THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF COLONIALISM ON AFRICANS AND EUROPEANS' RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Very few, if anyone, can argue that Africa's relation with Europe is an asymmetrical one which costs the continent positive and sustainable developments in the political, economic and social spheres. Before the coming of Europeans into the continent, there was a traditional system of administration, economy and social relationships ranging from powerful empires to decentralize groups of ancient kingdoms e.g. Ghana, Dahomey, Songhai, Mali, Kanem-Borno. As far as Africa is concerned during the period of early development, it is preferable to speak in terms of traditions rather than civilizations. It should be noted that the defining contact between Africa and Europe originated with the slave trade, which saw the capture and forceful transportation of millions of Africans across the Atlantic Ocean. The colonization of Africa also led to the colonisers' (stronger partner) exploitation of African colonies (weaker partner)[1], especially the resources, to strengthen and enrich the economies of Western nations.

KEYWORDS: Negative impacts, Relations, African, European.

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism is a system of political control and economic exploitation of underdeveloped countries, land acquisition policy and the use of territory for economic and political growth of the country controlling the colony. It can also be seen as a form of temporally extended domination by people over other people and as such part of the historical universe of forms of intergroup domination, subjugation, oppression, and exploitation. From a world-systems perspective, much of the history

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[1] Asongazoh, Joy, *the Journal of Pan African Studies,* vol. 3 no 10, September, 2010. 64.

of the capitalist world-economy is a history of colonialism, consisting of repeated and more or less successful attempts by the core to create a periphery, to control it politically in order to exploit it economically[2]. Most African countries are erstwhile colonies of either Britain or France. The British are best known for promoting decentralization through the so-called "indirect rule strategy", which employed indigenous African institutions in the administration of British colonial policy, while the French are associated with the "direct rule strategy", which favoured centralization, particularly the concentration of all colonial decision making in Paris. Far less has been written about the implications of these different strategies for post-colonial development, particularly human development, efforts in African countries.[3]

The colonial era ended in most parts of Africa more than half a century ago. Yet, the legacy of colonialism continues to reverberate in all development domains throughout the continent. The debate about the effects of colonialism on colonized societies is almost as old as colonialism itself. Confronted with increasing critique about the conditions of colonized peoples, colonial powers in the 19th century started legitimizing their rule over foreign lands and peoples by claiming to be on a civilizing mission[4]. From this perspective, colonial rule existed not only for the benefit of the colonial powers, but was supposed to be in the interest of all the empire's subjects. The 'white man's burden'[5] was to bring civilization, technology and progress to parts of the world that would otherwise go without.

While colonial rule was generally legitimized by the idea that it was benevolent, different varieties of colonialism were argued to have different impacts on colonized societies, some more favourable than others[6]. British politicians saw the British Empire as spreading the values of individual freedom and commerce around the world. However, this paper argues that the impacts of European relations with Africans is more or less negative and insists on the need to rethink the relationship,

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[2] Stephen Sanderson, K. "World-Systems Analysis after Thirty Years" *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46: 179-213. (2005)

[3] Ambe J. Njoh. "The Impact of Colonial Heritage on Development in Sub-Saharan Africa". *Social Indicators Research* **52:** 161–178, 2000.

[4] Fischer-Tin´e, H. and M. Mann. *Colonialism as civilizing mission: Cultural ideology in British India*, Cambridge: Anthem Press. (2004)

[5] R. Kipling 'The white man's burden', *McClure's Magazine*, 12(4): 290. (1899)

[6] D.K. Fieldhouse,. *The Colonial Empires: A comparative survey from the eighteenth century,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. (1966)

especially in putting an end to working with dictators because of economic interests. While it cannot be said that all the relationships are negative on African's development, this paper offers the view that the relationship was negative in such a way and manner that the previous Africa's development was "blunted", "halted" and "turned back" by the European colonisers[7].

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this paper is based on empirical examples drawn from across Africa and presented in a case to case basis, beginning with colonial legacy.

