

THE RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

After the fight for the liberation of most African states from the alien dictatorship of colonialism, the African states were disenchanted when they discovered that the economic, political, and cultural exploitation of the continent continued. African nations are faced with enormous problems and challenges due colonial legacy. This development spans decades. There are scholarly works that address some of these problems. However, the religious response to the impact of colonialism is missing. So, the recognition of these problems has inspired the writing of this paper, which argues that transformative religious values could influence individual behaviours, which has a direct impact on the social, political, and economic institutions. This will give a new lease on how to face these problems. Historical approach, archival materials, and secondary materials from existing literature were used, in addition to demonstrative examples drawn from around the continent. It was noted that religious values remain a crucial component that could contribute to social, political, and economic well-being and transformation in Africa. Also, Africans should initiate and implement programmes for the development of the continent.

KEYWORDS: Africa, Colonialism, Impact/effect, and Religious values.

INTRODUCTION

As a continent, Africa has passed through some historical stages, which are: the period of the slave trade, the age of colonialism, the age of independence, and the neo-colonialism stage, which is the present age. Throughout these stages, it can be argued that Africa has a connection and relationship with Western nations. This relationship with the West had direct and indirect social, political, and economic impact and consequences. Ocheni and Nwankwo assert that the emergence of the industrial revolution, which brought about rapid change in the socio-economic transformation and technology of the European countries, has led the European powers to take direct control of the African economy and political administration (47).

This was to use Africa's raw materials to satisfy the needs of the fast-growing industrialization and population of the Western Nations (Ocheni and Nwankwo 47). The

control of African human and material resources was exploitative. This has far-reaching effects that weigh down the development of the continent negatively. These effects are what several scholars termed *The Colonial Legacy*. In post-colonial Africa, there are international factors affecting the political and economic development of the continent. Alemaxung observes that “the political and economic relationship between post-colonial Africa and the West has the same underpinnings and meets the same objective as the relationship of the colonial period” (63). The Europeans implemented various political, economic, and social policies that enabled them to maintain or extend their authority and control over different territories (Alemaxung 63).

Therefore, this has left Africans in a state of political and economic crisis for their development. As a continent with a traumatic colonial inheritance coupled with international pressure on administrative and economic policies, thus, African leaders are now faced with enormous challenges. Therefore, it is in this regard that the writer is motivated to write the need to rethink ways of facing these problems. This paper will focus on various impacts of colonialism and the influence of religious values on these impacts.

THE IMPACT AND EFFECTS OF COLONIALISM IN AFRICA

There are different sets of presumptions about the intentions of colonial masters. Different varieties of colonialism were argued to have different impacts on colonized societies, some more favourable than others (Bobo and Mohammed 216). Ogunbado observed that the arrival of colonialism, coupled with Christianity, brought Western education, which is considered a vehicle of prosperous civilization (54). It can also be seen that colonialism imposed a ban on the slave trade and led to the availability of transport networks (Ogunbado 54). Colonialism has had some positive impact on the African soil. However, Bobo and Mohammed argue that the impact of European relations with Africans is negative, and there is a need to rethink the relationship, especially in putting an end to working with dictators because of economic interest (216). Similarly, Heldring and Robinson observed that some scholars are of the opinion that without colonial intervention, Africa would have stayed backward (1). Opposed to this eccentric consensus is a vast literature blaming colonization for all the ills of former colonies, including persistent poverty and dictatorship (Heldring and Robinson 1, 7). It is also discovered that the negative impacts of colonialism outweigh the positive impacts (Ogunbado 51).

Colonial legacy has distorted and retarded the pace of social, economic, and political development in Africa. These legacies are the structure and the polity that the colonizer has left behind, which affected post-independence Africa, and the impact is still felt within the contemporary African states.

Social Effect

The work of Cheriet Asma explained some of the social impact of colonialism in Africa. Asma asserted that “after a very long time of experiencing suffering and a brutal contact with the colonizer, the colonized find themselves unconsciously incorporating aspects of colonial ways in the original identity” (2). Through education, they control the thoughts and ideas held by the younger generation through implanting colonial ideologies in their minds (Asma 2). Asma's work goes in line with the works of Ekon and Rodney, which explains how the French, the Belgians, and the Portuguese championed the policy of assimilation. This states that an African who had received their kind of education and understood their culture and lifestyle stood the chance of getting assimilated into their culture (Ekon 22; Rodney 72).

