

## COLOMENTALISM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The British colonial masters took full control of the political, economic, religious and even the social life of Nigeria. Nigerians have irrationally chosen to remain slaves of their circumstances even when the colonial masters have long gone. The damage caused by the colonial indoctrination and outlandish orientation is quite enormous but not irredeemable. For this reason, this paper calls for urgent, persistent, rational and psychological conscientization that would consequently lead to or bring about a decolomentalization or decolonization of Nigeria and her teeming population. Because we believe that Nigeria can still be liberated from her oppressive colonial mentality by radically, rationally, creatively and culturally addressing the situations, circumstances and systems that have hitherto kept her mentally, socially, culturally, economically and politically slave in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, this paper addresses the negative influences or impacts of colonialism in modern day Nigeria. The paper was necessitated by the sad realization that Nigerian independence is not completely won yet. This paper employs a critical and historical analysis in the delineation of our subject matter. The main objective of this paper is to highlight, draw attention to and recommend ways and methods through which Nigeria can actualize a total and complete independence from neo-colonialism and colomentalism.*

**Keywords:** Colomentalism, Colonization, Colonized, Neo-colonization, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The British colonizers who came into Nigeria were not interested in learning about the diverse cultures of the people who already inhabiting the territory. They came into Nigeria purely for financial and political reasons. The British colonized Nigeria and other African countries because they were in need of foreign materials to increase their country's wealth and expand their empire. They had two principal agenda: what would make the colony easy to rule and what would bring them profit quickly and easily. No doubt, colonialism has bought constructive and destructive effects on the life of the nation Nigeria. Unfortunately, the

destructive effects of colonialism outnumbered its constructive effects. This is why this paper concentrate on the negative effects of colonialism in Nigeria because the impacts of these destructive effects can still be felt firmly in Nigeria's economic, religious, social and political systems today. The colonialists' inability to set a proper foundation for Nigeria to be ruled as a country is the basis for the numerous conflicts that crippled Nigeria today. The colonial masters rather handed the emerging Nigerian leaders a shabby economy that had no promise of growth or development. This was intentionally done so that even after they've left Nigeria, Nigeria would still require their assistance to run its government. The implication is that Nigeria independence is not yet completely won. The colonial legacies served as hindrances to the progress of Nigeria because the colonial policies had been threaded into the fabric of the Nigerian government as well as into the culture of the various people that constitute the nation called Nigeria. The assimilation of the colonial legacies led to the displacement of the culture, traditions and values of Nigeria and Nigerian people. Like many other nations in Africa, the introduction of the foreign culture, values, beliefs, religion and commerce affected, influenced and changed the Nigerian man's world view tremendously. These effects, influences and changes culminated into what we refer to as colomentalism.

Therefore, in the midst of the above circumstances, and given the extent to which colonialism has given birth to colomentalism, eating deep into the fabrics and the very essence of the Nigerian society, it is therefore, imperative that decolonization or decolomentalization is a necessity and indispensable phenomenon, needed to salvage the already bastardized cultural, social and psychological wellbeing of the Nigerian man. Thus, as it stands today, decolonization is not an option in the collective and individual lives of the Nigerians, but a categorical requirement, if Nigerians are to restore, regain and reinstate their cultural and traditional heritage. Hence, as Okolo (1993) rightly suggested, "if the African is to win his current battle for progress and development or hopes to overcome his psychological, social and political predicament, he must equip himself with genuine self-knowledge and self-understanding." This can only be possible if we undertake the programme of decolonizing the minds of Africans and Nigerians. Thus, genuine self-knowledge and self-understanding, which are the two pillars of decolonization, are urgently needed in the struggles for the total emancipation of the Nigerian man from the shackles and bondages of colomentalism. This calls for a radical, rational and creative action to salvage the situation. Nigerians must therefore, appreciate themselves, their culture, their values and their dignity more; avoiding the illusion of defining and expressing their existence in terms of the oppressive European culture. In other words, Europeans and their oppressive culture should cease to be

the yardstick with which Nigerians and indeed all blacks should measure themselves, their progress, their acceptance and adjustment in the society.

