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THE AFRICAN STATE: AN ILLUSORY VESTIGE OF  
COLONIALISM

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Muhammad “Moe” Otaru

June 2020

Advisor: Alan Gilbert

Author: Muhammad “Moe” Otaru  
Title: THE AFRICAN STATE: AN ILLUSORY VESTIGE OF  
COLONIALISM  
Advisor: Alan Gilbert  
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#### ABSTRACT

In a 2006 Interview, prominent Nigerian author, and social commentator, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said; “...*Nigeria was set up to fail. The only thing we Nigerians should take responsibility for is the extent of the failure...*”<sup>1</sup>. Such a view about colonialism and the states it arbitrarily created is widely shared by many on the African continent, who have come to understand that the very creation and existence of the African state are largely to blame for the seemingly countless socio-economic and political issues faced on the continent.

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<sup>1</sup> Kimber, Charlie, *Interview: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*. The Socialist Review. (Online, October 2006).

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## INTRODUCTION

The world's second-largest continent, with 30% of the world's oil and minerals, 43% of the world's poorest, and with 15% of the global population<sup>2</sup>, the second-most-populous continent, Africa is indeed a unique and peculiar case; from being a seemingly unending pool of free labor for American and Caribbean plantations for centuries, to existing as a large swath of land with abundance of resources divided among colonizers, to becoming a potential ally in the decades-long battle between Eastern communism and Western capitalism, and today, one on the verge of unprecedented economic growth spurred by a subtle economic confrontation between China and the West, but still trapped in a web of debt, poverty, disease, imperialism, dysfunctional political institutions et al. Indeed, it is a large and diverse continent, with divergent views, histories, experiences, perspectives and beliefs, but bounded together by common adversities. For the purpose of this study, the focus will largely be on Sub-Saharan Africa or in layman's terms, Black Africa.

Although, often thought of in monolithic terms and fairly rightly so, considering the shared history of European conquests (rooted in racism, exploitation and dehumanization), hastily drawn arbitrary borders, ethno-religious strife and underdevelopment, the continent is rich with complexities and intricacies. However, there

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<sup>2</sup> Burgis, Tom, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. (London: William Collins, 2015).

happens to be a rigid and set tone in the narrative of the continent; its past, its present and future – its seemingly unending phase of underdevelopment. Development, like some Dependency scholars, particularly Walter Rodney, is essentially a Western concept and is largely “*used in an exclusive economic sense*”<sup>3</sup>, and perhaps, most importantly tie the continent’s present situation to its horrid past. Interestingly, the exploitative relationship between the continent and its erstwhile colonial *masters* has been preserved for centuries and although there always seems to be some glimmer of hope on the horizon, the continent appears to be stuck in an abyss of unrealized potential. Until the continent realizes the important yet peripheral status and position it has occupied for most of modern history, and aspires for radical change, the story will always be the same.

Regarding development, over decades, African governments have been on the receiving end of billions of dollars from donors and billions more from lenders; tons of food have inundated the continent in food aid that have ended up displacing local producers and enabling dependency, and thousands of researchers, experts and consultants have called the continent home temporarily on problem-solving missions, motivated by varying factors, yet, in per capita income, most of the continent is either declining or outrightly stagnant. Furthermore, the abundance of resources on the African continent makes this appalling situation even much more baffling. Today, the per-capita income across the continent is lower today than it was in the 1970s, and more than half of the people on the continent live on less than \$1 daily - this has been further exacerbated

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<sup>3</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 4.

by a vicious cycle of poverty, corruption, weak political institutions, conflict, and diseases<sup>4</sup>.

Amidst these discussions, lie very fundamental conversations revolving around the concept of *the African state*; its creation, *raison d'être*, the seemingly dysfunctional state of its institutions and economic underdevelopment. To understand the African state is to establish a diagnostic approach to trace its shortcomings and perceived institutional ineffectiveness, in order to grasp context-specific realities with the lofty objective of proffering solutions to make some much-needed headway towards genuine statehood and ultimately, development. The statehood of many African states is questionable, thus, the continent's seemingly endless struggle with weak institutions, poor constitutional development, unethical practices, unviable socio-economic policies may in fact, be endless, considering the projected massive population growth on the continent over the next few decades. It is true to say not much has changed over the centuries; Africa is still that resource-laden region, with exploitative leaders with little regard for their citizens (arising from the inexistence of social contracts, in the real sense amongst other factors), ensuring the resources are free-for-all to loot and plunder. In effect, creating a society and system where the wealthiest, often most powerful governments and multinational corporations hold sway with absolute power and influence, in direct contrast to the abysmal conditions faced by billions on the planet; many of whom call Africa, home. For instance, the West African states of Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast account for majority of world cocoa (worth about \$100 billion), with Ivory Coast alone, exporting 1.8

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<sup>4</sup> Moyo, Dambisa, *Dead Aid*, (London: Penguin Books, 2010)

million metric tons of cocoa in 2016 <sup>5</sup>. However, the average cocoa farmer in the region lives below \$2/day <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ekkannath, Shivani, *The Progression of the Cocoa Trade in West Africa, Business and New Markets*. (Borgen Magazine, March 16, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Richards, Janelle, *Chocolate Is a Bittersweet Way of Life in Ghana*, (NBC News, September, 29, 2014).

## CHAPTER 1

### PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

With over 50 countries, Africa is the continent with the most countries, but centuries ago, the map of the continent was very distinct from what we know today. And in line with the great thoughts of writer and philosopher, Walter Rodney in his critically acclaimed work aptly called; *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, it is only reasonable to condemn the unfair comparison of the African society to the West in terms of civilizations<sup>7</sup>. On what basis, shall we compare distinct civilizations? Besides, it is an open secret that history was unfair to the African continent as colonialists' propaganda, often accompanying dastardly colonial atrocities, ensured the eternal depiction as a society of inferior species who were far from civilization as could possibly be. Ironically, whilst labeling Africans, *primitive, savage and barbaric*, Western colonization on the continent, as elsewhere was of the most barbaric nature and was rooted in "*forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses*"<sup>8</sup>.

It can also be argued that but for the fact that the conqueror authors history, history would have been much more critical of the Western colonialists and many known

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<sup>7</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 42.

as *heroes* today would be referred to as what they truly are; greedy and narcissistic murderous egomaniacs, whose actions were rooted in hypocrisy, racism and capitalist greed.

However, to ensure better clarity, the pre-colonial African life will be divided into two broad categorizations:

- Socio-Politics
- Trade and Economics

### **SOCIO-POLICICS OF PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA**

*“Before even the British came into relations with our people, we were a developed people, having our own institutions, having our own ideas of government”*<sup>9</sup> – J.E. Casely-Hayford, Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) nationalist.

Contrary to a flawed assumption, the continent of Africa was far from what history depicts; a Dark continent inhabited by *savages* who were in desperate in need of Western civilization. The continent was home to distinct groups and societies, often divided by ethnicity and religion. There were sharp differences in the social and political lives across the continent; for instance, there were conspicuous differences among the world-renowned Ethiopian empire in the horn of Africa, hunting groups of pygmies calling the lush Congo forests of Central Africa home, and the Itsekiri coast-dwelling fishermen of present-day Nigeria.

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<sup>9</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 33.

Europe had a head-start in the transition from communalism to feudalism, and later to capitalism, thus, ensuring the need for advanced politico-economic organization and eventually, statehood<sup>10</sup>. It can be said that national unification and statehood were born of advanced capitalist modes of production. In contrast, the vast majority of the pre-colonial societies in Africa were communal and although, some like the Songhai Empire of West Africa were in the transition phase to feudalism, no African civilization or society reached a level of statehood as advanced as the nation-states in Europe<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, there existed, in societies in the transition phase from communalism to feudalism, state-like entities that composed of several smaller factions, regions or tributaries, upon whom the greater super-structure imposed some level of control over, with clearly-defined territories, but without any genuine social contract between the rulers and the led, and in most cases, hardly any interaction between them except payment of taxes and tributes<sup>12</sup>. It was a common occurrence for African states to wage wars, with well-organized armies, against defaulting regions and tributaries. A notable example of this was the several military campaigns the Oyo Empire carried out on the Kingdom of Dahomey, which served as a tributary to Oyo from 1732 until 1823<sup>13</sup>. Noteworthy also is the fact that the Oyo Empire, like many of Africa's most advanced societies of the time, as expected, operated with some level of constitutionality that

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 79, 135.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>12</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 46.

<sup>13</sup> Heywood, Linda M.; John K. Thornton, *Kongo and Dahomey, 1660-1815*. In *Bailyn, Bernard & Patricia L. Denault. Soundings in Atlantic history: latent structures and intellectual currents, 1500–1830*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009)

governed affairs between the Alaafin (Emperor) of Oyo, his subjects and the relationship between/among capital and province/region/tributary.

Although not all African societies reached the level of political development attained by the continent's many prosperous empires, there still existed similarities between those who did and those who did not. Unlike in Europe where the significance of religion had been relatively checked, through the Protestant Reformation, and the increasing relevance of science, religion and spirituality pervaded every sphere of life in most African societies, regardless of political advancement, they also almost always had often relatively wealthy ruling classes, lineages or families that were believed to be destined to rule and also, the power of the rulers largely went unchecked as there never really existed genuine social contracts, at least, in European terms<sup>14</sup>. Interestingly, however, religion and spirituality proved to be inspiration for rebellion against colonialism and white-majority rule from Haiti to Brazil, where the progeny of slaves preserved some of their spiritual identity, leading to the birth of Candomblé, a form of spirituality largely built on rituals, ancestral worship, divination, and strong communal & familial ties to carve their own identity in the real world, enabling them to foster a true sense of identity amongst themselves, enabling numerous slave rebellions in places like Bahia<sup>15</sup>.

Although, time and time again, the non-statelike African societies have been pointed out to demonstrate the so-called *primitiveness* of African societies, mostly out of

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<sup>14</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 34-37, 46.

<sup>15</sup> Harding E. Rachel, *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness*. (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 17.

bigotry, they often had well-defined centralized governments and advanced political systems, often based on clans like the Kikuyus of Kenya, religious oracles and *secret societies* (like the Igbos of Nigeria), or other forms of social stratification. In most of the continent, family and kinship stood out as the most significant relationships in the society, and strong communal ties were largely identified with, that in times of drought and famine, people could move hundreds of miles away to live with members of their clan they barely even knew. Also, every member of the society had a well-defined role, often depending on matrilineal or patrilineal ties. Land was often communally owned, and family and kinship ties determined many aspects of society, for instance, labor was often obtained based on these ties and land and agricultural activities were often shared amongst clans of people related by blood or/and marriage<sup>16</sup>. In the Dahomey Kingdom, for instance, it was common practice for a man to provide labor on his father-in-law's farm. This, according to Rodney, is in sharp contrast with capitalism, where money secures labor, and feudalism, where serfs work in exchange for food or a share of the landlord's land. Furthermore, in many parts of Africa, there were social relationships formed between / amongst groups with different methods of earning a living, where each supplied, in exchange, what the other needed in a genuinely mutually advantageous way. This was most often done between cultivators and pastoralists, and although, seemingly idealistic, this practice often led to or in other cases, fostered animosity and clashes

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<sup>16</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 34-37.

amongst such occupational blocs; most notably, in some parts of West Africa where the Mandinga cultivators dominated the Fulani cattle herders<sup>17</sup>.

One key element of the African life, in broad general terms, prior to European invasion was religion, spirituality and belief. As mentioned earlier, unlike some few other regions of the globe that had embraced some form of secularization, effectively putting some aspects of religion under check, religion and spirituality dominated every sphere of life in many African societies. Although, the religions and beliefs varied from place to place in the real sense, for the most part, they included sacred oral traditions rather than scriptural ones<sup>18</sup>, the belief and veneration of ancestral spirits, animist teachings that sought to harmonize man with nature and perhaps, most significantly, the pantheistic worship of deities that were mostly designated special and unique roles<sup>19</sup>. Religion and spirituality had a strong grasp on the lives of peoples across the continent and dictated society, lifestyle and even politics. Amongst the Igbos of Nigeria, planting season meant divination, sacrifice of animals and libation to gods such as Aha-Njoku, the yam goddess and one of many deities worshipped to ensure bountiful harvests<sup>20</sup>. In politics, in the Asante Empire of present-day Ghana, the Golden Stool, believed to be inhabited by ancestral and unborn spirits was believed to be and respected as the divine throne of the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Awolalu, J.O, *Studies in Comparative Religion*. (London: World Wisdom Books, Inc., 2009 Edition).

<sup>19</sup> Mbiti, John, *Introduction to African Religion*. (London: African Writers Series. Heinemann, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Smart, Anthony, *Aha Njoku*. (MCMXCV - MMIX Encyclopedia Mythica, 1999).

people<sup>21</sup>. A number of scholars, notably, Rodney, have attempted to establish the connection between the superstitious attitudes of most African societies and the relative insignificance of innovation and technology. He explains; “...*Belief in prayer and in the intervention of ancestors and various gods could easily be substitute for innovations designed to control the impact of weather and environment*”<sup>22</sup>.