Asma concluded that the original culture and identity for the coming generation are lost in the new world order (2). Therefore, changing the national identity of the colonized Africans displaced their traditional beliefs and cultural standards. Although a reasonable knowledge could be derived from Asma's work, his work on the impact of colonialism is limited to social issues.

Another major problem and challenge African states have to deal with is the issue of ethnic division and conflict. Though there were clashes and conflict between African tribes before the arrival of colonial masters, Shillington admitted that the competition and conflict experienced by tribal groups before the incursion of the colonialists were for political power or economic advantages and not because they were different tribes (356). However, Shillington asserted that the colonial authorities emphasized the distinction between different ethnic groups, thereby strengthening tribal differences and rivalries between these groups and preventing them from forming a united opposition against the colonizer (356). Similarly, African authors as well as non-African scholars concerned with African politics identify the ethnic division and rivalry amongst the nations in Africa on the arbitrary boundaries and cultural differences created and imposed upon these people by the colonial masters (Mahoso 10). Also, Clappham observed, when scrutinizing problems and causes of ethnic conflicts in Africa, 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 (57-8). Thus, colonialism has virtually created differences by dividing several communities rather than uniting them. Kicza, in his work, agrees that colonial authorities often sought to agitate ethnic or religious groups against one another to consolidate and protect their power (815). One of the worst examples of ethnic rivalry and conflicts is the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. According to a BBC report titled “Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened”:

It is claimed that the Belgians created differences between Tutsis and Hutus, which did not exist before their arrival. These differences went as far as creating identity cards for Tutsi minorities, illustrating their superiority over Hutus and giving them leadership positions in the country. The result was hatred and the nurturing of feelings of revenge by the Hutu's which culminated in the 1994 genocide, which saw the slaughtering of over 800,000 Rwandans within a period of four months (BBC News, Rwanda: *How the Genocide Happens*).

For this reason, ethnic groups who feel marginalized often develop hatred against the other. This, of course, will result in conflict.

The works of Mahoso, Shillington, Clapham, and Kicza explain how colonialism was an external contributing factor that fuelled division and conflict within African communities. Their contributions have revealed how post-colonial African nations are left with tragic social issues to deal with.

The Economic Effects

For the relative stability of African states' economy in the 60s after independence, most African states began experiencing economic collapse in the later years. Olukoshin and Laakso observed:

that the economic collapse was triggered by a host of factors, among them are the growing problems of dependency facing most postcolonial African economies, sharp price fluctuations mostly of a downward nature in the materials markets, and the downward fluctuation that led to diminishing terms of trade for most African primary commodity exporters. Also, the introduction of substitutes for certain minerals exported by Africa resulted in market loss for some countries, etc (16).

Similarly, Kicza argues that colonial policies prevented or discouraged colonies from industrializing or expanding the kinds of products they produced. Instead, most colonies remained dependent on the production of a limited number of raw materials (815). Trade regulation and tariffs generally limited exports only to the home country, and then to unfavourable terms of trade (Kicza 815). Thus, with the end of colonialism, many former colonies remained economically dependent on their mother countries.

Also, Ocheni and Nwankwo observe that the direct control of the African economy and political administration enabled the colonialists to ensure that African colonies did not take to manufacturing. It helped to restrict Africans and their technology to the confines of producing only agricultural raw materials needed by industries in Europe (48). This is the main reason African states find it very difficult to industrialize and go into full manufacturing (Ocheni and Nwankwo 48). For this reason, Africa has become a consumer of foreign manufactured goods. This has brought the African state to a circumstance of the present under-development of their states and

their technologies. In this regard, Farah et al. admitted that the progressive integration of Africa into the world capitalist system, within which Africa functioned primarily as a source of raw materials for Western industrial production (8). Also, Ocheni and Nwanko admitted that the colonial education was not rooted in African culture and therefore could not foster any meaningful development within the African environment because it had no organic linkage (51). Furthermore, colonial education was essentially literacy; it had no technological base and was therefore antithetical to real or industrial development (Ocheni and Nwanko 51). Colonial education essentially aimed at training clerks, interpreters, produce inspectors, artisans, etc., which would help them in the exploitation of Africa's rich resources (Ocheni and Nwanko 51). Ocheni and Nwanko concluded that colonial education did not aim at industrialization of African territories or at stimulating technological development within the African environment (51). Thus, there is an urgent need for Africans to galvanize towards Africa's self-development and economic emancipation.