Having been subjugated and systematically stripped off of the most important characteristics or qualities of humanity – culture, values and dignity – Nigerians like the rest of Africa found themselves under a new form of colonialism called colomentalism or in the words of Ezeani (2005) “Colonialysis”. Colonialysis according to Ezeani is “a disease of the mind or the head resulting from the act of colonization of the people.” The essence of neo-colonialism as expressed by Crozier (1964) implies however, that “a country does not become truly independent because an imperialist power confers sovereignty on it and even though it may surrender political power, the imperialist country is able to remain its ultimate control by other means. This may be economic, military or cultural or a combination of the three.” Although the imperialist British nation has ultimately remained and continued to control the colonized through the aforementioned three means, the greatest and most devastating of the three is cultural in which religion and beliefs are equally subsumed. This is why, even when the British colonizers had long gone, their intractable and obnoxious cultural legacies have not stopped hunting and hurting Nigeria and Nigerians till date. Hence, the need for a serious and urgent decolonization or decolomentalization of the Nigeria’s colonial and neo-colonial predicaments, so that she can be mentally liberated to actualize complete independence.

## **Colonialism**

Colonialism can be described as the deliberate imposition of the rules and policies of a nation on another nation. In other words, colonialism is an instrumental process through which a state acquires and maintains colonies in another foreign territory. For Ronald J. Horvath, colonialism is a “form of domination - the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups” (Horvath 1972, 46). Its strategy therefore, is the forced placement of a nation over another that gives room for the opportunity to exploit the colonized nation in order to facilitate the economic development of the colonialist home state. Hence, colonialism is a tool for expansion and a form of exploitation on all fronts. Colonialism being a system of acquisition and maintenance of colonies over a native territory by people of another country encompasses the social, political and economic life of the country. Here, political and economic decisions are taken by the colonizers, often with the intention of serving their own interests to the detriment of the host country. For this reason, the relationship between the

colonizers and the colonized is can never be equal in nature. Besides, the idea behind colonialism has always been the conquest and rule over a country or region by another, allowing for the exploitation of the resources of the conquered for the profit of the conqueror. Hence, the colonizers basically reorganized and reoriented the economy of the colonized to serve the needs of the ruling country without giving thought to the development of the natives. It is for this reason that Kwame Nkrumah, reflecting on the exploitative philosophy of colonialism, defines it as, "... the policy by which a foreign power binds territory to herself by political ties with the primary objective of promoting her own economic advantage" (Nkrumah, 1965).

As can be seen, colonialism is replete with a political, social, economic oppression and exploitation of the less privileged nations. Used positively, colonialism appears to be solution to the problems of the weaker nations, but ironically and unfortunately too, it is actually meant to subjugate, exploit and dehumanize the weaker nations that cannot stand on their own. It does this by establishing superiority and inferiority complex between the colonizer and the colonized which often led to a situation where the colonizers assume superior position and regard the colonized as objects to be seen and not to be heard. Like Nkrumah rightly observed, the motive behind colonialism as pre-eminently economic. There is abundant proof that the primary motives underlying the quest for colonies and the present administrative and economic policies of the colonial power are rooted in economic exploitation and not in humanitarianism as the colonizers had blandly tried to convince themselves and the rest of the world. But the truth is clear; their motive was purely economic! And they made sure that African economy was totally diverted, usurped, converted for their benefits and finally destroyed. It was the realization of the damage caused by the colonizers to the colonized that led Walter Rodney to write a classic and a famous work, entitled, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Having underdeveloped Africa, Europe undertook the ignominious task of building or making Africa a receptive tank or what Nkrumah refers to as: "the dumping ground" and the peoples, "the false receipts of manufactured goods of the industrialist and capitalists of Great Britain, France, Belgium and other colonial powers who turn to the dependent territories which feed their industrial plant" (Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom*, p. xv). Thus, the colonial masters reduced the colonies and the people to objects of manipulation and exploitation for the advancement of their economic, social and political needs. In doing that, they underdeveloped and drained the colonized - Africa (Nigeria) to develop their own country. Consequently, instead of helping to improve African indigenous civilization, Europeans civilization was rather enforced on the

Africans. They manipulated and affected this while pretending to be on a civilizing mission in Africa. Before the coming of the European colonizers, Africa had a unique civilization of their own. Unfortunately, having forced themselves into the colonies, they skillfully manipulated Africans to look down on their very being, their fellow Africans, their own values and identity in order to adopt European values, learn European languages in preparation to work and serve the Europeans. They were made to believe that they were inferior and, as such, only the ways of the colonialists were worthy to be imbibed. It was for this very reason that many writers believe that colonialism did more evil than good to Africa.