COLONIAL LEGACY AND IMPACT

Colonial legacy is the sum total of the political, economic and social structure which affected post-independent Africa and still has an impact on contemporary African states and politics.[8] Walter Rodney questioned what did the colonial governments do in the interest of Africans? Supposedly they built railroads, schools, hospitals etc. the benefits were small for colonialism and they were not gift from the colonialists, but rather fruits of Africans labour and resources for the most part build was indeed called the development of Africa by the Europeans.[9]

SOCIAL IMPACT

One of the most important manifestations of historical arrest and stagnation in colonial Africa is that which commonly goes under the title of tribalism.[10] It is understood that Africans have a basic loyalty to tribe rather than nation and that each tribe still retains a fundamental hostility towards its neighbouring tribes. Africans were organized in groups which had common ancestors. Generally, such groups could therefore be said to be of the same ethnic stock, and their languages would have a great deal in common.[11] African authors as well as non- African scholars concerned with politics blame the ethnic divisions and rivalry amongst the nations and in Africa

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[7] Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Washington DC Howard University, press, 1973), 321

[8] Asongazoh, *the Journal of Pan African Studies, op. cit.*

[9] Walter Rodney. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, op. cit.*

[10] Asongazoh, *the Journal of Pan African Studies, op. cit.*

[11] *Ibid*

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on the arbitrary boundaries and cultural differences created and imposed upon these peoples by the colonial masters.[12]

When scrutinizing problems and causes of ethnic conflicts is Africa, for example, the conventional explanation relating to external factors contributing to the ethnic conflicts is that the polarization of ethnic communities and the outbreak of ethnic violence are legacies of colonialism which ignored cultural differences during the creation of artificial state borders.[13] The colonial masters emphasized the distinctions between different ethnic groups, thereby strengthening tribal differences and rivalries between these groups and preventing them from forming a united opposition against the colonizers. According to Shillington, by expostulating that, these groups had always lived in the past as a people despite some customary differences that might have existed between them like their dressing, housing and religious practices. Furthermore, even when these groups experienced competition and conflicts, it was for political power or economic advantage and not because they were of different tribes. One of the worst examples of colonialism founded ethnic rivalry and consequential conflicts is the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, which was characterized by the attempted extermination of the Tutsi and moderate Hutu races in the country. Thus, colonial authorities invented and strengthened tribalism within African communities and nations.[14] Frantz Fanon writes that "colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of a devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today".[15]

POLITICAL IMPACT

Besides ethnic division and rivalry, another colonial legacy is that which impacted African politics though the administrative style of the colonizers. The colonizers ruled without the consent of the people. They deposed and executed traditional rulers, when the latter failed to implement the instructions of colonial administrators

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[12] Mahoso, Tafataona, Completion of African's Liberation; *The Herald*, (2010).

[13] Clapham Christopher, *Third world politics,* (University of Wisconsin press, 1985), 57 – 58.

[14] Shillington Kevin, *History of Africa*, Revised Edition, (New York; St Martin's Press 1989), 356.

[15] Frantz. Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. [originally published in French under the title *Les damnés de la terre*1961 by François Maspero, Paris.] (1963)

or failed to serve the need of the colonial government.[16] With the direct support of their home countries, the colonial administrations practiced policies like that of assimilation, as was the case in French Africa, or indirect rule for British colonies on the continent.

The ruling structure which was based on the control by a few, through oppression and the use of force, laid a basis for patron-client ruler ship after colonialism.[17] Neo-patrimonial leadership as practiced in many African countries is an extension of the kind of autocratic and alien tyrant rule that the colonial masters had initiated.[18] In the words of William Easterly, "Colonial administration re-enforced autocracy in Africa and neo-colonialism continued to sustain and consolidate tyrant autocratic rule, the result of which are bad governance and extremely selfish and cruel governors in the likes of Mobutu in Zaire, Idi Amin in Uganda" (2006: 273). The instrument of political control and economic allocation in African states had been violently constructed by an outsider, that is, the colonizers.[19]