Of all the Abrahamic religions, Islam played the most critical role in pre-colonial Africa. A great aspect of what we know about the continent prior to Western incursion was from the writings of such Arab historians such as Al Bakri and Ibn Khaldun<sup>23</sup> that had journeyed to the continent as a result of socio-economic ties brought about by trade and the Islamization of certain parts of the continent especially in most of the North and a sizeable portion of the Western parts. The empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai are three of the most notable societies on the continent that had significant Muslim populations and maintained strong ties with the Arab-Muslim world. The Songhai empire, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century had embraced political structures and institutions that greatly mirrored the caliphates of Baghdad and the Arab Oriental legal system<sup>24</sup>. One major reason for the successful spread of Islam was its support of polygamy and a much-believed metaphysical link between African beliefs and Islam<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, the religion of Islam

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<sup>21</sup> Carmichael, John, *African Eldorado - Gold Coast to Ghana*. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 1993, 176–77).

<sup>22</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 36.

<sup>23</sup> Diop, Anta Cheikh (1987). *Precolonial Black Africa*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 43

<sup>24</sup> Diop, Anta Cheikh (1987). *Precolonial Black Africa*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 50.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 165

proved to be the mystical underpinning, upon which the basis for many significant nationalist movements on the continent such as those of the Mahdi, the 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist icon and liberator of erstwhile Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and the Tukulors of the Senegal and Western Sudan were built<sup>26</sup>.

In most of the West, from the Dark Ages to even a few centuries after the Renaissance, intellectual authority and advancement was influenced, controlled and dictated by the Church, and this was greatly mirrored during this period in Africa, albeit, in this case, Arab-Islamic elements. The University of al-Qarawiyyin, established in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Fez, Morocco is the world's oldest existing, continually operating higher educational institution and in a few centuries, such intellectual advancements had been exported to other parts of the continent. Timbuktu, present-day Mali, proved to be a city famous for its intellectual depth, with libraries and universities such as the University of Sankoré, established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, doubling as a religious and intellectual landmark<sup>27</sup>. Most of the continent of Africa was illiterate as most nations and societies did not possess standardized writing except in few cases such as the Abyssinian Empire, hence, literacy on the continent was heavily influenced and dominated by Arabic. The Qur'an was one of the most widely read books on the continent and was memorized by thousands for religious purposes<sup>28</sup>; a practice that has survived and thrived amongst the Muslim faithful on the continent till today.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>28</sup> Diop, Anta Cheikh (1987). *Precolonial Black Africa*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 177.

## TRADE AND ECONOMICS

Prior to the intensification of European exploitation of the continent and the exploitation-driven involvement of the continent in the world market, there was a unique intersection between the extent of political development and sophistication of trade and economics. The smaller, politically less-defined societies tended to operate hunting-gathering or subsistent agriculture economies, while many of Africa's most advanced societies of the time, possessed greater capacity for production; many of whom, engaged in crafts-level hand-tool manufacturing producing metal ornaments and tools, fabrics, pottery, jewelry, weapons for hunting or warfare, et al<sup>29</sup>. The false idea that the continent was only operating at the level of subsistence, lacking sophistication and creativity is one born out of a need to view Africans as primitive, often by colonialists<sup>30</sup>. There existed a common denominator across the continent as regards trade, irrespective of level of political or economic advancement; the constantly reoccurring theme of communalism – agriculture, industry and production were collectively or communally carried out. Equally interesting, there were often well-regulated guilds of artisans, hunters and other core professionals that practiced their craft and expertise, and often, exchanged the fruits of their labor for what they did not produce. For instance, the Mandinga merchants, known as Dioulas, were exceptionally skilled in measuring gold using finely balanced scales and brass weights<sup>31</sup>. The Dioulas epitomized the grossly under-appreciated level of economic

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<sup>29</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 41-43

<sup>30</sup> Diop, Anta Cheikh (1987). *Precolonial Black Africa*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 130.

<sup>31</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 58.

interconnectivity and interdependence across the continent prior to European invasion, as they dealt with kola nuts from present-day Ivorian forests, iron from Fouta Djallon, gold from Akan country in modern-day Ghana, salt originating from the continent's west coast et al<sup>32</sup>.

Although, the vast majority of pre-colonial African economies were predominantly subsistence-inclined, they established trading routes and networks for the exchange of goods that were surplus to communal needs for those goods for commodities that either were not or could not be produced or obtained locally.<sup>33</sup> Also, the spread of the religion of Islam and the establishment of relatively politically advanced caliphates and emirates on the African continent (such as Kanem-Bornu) owe much to the route. The existence of merchant classes in Ghana and Songhai serves as an attestation to the extent of international trade with goods being traded through military and commercial ports, extending from and across parts of the continent and beyond<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, it was very famous for the fine quality of goods and products traded along its vast networks of cities and even Europeans attested to the superior quality of works such as a brand of red leather, popularly referred to as "Moroccan leather", which was produced by Hausa and Mandinga tanning experts in cities such as Kano and Timbuktu<sup>35</sup>. However, the goods the route is most famous for are those that were living; humans traded into chattel slavery.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>33</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 59.

<sup>34</sup> Diop, Anta Cheikh (1987). *Precolonial Black Africa*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 132.

<sup>35</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 42.

At no point in history was slavery ever new to man nor man new to slavery. Slavery has always been essentially ubiquitous and has existed in some form or way in many civilizations; several societies were built on the socioeconomic benefits of slavery - empires were built on the backs of slaves and history would be much different if it never existed. Slavery in pre-colonial African times was an essential part of commerce for many societies and was engaged in actively. In the West, the Oyo, Asante and Dahomey Empire were famous for their slave raids and capture of prisoners of war, and on the trans-Saharan route, the Kanem-Bornu made up for their lack of gold supplies by embarking on slave raids as far as Central Africa to generate revenue<sup>36</sup>. Slavery is a form of social relationship; an association founded on the basis of inequality, subjugation, discrimination, and most significantly, domination and is perhaps, the most dehumanizing condition ever known to man but on the continent, slaves were much better treated and had more rights than those who embarked on European ships for centuries to come. Indeed, a good example of this is in the Oyo Empire, where slaves (most especially, Eunuchs) were often given high-ranking positions; the 3 most important court positions were often occupied by eunuchs, who were saddled with responsibilities such as administrative and religious functions – one of the most significant positions was known as “*Osi Iwefa*”, which means “*eunuch of the left*”, who was put in charge of the empire’s

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<sup>36</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 38.

revenue and could even represent the emperor; “*Alaafin*” in dealings with certain kingdoms under the empire<sup>37</sup>.

The arrival of the Europeans and their relationship with Africa till this very day has been driven by what could be obtained, stolen, or pillaged, and this treatment was extended to colonies all over the world. For example, prior to the brutal British invasion of India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, India's share of the global economy was as large as Europe's and had decreased six-fold after two centuries of British rule, following draconian colonial policies that led to massacres of unarmed protesters, the starvation of millions (including 4 million in just 1943, as a result of Churchill's diversion of Bengal's food stocks to the war effort), and the near-destruction of India's once world famous textile industry<sup>38</sup>. In the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the Portuguese became the first European empire to have meaningful and well-documented trade along the coasts of the erstwhile *Dark Continent*, and the commodities included gold, ivory, and to a lesser extent, slaves. In return, the Africans acquired European and Asian manufactured goods, and in no time, other European empires were drawn to the continent, also for economic reasons<sup>39</sup>. Utilizing their superior naval knowledge, they established a system driven by egoistic and monopolistic greed, where they journeyed far and wide in a bid to pillage, destroy, conquer and loot. Especially noteworthy was the economic situation between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century; the exploitation of the continent spurred unprecedented levels of growth in

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<sup>37</sup> Thompson O. Alvin, *Unprofitable Servants: Crown Slaves in Berbice, Guyana, 1803-1831*. (Barbados: The University of the West Indies Press; 2002, 5)

<sup>38</sup> Tharoor, Shashi, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, 1st Edition. (London: Hurst), 3 & 222

<sup>39</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 80-84.

Europe and immensely contributed to the accumulation of capitalist growth over sectors such as shipping, mining and accelerated the birth of many multi-national of corporations, such as Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, later known as the Royal African Company, a mercantile company founded in 1660, which once held monopoly over British interests in West Africa and even established forts, mines and factories, maintained well-equipped troops and exercised martial law in West Africa, with the grand aim of acquiring gold, silver, and most significantly, slaves<sup>40</sup>. Most African societies were not as versed in the capitalist and many did not even employ the use of money, hence, they gradually fell prey to European imperialistic ambition, founded on brutality, cunningness, and capitalist greed.

Thrown into an already toxic mix was the cultural materialistic attitude that gave recognition to those who owned the most in the vast majority of African societies and the asymmetric trade, although done at Africa's detriment, soon favored many African elites, who enriched themselves starting a trend that would be exploited till this very day. There, of course, many revolts and rebellions against colonial control; most notably the Anglo-Ashanti wars, a series of conflicts fought over the course of nearly a century<sup>41</sup>. Nonetheless, although, this trade somewhat broadened the horizon of many otherwise *closed* African societies and gave them access to European manufactured goods, notably, firearms which would soon prove useful in anti-colonial rebellions and campaigns, they also would contribute to political instability (resulting in many battles and wars, often

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<sup>40</sup> Carrington, Charles, *The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 217.

<sup>41</sup> Lloyd, Alan, *The Drums of Kumasi: the story of the Ashanti wars*. (London: Longmans, 1964).

across tribal and ethnic lines) across the continent, spurred on most especially, by the seemingly never-ending European demand for free human labor. For instance, the Kingdom of Dahomey, home to famous slave ports such as Wydah, proved to be a formidable regional power on the West coast of the continent with an economy primarily built on military conquest and the slave trade<sup>42</sup>. It is also noteworthy to emphasize that since wealth and prosperity revolved around trade with Europeans in many societies, agriculture suffered and soon, wealth, status and prestige were largely dependent on contact with the West. The introduction of Western education further escalated the severity of this situation as it gradually created an apparent and significant clear divide in many societies between the newly created educated and well-off elite class and the rest. Unsurprisingly, this continues in some form till today, with the creation of *the big man*, the comprador.

The asymmetry of this trade relationship and the profitable contributions the continuous pillaging of another was aptly described by Karl Marx in his 1867 work, *Capital, Volume I : Critique of Political Economy - The Process of Capitalist Production*: “*the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, turning of Africa into a commercial warren for the hunting of black skins signaled the rosy dawn of the era of*

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<sup>42</sup> Polanyi, Karl, *Dahomey and the Slave Trade: An Analysis of an Archaic Economy*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966).

*capitalist production*”<sup>43</sup>. Over the centuries, this exploitative relationship would continue under different names and under the assumption of a vast array of nomenclature.

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<sup>43</sup> Marx, Karl, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production, by Karl Marx*. Translated from the 3rd German edition, by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels. Revised and amplified according to the 4th German ed. by Ernest Untermann (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Co., 1909).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CREATION OF THE AFRICAN *STATE*

It is particularly noteworthy that certain technological advancements in the West facilitated the conquest of the African continent; the invention of breech-loading rifles, Gatlin and the Maxim machine gun ensured the military superiority of colonialists, Steamboat technology as well as shallow draft applications and screw propellers made African inland rivers more navigable and conquerable, and of course, the discovery of quinine reduced the threat of one of Africa's most effective barriers against colonialism; Malaria<sup>44</sup>. The Berlin Conference of 1884-85, resulting from the Scramble for Africa and its resources effectively led to the creation of arbitrary national borders, most of whom are in existence today. As expected, there were numerous wars of resistance waged against colonial domination, such as the Zulu Wars in 1879 and 1906 in present-day South Africa, and the 1905 Maji-Maji revolt in erstwhile Tangayika<sup>45</sup> (present-day Tanzania) but the ingenious combination of superior weaponry as well as ingenious "divide and rule" political manipulations, often resulting in other Africans fighting on the side of the British, proved formidable. The first Anglo-Ashanti war, for instance, broke out in 1824, with the British exploiting socio-economic and political differences between

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<sup>44</sup> Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 87.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

the Ashantis and their neighbors, the Fantis, to ally themselves with the latter, with the goal of conquering both peoples and furthering their colonial ambitions<sup>46</sup>. In the same vein, even within ethnicities, the colonialists capitalized upon intra-ethnic political differences to favor certain factions over others. A great example of this occurred in 1851, where the British sided with the deposed Oba of Éko (present-day Lagos), Oba Akintoye and through a heavy naval bombardment of the city, usurped the rightful king, Oba Kosoko. In return, once he became king, Oba Akintoye granted British merchants a monopoly in trading certain commodities and established a treaty with them, which effectively paved the way for the annexation of Lagos as a Crown Colony just a decade later<sup>47</sup>.