Some people, including the Europeans and their African sympathizers or supporters, had argued that colonialism did some immeasurable good things to Africa. According to the argument, colonial masters built railway lines, roads, hospitals, schools, and many more. No doubt, they did all that; the question however, is, for what purpose and for whose benefits? Of course, they did all these things mainly to achieve their own selfish and imperialistic interests. They did not build railways because they wanted to provide means of transportation for the Africans, but to transport goods - our goods - from the North to the South for onward shipment to their countries. The few schools they built were basically for the training of Africans to work for them as clerks, and not to educate and liberate them. Thus, from this perspective, it became obvious and unquestionably true that colonialism was not really aimed at helping Africa and the African people. Colonialism was rather meant to exploit them for the benefits of the Europeans. In fact, it was simply a means for the Europeans ends. In other words, the whole ugly enterprise of colonialism was undertaken to enrich the Europeans at the detriment of the Africans.

In political terms, the negative impact of colonialism was quite spectacular. This is because, "overnight, African political States lost their power of independence, and meaning-irrespective of whether they are big empires or small politics... political power had passed into the hands of the foreign overlords (W. Rodney, 1982). This indeed was the beginning of the Africa's woes. Hence, the present cultural, social, political and economic dichotomy which we face today all over Africa and particularly in Nigeria by the Nigerians of South-Eastern Nigeria, are no doubt, the effects of colonialism/neo-colonialism. This is why there is a need for a proper understanding of the psychological problems created by colonization, so that we can deconstruct the present precarious and ignoble circumstances staring us on the face.

Meanwhile, we cannot deny the fact the colonial masters left some positive legacies with Africa, such as modern technology, Christianity, and above all, formal education. But then, as already mentioned, the Europeans did not intend leaving any positive legacy for the sake of the love they have for Africa and African people. In fact, a closer analysis and evaluation of the so called positive legacies left by the colonial masters would reveal that they were actually the tools for their colonial manipulations and subjugation. Christianity for instance was introduced mainly for Africa to forsake her own traditional religion and adopt the religion of the colonial masters. Formal education finally saw to it that Africans abhor their own language and struggle to master and speak the language of the colonial masters so as to totally lose touch with the culture, customs and beliefs of the African people. This is because language is the fundamental aspect of every culture and religion. Today, a good number of Africans, particularly Nigerians, can hardly speak their indigenous language, thanks to colonialism.

### **Colomentalism**

Colomentalism is quite a recent term coined from the words 'colonial' and 'mentality'. It means colonial mentality - a disease of the mind resulting from the act of colonization of the people. Colomentalism is therefore, a distortion of the mind in which a person consciously and unconsciously despises what is his or hers and who he or she is. A person who is suffering from colomentalism or who is controlled by this mental disease, tend to acquire an inordinate love or desire to be like the colonizer (white man) or to have everything the colonizer has. Besides being a state of the mind in which a person unconsciously and consciously despises himself and what belongs to him, colomentalism can also be understood as a state of the mind in which a person, due to his colonial orientations and indoctrination consciously despises and rejects most if not everything about his or her origin, values, beliefs and culture. It is for this reason that colomentalism is regarded as a disease of the mind. Because, being a disease of the mind, the infected persons develop an inordinate desire or love to become like the colonizer in all things at all costs. This is what Wole Soyinka (1998) described as "the slave mentality that makes sacrosanct whatever has been bequeathed to us by European authority" (p.21). This slave mentality according to Soyinka or colonialism according to Ezeani (2005) makes a people embrace everything the white man says, does or teaches without critical analysis or questioning. Above all, it makes one disdain himself, his culture, his values and everything he stands for. In fact, colomentalism makes a person a white man in a black skin. It is for this reason that

we call for a decolonization of the minds of Nigerians in order to gain freedom and independence from every foreign manipulations and indoctrinations.

