's Dictionary as "an economic system in which a country's businesses and industry are controlled and run for profits by private owners rather than by the government." Neo-colonialism on the other hand is the control or domination by a powerful country over weaker ones (especially former colonies) by the use of economic pressure, political suppression and cultural dominance.

As can be seen from the above, these triplets phenomenon are by-products of colonialism. The ancient theory of "Might is right" is encouraged by Capitalism hence those in authority believe that the more they have, the

more they will be charge. The result therefore is corruption, so the origin of corruption can be traced to Capitalism and its practice in Nigeria and other Third World countries. Karl Mare and Friedrich Engels saw the inequality and social injustices that Capitalist progress brought Europe as essentially a “breeding ground” for revolution. This was transported to their colonies. Rather than revolution, it produced corruption because of the European divide and rule policy. A revolution was not possible because of the superior fire power of the “oppressor” over the “oppressed”.

The above situation was made worse with the so called independence. This was so because what happened in Nigeria called independence in 1960 was a mere addition of NEO to COLONIALISM and mere withdrawal of the physical presence of the Europeans. Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism can be compared to the Biblical King Solomon and his son Rehoboam of the ancient Kingdom of Israel. King Solomon was said to have treated his people harshly. On his death, Rehoboam, who took over from him was asked what he will do. After consultations, he came back with this reply. “My little finger is thicker than my father’s wrist. Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier. My father beat you with whips, but i will beat you with scorpion.” This situation represents what we have today in Nigeria and of Africa at large. Those who celebrated this “independence” were those Ayandele christened “diluted hybrids and collaborators,” the innocents, the power hunger and their cohorts. Otherwise, what happened was like leaving a country under a zombie whose controller was in London. Nigeria is yet to recover from this and therefore how can one think of decolonizing Nigeria?

Inferiority Complex and Black Dictatorship

The marriage contracted between the Europeans and the Africans as said before was that of inconvenience. On arrival in Africa, and to effectively control the people and their resources, the Europeans imposed their religion on them, Africans were psychologically amputated, socially made inferior, politically maligned, economically ravaged and culturally dehumanised. Although it is argued that no person is made inferior without the person’s approval or consent, the case of colonialism was different. Africans were not only intimidated with the Europeans’ superior fireworks, but introduced bribery and corrupted the peoples’ mentality through divide and rule mechanism. Having achieved these, Africans became like a dog that lost its sensory organs. And so can no longer control itself except by a “superior’

'hence the "inferior" status. These continued over a century a half years, where therefore lies the possibility change in a reasonable scale?

Ogbogbo (1990) argued that the trade on slaves retarded the process of development in Africa, anchored Africa into a relationship of dependency which has persisted uptill the present and in addition, Africans became psychologically brutalised to the point of destroying their self confidence and self esteem. Apart from slaves, the articles of trade such as clothes, rum mirror and guns, brought about considerable socio-economic dislocation. Budding African industries began to face competition and were eventually stifled into extinction at the wake of colonialism.

However, it was the legitimate trade i.e. trade in palm oil which was to drastically alter Euro-African relations and in this way further deepened the African crisis. As if in an attempt to atone for the sins of their fathers, the humanitarians and missionaries suddenly realised that the trade in slaves was man's inhumanity to man and as a consequence sought and successfully abolished the trade in slaves. The vacuum created by this abolition was replaced by the trade in palm oil. Although it is now clear that the real reason for the abolition was because European economic interests had changed, the new trade again caused its own considerable internal dislocations as is evident from the history of the Niger Delta peoples. For our purpose, it is the friction generated from this trade between European traders in their bid to circumvent the African middlemen and penetrate into the interior that led to the eventual colonisation of Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Embedded in the whole notion of colonisation is the superiority complex as a result of which "Dark Africa" was supposed to be Christianized and civilized. Indeed all these were euphemisms for Europeanization of the African with all the attendant cultural implications. As has been succinctly observed by P. P. Ekeh,

The colonial period is unmatched in our history in the growth and development of institutions, constructs and social processes. The moral and social order which formerly encased the pre-colonial indigenous institutions is burst by the social forces of colonialism.