Interestingly, although, the newly independent African states in the 1960s understood the almost impossible tasks of development staring them in the face due to their status as being not a lot more than vestiges of Western colonialism, they unfortunately chose, partly under imperialist pressure, to keep the arbitrarily-drawn colonial borders at independence. However, the creation of these so-called *states* or better still, colonial outposts, were more complicated than not and for obvious reasons too. The complex nature of African societies made it imperative for European colonizers to design devious but effective mechanisms to control the colonies, with the most effective of these mechanisms being the divide and conquer policy, embarked upon to exploit and escalate already-existing ethno-religious differences amongst African nations, societies and

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<sup>46</sup> Raugh, Harold E., *The Victorians at War, 1815–1914: An Encyclopedia of British Military History*. (California: ABC-CLIO, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Giles D. Short, *Blood and Treasure: The reduction of Lagos, 1851*. (ANU Historical Journal, Vol. 13, 1977). 11-19.

ethnicities in a bid to primarily eliminate the chances of a robust and cohesive anti-colonial resistance, as well as to weaken each one, paving the way for brutal colonial exploitation. Colonial Rwanda, perhaps, paints the bleakest of pictures of the disastrous nature of the policy. The European colonizers, fueled by their steadfast belief in the inferiority of the peoples they encountered in their incursions all over the globe, and particularly in Africa, ignored virtually every sign or aspect of advancement and sophistication on the continent such as organized state life, and instead, chose to believe it was proof of that some Africans had migrated there from elsewhere and supposedly were not truly African<sup>48</sup>. It was out of this rather ridiculous belief, that an even more laughable thought was born; *the Hamitic Hypothesis*, which claimed that every proof of advancement on the continent was the work of the Hamites, the sinful descendants of Noah who were cursed to be black<sup>49</sup>. This deeply believed Judeo-Christian myth, provided legitimacy for slavery, genocide, and many other forms of brutality, as it essentially denied humanity, or at least, equality to the black race, in general. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after it became increasingly clear that the Egyptian civilization was a black one, it became necessary for Europeans to claim that the Hamites, the Egyptians included, were Caucasians in black skin<sup>50</sup>. However, such baseless and ludicrous racial stratification led to the racialization of the Tutsis; an intentional and institutional concept embraced by Western colonialists, who claimed the Tutsis were Europeans with black

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<sup>48</sup> Mamdani, Mahmood (2001), *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 80.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 80-81.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 81.

skins<sup>51</sup>. This led to obvious favoritism and the colonial-backed domination of the Hutus and other ethnic groups by the Tutsis, which led to decades of ethnic animosity, culminating in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Nevertheless, the colonial *states* conspicuously lacked 3 fundamental characteristics of statehood<sup>52</sup>; sovereignty; although, the colonial states yielded some authority to native placeholders and agents, the colonialists held sway and exerted essentially unlimited control on their colonies. Secondly, a sense of nationhood was almost nonexistent among colonized populations until shortly before independence and finally, the colonies possessed no international recognition. All these factors, effectively, relegated the colonial state to the background, making them nothing but backwaters, to be exploited and dominated. Infrastructural projects were designed towards the exploration and transportation of mineral resources from resource-rich regions to the coasts for shipping and agricultural sectors were geared towards the production of export-crops. Perhaps, the most glaring reason why creation of the African colonial state was so complicated is because nationhood was a largely Western concept and, the continent was and forever remains an incredibly diverse one. For example, present-day Nigeria is home to about 200 ethnic groups with about 300 languages spoken, and many of these ethnic groups had no prior interaction until the British invasion and colonization of the territory. Such ethnic heterogeneity would be exploited by colonizers, in a bid to divide and conquer African populations, especially those that had prior inter-ethnic grievances and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 43.

rivalries such as the fishing rivalries between the Adiou-Krou & Alladian, who were often favored as colonial interlocutors and the Aizi' in present-day Ivory Coast<sup>53</sup>. In the British protectorates of Nigeria, the British hastily and unceremoniously amalgamated hundreds of ethnic groups and nations; some of which had no recorded prior contact, into a colony, thus, creating a problem of astronomical proportions.

However, for the British, this was utterly positive as it not only ensured there was barely any cohesive efforts of resistance, it also ensured the perpetuality of ethno-religious strife and rivalries to be exploited for imperialist gain. Indeed, the expansion of colonial dominance owes much to the diabolical and ingenious strategies employed by the colonizers to exploit ethno-cultural differences. For example, African rulers sought military help from colonial powers for defense against aggressors or colonial alliance to balance the power against rival ethnicities or societies<sup>54</sup>. The first Anglo-Ashanti war, for instance, broke out in 1824, with the British exploiting socio-economic and political differences between the Ashantis and their neighbors, the Fantis, to ally themselves with the latter, with the goal of conquering both peoples and furthering their colonial ambitions<sup>55</sup>. Understanding how fragmented and distinct the many populations of the African continent were, the colonialists embarked on a mission of promoting the idea of competition and rivalry for social, economic, and political resources, relevance, and favor from them, the universal oppressor. In many cases, the colonial agenda included favoring

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<sup>53</sup> Bayart, Jean-Francois, *The State in Africa: The Politics of The Belly*. (USA: Polity Press, 2009), 52.

<sup>54</sup> Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 75

<sup>55</sup> Lloyd, Alan, *The Drums of Kumasi: the story of the Ashanti wars*. (London: Longmans, 1964).

certain ethnic groups over others to ensure a perpetual divided front against them. This led to an exaggerated emphasis on ethno-cultural differences such as the tragic case in Belgian Rwanda with the Hutus and the Tutsis, two subgroups of a larger ethnic group, with strong cultural ties and even a common language. The Belgian colonists heavily favored the Tutsi over the Hutu in the assignment of administrative positions, believing them to be racially superior, and even going as far as issuing ethnic ID cards in 1935, thereby, creating animosity between both groups and a sense of disenfranchisement amongst the Hutus<sup>56</sup>. Colonialism undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping ethnic identities and consciousness and constructivist views of colonialism asserts that certain ethnic groups are essentially a creation of European colonial manipulations through a craftily created web of missionaries, ethnographers, colonial administrators and selected African elements. The colonialists promulgated the idea of promoting selected ethnic groups over others and made them bigger beneficiaries from the colonial system, either as unwilling accomplices or as members of a privileged class<sup>57</sup>. These autocratic colonial policies transformed ethno-religious identities into a perpetual stumbling block to national unity, progress, and development in most African countries, leaving them with a maddening obsession with identity politics. Although, it has been established that such policies were aimed at facilitating the control and outright exploitation of the colonies, it is remarkable how successful they have been. A true sense of nationality is lacking

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<sup>56</sup> Prunier, Gérard (1999). *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (2nd ed.). (Kampala: Fountain Publishers Limited, 1999), 35.

<sup>57</sup> Dan Suleiman Muhammad & Maiangwa Benjamin, *Nigeria and the 'making' of combative identities, African Identities* (UK: Routledge, 2017), 262-263.

among most African populations till this day and this arguably has contributed to the shocking number of civil wars faced on the continent, as well as the diabolical level of corruption and underdevelopment. Most of the continent is left scarred by such policies and this dysfunction has contributed to the reality that there exist many African countries, oftentimes headed by puppets favored by international actors, that are more inclined towards favoring Western / imperial economic interests rather than those of the citizenry. This is obviously not unconnected to the staggering level of underdevelopment, poverty and hopelessness faced on the continent as weak and dysfunctional political institutions are often wedded to poor economies.

### CHAPTER 3

#### ***COLO-MENTALISM: THE PERPETUAL MENTAL ENSLAVEMENT OF COLONIALISM***

Authored by English writer and poet, Rudyard Kipling at the height of Western imperialistic ambitions, *The White man's burden*, presents a case for imperialism and the pseudo-moral obligation (or burden) placed by God on the white man to *civilize* other races. With words like *new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child* used to depict the inferiority of non-Western native populations<sup>58</sup>. Nonetheless, the poem, to a large extent, captured the elite Western attitude towards colonialism and legitimized their ostensibly *well-intentioned* actions towards colonized peoples with lines like “*take up the White Man's burden and reap his old reward*”. Behind the supposedly well-meaning intentions of the colonizer was also a certain *Manifest Destiny*, that was rooted in the assumed superiority of Christianity and Western civilization, and out of which some of the most evil crimes against humanity such as genocides were born. French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal shed more light on such religious conviction, as he once said; “*Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction*”<sup>59</sup>. To the Western imperialists, they were on a mission to Christianize the world, help themselves to all the riches in the world as *God*

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<sup>58</sup> *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (6th. Ed., 2000, 808).

<sup>59</sup> Pascal, Blaise, *Pensées* (Ed. de 1670, Paris: Flammarion, 1913).

had granted them divine permission and if these were at the cost of the lives of inferior people with inferior cultures, civilizations and beliefs, it did not matter. In order to carry out this nefarious divine assignment of brutalizing the colonized, it became necessary for the colonizer himself to become desensitized to the truly evil acts of colonialism, and instead, embrace the instincts of covetousness, violence, racism and moral relativism<sup>60</sup>. This viewpoint reveals the dynamics and relationship between Western colonialists and colonized people around the world and makes understandable, many horrific aspects of the oppression, exploitation and domination that plagued the colonial experience. This explains why Leopold II, King of Belgium maimed and enslaved millions of people in the Congo Free State in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century for his own personal benefit under the rather ridiculous guise of Christianizing them and protecting them from slavery<sup>61</sup>, and also, the license for the British to let loose their maxim guns on indigenous populations resulting in hundreds of thousands of casualties all across Africa and a pathetic excuse for the Germans were able to get away with the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, against the Herero people in present-day Namibia. As despicable and gruesome as these events were, they are barely spoken of even today because at the time, the casualties were barely even considered human by the foul racist colonizers.

In his work, *Slavery and social death: A comparative study*<sup>62</sup>, Orlando Patterson attempts to understand the institution of slavery and how it is maintained and preserved.

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<sup>60</sup> Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 35.

<sup>61</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 138.

<sup>62</sup> Patterson, Orlando, *Slavery and social death: A comparative study*. (Harvard University Press, 1982), 35-70.

Slavery, to Patterson is a form of social relationship; an association founded on the basis of inequality, subjugation, discrimination, and most significantly, domination. He insists that the power dynamics between slave and master are unseen in any other social relationship that involves humans, and further argues that this unequal power relationship consists of three facets:

- The social facet that involves violence and the threat of it to keep the slave subservient.
- The psychological facet that is based on influence and the ability to convince another to alter his outlook on life. Here, the slave is manipulated and made to lose sense of identity and self and feel inferior to the white man.
- The cultural facet which is based on authority and the capacity to legitimize slavery on the part of the master as a right and forced service on the part of the slave as a *duty*, in a bid to sustain the relationship.

All three facets are indispensable in the preservation of the monstrous cycle that is the institution of slavery, instituting an imposed concept of sub-humanity and discrimination, hence, confirming the *social death* of the slave. Whipping and the infliction of other inhumane punishments on the slave were necessary in reducing their self-esteem and humanity, thus, enslaving not only the body but the mind and soul<sup>63</sup>. In addition, although, chattel slavery and other forms of forced labor were also still practiced in African colonies well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with some notable examples being the practice known as *prestation* in French Sudan and French Equatorial Guinea,

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<sup>63</sup> Patterson, Orlando, *Slavery, and social death: A comparative study*. (Harvard University Press, 1982), 35-70.

where able-bodied men were *enlisted* under the guise of being conscripted into the army and then, forcefully transported to the coastal plantations or construction sites to work for next to nothing, and in Kenya and Tanganyika during WWII, where British colonialists forced thousands to work for free, usually under the threat of death, towards the empire's war effort<sup>64</sup>, colonialism in its best and most humane form, mirrors many aspects of the concept of social death and is probably akin to slavery in more ways than one would think. To establish the link between colonialism and the *social death* of the colonized populations, we should understand the rationale and basis behind colonialism. Colonialism was born out of, amongst other things, the sense of entitlement, superiority and ownership of the possession of others (and even others themselves), and this was rooted in what could be identified as the cultural facet of the asymmetric power relationship between conqueror and conquered, which is based on authority and the capacity to legitimize colonialist violence and lordship on the part of the master as a right and slavery, oppression, forced labor et al on the part of the colonized as a *duty*, in a bid to sustain the relationship. To the colonial powers, they were driven by some form of *manifest destiny* that emboldened, spurred and motivated them towards the subjugation of others and the imposition of their culture and civilization on others while also, systematically instituting the erosion of their own culture and civilization by etching its inferiority in their minds. How else could colonialism have been so successful if at least, the Africans elite through divide and rule the African did not partake actively in his own *social death*? Although, there were fierce resistances to colonialism by native populations across the continent such as in the case of the Zulus against the Dutch and the British, and

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<sup>64</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 167.

the Great Benin Empire against the British, the canons and guns ironically procured largely from the trans-Atlantic slave trade would, for the most part, proved no match against the superior weaponry of the colonizers, who were also armed to the teeth with an appalling sense of greed and entitlement. However, there were many instances of success against the colonizers, despite the advantage in weaponry, such as Emperor Menelik II in Ethiopia's famous victory against the Italian general Oreste Baratieri's and his Eritrean allies at the Battle of Adwa in March 1896<sup>65</sup>. This victory reverberated across the globe and inspired other resistance uprisings on the continent such as the Bambatha Rebellion led by a Zulu chief, Bambatha kaMancinza, in direct revolt to amongst other things, poll taxes levied on the indigenous populations by the British<sup>66</sup>.