### **Decolonization**

Decolonization is a consequent of the impact and influences of colonization. In other words, we can talk of decolonization today only because there were and still are nations under colonial rule, directly or indirectly. Nigeria in particular is no longer under colonial rule directly; but indirectly she is still been ruled by her former colonizer – Britain. There are several approaches to the understanding of the term decolonization. First, we understand decolonization to mean the abolishment of colonialism and the enthronement of a nation's powers over its own territories. That is, a situation in which a nation that has erstwhile been controlled by foreign powers, revives and acts under its own volition, free from the direct control of foreign powers or actors. Secondly, decolonization can be understood as the intellectual decolonization from the colonizers' ideas that made the colonized feel inferior (Mignolo, 2011). In other words, the term decolonization can be understood as mental emancipation from “acute colonialysis – involving a loss of contact with or unconscious rejection of one's own reality in preference to the other people's reality” (Soyinka, 1998). This means liberating the mind or oneself from the colonial disease of struggling to be like or imitate the way other people considered superior speak and live, as well as the deliberate rejection of one's own language and mutilation of the spelling and pronunciation of one's own names.

Being a journey of self-discovery, reawakening and value re-orientation, decolonization in essence, involves a conscious decision to first uncover, uproot and remove all remnants of slavery and colonial values and beliefs harmful and responsible for the myriads of problems that hamper growth and development at all levels. It calls for self-realization, self-determination, self-esteem, and acceptance of who and what we stand for. It is for the very fact that colonialism has seriously affected the mental reasoning and political life of the Africans that Kwasi Wiredu advocates the need for Africans to go through a process of mental decolonization (Wiredu 1998). For Wiredu, decolonization is a necessary tool for developing an authentic African philosophy that is devoid of any neo-positivist influences. Taking a cue from Wiredu, we see decolonization as necessary and expedient in the re-development and maintenance of an authentic Nigerian self-hood. This can only happen when, as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o noted, the “cultural bomb” is diffused (Wa Thiong'o, 1986: 29). The process of diffusing the cultural

bomb or decolonizing the colonized's minds begins when we return to our culture; develop our indigenous languages and proudly use them as means of communication, teaching and learning in our educational institutions. It can also take place when Nigeria begins to value and appreciate what she is and what she stands for in the continent of Africa.

### **Effects of Colonization in Nigeria**

No doubt, colonization has some unarguable positive effects on the Nigeria nation. However, in this paper we are concerned only with the negative effects because these negative effects have really contributed to much of the problems the nation is having presently. Besides, concentrating on the negative effects of colonialism would help us to start the process of a systematic decolonization of Nigeria.

Colonization therefore, has serious negative impact on the economy of Nigeria. It has made Nigeria dependent on the colonial masters even after she has gained independence. This is because the colonial masters tapped into and exploited the mineral and human resources of Nigeria and this has left Nigeria somewhat underdeveloped or developing. Till date, Britain has not stopped stealing Nigeria's mineral resources. A large number of resources were exported out of Nigeria due to colonization. The British Empire and other colonial powers extracted and sold a lot of unique minerals belonging to the Nigerian people. Consequently, Nigeria is still very much dependent on Britain for many things. Even the clothing materials and other things are imported from Britain and other countries. This form of economic dependence is referred to as a type of neocolonialism or what we here call colomentalism.

The colonizers strengthened and enthroned slave trade when they came into Nigeria. Today, a new form of slave trade known as kidnapping is sweeping across the nation like fire. Human trafficking otherwise known as another form of slave trading is equally on the rise, masterminded by the Europeans who still feel that Africans are not human beings. It is impossible to deny the fact that Nigerians became more cruel because of slave trade. A lot of Africans became agents for slave trading companies all over the world. They helped the British slave traders to kidnap people and turn them into slaves. Today, the issue of kidnapping is and still remains a threat to the overall security and wellbeing of the Nigerian people.