Indeed with Christianity and colonialism came an assault on all that is African. Even institutions that survived the colonial onslaught became shadows of their former selves. Truly, the storm of African crisis gathered

during the pre-colonial and colonial periods with its thundering manifestations in the post colonial era. The challenges thrown up by colonialism were so complex and diverse that the traditional African institutions could not respond adequately to the challenges. Hence, the breakdown of state structure and the gradual but steady retrogression into the state of nature.

Ngugi J. using William Shakespeare's *Tempest* compared African colonial experience to two characters (Caliban and Prospero) in the book. As Caliban noted to Prospero;

When thou came first, thou stroked me and
made much of me; would, give me water
with berries in it and teach me how to
name the bigger light, and how the less that
burn the day and night! And then I loved
thee, and showed thee all the qualities of
the Island, the fresh springs brim pits,
barren place and fertile, cursed be that i did
so!.. for I am all the subject that you have, I
first was mine own king and here you sty
me in this hard rock, whiles you do keep
from me the rest of the Island.

Thus like Prospero, the European colonizer knowing the supreme importance of culture and fearing the threat posed by men with confidence in their own past and heritage made the conquest both a political and mental one. Hence, the energy dissipated on the argument that Africa had no valid past, after having taken away their material base and systematically dismantled the socio political and economic structures on which Africa had built its way of life. It is based on this that it can be regarded as a cultural crisis.

Africans themselves are not even helping matters as they compound the already bad situation with bad governance, greed, nepotism and of course dictatorship. The list of despotic rulers in Africa is endless. Sani Abacha, Idi-Amin Dada, Mobutu Sese Seku, Robert Mugabe, etc. This is one of the reasons one of those interviewed advanced for his call the return of the Europeans.

World Bank, Donor Agencies and IMF Monetary Policies

Africans, because of the foregoing have become so poor that they no longer could help themselves as calculated by the so call first world. Africans were now forced to go cap in hand begging for survival. Nowhere in the globe can one talk about decolonization in the face of hunger, deathly diseases, poverty, inflation, etc. Africans found themselves in this situation at the instance of the first world who, during colonialism, were not allowed to develop technologically in what Walter Rodney called “technological arrest.” The assumption of the first world is that if Africans developed technologically, they will have no market for “their produce” hence their action. It is no longer news that Africans were considered not good enough to be educated beyond reading, writing and some arithmetic during colonialism. Under this circumstance, how could Africans ‘invent’ or ‘discover’ as they themselves were discovered? This policy was pursued beyond colonialism and is still being pursued under many guise. Where, therefore, is the road to decolonization?

In her contribution, Dambisa Moyo in *DEAD AID* believes that the poverty of African countries is precisely because of aids Africans receive. She argued that despite the widespread western belief that “the rich should help the poor, and the form of this help should be aid,” the reality is that aid has helped make the poor poorer, and growth slower. In her words: “Aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic and humanitarian disaster for most parts of the developing world.”(2009) Moyo is even angry with the way these aids encourage corruption. Using president Mobutu of Zaire, as an example, she said Mobutu is estimated to have stolen a sum equivalent to the entire external debt of his country. Aid has not lived up to expectation. It remains at the heart of the development agenda, despite the fact that there are very compelling reasons to show that it perpetuates the cycle of poverty and derails sustainable economic growth. According to Moyo, President Paul Kagame of Ruanda rightly also laments that “while more than US\$300 billion in aid has apparently been disbursed to our continent since 1970, there is little to show for it in terms of economic growth and human development” (2009).

To address the external debt crisis of poor countries, the IMF and World Bank introduced the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in 1996. Initiative by creditors, this was intended to extract the maximum in debt repayment from poor countries. With its well intended mission, the programme even failed to meet its stated objective of reducing Africa’s debt burden to a “sustainable”

level, and the strict HIPC eligibility requirements prevented many countries from receiving much-needed assistance.

The Group of 8 (G-8) proposed a debt cancellation deal for 18 countries in 2005, 14 of which are in Africa. The World Bank and IMF as expected approved this deal through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). This debt cancellation obviously required certain eligibilities, including adherence to economic policies and programs that the World Bank and IMF 'the oppressors' consider satisfactory. Although the MDRI provides some relief on the issue of debt, it still leaves many African countries trapped under the burden of illicit debt. Furthermore, it established the guide that future debt cancellation will only be offered to countries that have submitted their economies to the draconian dictates of the World Bank and IMF's structural adjustment policies (Dalgard 2004). Nigeria had her own share of the above scenario between 1985 and 1988 under the military dictator president Ibrahim Babangida.