Nonetheless, gradually, many Africans were forced to submit to colonialism, which was built on racial and cultural superiority, and colonialist taught that they should be thankful for civilization and for being subjects of the greatest empires the world had ever seen. Worse still, however, amongst colonialists and populations in the European metropole, actions taken in the colonies, no matter how terrible, unfair, inhumane, and callous were conceived of as being for the good of the *savage*<sup>67</sup>. Guided and goaded by such words, as this, spoken before the French Chamber of Deputies in 1885, by French statesman, Jules Ferry; "*it is a right for the superior races, because they have a duty.*

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<sup>65</sup> Uhlig, S. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 1 (A–C), (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Hennop, Jan, *SA to mark historic Zulu rebellion*. Independent Online, 9 June 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 98.

*They have the duty to civilize the inferior races*<sup>68</sup>, the French embarked on a colonial policy often called The French Assimilation concept. This concept was rooted in the ideology of propagating French culture to the colonies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and considering natives of these colonies citizens and subjects of France, subject, of course, to the embrace of the French culture and civilization at the expense of theirs. Hundreds of thousands of Africans were coerced to fight in both world wars and laid down their lives for empires that would barely acknowledge their sacrifices let alone, honor them. Encountering the issue of with manpower shortages on the frontlines, the British imperialists recruited up to 1.4 million Indian soldiers, France enlisted about 500,000 troops from its African and Asian colonies, and their efforts would largely remain ignored by European history<sup>69</sup>. Prominent amongst those who are nothing but footnotes in European and world history, as a whole, despite their bravery and loyalty were the Senegalese Tirailleurs or *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*; corps of colonial infantry in the French Army recruited from primarily from Senegal, and eventually, from across French colonies on the continent, that fought on the side of the French in every war they fought from the 1870s till the decolonization era in the 1960s<sup>70</sup>.

The assimilation policy typified the colonial experience in most of the continent and also contributes to what could be rightly considered the psychological facet of *social death* that is based on influence and the ability to convince another to alter his outlook on

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<sup>68</sup> Chisholm, Hugh, *Ferry, Jules François Camille*. Encyclopædia Britannica (11th ed.). (Cambridge University Press, 1911).

<sup>69</sup> Mishra, Pankraj, *How colonial violence came home: the ugly truth of the first world war*. The Guardian (Online, Nov 10, 2017).

<sup>70</sup> Michel, Marc, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre*. (Paris: Kathala. 2003), 7.

life, where the colonized African was manipulated and made to lose sense of identity and self. At this juncture, it is important to understand how much of an impact colonialism had on the colonized. Every aspect of life was controlled and determined in entirety by the colonial masters in most cases; their beliefs were deemed evil and diabolical, their languages and customs were labeled inferior, the political economy of their territories were determined, regulated and controlled by the colonial invaders, and even landmarks that had existed since the beginning of time were *discovered* and *re-christened*. It is especially noteworthy to include the fact that the inferiority complex etched in the minds of the colonized people was instituted on racial and other sociological grounds, whilst simultaneously, having their resources plundered by *superior* invaders. Gradually, the colonizer could do no wrong in the eyes of the colonized and colonialism became justified and even important in the minds of the latter.

In the attempt to relate the social facet of Patterson's *social death* concept between slaver and slave that involved violence and the threat of violence to keep the latter subservient, to the relationship between colonizer and the colonized, it becomes indispensable to understand that colonialism encountered fierce resistance from native populations all over the continent, with famous battles such as the Battle of Adwa (fought between the Ethiopian empire and the Kingdom of Italy), to preserve their freedom. However, the superior weaponry possessed by the Europeans helped the sweeping tide of colonialism across the continent; particularly, the maxim gun, the first recoil-operated machine gun, invented in 1883 won so many victories for the colonialists, across the globe that Anglo-French poet, Hilaire Belloc once wrote;

*“Whatever happens, we have got*

*The Maxim gun and they have not”*<sup>71</sup>

Violence proved to be an invaluable tool in the colonization of the continent. Prior to colonialism and during the era, African leaders opposed to colonial rule or disloyal to colonialists were killed or deposed in favor of ones more willing to be paid off by colonial invaders. Most times, there was active participation of fellow Africans and this *active participation* would continue well after the decolonization era of the 1960s and arguably, survives to an extent till this day. Scholars, like Rodney, attribute rapid technological advancements in warfare in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to imperial rivalry amongst European powers for spheres of influence, which in turn, ensured increased sophistication in weaponry to keep colonies subservient. Indeed, this was rule by naked coercion and diminution, not by law. The *social death* of the African was thus fundamental to the colonial cause and still favors imperial interests till this very day. The colonized African peoples have been dealt mental blows and have suffered scars, that could better be defined as a form of transgenerational post-traumatic stress syndrome, and the ingenious and effectively systematic structures put in place over centuries by the colonialists ensure that many Africans and weak African *state* remains subservient to their interests.

Frantz Fanon in his work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, takes a more psychoanalytic approach towards the relationship between the colonizer and the *native*, and arrives at a

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<sup>71</sup> Kilmer, Joyce, *The Poetry of Hilaire Belloc, Prose Works*, Vol. 2, (George H. Doran Company, 1918)

conspicuous conclusion; “*It is the racist who creates the interiorized*”<sup>72</sup> and in detail, insists that the colonized black African was forced to “*whiten or perish*”. Fanon argues that as a result of centuries-old institutions put in place to “*disrupt the psychological horizon and mechanisms on the continent*”, the black man was transformed into a colonial subject, deprived of self-esteem and originality, and constantly belittled<sup>73</sup>. This also meant that “*when blacks make contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place...the black man stops behaving like an “actional” person. His actions are destined for “the Other” (in the guise of the white man), since only “the Other” can enhance his status and give him self-esteem at the ethical level*”. Fanon fingers the educational system on the colonies as one of the most viable means through which this racial inferiority amongst black colonial populations was perpetuated. In the colonies, school children were often prevented from speaking their local languages and made to identify with *the civilizing colonizer* and *the mother-country*, and prescribed books that depicted their own people as savages and backward, which imposed a certain sense of inferiority in them and indirectly, created a feeling of respect, admiration and even gratitude towards the invader for bringing them civilization. The vile system was designed to stamp on their minds the desire to be what the colonizer is and not what they actually are<sup>74</sup>. The more *westernized* an African was, the more prominent and further away from *backwardness* and *barbarity* he considered himself and although, he must never dare equate himself to the colonizer, he felt superior to his *uncivilized* peers.

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<sup>72</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 73.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 77 -80.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 120.

In the same vein, in 1977, legendary Nigerian musician and activist, Olufela “Fela” Kuti coined the term *colo-mentality* in his song; *Colonial Mentality*<sup>75</sup>. In an attempt to explain how the West did such a marvelous job in ensuring the preservation of the dynamics between themselves and Africans, and further express the debilitating effects of colonialism on African progress and development, Kuti came to the conclusion that the most significant aspect of colonialism was that done to the minds of Africans, thus, creating the term *colo-mentality*; an ingenious portmanteau of *colonialism* and *mentality*. Like Fanon, Kuti identified the aspiration of many Africans to be more like the white colonizer and be less of what they really are as one of the greatest accomplishments of the colonialists, as it *helped* preserve the subjugation of the continent for generations to come. He further identifies the rather embarrassing yet literal need to be seen as more white in a 1976 classic; *Yellow Fever*<sup>76</sup>, where he sings about skin bleaching, especially amongst women on the African continent, mockingly establishing a similarity between the devastating effects of bleaching creams and the symptoms of the tropical Yellow Fever disease. The effects of colorism are also linked to class, and wealth is often associated with being of lighter skin and a darker color is often linked to the lower class in many former colonies. This put simply is another grotesque effect of racism. According to a 2011 WHO estimate, about 76 million Nigerians, mostly women, use skin-lightening products regularly<sup>77</sup>, with the skin bleaching epidemic affecting non-white populations

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<sup>75</sup> Kuti, Olufela *Colonial Mentality*. Lyrics. Genius.com.

<sup>76</sup> Bandcamp.com, *Albums / Fela Kuti*.

<sup>77</sup> VOA News, *Nigeria's 'Melanin Movement' Swims Against a Skin-Whitening Tide* | (Africa News Online, February 11, 2019).

across the continent and extending to the black diaspora in the Caribbean, Latin America and elsewhere.

Today, this sense of inherent inferiority of the colonized mind manifests itself in several forms, including the overconsumption of and massive preference for foreign goods contributing to the snail-paced industrial growth on the continent, the relatively low intra-continental trade on the African continent, and the gradual extinction of many African languages, customs and traditions. For societies that have suffered centuries of being subjected to the erasure of their cultures and identity, including the renaming of landmarks and sites by colonialists such as Lake Victoria and the Victoria falls, after the British Queen Victoria, it may be necessary to revert those appellations to their original names as a sign of cultural and perhaps, even national pride. Such thought was certainly what prompted students of the University of Cape Town in 2015 to deface and eventually tear down the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a brutal and exploitative colonialist, after whom the country Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was named, and who held sway over large swaths of African land and resources<sup>78</sup>. The statue was rightly perceived to be a symbol of colonial oppression and an impediment to real transformation in the country that had suffered from apartheid rule for most of its history. It becomes quite imperative, at this juncture, for Africans to find pride in their identities and decolonize and emancipate their minds, thoughts, and philosophies in the pursuit of a truly Afro-centric path to genuine independence, and sustainable growth & development.

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<sup>78</sup> Serino Kenichi, *Anti-racism protesters in South Africa use poop to make a point*. Al Jazeera America (Online, April 6, 2015).

## CHAPTER 4

### COLONIALISM AND THE CREATION OF THE AFRICAN *BIG MAN*

The oppression, subjugation, and exploitation of the peoples of Africa, their lands and resources would never have been possible without their involvement; often active on the part of some leaders and forced or passive for most. However, this involvement occurred in many forms and evolved over time, eventually leading to the creation of the African *Big Man*, a self-serving figure, with an assumed sense of superiority, based on closer ties to colonial and imperial interests. The effectiveness, and indeed, the success of European colonialism on the continent would have been implausible but for structures already put in place from the earliest contacts with Africans on the continent. Even the economic relationship between Europe and Africa, prior to colonialism were facilitated by African middlemen, who were indispensable in the slave trade and in opening up the hinterland to Europeans, as they provided despicable services as slave raiders, fort guards, translators, et al. A good proportion of these men whom Rodney aptly refers to as *agents of repression* were often former slaves themselves, had been immersed in Europe culture by living there and many were of mixed racial parentages, which gave them some level of respect, in comparison to the black *savages*<sup>79</sup>. Nevertheless, this racial hierarchy would dominate the socio-political landscape and structure of many colonies from the West Indies to Africa. At least, the upper classes of colonized populations were required

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<sup>79</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011).

to become more *Western-oriented*, not only to improve one's standing in the social hierarchy but also as a survival tactic. Adaptation is second only to survival as man's most primal instinct, after all.

The Europeans had come to stay and were very dominant using violence; hence, the need soon arose for those who would succeed in being subalterns, to be immersed in their way of life. Rulers and elites on the coasts of Africa realized this and desired their children to be educated *the white man's way*<sup>80</sup>. Western *educated* sons of elites and mixed children of white sailors and traders played vital roles in the increasing subjugation of the people. Most were taught only what the colonialists wanted them to know and had imbibed pro-capitalist and colonialist values and thoughts, and of course, with racial undertones. Particularly noteworthy was the attitude of returning former slaves and their descendants to places like Liberia towards *natives*; they not only saw themselves as superior to the indigenous populations, but also maintained strong ties with the West, advancing pro-colonialist agenda, and essentially seeing themselves as colonial placeholders. In Liberia, between 1847 and 1980, the country was ruled by the small minority of Americo-Liberian returnees; many of whom, married strictly within their group, were of mixed racial heritage, owned American-styled Southern plantations, and lorded over the natives with a rather caricatural sense of superiority<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 120.

<sup>81</sup> Jones, Abeodu Bowen, *The Republic of Liberia*. In Ade Ajayi, J.F.; Crowder, Michael (eds.). *History of West Africa*. II. (London: Longman, 1974), 315-316.