In the area of education, the colonial master replaced and killed our traditional education with theirs. Although we can agree that Western education has brought many positive changes to Nigeria, yet we cannot forget the fact that before the

coming of the colonial masters, the various entities that make up Nigeria had their own form of education. Besides, the colonial masters destroyed our traditional medicine by regarding them as unorthodox and primitive medicine. Today, the same Nigerian traditional medicine competes favourably with the colonial masters' orthodox medicine.

Above all, colonization of Nigeria brought about loss and destruction of our indigenous culture and traditions. First, the native languages in Nigeria were made inferior to the languages of the colonial masters. This has seriously affected every aspect of the nation's life as English language was forced on the Nigerian people to the detriment of their own languages. Many Nigerian tribes are facing cultural extinction due to assimilation of the colonial masters' language. In Igbo society for example, a good number of Igbo sons and daughters can hardly speak or understand their language. Apart from displacing our indigenous languages, the colonial influence also changed the mode of dressing of the Nigerian people. Today, majority of Nigerians dress and speak like the colonial masters as they were made to believe that their colonial masters were superior human beings. This belief in the superiority of the colonial masters and their ways of life, and the unquestionable desire to be like the colonial masters is what we refer to as colomentalism.

### **Areas of Decolonization in Nigerian**

How do we decolonize the mind of the Nigerian man given his romance with the colonizers' culture? As already noted, any meaningful or sustainable decolonization of Nigeria must begin with the minds of the people of Nigeria. When the mind is educated or aligned towards the truth, nothing can go wrong. Therefore, in order to bring about lasting decolonization of the Nigerian man's mind, a number of things must happen. The first is acceptance and appreciation of self. The Nigerian man must accept himself for who he is and what he stands for without looking up to the White man for approval or disapproval. He must live and die as a Nigerian without apology to anyone. He must use his intelligence to develop his world without desiring and struggling to create his world as a replica of the white man's world.

Nigerians must understand that before the coming of the white man, they have been and will continue to be without the white man. Thus they should learn to appreciate the numerous and wonderful qualities and cultures they possess which had distinguished them as the Giant of Africa. Thus, accepting and appreciating

the numerous talents and diverse cultures and traditions bestowed on them by their creator is the first step towards regaining the Nigeria's self-image, identity, self-esteem and collective consciousness. If Nigerians could realize the powers residing in the tremendous talents and gifts they possess, they would never choose to play a second fiddle – they would never throw away their rich social, cultural, political and spiritual endowment which they have in abundance in exchange for any other culture.

Therefore, the starting point of decolonization in Nigeria is the acceptance of who we are as a people followed by the appreciation of all that God has blessed us with. This appreciation can be translated into being proud of being Nigerians, using and promoting every good thing that is Nigerian. A follow up would be going back to the source and embracing the Nigerian cultural heritage. Nigeria is full of various cultures and traditions which must be harnessed and protected. Since language is the main vehicle of traditions and cultures, Nigerians must learn how to communicate and interact in their various languages. Like in the past, Nigerian languages should be made compulsory at all levels of education in Nigeria. After all, races like the Indians, Chinese, Japanese and many more made their indigenous languages the official language for teaching and learning in their schools. Today, these races can be counted among the most culturally and even scientifically and technologically progressed nations of the world. India, for example, is known today for her excellence in medicine and engineering. Equally, China and Japan started inviting foreign teachers into their countries to teach English language after they had socially, culturally and educationally secured their traditions and customs. If the British are proud of their language and cultures, to the extent of imposing it on other cultures, why should Nigerians not be proud of their own culture? Why should they allow the white man to determine their essence and being? Why should the ugly legacies they left behind by the colonizers be allowed to exist unchallenged even when the colonizers themselves have long left the shores of Africa? In fact, why should we retain the British imposition of the name 'Nigeria'? Why can't we change it like other nations that were colonized and given names that are not indigenous with the people. It is no longer news that the British named a particular nation Burma, but they rejected it and renamed themselves Myanmar. The British gave several African nations their names - Upper Volta, Gold Coast, Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Nigeria; and these nations rejected the names and renamed themselves such that Upper Volta is today known as Burkina Faso, Gold Coast is today called Ghana, Tanganyika is today called Tanzania, Southern Rhodesia is now known as Zimbabwe, Northern Rhodesia is today called Zambia. Even France gave one of

our African nations the name Dahomey, but they rejected it and today they are known as Benin. Belgium too gave a nation the name Zaire, but they too rejected it and are called Democratic Republic of Congo. The question is what is wrong with the people who are named Nigeria? What is it in the name 'Nigeria' that is so noble that we can't change it especially as it was given to us by those who did not want us to progress. In fact, the British are enemies of the people they named 'Nigeria'. Why must we continue with the British label that portrays us as perpetual slaves and conquered people?