Significantly, African colonies were used by the colonialists to be their economic satellites. The imperial logic is that the African nation-states were not designed to be economically independent and self-sufficient. This was explained by Rathbone as the colonialists initiated the commercial, technological, and industrial thrust into Africa. This was designed to provide for national monopolies in the market for African produce and to reduce competition in what Africans would be bound to buy in return (4). Therefore, the expanding percentage of food imports in almost all African budgets and the inherited dilemma of debts need servicing in international exchange are all impacts of colonialism (Rathbone 11). Thus, the continuous decline and fall in value of African states' natural produce make it very difficult to diversify their economy.

Colonial legacies created domestic economic problems in the present day of most African nations. Olukoshin and Laakos pointed out clearly that:

As the economic crisis worsened in various countries, so too did the capacity of the state to provide welfare services to the populace and patronage to the political and economic elite diminish. Battered by the economic crisis, the legitimacy of the state, and of the model of nation-building which it pursues, was called into question as various groups began to devise strategies and mechanisms for coping with the deteriorating domestic economic environment and the social cost which both the crisis and government austerity measures were exacting (16).

Therefore, the impact of colonialism is seen in economic crises within most African states. The works of Olukoshin and Laakos, Kicza, Rathbone, Ocheni, and Nwanko state a good number of reasons for Africans and non-Africans to see the long-term impacts of colonialism on the African economy. Africans have many economic issues to deal with for their own development.

Political Effects

There are different sets of presumptions about the activities of colonial masters on political matters. Arowolo noted that the forces of European Colonialism changed the political administration in most African states. The introduction of liberal democracy did not necessarily work in Africa, not because Africa did not have its own pattern of democracy before the imposition of liberal democracy. Still, the typical democracy in Africa and its processes were also submerged by Westernization (7). Similarly, Mimiko observed that the African traditional system of leadership, which was accorded as an explanation for the shortage of democracy in Africa, warrants the westernization and liberal democracy of the colonialists. But the above proposition is unhistorical and therefore invalid in the context of African (641-2). Mimiko added that, before the contact between Europe and Africa, the latter had not only developed relatively advanced state structures, but that emergent pre-colonial African states also had “a sophisticated system of political rules” with strong democratic foundations (641-2). Mimiko continued that the basis of the advertised inability of these societies to sustain democracy in contemporary (post-colonial) times could not have consisted in the absence of a democratic culture on their part (641-2). Rather, it is the residue of constraints that were attendant upon imperialism, which has been the dominant experience of the African people since the fourteenth century (Mimiko 641-2). Therefore, the installation of foreign rule had successfully dismantled the African traditional political system and indigenous institutions.

Following the dismantling of the pre-colonial ruling structure and political culture, the colonialist initiated their structures. Lonsdale opines that “the colonialist did not see the need for discipline and responsibility in the constitution of political power but simply applied the principle of rewarding and absorbing the recruitment of supporters and civil servants” (145). Therefore, Easterly observed that native chiefs were selected not in traditional legitimacy but were selected according to loyalty to the European administrators in what is described as indirect rule in British Africa. Also, Nugent agreed that colonial rule wiped out the dependency of the chief on his councillors, as was the case in pre-colonial rule. They replaced this with autocracy, which depended upon colonial superiors and later foreign powers (107-108). Furthermore, Meredith stated that colonial administration reinforced autocracy in Africa, and neo-colonialism continued to sustain and consolidate tyrannical autocratic rule, the result of which is bad governance and extremely selfish and cruel leaders, the likes of Mobutu in Zaire, Idi Amin in Uganda, and Bokassa in the CAR (2005). These are all colonial legacies that have and continue to affect the African nations’ political systems.

Another impact of colonialism is that the colonialists institutionalized and aided classes and class struggle in the political life of Africans. These classes include the

comprador bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the peasant (Ocheni and Nwanko, 52). Ocheni and Nwanko pointed out that:

There is a great harmony of interest between the African petty bourgeoisie and the European comprador bourgeois. This was why, during the period of political independence, it was the African petty bourgeoisie that got the mantle of leadership. The African petty bourgeois maintained the same relationship with the erstwhile colonial masters, and this is why they run the economy and political administration of their states in the same manner as the colonialists did (52).