At the dawn of colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, such *agents of repression*<sup>82</sup> fought on the side of the colonial invaders in most wars waged against native populations. For instance, when the British defeated the Asante in 1874, their ranks were swelled by Africans from the coastal cities situated close to the Gold Coast forts. They had established such intimate contact with the Europeans that prior to colonization, they had even identified themselves as *English, Dutch* or *French*, depending on which empire's coastal forts or interests they were in the service of guarding<sup>83</sup>. Perhaps along with coercion, such ideas influenced the thinking of the 146,000-man strong West African Frontier Force or the 280,000 Eastern African military components that fought primarily on the side of the Allies during WWII<sup>84</sup>. A few may have been spurred on by the *nobility* of valiantly defending the *master's* interests even in the face of being paid much less than white soldiers and being treated with little or no dignity.

Nonetheless, the colonization of the continent saw the birth of the African *Big Man* as we know him today. Any chances of anti-colonial rebellions were made even slimmer by troops made up of native black people. Besides their relative inexpensiveness to maintain, they also helped perpetuate the subjugation of their own and facilitated, to a large extent, the embrace of racial and cultural inferiority amongst black populations. For instance, the Mau Mau Uprising (1952–1960) in British Kenya, a famous rebellion led by the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), drawn primarily from Kenya's main ethnic

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<sup>82</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 144.

<sup>84</sup> Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 184.

group, the Kikuyus, better known as *Mau Mau*, against the authority of the British had 25,000 Kikuyu fighters, known as the Kikuyu Home Guard, fighting on the colonialists' side<sup>85</sup>. Nonetheless, the policy of divide and conquer often ensured the pitting of separate groups and ethnicities on either side of a conflict. A great example of this is the famous Battle of Adowa, where six thousand Eritrean soldiers, known as Ascaris fought on the side of the Italians, against their neighbors<sup>86</sup>.

More significantly, however, were the political institutions set in place by colonial powers who for various reasons, ranging from reduction of costs to the colonizers to maximization of taxes, installed puppet leaders who did their bidding, often under threat of death, dethronement or exile. *“The French and the Portuguese were in the habit of choosing their own African “chiefs”: the British went to Ibo land and invented “warrant chiefs”; and the colonial powers found it convenient to create “superior” or “paramount” rulers*<sup>87</sup>. Easy to prey upon was the newly burgeoning class of Africa's educated elites that had been given Western education and often had instilled in them, loyalty and respect to the metropole, and they soon returned home to occupy important positions in the society and eventually, became politicians, civil servants and business men – *Big Men*. Quite ingeniously, the colonialists exploited the blatant culture of materialism amongst many societies on the continent, which for centuries was been centered upon the acquisition of wives, cattle, plantations et al, and the wealth attracted

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<sup>85</sup> Anderson, David, *Histories of the Hanged*. (New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 252.

<sup>86</sup> Ruggeri, Raffaele, *Le Guerre Coloniali Italiane. Italian Colonial Wars 1885/1900*. (Italy: Libreria Militare Editrice, 1988).

<sup>87</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 225-226.

significant levels of respect in most, also. Gradually, the professionalization of African cadres and the increase of indigenous populations in bureaucracy would reduce the direct involvement from the metropole<sup>88</sup>. Also, slowly but steadily would the African elites replace the West as the continent's most brutal oppressors, unsurprisingly in a fashion best suited to Western economic interests.

According to Mulinge and Lesetedi's essay titled *Corruption in sub-Saharan Africa: Towards a More Holistic Approach*<sup>89</sup>, corruption is deeply-linked to the nature and structure of pre-colonial taxation – due to the inexistence of viable monetary economies in their colonies, colonial governments, especially the British, established the mandatory payment of tax payable only in cash which were directed towards administration costs. The collection of these taxes was done through local (puppet) chiefs, who were incentivized by the colonial governments to keep a sizeable amount of tax for themselves. For instance, In Bechuanaland – present day Botswana, the *dikgosi* (chiefs) were allowed to retain 10% of all tax collected in their jurisdictions. This not only established the culture of 'kickbacks' (which is prevalent in countries like Nigeria, where government officials expect 10% of the costs of projects for lobbying for the award of government projects to contractors), the practice also made tax collection a lucrative avenue to acquire wealth, which also encouraged abuse of office, as the chiefs had been implicitly handed the access to wealth without much checks and balances. The

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<sup>88</sup> Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 159.

<sup>89</sup> Mulinge M. Munyae, Lesetedi N. Gwen, *Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards a more holistic approach*, (African Journal of Political Science Vol 7, No 1, 2002).

minimal checks and balances, and access to wealth were designed by colonialists as a reward to indigenous leaders for aiding and abetting the oppression of their own. From all these, did the culture of African leaders being instrumental in the exploitation of their own people emerge, creating a culture obsessed with wealth and class in many African societies, separating citizens into almost caste-like stratifications with subordinate urban working-class groups and rural populations living in abysmal conditions and on the other side, the prestigious class of the *big man* as Nigerians and Ghanaians refer to them, the *big types* as they are called in Ivory Coast, the *acquirers* of Congolese jargon, the *nizers* of Tanzania (from the word *colonizer*), and the *wabenzi* as referred to them in Kenya (*wabenzi* means *owners of Mercedes Benz*)<sup>90</sup>.

It has long been established that Western-imperialistic interests in Africa have primarily been economic, thus, it becomes essential to further explore this angle in relation to the *Big Man*. The IMF defines *resource-rich* countries as those that depend on natural resources for over a quarter of exports and one on the verge of suffering the much-dreaded *resource curse* and IMF statistics show that oil exports constitute 97% and 98% of exports respectively, of the two largest oil exporters on the continent, Nigeria and Angola<sup>91</sup>. In the 1990s, Nigeria's military dictators, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and his successor, General Sani Abacha brutally clamped down protests directed at Royal-Dutch Shell and other multinational oil companies in the Niger-Delta region of the country. At a point, Shell maintained a private police force (better known as

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<sup>90</sup> Bayart, Jean-Francois, *The State in Africa: The Politics of The Belly*. USA: Polity Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>91</sup> Burgis, Tom, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. (London: William Collins, 2015), 7.

Shell Police) with imported arms and ammunitions, and maintained close ties with the Nigerian army, and both security forces were actively involved in the repression of the people<sup>92</sup>. In a rather pitifully ironic way, the people were paying for their own oppression, as their taxes were involved in the maintenance of those same security forces. Nonetheless, both generals were heavily rewarded for their close ties with the multinational companies and enriched themselves at the expense of the people. General Abacha, who died in 1998, stashed an estimated \$5billion in foreign banks in Switzerland, France and elsewhere, and Nigeria is still in the process of recovering the immense loot<sup>93</sup>. Angola has not fared much better, as regards imperial interests. José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, one of the continent's longest-serving despots ruled from 1979 to 2017, with support from multinational oil companies such as Agip and BP, and oversaw a sophisticated corrupt network of offshore accounts, brazen embezzlement and foreign oil interests<sup>94</sup>. His daughter, Isabel Dos Santos is the continent's richest woman, with an estimated net worth of \$3billion, largely acquired from taking stakes in foreign companies doing business in Angola<sup>95</sup>.

One of the ways imperialism has continued to thrive and the relationship between Global North and South has been preserved is by curtailing development of the political-

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<sup>92</sup> Okonta Ike & Douglas, Oronto, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil*. (New York: Verso, 2003), 58-59.

<sup>93</sup> George, Libby, *Nigeria rejects U.S. senator's query over \$300 million Abacha loot repatriation*. Reuters World News (Online, April 10, 2020).

<sup>94</sup> Dolan A. Kerry, *Daddy's Girl: How an African 'Princess' Banked \$3billion in a country living on \$2 a day*. Forbes (Online, August 2013).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

economy of the South, by ensuring their stagnancy as resource rich countries, where other potentials lie dormant and instead, the exploitation and export of natural resources dominate other sources of revenue. And of course, the *Big Man* has remained an ever-willing agent of repression. Equally important, are the facts that the social contract further suffers since the elites or so-called *Big Men* do not actually need the people's taxes to run the country, since the resource industry generates enough to fuel their interest, strengthen the army, and keep the opposition and civil society docile either by threat of violence, or through financial appeasement<sup>96</sup>.

Burgis further provides an excitingly insightful look into the complex web of looters, politicians, businessmen, imperialists, et al that have been raping the continent of Africa and stealing its abundant resources, further establishing the relationship between Africa countries' operation of deeply-flawed social contracts and their resource dependent state. "*An economy based on a central pot of resource revenue is a recipe for 'big man' politics. The world's four longest serving rulers ... each preside over an African state rich in oil or minerals. Between them, they have ruled for 136 years*"<sup>97</sup>. The continent's longest serving leader, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has ruled oil-rich Equatorial Guinea since 1979, and has ruled autocratically and even created a cult of personality, by clamping down on the press, free speech and criticism, and encouraged the commemoration of the 1979 coup that brought him to power in public spaces and

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<sup>96</sup> Burgis, Tom, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. (London: William Collins, 2015).

<sup>97</sup> Burgis, Tom, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. (London: William Collins, 2015), 5.

many of his citizens wear clothes with his face printed on them<sup>98</sup>. He has an estimated net worth of \$600 million, and has not only enriched himself, but also pays foreign-based firms and foundations such as US-based non-profit, Leon H. Sullivan Foundation, to improve his image on the global stage, and further his interests<sup>99</sup>. Western governments hypocritically ignoring their assumed moral high ground, regarding corruption and human rights abuse, and turning a blind eye to African despots provided they are in line with Western interests is the norm rather than the exception. In 2018, former Nigerian Vice President and then presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, hired 2 US lobbying firms, Holland & Knight, and Ballard Partners to enlist the help of some Congressmen such as Representative Michael McCaul of Texas and Representative Chris Smith of New Jersey in a successful bid secure a US visa<sup>100</sup>. The strongman had been banned from visiting the US due to his involvement in the 2007 William J. Jefferson corruption case; where US Representative William Jefferson allegedly paid him, bribes aimed at furthering tech giant, Siemens business interests in Nigeria<sup>101</sup>.

As expected, there have been leaders that have risen on the African continent against colonialism and imperialism since the pre-colonial era, but their fates have almost always turned out the same; removed or killed and in their steads, leaders more inclined

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<sup>98</sup> Silverstein, Ken, *Dictators allowed to buy their own prizes, for the right price*. Harpers Magazine (Online, 2 June 2010).

<sup>99</sup> Attiah, Karen, *How an African Dictator Pays for Influence*. The Morningside Post, Huffington Post (Online, August 7, 2012).

<sup>100</sup> Sullivan, Andy; Wroughton, Lesley et al, *Nigerian candidate's U.S. visit was temporary reprieve from graft ban*. Reuters, (Online, 03/20/2020).

<sup>101</sup> Sullivan, Andy; Wroughton, Lesley et al, *Nigerian candidate's U.S. visit was temporary reprieve from graft ban*. Reuters, (Online, 03/20/2020).

towards Western interests. A notable pre-colonial example of this was the last king of Dahomey, Béhanzin, who ruled from 1889-1894, who was deposed by the French and exiled to Martinique and later, Algeria, after the Franco-Dahomean War that lasted from 1892-1894. In his place, Agoli-agbo, deemed more favorable to the French cause, was named king, and ironically, 6 years later, was deposed too for opposing new French taxes, thus, effectively putting an end to one of Africa's greatest kingdoms<sup>102</sup>. France continues to maintain formidable imperial ties with its West African colonies; some of its former colonies use the CFA franc, a currency whose monetary policy is decided by France, tailored to suit French interests, and pegged to the Euro; thus, making exports originating from the CFA-franc zone much more expensive than they actually should be, thereby, inhibiting economic growth. Worse still, as a result of the nature of the economies of most of the countries in the CFA zone, their continued use of this currency creates an issue of over-dependence on France, making them subservient and completely under French control and domination<sup>103</sup>. Furthermore, the French have a notorious long history of supporting despotic and corrupt African leaders – *Big Men*, as long as they remained tied to their aprons. One of their most prominent puppets was Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast who coined the term *Françafrique*, an expression describing France's very close (exploitative) ties with its former colonies<sup>104</sup> – unrepentantly corrupt,

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<sup>102</sup> Newbury, C.W., *A Note on the Abomey Protectorat*. (Africa: Journal of the International African Institute. 29 (2), 1959), 146–155.

<sup>103</sup> Cavanaugh, Jeffrey, *FOREX Africa: The CFA Franc aka The African Euro*, AFKI Original, (Online, February 12, 2014).