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The main arguments regarding the economic impact of colonialism are the 'drain of wealth,' expropriation (mainly of land), the control over production and trade, the exploitation of natural resources, and the improvement of infrastructure. Colonialism led to a substantial outflow of *financial resources*.[20]

In the words of Walter Rodney: "We have been oppressed a great deal, we have been exploited a great deal, and we have been disregarded a great deal".[21] The combination of being opposed, being exploited, and being disregarded is best illustrated by the pattern of the economic infrastructure of African colonies. This was the first step in "how Europe underdeveloped Africa".[22]

Plantations were core elements of the colonial economy. In general, a plantation is "owned by a legal entity or individual with substantial capital resources, the

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[16] Hochschild Adam, *King Leopold's Ghost; a story of greed terror, and heroism in colonial Africa (New York;* Macmillan, 1998.)

[17] Lonsdale John, political Accountability in African History, in Patrick Chabal ed. *Political Domination in Africa,* (Cambridge University press 1986). 126 – 157,

[18] *Ibid*

[19] *Ibid*

[20] Patrick Ziltener. Impacts of Colonialism –A Research Survey. American Sociological Association, Volume 19, Number 2, Pages 290-311, ISSN 1076-156X (2013)

[21] Rodney. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, op. cit.*326

[22] *Ibid*

production techniques are based on industrial processing machinery, and the labour force consists of wage labourers resident on the estate"[23] also because of the related work immigration. Working and living conditions on plantations were generally bad. Many plantation owners used a long-term debt strategy to bind workers to their enterprise. Tropical diseases were widespread and accidents common.[24]

Moreover, because Europe was a capitalist society using manufacturing and large-scale machine production, its capacity to produce was greater. The manufacture of cloth is a good example. During the 18th century new inventions like the power—loom and the use of water power revolutionized cloth production in Europe.[25] This enabled Europe to produce enough cloth to supply its own needs and to export large quantities to Africa and elsewhere. European manufacturers even copied and produced colourful African cloth patterns and flooded Africa with this cloth. African cloth producers were unable to compete with this cheaper, machine -produced cloth since they were still producing by hand.[26] As a result, African manufacturing was neglected and the process of technological advancement was slowed in cloth production and in many other sectors of the economy (like iron manufacture) and continued trade with Europe only pushed Africa further behind Europe.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can be understood that the ills of Western influence on Africa in terms of economic, political and subsequently, social development on Africa surpass the positive impacts claimed by the pro-Western writers.

The fact that colonialism had positive effects on development in some contexts does not mean that it did not have devastating negative effects on indigenous populations and society. It did. The impacts of imperialism and colonialism on colonized people were very destructive. Economically, the people were forced, often at gunpoint, to work in imperialist—owned mines, plantations and factories for starvation wages. Politically, imperialist nations arbitrarily drew political boundaries and instituted a system of political rule using their own administrators or indigenous puppets to

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[23] Jeffrey Paige M. *Agrarian Revolution. Social Movements, and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World*. New York: Free Press/Macmillan. (1975)

[24] Patrick Ziltener. Impacts of Colonialism –A Research Survey. Op. Cit.

[25] Bernard Magubane, *The Political Economy of Race and Class in south Africa*, (New York Monthly Review Press) 1979

[26] *Ibid*

guarantee that power remained in the hands of the "mother country". While socially, the cultural and social life of the indigenous people was suppressed. Missionaries and educators played key roles in consolidating imperialist colonial domination as Nkrumah wrote:

> The stage opens with the appearance of missionaries and anthropologists, traders and concessionaries and administrators. While "missionaries" with "Christianity" perverted implore the colonial subject to lay up his "treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt", the traders and concessionaries and administrators acquire his mineral and land resources, destroy his arts, crafts, and home industries.

Rodney argued that, "the relationship was an unequal". That African was forced into colonial economic relations with developed nations. In the same regard, Anne Balley questioned the notion that, "Africans and Europeans were equal partners in the Atlantic trade". She further disputed that, "to see Africans as partners implies equal influence on the global and interconnected process of trade.… Africans has great influence on the continent itself".

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