Therefore, most of the African leaders in the post-colonial era are petty bourgeois who maintain a strong link with their counterparts' colonial masters. Thus, Ocheni and Nwanko explained further that the continuous exploitation of the peasant masses is evident. The nature of political power struggle and distribution of wealth, as well as economic resources in the contemporary African state, is a reflection of the understanding and harmony of interest between the African petty bourgeois and their colonial masters (53). In this regard, Mwaura maintains that nothing in Africa changed after the colonizers left. The only change that occurred was the replacement of colonial governors with colonial ambassadors (6). The Administrative structures were maintained as well as the economic structures to preserve the flow of wealth from the continent to the West, which began in the colonial period. National leaders who took over after the colonizers left were traitors, with a pretended and false patriotism (Mwaura 6). Therefore, African nations today have recourse to the character of classes introduced in Africa by colonialism. The petty bourgeois, who are the ruling elite/class, benefited from the network of exploitation with their European patrons.

The works of these authors in regard to the political impact of colonialism have helped in understanding the complex nature of political power, political instability, marginalization, etc, in most African states, which are actually the offshoot of colonialism. The ruling structure and political culture of most African states were dismantled. The African nation-states are now an extension of the kind of tyrannical rule. These are the colonial legacies that continue to affect Africa. The continuation of these legacies is the failure of African leaders to break away from these legacies. There are many social, political, and economic issues related to the impact of colonialism in Africa. While the impact of colonialism has been approached from the above perspectives, no attempt seems to have been made yet on the religious response to the impact of colonialism.

NEO-COLONIALISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCE

After independence and liberation from the alien dictatorship of colonialism, many nationalists observed and realized that the economic, political, and cultural exploitation of the continent still existed in a different concept and ideology known as

neo-colonialism (Mwuara 5). Nkrumah pointed out clearly that even though these states were independent, their economic system and political policy were indirectly formulated by the colonizers (415, 418). Neo-colonialism resulted in the exploitation of the African state. Such that the foreign capital entering the state to foster development instead “promoted” underdevelopment (Nkrumah 415). Neo-colonialism survived because the West had established a dependent economic and political structure, which was inherited and never changed by the new leaders (Alemazung 76). Consequently, on foreign support by Western nations to African nations, rulers’ “debate” on their political future and stay in power with the international community/actors instead of “negotiating” with their own citizens (Alemazung 76). This contributes to shutting the African people out of every people’s rightful position, not only to form their own government, but also to ensure that this government serves their common good (Alemazung 76). Hence, this has rendered the citizen irrelevant in public policy and decision-making for the national interest. Thus, this ideology and alliance with Western nations is to the detriment and underdevelopment of the people of African nations. The treacherous attitude of most African leaders makes most African states permanently dependent on developed nations.

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS VALUES

Colonial legacies had left enormous problems for most African societies. The parliamentary, military, and presidential system of government in most African states has its achievements and flaws, and thus, cannot correct some of the imbalances of colonialism. Some of these plans centred on restructuring for the good of all citizens of their states. Yet, most of these efforts had been sabotaged by certain cunning individuals. Based upon concrete historical factors, no amount of new, social, political, and economic structures imposed upon the present Nigerian can solve our salient problems unless we are willing to re-orient our beliefs, values and structures of meanings, authority, codes, and legitimacy of ethnic, cultural or religious identity to promote peace, justice, and national unity (Turaki 325). This is also applicable in all African states.

This work argues that one of the solutions to the post-colonial problems in Africa depends very much upon religious values and not so much upon the application of methods, models, theories, and tools that deal with the development of Africa. Nelson pointed out that a given society must be committed to a universalistic ethic of disciplined conduct, a regulation of character, and readiness to move forward widened expression of divine-human imperative (80). He said this connection towards the transformation of any given society. Nelson further revealed the influences of religious values:

1. Religious prescriptions of conduct, especially the more realistic ones, could have a direct impact on economic activities.
2. Religious ideas could be a source for legitimisations of social and political institutions.
3. Through religious sanctioning, human motivations and interests might be channelled in the direction of different types of goals (32-33).