<sup>104</sup> Erlanger, Stephen, *Rwandan Leader, in Paris, Seeks to Ease Tensions*. (The New York Times, 12 September 2011).

he died leaving behind wealth, estimated at between \$7 billion to \$11 billion<sup>105</sup>. The French were also strong allies of Jean-Bédél Bokassa, leader of Central African Republic, which he renamed Central African Empire – a despot accused of several human rights violations, in 1977, he held a coronation ceremony for himself which cost a whopping US\$20 million, which was a third of the CAE's annual budget and all of France's aid money that year. His diamond-encrusted crown alone was valued at \$5 million<sup>106</sup>. In stark contrast, Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara, a young charismatic, visionary, anti-imperialist progressive was murdered in 1987 by Blaise Compaoré, his best friend and deputy, who ruled for 27 years until his regime was toppled by a massive demonstration in 2014 after he attempted extending his rule for the umpteenth time<sup>107</sup>. Sankara was staunchly anti-imperialist and in his 4-year rule, introduced radical reforms that were well ahead of their time which included promoting gender rights, creating anti-HIV programs, and of course, taking a principled stand against France, the World Bank & the IMF, bringing unprecedented progress to the country<sup>108</sup> – he wrote; *“Our country produces enough to feed us all. Alas, for lack of organization, we are forced to beg for food aid. It's this aid that instills in our spirits the attitude of beggars ...”*<sup>109</sup>. Unsurprisingly, imperialist France was uncomfortable with his stance and the widespread belief that they

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<sup>105</sup> Dulin, Antoine. *Biens mal acquis... profitent trop souvent*. Ivoire Diaspo (in French). Archived from the original (PDF) on 12 September 2008

<sup>106</sup> Lentz, H. M., *Heads of States and Governments*. (Jefferson: McFarland, 1994).

<sup>107</sup> BBC, *Burkina Faso general takes over as Compaore resigns*, (BBC News Online, November 1, 2014).

<sup>108</sup> Bonkougou, Mathieu, *Burkina Faso salutes "Africa's Che" Thomas Sankara*. (Reuters, October 17, 2007).

<sup>109</sup> Sankara, Thomas, *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution*. 1988. (Pathfinder, 2007), 11.

had a hand in his assassination is further strengthened by the fact that his successor and killer, Compaoré rescinded most of his policies and took a much more favorable position towards France. Compaoré ruled for 27 years and enjoyed massive French support and backing despite enriching himself at the expense of his people<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Reuters, *Burkina Transitional Council Indicts Former President Blaise Compaore for High Treason*. World News, July 17, 2015.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONGO: THE SICK MAN OF AFRICA

Of all the resultant entities of the brutal incursion, exploitation and balkanization of the African continent, perhaps none has encountered a more complex and complicated history and present than the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its appellation itself is ironic considering the number of autocratic regimes that have ruled the country since its independence from Belgium 60 years ago. One of the poorest countries on the planet and constantly one of the bottom-ranked countries on virtually every major index related to development and prosperity<sup>111</sup>, it is almost impossible to believe it is possibly the most resource-rich countries in the world.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Kongo Kingdom was highly centralized, with a capital, Mbanza, with a population of about 60,000, larger than that of London's 50,000 and about the same size as Lisbon<sup>112</sup>. It was a powerful kingdom and at the peak of its powers, extended from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Kwango River in the east, and from the Congo River in the north to the Kwanza River in the south, and its sphere of influence encompassed neighboring kingdoms, such as Ngoyo, Kakongo, Loango,

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<sup>111</sup> Ventura Luca, *Poorest Countries in the World 2019*, (Global Finance, April 17, 2019)

<sup>112</sup> Acemoglu, Daron & Robinson James A., *Why Nations Fail: The origins of power, prosperity and poverty*. (New York: Crown Publishing, 2012), 58.

Ndongo and Matamba, the latter two located in present-day Angola<sup>113</sup>. The kingdom experienced a varied amount of contact with the West, beginning with the Portuguese, over the next few centuries. This contact became a lot more defined in the 19th century, characterized by a mad scramble for Africa's resources by European powers. Belgium's Leopold II understood the strategic importance as well as the abundant wealth that colonization possessed, hence, made frantic efforts to secure a slice of the pie. He had made previous unsuccessful efforts to secure the Philippines from Spain and with that failure, his attention turned to the African continent<sup>114</sup>. About a decade before the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, he established a private holding company shrewdly disguised as an international scientific and philanthropic association, called the International African Society, or the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of the Congo and acquired the services of the explorer Henry Stanley to explore and establish a colony in the continent's Congo region<sup>115</sup>.

In the aftermath of the conference, his authority over the Congo region was recognized by other European colonial powers and the Congo Free State, an area 76 times larger than Belgium, was established under his personal authority and private army, the *Force Publique*<sup>116</sup>. He ruled ruthlessly over the lands and the people like his own

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<sup>113</sup> Thornton, John, *Demography and History in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1550–1750*. (The Journal of African History. 18 (4), 1977), 526.

<sup>114</sup> Ocampo, Ambeth, *Looking Back*. Mandaluyong, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2009), 54–57.

<sup>115</sup> Ewans, Sir Martin, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo Free State and its Aftermath*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2017), 122-124.

<sup>116</sup> Hochschild, Adam, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. (USA: Mariner, 1998), 123-124.

personal fiefdom under the guise of Christianizing and *civilizing* the people of the Congo<sup>117</sup>. He oversaw the brutal exploitation and dehumanization of a people he saw less than human in the first place and utilizing the *Force Publique*, established rubber collection quotas. The native populations were coerced into harvesting rubber and meeting a non-negotiable quota, and failure to meet this quota often meant mutilation and even death. The *Force Publique* were tasked with providing severed limbs of noncompliant or noneffective *workers* as evidence that they had carried out Leopold's orders<sup>118</sup>. Leopold exploited the resources of the Congo region, vastly enriching himself from the sale of the ivory and rubber collected by the brutalized and enslaved Congo labor force, and channeled the wealth towards extravagant construction projects; most of whom were dedicated to his *greatness*<sup>119</sup>. Although, the terroristic abuse of the Congo people lasted over 2 decades, their race, as well, as the fact that such colonial brutalization was not uncommon at the time meant barely attention was paid to it. Nevertheless, in 1908, the Belgian Parliament reluctantly took control of the Congo Free State, handsomely compensating Leopold for his troubles, thus, making it officially, a Belgian colony<sup>120</sup>.

The only major differences between Leopold's Congo and Belgian Congo were the drastic reduction in dehumanizing atrocities and the gradual infrastructural

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<sup>117</sup> Ewans, Sir Martin, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo Free State and its Aftermath*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2017), 123.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 117-118.

<sup>119</sup> Stanley, Tim, *Belgium's Heart of Darkness*. History Today. (Vol. 62 no. 10, October 2012).

<sup>120</sup> Hochschild, Adam, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. (USA: Mariner, 1998).

development, albeit, heavily targeted at Belgian exportation of Congo's resources and certainly not towards the welfare of the population<sup>121</sup>. It was the norm, rather than the exception for infrastructural developments on the continent at the time to be directed towards the extraction and exportation of resources to the metropole, which often times meant the construction of railways to connect seaports with resource-rich regions. Also, political participation amongst the Congo people was outlawed; a remarkable effort to destroy democracy and initiative among the Congolese and the *Force Publique*, now consisting of Congolese boots and Belgian leadership, enforced such laws with brutality. However, British-styled indirect rule, through corrupt Congolese leaders or as Rodney put it, *agents of repression*, was adopted by the Belgians, with kings, chiefs and appointed officers placed in administrative positions to oversee taxation, certain aspects of administration and more frankly, ensure the preservation of Belgian order over its colony<sup>122</sup>. One particularly effective way of preserving the status quo was a system of racial discrimination that ensured segregation between white colonizers and the black Congolese, with discrimination being commonplace in public buildings and spaces such as city centers, as well as in housing and healthcare<sup>123</sup>. There was an obvious *unholy* alliance among the church, the colonial state and the Belgian exploitative capitalistic machinery, masterminding the mental, economic, cultural and social domination of the Congolese people. Nonetheless, like in most African colonies, as the last roars of battle in

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<sup>121</sup> Ewans, Sir Martin, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo Free State and its Aftermath*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>122</sup> Meredith, Martin, *The fate of Africa: From the hopes of freedom to the heart of despair: A history of fifty years of independence*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 7.

<sup>123</sup> Vanderlinden, Jacques, *Pierre Ryckmans 1891–1959, Coloniser dans l'honneur*, Brussels: De Boeck, 1994).

WWII were heard, a sizeable and politically conscious African intelligentsia had emerged in the Congo. These men and women would play a significant, albeit, often ceremonial roles in the independence and political future of their country. In Congo, these social class were known as the social class were known as the *évolués* (meaning *those who have evolved* from *savagery* to so called *civilization*<sup>124</sup>), and comprised educated and intelligent young people, with a decent knowledge of French, often occupying skilled positions such as clerks and nurses<sup>125</sup>.

The post-WWII international political climate was dominated by the Cold War and to an equally important degree, a rise of pro-independent movements in colonies across the world, and with India gaining its independence in 1947, the fervor burned ever brighter. In 1958, a young, charismatic and Pan-Africanist intellectual, Patrice Émery Lumumba, who by then, had already faced criminal prosecution in the hands of the Belgian authorities due to his political views, was instrumental in the founding of the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) and rose through the ranks, to become party leader<sup>126</sup>. The MNC was quite unique and was frankly, an anomaly in Congo and in fact, most of colonial Africa, due to its ethnic diversity<sup>127</sup>. Indeed, he led a genuinely democratic and inclusive movement, that fought against divide and rule in the Congo, but

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<sup>124</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 248.

<sup>125</sup> Gibbs, David N., *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. American Politics and Political Economy. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, November 1991), 70.

<sup>126</sup> Gibbs, David N., *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. American Politics and Political Economy. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, November 1991), 79.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

sought to bring the Congolese together against colonial predation. In this, Lumumba's movement contrasts strikingly with sizable proportion of pro-independence political party membership and allegiance on the continent was rooted in ethnic and/or tribal identity. For example, the *Alliance des Bakongo* (ABAKO) served as the major ethno-religious organization for the Bakongo people<sup>128</sup>.

Lumumba's MNC advanced a pro-independence agenda, aimed at the gradual but methodological Africanization of the government, state-led economic development, and foreign affairs rooted in neutrality<sup>129</sup>. Lumumba, a Telela, was very popular across ethnic lines as he was charming, a great orator, intelligent and exuded charisma and was widely seen to be outside of Belgian influence, unlike many other politicians<sup>130</sup>. The late 50s saw amidst many other historic political events on the continent, the independence of Ghana in 1957, and it soon dawned on colonial powers including Belgium that colonization was in its last days. The Belgians then encouraged some political participation but only under strict guidance and approval and in May 1960, the first national elections were held in Congo, with Lumumba's MNC winning a plurality<sup>131</sup>. However, a combination of ethnic-centered politics, Belgian interference in the nascent political process as well as the

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<sup>128</sup> Carter, Gwendolen Margaret (ed.), *Five African States; Responses to Diversity: the Congo, Dahomey, the Cameroun Federal Republic, the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, South Africa*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963).

<sup>129</sup> Gibbs, David N., *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. American Politics and Political Economy. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, November 1991), 79-80.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>131</sup> Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960 – December 1961*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

absence of a truly united pro-independence front would complicate things and stifle the country's political maturity<sup>132</sup>.

Emerging from the upheaval were two prominent political rivals, Patrice Lumumba, a Telela and MNC leader and Joseph Kasa-Vubu, a Yomba and leader of the *Alliance des Bakongo* (ABAKO) party. They eventually placed their differences aside to become the Prime Minister and the President of newly independent Congo, respectively. The Belgians considered the conservative Kasa-Vubu a necessary check on what they considered the radical nature of Lumumba. Some of Lumumba's so-called radical political ideas included the improvement of the quality of life of the average citizen, the emphasis on nationhood as opposed to an ethnic or regional one, and an indigenization of the Congolese political process; all of which, threatened the Belgians' stranglehold on their former colony<sup>133</sup>. On June 30, 1960, Belgian Congo successfully gained its independence from Belgium, becoming *République du Congo* (Republic of Congo or Republic of the Congo in English), and due to the fact that the neighboring erstwhile French colony in the Congo Region, also decided on that identical appellation of *République du Congo* upon its independence, the two countries became known as *Congo-Léopoldville* and *Congo-Brazzaville*, after their capital cities<sup>134</sup>. The optimism, rejuvenation and empowerment that marked the Congolese independence was short-lived, however, as just days after independence, a mutiny broke out in the army, marking the

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>133</sup> Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960 – December 1961*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 79-80.

<sup>134</sup> Time Magazine (25 July 1960), *Jungle Shipwreck*, Archived 16 December 2014 at the Wayback Machine.

start of the Congo Crisis<sup>135</sup>. To further exacerbate an already ugly situation, Katanga, a resource-rich province, with huge deposits of cobalt, uranium, copper, tin, radium and diamonds, seceded under the leadership of Moïse Tshombe, leader of the local *Confédération des associations tribales du Katanga* (CONAKAT) political party, and with significant support from *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, a Belgian mining company, and a large contingent of Belgian military advisers<sup>136</sup>. The Belgian imperialists openly detested Lumumba's Pan-African and anticolonial stance and Tshombe's alliance meant access to the immense riches of the Congo.