Decolonization can take a positive dimension in Nigeria when we start first by rejecting and replacing the name 'Nigeria' with something more befitting. From there we can proceed to replacing the names of towns given by and in the names of colonial masters. Why should Nigeria continue to answer the name Nigeria, when it is on record that the people who are referred to as Nigerians did not call their country Nigeria? Why should we still retain Port Harcourt as the name of the capital of Rivers State? Why not change that word "Port Harcourt" to an indigenous River State's name? What of Lagos? Why not officially remove the word Lagos and replace it with Eko, which is the indigenous Yoruba word for what is today called Lagos State. Why can't the government of Anambra State officially re-spell the name of their State capital to read Oka and not Awka? Onicha and not Onitsha? To continue to use or retain the white man's version of the names of Nigerian towns and places is nothing but a clear indication or manifestation of effects of colomentalism.

Why should Nigerians choose to remain mentally and culturally slaves to the Europeans? The Indians who were equally colonized by the same British colonialists have conscientiously retained their culture, language and customs instead of replacing them with that of their colonizers. Today, in India, one can hardly find any Indian bearing English names. In fact, they clung tenaciously to their cultural heritage such that they struggled and strived to be who they are not otherwise. This spirit made it possible for them to reject almost everything that is not Indian thereby promoting and exposing their rich cultures to the rest of the world. This is exactly what Nigerians are expected to do in order to protect their culture and tradition. Unfortunately, the crave for and the desire to become like the white man, has eroded seriously the very base of Nigerian tradition and culture. It is for this reason that decolonization is recommended urgently in Nigeria so that Nigerians can step out of colomentalism.

### **Recommendations**

In order to realize the objectives for decolonization, we recommend the following:

1. Nigerians should stop longing and preferring things that come from the white man's country or believing that they can only become fulfilled or significant in life if they travel to Europe, or live and behave like them. Being known for their natural pride as Nigerians, they should be proud of their culture, their language and what they can become without the help of the white man.
2. Nigerian cultures and traditions should be promoted and marketed through various means like cultural displays, dresses, dances, movies, literatures, etc. This would restore interests in Nigeria and her rich cultural and traditional values.
3. The leaders should address the issue of Nigerian languages and cultures in their various States. They should be able to come out with a reliable and logical programme that would perpetuate the rich Nigerian traditions and cultures.
4. Nigerians should be encouraged to develop their land culturally, socially, scientifically and technologically using their God-given talents and intelligence instead of depending on the white man.

## **Conclusion**

Colonialism has proved to be a curse to the Nigerian system of government because its effects still affect the country strongly, decades after it was introduced. Colonialism has many tribulations, but its most prominent error was creating a foundation of discord amongst the Nigerian people. The decision to vehemently join three extremely dissimilar and varied ethnic groups together is still the underlining cause of many of the prominent predicaments that the country faces today. This decision coupled with the choice to make the country vulnerable to its colonial masters after independence created a disastrous recipe, causing the country to be a challenge to govern.

The fact the evils of colonial system persist even when the colonizers are no longer there with the colonized introduces a movement from the colonialism to non-colonialism. In other words, it suggests that colonialism is not yet over. In fact, the colonized should establish solid patriotism, creativity and solidarity which pave way for an enabling environment to attain a greater height for the benefit of all. The colonized are urged to form themselves rather than being formed. To this end, they should rationally and creatively seize available opportunities from daily experiences they constantly encounter to do away with current ideological pitfall

of resorting to artificial experiences. They should be independent through radical and genuine decolonization which will reinforce them to improve their cultural values, appreciate and maintain their own identity.

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