On this account, religious values can influence an individual to be more honest in business and other economic activities. Religious values can inculcate civic righteousness and dispel unrighteousness and corruption in political participation. Religious values can inculcate the ideology of truthfulness and justice in every socio-political activity. Religious values can inspire an individual to maintain democratic integrity and not to embrace a system that tramples on justice and betrays the trust of the people. Religious beliefs/values could be a pivot for effective policies for a society to thrive into prosperity.

Therefore, it is evident that the transformative potential of religious values in individual behaviours can have an impact on economic, social, and political institutions. This can also give directions towards achieving different types of goals. Thus, it is important that we take into account the religious values and orientations in dealing with most problems in the post-colonial African society.

The religious traditions cherish moral values such as virtue, justice, the sanctity of human life, equality, and human dignity (Agjiji and Swart 6). There is also a belief in the supreme being to whom all beings are accountable. The symbols of justice were respected, and belief in restoring justice was very strong. This promoted the well-being of African Societies (Agjiji and Swart 6).

Therefore, injustice, inequality, and dominance of one group over others are not based upon religious values. Cultural and religious intolerance, racial or tribal inequality, and differential treatment of ethnic groups were developed and institutionalized by colonialism. Thus, when the religious values and principles of human dignity, justice, equality, and sanctity of the human person are upheld by Africans, then there will be a sense of coexistence, harmony, and respect for one another without fear of discrimination, dominance, and prejudice. This outcome will dismantle the tribal inequality, ethnic division and rivalry, politics of dominance, etc. that colonialism had created. Colonialism had introduced classes and class struggles. But the religious values of human dignity, equality, and sanctity of human life upheld by Africans will reduce and deal with classes and class struggles that have led to the oppression, marginalization, exploitation, and severe impoverishment of most African masses by the ruling class (leaders).

It should be noted that merit and equity will thrive in terms of recruitment into civil service, political appointments and representation, educational scholarship, and

distribution of resources when Africans uphold their religious values. This will make citizens feel a sense of belonging, benefit, and participate in the government of the day. Significantly, there are some dangerous attitudes that characterize leadership flaws that are common among African leaders. These are corruption, authoritarianism, and autocracy, which African leaders have failed to turn away from or avoid. However, the virtue of honesty, truth, and transparency will expose these leadership flaws that hindered the transformation and the well-being of African society.

Africans should submit themselves to their religious values. This consciousness will be evident that everyone is accountable to God and to his/her fellow humans. This will make leaders not impose their decisions on their citizens; instead, they will engage in negotiation and consultation for every native issue, whether economic or political policies even international agreements, for the common good of all. With this consciousness of accountability, African leaders will be careful in promoting their self-interest, knowing that they shall be held responsible and accountable for their failures. Thus, strengthening democracy and disbanding the authoritarian, dictatorial, and autocratic legacies instituted by colonialism.

African leaders need to show their capacity and vision for their nation-states. Africans should develop ideas, exhibit potential, and channel them towards achieving different economic goals. This is because religious prescriptions of conduct that are realistic have a direct impact on the economy. Since European leaders have been honest about the interests of their country in most partnerships and agreements, African leaders should never abide by the Neoliberal agenda and policies that will be to the detriment of their home countries. This is to avoid the repetition of past leadership failures and mistakes that have plunged African states into underdevelopment. Neo-liberal ideology should be disbanded and replaced with religious-value ideologies that have a direct impact on the economy. Africans should have a positive impression of themselves. They should engage their abilities to solve their problems independently. African leaders need to rally together to ensure that capacity building, technology transfer, New Partnership for African Development, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), etc., are all in favour of African nations. Some of these inflows can finance the construction of new infrastructure and make Africa a developed continent.

CONCLUSION

Post-colonial Africa is left with tragic social issues to deal with in this era. Economically, Africa is struggling and is more dependent. It faces the challenge of the disarticulation of its market. Most African nations' political structures are an extension of the European network of exploitation. Colonialism distorted almost everything in Africa. Colonialism shaped both the economy and political structure towards the needs

and interests of Europe. Africans should not always live in the shadows of colonialism but rather echo their wishes for the future of their continent. Africans must break the domination of imperialism. Africans should also uphold the religious values, which can influence the social, economic, and political institutions towards the transformation, development, and well-being of African nations

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