Lumumba's appeal for US and UN support in suppressing the Belgian-supported Katangan secessionists was unsuccessful, hence, he became increasingly unopposed to Soviet military aid. This was at the height of the Cold War, and this created tensions internally and externally; effectively worsening relationships between Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu and chief-of-staff Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, as well as with the United States and Belgium<sup>137</sup>. It was increasingly important for the US and the USSR to stave off the other in search for allies amongst the newly-independent African states and both understood the economic strategic importance of the Congo, hence, the US and its ally, Belgium grew more concerned about Lumumba's perceived Communist ties. Soon after, President Kasavubu arbitrarily, and with Belgian imperial support removed him

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<sup>135</sup> Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960 – December 1961*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 88.

<sup>136</sup> Osabu-Kle, Daniel Tetteh, *Compatible Cultural Democracy*. (Broadview Press, 2000), 254.

<sup>137</sup> Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960 – December 1961*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 156-160.

from office<sup>138</sup>. Lumumba rightly refused to heed the order, creating a tense political impasse; one that was only broken with chief-of-staff Joseph-Désiré Mobutu's coup, which essentially summarily wrested control of the country<sup>139</sup>. Several attempts were made towards a reconciliation between Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu and the reintegration of Katanga, including one led by African diplomats, and another, by Mobutu but a combination of Tshombe's refusal to be aligned with a *Communist*, (an idea propagated by US and Belgian propaganda), and Lumumba's justified refusal to recognize Mobutu's coup resulted in their failure at reconciliation<sup>140</sup>. The increased political tensions in the country culminated in Lumumba's arrest by forces loyal to Mobutu and after being detained at Thysville, military barracks in inhumane conditions, Harold Charles d'Aspremont Lynden, the last Belgian Minister of the Colonies, ordered that Lumumba and two of his associates, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, be taken to the State of Katanga, which was still under Tshombe's rule<sup>141</sup>. They were brutalized and tortured, and eventually, executed, and their remains, brutally dismembered, and dissolved in sulfuric acid<sup>142</sup>. In 2002, the Belgian government issued a formal apology to the Congolese

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<sup>138</sup> O'Ballance, Edgar, *The Congo-Zaire Experience, 1960–98*. (New York: Springer, 1999), 26–27.

<sup>139</sup> Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960 – December 1961*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 214.

<sup>140</sup> . Hoskyns, Catherine, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960 – December 1961*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 221-222.

<sup>141</sup> De Witte, Ludo, *The Assassination of Lumumba*. (New York: Verso Books, 2001), 136.

<sup>142</sup> Kinzer, Stephen, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War*. (New York: Times Books, 2013).

people for their culpability in the deaths<sup>143</sup> and a year earlier, a report identified U.S. and Belgian assassination plots against kill Lumumba, as well as the CIA's involvement in the executions<sup>144</sup>.

The country witnessed three short-lived governments in just 4 years and once again, Mobutu exploited the instability, this time, becoming the country's leader and dictator in 1965. His overt support for the depraved plundering of the Congo's resources by Belgian, French and US multinational companies, coupled with US military aid to preserve him against any future Lumumba-style revolt, propagandized as his anticommunist stance made him popular in the West, winning him somewhat great admiration and a cult of personality, behind which he established a dysfunctional single-party system, rooted in obscene greed, endemic corruption, severe human rights violations, and political repression<sup>145</sup>. His narcissistic obsession with furthering his cult of personality led him to the construction of several white elephant projects, including a personal airport outside his palatial mansion and embarking on many PR stunts including hosting the 1974 heavyweight boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, in the face of such abysmal conditions faced by the average citizen, and changing his name to *Mobutu Sese Seko*, meaning *The warrior who leaves a trail of fire*

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<sup>143</sup> New York Times, World Briefing | Europe: *Belgium: Apology for Lumumba Killing*. (New York Times, February 6, 2002).

<sup>144</sup> Kettle, Martin, *President 'ordered murder' of Congo leader*. (London: The Guardian, 10 August 2000).

<sup>145</sup> Young, M. Crawford; Turner, Thomas Edwin, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 58.

*in his path*, and that of the country to Zaire<sup>146</sup>. The changes were made in line with his lofty *Zairianization* policy aimed at the *recovery* of economic modes of production from foreigners and reallocated to Zairean nationals<sup>147</sup>. Such policies allowed nepotism, corruption, waste, and mismanagement fester through a network of cronies and elites (publicly dubbed *Les Gros Legumes*), or *Big Vegetables*, loyal to Mobutu, in collusion with foreign capitalists. With about 17 – 22% of the national budget under his personal control, and amassing a great deal of wealth (estimated to be about \$4 billion in 1982)<sup>148</sup>, from personally exporting copper, ivory, diamonds and other minerals, Mobutu lorded over the Congo, like his personal fiefdom, like a certain Leopold II had done less than a century before. But of course, this *Big Man* was a product of US-Belgian imperialism.

The First Congo War (1996–1997), a civil war and international military conflict, which largely took place in Zaire (present-day DR Congo), but with neighboring countries such as Sudan and Uganda also witnessing severe bloodshed culminated in a military offensive that toppled the terminally ill strongman who was suffering from cancer and had been struggling to maintain order<sup>149</sup>. His 3-decade reign, between 1965 – 1997, was marked by severe economic decline and poverty that continued long after his ouster by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, owing to a well-oiled machinery of highly extractive set

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<sup>146</sup> Young, M. Crawford; Turner, Thomas Edwin, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 169.

<sup>147</sup> Bayart, Jean-Francois, *The State in Africa: The Politics of The Belly*. (USA: Polity Press, 2009), 84.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 87-88.

<sup>149</sup> Prunier, Gérard, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009),

of economic institutions<sup>150</sup>. Kabila's short yet tumultuous presidency was characterized by a series of seemingly unending conflicts and bloodshed. Under his watch, Zaire was renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo, but this was about the only change the Congolese people witnessed, as their socio-economic situation remained largely abysmal. The GDP per capita throughout his regime was below \$800, one of the lowest in the world<sup>151</sup>. Kabila chose to alienate his Rwandan and Ugandan allies that helped him to power and fearing being toppled, expelled all Rwandan and Ugandan forces from the Congo, leading to the Second Congo War, that involved at least, 9 countries and dozens of armed militias and warring factions<sup>152</sup>. Many of such tensions stemmed from divide and rule policies instituted by imperial powers, as well as conflicts surrounding arbitrary borders drawn decades earlier. Similarly, tensions and hostilities between/among ethnic groups, especially in Eastern Congo, oftentimes between the agrarian ethnic groups native to the Congo and semi-nomadic Tutsis that had emigrated from Rwanda (including after the 1994 Rwandan Genocide) ensured that for decades, peace would remain nothing but a lofty, unattainable dream in Central Africa's largest country<sup>153</sup>. Columbite-tantalite, better known as coltan, a metal vital in the production of devices and electronics has been at the center of much of the country's bloodshed in recent times; the trade has helped

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<sup>150</sup> Acemoglu, Daron & Robinson James A., *Why Nations Fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. (New York: Crown Publishing, 2012), 83.

<sup>151</sup> AfDB/OECD, *Democratic Republic of Congo*. (African Economic Outlook, 2005), 180.

<sup>152</sup> Reyntjens, Filip, *The Great African War: Congo and Regional Geopolitics, 1996–2006*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 194.

<sup>153</sup> Vlassenroot, Koen, *Conflict & Militia Formation in Eastern Congo*. Ed. Preben Kaarsholm. *Violence, Political Culture & Development in Africa*. (Athens: Ohio UP, 2006), 53.

fund local militias that have held sway over resource-rich Eastern Congo for decades <sup>154</sup>. Although, there have been a lot of legislation and regulations placed over exports from Congo to ensure only *conflict-free* coltan is exported, a combination of weak institutions, ruthless foreign capitalists and the brazenly corrupt Congolese army has ensured their redundancy<sup>155</sup>. Today, the DR Congo, remains one of the poorest countries in the world, still experiencing violent skirmishes, and many of the mines including those where coltan and cobalt are extracted are run by militias and employ unethical and immoral practices in their operations such as the use of child and even forced labor. A 2019 lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court in Washington D.C. by the non-profit organization International Rights Advocates, on behalf of 13 anonymous plaintiffs from the Democratic Republic of Congo, identified big multinational corporations including Apple, Tesla and Google over complicity in the death and maiming of hundreds, of Congolese children<sup>156</sup>.

The Congo paints a dire yet familiar picture across the continent and its long and complex history is one that resonates all through Africa. For instance, the horrific Belgian occupation and extraction of its resources under the *watchful* eyes of the International African Society, or the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of the Congo mirrors the devastating actions of the Royal Niger Company, (first named the United African Company, later renamed National African Company in 1881 and finally,

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<sup>154</sup> Burgis, Tom, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. (London: William Collins, 2015), 30.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>156</sup> CBS News, *Apple, Google, Microsoft, Tesla and Dell sued over child-mined cobalt from Africa* | (CBS News International, Dec 17, 2019).

in 1886, the Royal Niger Company)<sup>157</sup>. Although, it witnessed several changes in appellation, at its core, it preserved its essence; the goal and ambition of expanding and protecting British commercial interest on the continent of Africa, by any means necessary. This unchecked ambition led to the 1895 siege on Brass, the main city of the Ijaw People in present-day, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, which left 2000 mainly women and children dead and left the populations of Brass and two nearby towns, Fishtown and Twon almost completely wiped out<sup>158</sup>. Such elaborate extractive institutions were commonplace on the continent during the colonial era and often hid behind the Church and a *noble* cause to *civilize* heathens to perpetrate brutal crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, the history of the Congo and much of continent would be shaped by an imposed identity of being nothing but hubs for the extraction of cheap resources to feed the insatiable appetite of the imperialist-capitalist machine. Hence, many African countries have neglected developing industry and technological output, and lazily embraced resource exportation, and this has had devastating effects on their socio-economic lives over the decades, as greed, corruption, nepotism, violence and poverty fester and thrive in such arenas. Furthermore, just like in the Congo, where autocratic leaders like Mobutu, with the *Gros Legumes*, as supporting cast, held sway, the continent has suffered the brutal leaderships of figures such as Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, Jean Bédel Bokossa of the CAR, Sani Abacha of Nigeria, José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola,

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<sup>157</sup> Baker, Geoffrey L., *Trade Winds on the Niger: Saga of the Royal Niger Company, 1830-1971*. (London: Radcliffe Press, 1996).

<sup>158</sup> Okonta Ike & Douglas, Oronto, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil*. (New York: Verso, 2003), 1.

et al. Many of these despots ruled for decades, often embracing policies, favorable to imperial interests and at the expense of their own citizens. The incessant violence in the DR Congo, often across ethno-religious lines and over control of natural resources, is the rule, rather than the exception on the continent, thanks to hastily-drawn arbitrary borders that united people with little or no prior contact, shared culture, philosophies, languages, or beliefs. Lastly, the fact that the DR Congo is one of the poorest countries on the face of the globe despite the sheer abundance of resources it possesses captures the rather ironic realities of many Sub-Saharan African countries, and the continent remains home to 43% of the world's poorest despite possessing almost a third of global oil and minerals<sup>159</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup> Burgis, Tom, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. (London: William Collins, 2015).

## CHAPTER 6

### ENTER THE DRAGON

In the last few decades, the continent of Africa has experienced an unprecedented rise in Chinese influence on the continent. Deeply rooted in what is perceived as an ingenious strategy, based on wielding enormous soft power built on non-interference and pragmatism, the Chinese share rapidly growing economic ties with African countries. Offering the continent an alternative model of development, in heavy contrast to what many deem a Western-oriented neoliberal one-size-fits-all- approach, and a policy of non-interference in national politics, the Chinese have managed to portray themselves as the *good guys* as opposed to the evil, greedy Western imperialists, and have certainly made significant headway. This, however, is to be expected, considering Africa's checkered colonial past, coupled with the present imperial era sustained by controversial military aid, covert foreign interventions in civil wars, the excesses of multinational companies, as well as imperialists' roles in the deaths of such iconic leaders like Lumumba and Sankara. Expectedly, this interest in the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest continent has impacted national economic dynamics regionally and reverberated across the globe, with a clear preference for China shown by many African leaders, in opposition to dealing with international organizations such as the World Bank and IMF, in a somewhat desperate bid to avoid the bureaucratic loan conditions and provisions such as those found in the horrible Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s and 1990s. Such

provisions and conditions included deficits reduction via currency devaluation, austerity measures which often cut funding for education and healthcare, the elimination of food subsidies which often negatively affected agricultural industries, and the privatization, or divestiture, of all or part of government-owned enterprises<sup>160</sup>.

In the aftermath of the Second Boer War in 1902, the gold-producing Rand Mines in the Transvaal in modern-day South Africa were faced with a serious issue; shortage in the supply of labor<sup>161</sup>. Two years later, despite stiff Boer opposition, the Legislative Council of the Transvaal, which had become a British colony, finally conceded to the passage of a Labor Importation Ordinance. This permitted the introduction of indentured Chinese laborers under certain restrictive conditions and was designed to a temporary measure to hasten the actualization of the vast wealth which the expensive war had, at least in part, been fought over. In a few years, about 63,000 Chinese laborers emigrated to the Transvaal, drastically improving the paltry population of 2,000 Chinese already living there and in the Cape Colony<sup>162</sup>. This rather mundane yet momentous incident is often seen as the most noteworthy account of the birth of Sino-African economic ties in relatively modern times.