One of the ways agents of underdevelopment can be identified is that they addressed or consider aid as a term only offered in the form of imported goods or services from the donor nation. This is the part of IMF conditionality that is an alarming example of how conditionality can easily thrive in the gloomy waters of politic; where the donor nation end up profiting more than the supposed poor and needy recipient. This and more negative examples further affect the already impoverished nation and back flog the intentions of these nations. These draconian conditionalities are and have so proven that they have the ability to restrain certain actions and prescribe requirements, such as tied aid and forced privatization on borrower nations, thereby impairing development. One of the greatest and unfortunate outcomes of these donor agencies conditionalities is that a heavily improvised country that is also in economic crisis or recession may not need to approach IMF or World Bank at all because they do not, or cannot, accept the condition for the loan. If and when such a country accepts the conditions, the crisis may deepen or the recovery will be complicated. Finally, these conditions are laid down for countries with disregards to differences in population and size, economic growth or system, gross domestic product [GDP] and the funding is made in complete disregard to the traditions and cultures within where they operate. These agencies have placed African countries between the proverbial deep blue sea and the devil, hence the underdevelopment, re-colonization or neo-colonialism and the inability to decolonize.

African Nationalism: Myth or Reality?

Nationalism is the idea of supporting one's country and culture especially when there is no sovereignty. It is often described as a feeling that binds a people together. It also depicts a sense of patriotism, a deep sense of attachment to one's native land, local tradition and in that process makes the people see themselves as one and distinct from others.

It is in the light of the above that some scholars have picked a quarrel with the term. It was nationalism that laid the foundation of the so-called decolonization of Africa. Using Emmanuel Ayandele's description of African nationalists as stated above, one will believe they were merely European stooges who were acting the European 'scribes' since direct colonization was becoming rather unpopular. This argument appears to hold water on the grounds that in most African states, elections are still overtly or covertly monitored and controlled by the European. In Nigeria for example, up to the fall of the second republic, rulers of the people were British trained teachers, police, court messengers, clerks or Nigerians who were mentally British. A spin through the stories of these rulers will justify this claim.

Another argument is the accusation of self aggrandizement as the pivot of the African Nationalist struggle. The researcher in November 1990 had a chat with Ineji Aja, a World War II veteran who claimed to have associated with Obafemi Awolowo very intimately. He believed very strongly that African rulers after the Europeans were only interested in "making themselves look like the whites, (sic) but they have no interest in changing what the whites did not do" (OHT, 2000). This claim may be responsible for the inability of Africans to liberate, free or decolonize themselves.

On the strength of what we have defined and described as nationalism above, one can easily agree that nationalism as held by African nationalists falls short of its real meaning, practiced wrongly by Africans or was staged managed by the 'lords' of the philosophy hence neo-colonialism (the worst form of colonialism) and inability to fully decolonize.

Conclusion

The above analyses of problems arising from African relations with the Europeans have shown clearly that Africans lost her independence several years ago and may not regain herself again. This is in view of the fact that, their psyche was completely eroded and in some places destroyed. Their culture, tradition, political system, family lineages, economic order, mode of

dressings, etc, has all been altered with the hope of regaining the original form. Their religion neatly replaced and those left with the original form were either made caricatures or termed primitive, uncivilised, unbelievers, worshippers of African "Traditional" Religion, barbarians, etc. As said before, whoever controls one's religious belief controls the entire life of the person. African mentality has therefore been completely seized and controlled from either Rome or Saudi Arabia. It is only reasonable to state the obvious that under such situation any such group of persons will not change but to hold firm to the current, "superior," and endemic religion of the Europeans or the Arabs.

Aside from the religious point of view, the political and economic system was not spared either as the ravaging influence of the European political and economic system built to perpetually impoverish the African continent through the instrumentality of the World Bank, IMF and other donor agencies. All these and many more has placed African society in a way she may find it very difficult to come out of this virtuous circle of poverty, hence, their perpetual attachment to the "First World."

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