After the 1949 revolution, Chairman Mao was more preoccupied with internal politics, seeking to establish sovereignty and control over all of the country, with the

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<sup>160</sup> White, Howard, *Adjustment in Africa*. Development and Change. (27 (4), 1996), 785–815.

<sup>161</sup> Harris, Karen, *Not a Chinaman's Chance: Chinese Labor in South Africa and the United States of America*, (Historia, vol. 52, no. 2, November 2006), 177-80.

<sup>162</sup> Harris, Karen, *Not a Chinaman's Chance: Chinese Labor in South Africa and the United States of America*. (Historia, vol. 52, no. 2, November 2006), 184.

bigger goal of legitimizing the authority of the Communist Party, hence, it wasn't until 1954, that the first key principles and guidelines shaping and dictating the country's foreign policy were officially formulated<sup>163</sup>. The *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* advocated mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. These principles, which are formally still in use today, were formulated specifically as guidelines for China's relationship with neighbors, India over disputed Tibet. However, they quickly evolved to be more encompassing and were embraced by the 29 participating countries at the Asian–African Bandung Conference of April 1955<sup>164</sup>. From the beginning, China displayed an admirable degree of practicality and pragmatism in its support for African countries still embroiled in bitter struggles for independence and in their relationships with newly independent ones. At that time, the country was in the shadows of the USSR but by the mid - late 1950s, the country had begun taking a more assertive stance externally, and in its relationships with Africa's fledging states<sup>165</sup>. It soon became rather apparent that China had a somewhat desperate need for new diplomatic partnerships and support across the globe due to their increasing differences with their ideological *big brother*, the USSR, and to perhaps a larger extent, their fight for recognition from the United Nations against the continuing claims of the Kuomintang (KMT) government, exiled in Taiwan (then known as the

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<sup>163</sup> Raine, Sarah, *China's African Challenges*. (London: Routledge, 2013), 1.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *The Second Upsurge in the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations*. (Online. Retrieved: April 2020)

Republic of China)<sup>166</sup>. Chinese prime minister, foreign minister and head of the Chinese delegation to Bandung in 1955, Zhou Enlai, was dedicated to the *Bandung spirit*, embarking on three major foreign tours to promote his country's interests internationally. On one of these, he took a trip to Africa and between late 1963 and early 1964, visited ten African countries. On this historic tour, Zhou proposed the *Eight Principles Governing China's Economic and Technological Assistance to Foreign Countries*, and the *Five Principles Governing Relations with African and Arab Countries*<sup>167</sup>. The People's Republic of China's struggle for global diplomatic recognition continued all through the 1960s and by the end of the decade, Beijing had diplomatic relations with 18 African nations. However, it was facing an uphill battle for UN recognition; in 1967, the vote was 45 to 58 against them, with 17 abstentions<sup>168</sup>. The tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution imposed a massive setback on the country's national development and inevitably, its foreign relation, with the country being forced to recall all but one of their ambassadors on the African continent<sup>169</sup>. At the 26th UN General Assembly in 1971, the PRC's annual bid to replace the KMT-led Republic of China as the occupier of China's permanent seat in the UN Security Council from the KMT-led Republic of China finally yielded some positive results; twenty-six African states backed the PRC as the *only lawful representative of China to the United Nations*, making up just over a third of the

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<sup>166</sup> Raine, Sarah, *China's African Challenges*. (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>167</sup> Spence, Jonathan D., *The Search for Modern China*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 527.

<sup>168</sup> Taylor, Ian, *China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise*. (London: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 32-33

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 33.

country's support<sup>170</sup>. The country became more assertive than ever before on the global stage and underlined this brazenly, highlighting their ambitions for Third World leadership in 1974 in Mao's *theory of three worlds*, which essentially depicted the US and USSR as two sides of a coin; sharing the same imperialistic and oppressive status as First World nations rather than two opposing sides, their allies in other developed countries constituted the Second World and the Third World comprised of the developing world made up of Africa, Latin America and all of Asia, except Japan<sup>171</sup>. It was clear for the world to see that the PRC had become a power to be reckoned with and by the end of the decade, the US had offered them full diplomatic recognition<sup>172</sup>.

China's giant economic leaps over the following decades led to the reinvigoration of Chinese interest in Africa and indeed, in its engagements elsewhere. Becoming an economic behemoth placed the country in rather desperate need of becoming more influential in other parts of the developing world. Emboldened by its *going out* or *go global* strategy embraced in the 1990s, underlining the country's ambitions to strengthen its businesses and companies by encouraging them to move from China and make strides in global markets, Chinese commercial and political relations and ties with Latin America, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Pacific islands have all burgeoned over the past decade. Just like those in Africa, many of the countries in those regions are exceptionally rich in resources, which the Chinese need to feed their gigantic ambitions

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<sup>170</sup> UNGA Resolution 2758, 25 October 1971.

<sup>171</sup> Gillespie, Sandra, *Diplomacy on a South-South Dimension*. Hannah (ed.). Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy. (Diplo Foundation, 2004), 123.

<sup>172</sup> Raine, Sarah, *China's African Challenges*. (London: Routledge, 2013).

and literally, their burgeoning population. With 9 percent of the world's arable land, 6 percent of its water, and over 20 percent of its people, China faces an obvious need for more resources to cater to its population and the continent of Africa, with its lush forests, savannahs and river basins holding the planet's largest expanses of underutilized land and water seemingly ideal for exploitation<sup>173</sup>. In 2006, the country embarked on a national food security strategy plan which advocated for the country to *go global* wielding their vast economic resources to develop foreign land, water, and energy resources; the plan pushed for large-scale, food conglomerates to produce grains, oilseeds, and sugar crops on rented land in South and North America and Africa, to be shipped back to China to address food security concerns<sup>174</sup>. In line with this, today, the Chinese government has acquired hundreds of thousands of acres of African land to grow food to ship back to China. Chinese economic interests in Africa extend from agriculture to manufacturing to resource exploitation to exploiting the continent's strategic location for seaports, in countries like Djibouti. China's economic approach to bilateral and multilateral agreements with African countries often occur in the form of massive resources-for-infrastructure deals, where the country provides China a certain amount of minerals and resources in exchange for infrastructural projects; often a bridge, highways or ports. Nonetheless, this could appear worrisome but for the fact that it pales in comparison to the behemoth that is America's military ambitions, for example.

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<sup>173</sup> Brautigam, Deborah, *Will Africa Feed China?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>174</sup> Cornish, Lisa, *Understanding China's foreign agriculture investments in the developing world*. (DevEx Online, 30 April 2018).

In 2008, China and the DRC agreed to a noteworthy deal worth about \$9 billion in infrastructural development; primarily highway repairs, and the construction of dams and airports in exchange for about a contract for copper and cobalt extraction, providing the Chinese access to about ten million tons of copper and 600,000 tons of cobalt<sup>175</sup>. Perhaps more interestingly, before pen was ever put to paper on the deal, 60 of the 75 processing plants in the DRC's resource-rich Katanga province were owned and operated by Chinese companies, with more than 90% of the region's excavated minerals being exported to China<sup>176</sup>. The China - DR Congo economic relationship, as well as this specific deal, have raised some eyebrows on the continent as a result of the vast sums involved, the large quantity of exploited resources and the optics of the deal, in general, in relation to Congo's checkered and bitter history. In more recent times, the Chinese have expanded their influence on the continent and added African countries to their rapidly growing sphere of influence; in 2017, in what many viewed as a statement of intent to accelerate China's power projection capabilities in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, the Chinese established the Chinese People's Liberation Army Support Base in Djibouti, a military base operated by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)<sup>177</sup>. Coupled with this, the Chinese also built the continent's largest seaport in Djibouti, and a railway to Ethiopia, effectively ensuring the near-actualization of what appears to be a sophisticated transportation and communication network stretching all the way from

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<sup>175</sup> Wallis William, *Congo Outlines \$9bn China Deal*, Financial Times. (Online: 9 May 2008).

<sup>176</sup> Clark, Simon; Smith, Michael; and Wild, Franz, *China Lets Child Workers Die Digging in Congo Mines for Copper*, Bloomberg (Online: 23 July 2008).

<sup>177</sup> Paice, Edward, *Djibouti Wins Jackpot – Renting Out Desert for Military Bases*. The Cipher Brief (Online: May 30, 2017).

Djibouti, to the northern rim of the Indian Ocean, from Cambodia to Sri Lanka to Pakistan<sup>178</sup>. Chinese economic involvement on the continent, although, starkly different to European colonialism is also directed at the plundering of the continent's resources. However, the fact that Africans are directly involved in these multilateral and bilateral agreements ensures there is at least, an iota of fairness and African interests taken into consideration unlike what was witnessed on the continent during colonialism. Nonetheless, it would be virtually impossible until possibly a few decades from now to accurately quantify the direct benefits Chinese involvement has contributed to national and regional development in Africa.

Employing a measured yet ingenious strategy comprising of seemingly untransparent economic deals involving aid, foreign direct investment, infrastructural development and maintenance, military training and arms, the Chinese government has undoubtedly gained great success in the enticement of African countries into its sphere of influence. Since 2000, China has lent an astonishing \$130 billion to African countries and the loans have tripled since 2012, largely through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aimed at expanding its communication and transportation network, and ultimately, globally expanding its sphere of influence, as it rapidly approaches superpower status<sup>179</sup>.

China's enormous success on the continent can be attributed largely to certain reasons; its colonial past and revolutionary rejection of British and Japanese imperialism,

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<sup>178</sup> Bearak Max, *In strategic Djibouti, a microcosm of China's growing foothold in Africa*. The Washington Post (Online: Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>179</sup> Damon, Arwa and Swails, Brent, *China and the United States face off in Djibouti as the world powers fight for influence in Africa*. CNN (Online: May 27, 2019).

which ensures a sense of solidarity with and amongst other victims of colonialism, Africa's ineffective leadership, corruption and chronic mismanagement of bountiful resources and lastly, an admirable level of pragmatism in its foreign policy. The growing Chinese debt on the continent means a growing Chinese influence and dependency on China, and this has not gone unnoticed by Western countries; some of whom have hypocritically criticized the country's approach to the African continent. Nonetheless, as it stands, it appears the dragon has come to stay and stay for good.

## CONCLUSION

Africa is a very diverse continent, with a vast array of people, nations, beliefs, races, physical attributes, perspectives et al. However, shared struggles, common problems and history have ensured a certain semblance of homogeneity from a strictly socio-political perspective. Poverty, political instability, brutal colonial history, imperialism, economic stagnation, corruption, autocratic kleptomaniacs, weak institutions, and ethno-religious strife are the rule and not the exception in Sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps, most pertinent here, is the creation of the state in Africa, and the nature of its creation; born out of colonial greed, pragmatism and an intention to preserve the continent as a perpetual source of resources by exploiting ethno-religious strife and other socio-political factors. The vast majority of Africa's issues can be attributed to its brutal colonial history and it may be important to look to its past to proffer solutions for its future. For example, on the issue of arbitrary borders, it may become necessary to create new countries, when there are conspicuous irreconcilable differences in values and culture like in the case of South Sudan that broke away from Sudan after decades of hostilities, although, preserving the borders while attempting to bridge the gaps amongst the distinct nations, tribes and ethnicities that constitute each state appears to be a much more viable, feasible and pragmatic approach. Furthermore, Africa must look inward to solve its problems due to the uncomfortable fact that its interests are not in alignment with the rest of the world, for the most part. To the outside world, it is nothing but a

resource-rich landmass and has been for the better part of 4 centuries, hence, it becomes ever important for more emphasis on regional cooperation. In order to achieve this, transportation and communication across the continent would need to be greatly developed and improved. Today, a catastrophic mix of poor transportation and communication infrastructure, an overreliance on external trade, decrepit manufacturing industries, inadequate political will, corruption, and unchecked violence have stifled intra-continental trade and business, ensuring they remain costly, inefficient, and time-consuming.

With the youngest population in the world, as well as almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of global natural resources, the continent possesses limitless potentials, but only if they can be harnessed optimally and in such a way that puts the national and regional interests at the forefront. This would, of course, mean the continent works for the good of the common Africans for the very first time since the creation of the states, and not in the interest of the current crop of kleptomaniac African elites, China, Western countries, nor any other external entity. The African diaspora has an integral role to play in providing remittances, technological transfer, skills, foreign direct investments and also, in the creation of robust institutions built on principles of such as social contracts and the rule of law. The countries on the continent must embrace a new identity, novel ideas, new philosophical and ideological perspectives and reject being illusory vestiges of their colonial pasts.

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